

February 17: Sunday of the Prodigal Son

When we listen to this Gospel, we notice that the repentant son returns to his father and humbles himself by prostrating before him to beg his forgiveness. We in the east know what prostrations are, at least we should! They have always been a symbol of our humility before God for generations and should be a part of our daily prayers, especially during the Great Fast.

How do we do it?

We first make the sign of the cross, then kneel down on both knees, then bowing forward, we place our hands down and our faces to the ground. Then we rise and continue our prayer.

We make these prostrations during the prayer of St. Ephrem which will be recited during the Presanctified Liturgy. St. Ephrem was a Syrian monk who lived in the fourth century. When he was just a little boy, he had a very bad temper and often got into fights and other trouble. One day, because of his reputation he was wrongly accused of stealing some sheep and was put into jail. That evening, God called out to him in a dream and told him to correct his life and stop misbehaving, and so he did. The charges were dropped and, grateful to God, Ephrem began to change his ways immediately, and that's when he composed his famous prayer.. Ephrem became a monk and then a saint who had developed such humility and piety that it was said that he had furrows down his cheeks from all the tears he shed in reparation for his former sins.

Let's practice our prayer and our prostrations today!



The Prayer of St. Ephrem

*O Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the
spirit of indifference, despair,
lust for power and idle chatter
(make a great prostration)*

*Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of
integrity,
humility, patience, and love.
(make a great prostration)*

*Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins, and
not judge my brothers and sisters;
for you are blessed forever and ever.
Amen.
(make a great prostration)*

Text taken from *The Zacchaeus Tree*, by Lynne Wardach; available on the Gift Shop page at ByziMom.com.