



**St. Nicholas**

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**Orthodox Church**

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**October 1, 2017**

*Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross*

*Commemoration of St. Eumenius, bishop and wonderworker of Gortyna on Crete*

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**We often become frustrated with ourselves, wanting to change bad behavior,** but seemingly incapable of making the changes we desire. Each confession we confess the same sins over and over. We know the priest has heard the

same confession, month after month, and we're aware that he could probably say our confession for us, having heard it that often. What we don't seem to know is that there is a simple reason for our repetition. These bad behaviors only seem to be unchangeable because we don't really struggle with the passions in a way that will bring about successful change.

For the person who always flies off the handle in anger, there is the matter of habit. Their temper flares up because of what the other person has done, so the outburst is really not about them, but about the other person. Change, therefore, becomes almost impossible. The person who is always stretching the truth is aware of their sin, but the habit is so strongly held, they find themselves lying before even realizing their confessed sin is being

repeated. The over eater makes a commitment to lose weight, but makes no attempt to empty the refrigerator of the very leftover cake that was a temptation the night before. So, while watching television, the thought comes into their mind that there is that one piece of cake remaining, and they rush forth that final consumption. Almost like magic, there is another cake sitting on the counter by the next afternoon.

We all have had moments like this, when we seemingly can't stop the bad behavior that we confess over and over, almost like a litany. Our captivity to this bad behavior seems permanent, and change impossible. Yet if we make a concerted effort to change, little by little, we will find we really can master those stubborn behaviors that seem so insurmountable. Instead of beating ourselves up each time we fall, we take those little baby steps, and little by little, we make progress. That cake we consumed becomes our last piece, because this time we don't go near the row in the grocery store where we know the bakery goods are displayed. We manage to curb our temper because we made a commitment to get through just two hours around that person in the office who pushes our buttons, and when the two hours passes, we have reason to pat ourselves on the back. We pass half a day without inventing a new story about ourselves, and before long, we are no longer confessing that sin. Little by little, we find we can change bad behavior.

*"A man cannot correct himself all of a sudden, but it is like pulling a barge – pull, pull, and let go, let go! Not all at once, but little by little. Do you know the mast on a ship? There is a pole to which is tied all of*

*the ship's lines. If you pull on it then everything gradually pulls. But if you take it all at once, you will ruin everything."*  
(St. Ambrose of Optina)

Abbot Tryphon



**To our students who made their  
First Holy Confession today:**

**BRENDEN LOMAGO  
VICTORIA SELEMBO**

***Bible Study*** continues every Friday at  
7:00 p.m.



**Rummage sale is set for this  
Saturday.**

