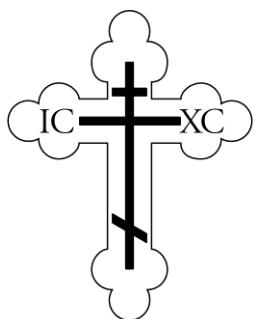
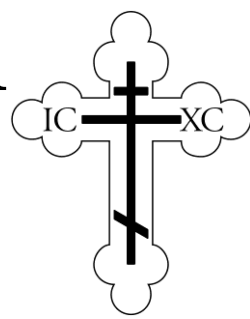


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



A Parish of the
Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



8600 Grand Blvd.
Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
Hall: (219)730-4698
www.ptvm.com

Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219)384-6826 • frjacobvansickle@gmail.com

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or
after Vespers or by appointment

Welcome visitors!
Please join us in the
parish hall after Divine
Liturgy for coffee hour.

March 14, 2021

Fourth Sunday of the Triodion:

Forgiveness Sunday

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..." (Mt 6:14-15).

Then, after Vespers, which liturgically brings us into Lent, we ask forgiveness from each other in the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. We approach each of our brothers or sisters in Christ and ask forgiveness of any sins we have committed against

them. They ask the same of us, and we each pronounce our forgiveness of the other. It is traditional to exchange the kiss of peace and conclude with the words, "God forgives all." Meanwhile, the choir sings hymns from Pascha, filling the church with the anticipation of Easter joy.

Forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us, so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in



Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns, we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me – we begin to realize that it is Christ Who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery – and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists – we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, "opens to us the doors of Paradise." We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage. Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting true fasting; our effort true effort; our reconciliation with God true reconciliation.

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 7 – Resurrectional Troparion

By Your Cross You destroyed death.
To the thief You opened Paradise.
For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy.
And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God,
to proclaim that You are risen,//
granting the world great mercy.

Tone 4 – Patronal Troparion

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy,
illuminated by your coming, O Mother of God.
Beholding your pure image we fervently cry to you:
Encompass us beneath the precious veil of your protection.
Deliver us from every form of evil
by entreating Christ, your Son and our God//
that He may save our souls.

Tone 6 – Kontakion of Forgiveness Sunday

O Master, Teacher of wisdom,
Bestower of virtue,
Who teach the thoughtless and protect the poor,
strengthen and enlighten my heart!
O Word of the Father,
let me not restrain my mouth from crying to You:
“Have mercy on me, a transgressor,//
O merciful Lord!”

Tone 3 – Patronal Kontakion

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,
And with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us.
Angels and bishops worship.
Apostles and prophets rejoice together,//
Since for our sake she prays to the eternal God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 8 – Prokeimenon of the Day (Psalm 75)

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God!

Epistle: Romans 13.11 – 14.4

Brethren: Do this, knowing the time—that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand! Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel: Matthew 6.14-21

Jesus said to His disciples: “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Erin Brady

Nicholas Lile

Leo DuMoulin

Protopr. Daniel Hubiak

Vern Orr

Jeffrey Smith

Blythe

Ev.Mem. Paul Shuman ('50)

Ignaty Shuman ('50)

Fred Dorza ('50)

Gregory Shwetky ('53)

Health & Salv.	Christopher	Declan
Archpr. Peter	Nina	Hudson
Mat. Margaret	Renee	Ayden
Mat. Anne	Carissa	Hyland
Pr. Christopher	Cynthia	Jason
Mat. Jennifer	John	Ted
Andrew	Olga	James
Gideon	Mark	Pamela
Kevin	Jerry	Erin
Jon	Michael	Alexander
Tanya	Anthony	Ronald
Jovan	Janet	Theodore
Julia	Daryl	Robert
Warren	Diane	Craig
Tom	Carla	Chuck
Tina	Susan	Scott
Jennifer	Timothy	Mark
Gail	William	Christine
Stacy	Paul	Dale
Jeramie	Joseph	Pauline
Olivia	Linda	Mary
Parker	Claudia	Jessika & family
Christine	Elizabeth	Timothy
Larry	Snezana	Lisa
Rollie	Nathan	Lois
Joseph	Kara	Michael
Nadia	Ryan	Ivanka
Brendan	Thomas	Irina
David	Carol	Janice
Sharon	Christine	Ken
Michael	Jon	Debbie
Janie	Zoey	Jacqueline
Tanya	Dominic	Dara

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After coffee hour today, we will come back into the Church for the **Rite of Forgiveness**.

We continue to take precautions during the health crisis. Everyone except celebrants and choir must be masked and maintain distance between groups. Those seeking to limit their exposure to large groups are encouraged to take advantage of **weekday services** with lower attendance.

We are collecting specific foods in order to provide **Easter dinners to local families** in need. Please pick up a flyer in the Narthex listing the items we need and bring those in by Saturday, March 27.

The parishes of the Chicago deanery each year usually collaborate to host a series of **Lenten Sunday Vespers** services. These Sunday Vespers are back again this year, but because of the pandemic, parishioners from other Churches are asked to remain home and participate via livestream. **Pick up a flyer** in the Narthex for information about when Sunday Vespers are happening this year and where you can find the Livestreams.

Mark your calendars:

Mar 15: **Clean Monday** (Beginning of Great Lent)

Mar 15-18: **Great Canon of St. Andrew** in 4 parts @ 6pm each night

Mar 19: **Presanctified Liturgy** @ 10am

Mar 23: **Parish Council** meeting @ 7pm

Mar 25: **Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast of Annunciation** @ 6pm

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$1,856

Love at the Last Judgment

A Reflection by His Eminence, our Archbishop Paul

Last Sunday we heard the readings from 1 Corinthians 8, concerning eating meat, and Matthew 25, concerning the Last Judgment. They may seem disjointed in looking at them on the surface, but they are actually very connected to each other.

Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care, lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (1 Corinthians 8:8-9)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh (to indulge the flesh, NIV), but through love be servants of one another (serve one another humbly in love). (Galatians 5:13)

The above readings from Corinthians and Galatians help us to put fasting in a proper perspective. The things we fast from during lent are not bad things. Whether they are certain foods, certain luxuries, certain videos, apps, TVs, or computers. St Paul tells us not to allow our use of these things to become a stumbling block to others. The verse from Galatians tells us not to use our freedom as an opportunity to indulge the flesh but, through humble love, to be servants of one another. As we are about to enter into the Great Fast, we address this simple question: Do we eat to live, or do we live to eat? This is a time for the family to have a discussion to help us all better understand where we have fallen short in our use of the gifts we have been given. This idea is presented very clearly in the following hymn sung at Matins from this past Sunday:

DANIEL THE PROPHET, AND GREATLY BELOVED MAN, WHEN HE SAW THE POWER OF GOD, CRIED OUT: THE COURT SAT IN JUDGEMENT AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED! CONSIDER WELL, MY SOUL: DO YOU FAST? THEN DO NOT DESPISE YOUR NEIGHBOR! DO YOU ABSTAIN FROM FOOD? THEN DO NOT CONDEMN YOUR BROTHER, LEST YOU BE SENT TO BURN AS WAX IN THE FIRE. BUT MAY CHRIST LEAD YOU WITHOUT STUMBLING INTO HIS KINGDOM! (Praises Verse, Sunday of Last Judgment, Tone 8)

When we read the gospel from Matthew 25 on the Last Judgment, we find that we will not be asked how often we went to church, how correctly we fasted and followed the rules, or whether we were “Orthodox” Christians. The question will be: did we see Christ suffering in the needs of those who are poor, hungry, naked, in prison, or alone having no one to visit them? Did we actively love those persons the Lord brought into our lives? Did we use what the Lord gave us for the well-being of others? Or were our lives only about living to eat? Our inability or refusal to see Christ suffering in the needs of others will be the rule we are judged by.

I encourage you, as we are about to enter the Great Fast, that by the grace of God, make every effort as a family to be active in your love towards one another. May your acts of self-denial through fasting bring you into a greater awareness of the brother or sister God brings into your midst. Receive them with kindness and love. May we repent of our failure to love and seek to “bear each other’s burdens, fulfilling the law of Christ.”

Forgive me a sinner.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,

+Paul

Glory to God for
all things!