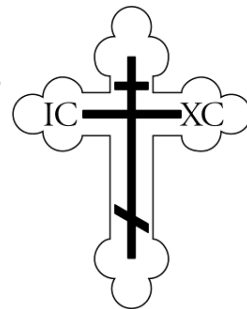
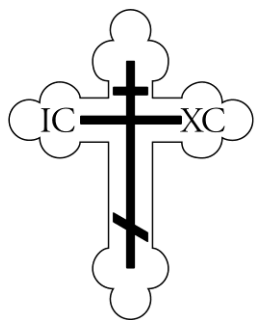


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



8600 Grand Blvd.
Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
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.

February 26, 2023

Sunday of Forgiveness

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: "Let us begin the time of fasting in light, preparing ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our soul, let us purify our body. As we abstain from food, let us abstain from all passion and enjoy the virtues of the spirit...."

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the women disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel the joyous message of Your resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles:

"Death is overthrown!

Christ our God is 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 – Lenten Kontakion

When You, O God, shall come to earth with glory,
all things shall tremble,
and the river of fire shall flow before Your judgment seat;
the books shall be opened, and the hidden things disclosed;
then deliver me from the unquenchable fire,//
and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O Righteous Judge!

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 Forgiveness Sunday (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

The Lord 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

New. Dep. David May

Ratka Traycoff

Thomas Mosak

Bp. Tikhon Fitzgerald

Ev.Mem. Grigori Kozirov ('14)

Mikolai Vozak ('24)

Prokop Onischuk ('25)

Metody Sarafin ('61)

George Belicoff ('63)

Helen Kuchik ('69)

Eva Hrischuk ('71)

Mitchell Geokas (2009)

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter

Mat. Cynthia

Archpr. John

Pr. Patrick

Mat. Anne

Dn. Nicholas

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Tom

Jennifer

Rollie

Joseph

Nadia

Joseph

Linda

Claudia

Carol

Snezana

Ryan

Nathan

Kara

Djuro

Paula

Christopher

Karen

Dominic

Declan

Hudson

Ayden

Hyland

Jason

Ted

James

Pamela

Alexander

Ronald

Ivanka	Chrisan	Aaron
Karen	Gerald	Dale
Sandra	Olga	Ebony
Linda	Janie	Peggy
Jim	Sharon	Sue
John	Tanya	Victoria
Martha	Renee	Janet
Mark	Michael	Tom
Michelle	Chris	Wilma
Irene	Nina	Jerry
Michelle	Carissa	Penelope
Erika	Ashton	Cora
Luke	Doris	Brandi
Jo	Laura	Joyce
Stephanie	Duane	Paul
Mary Ann	Elizabeth	Galina
Robb	Karen	Helen
Desiree	Alexa	Kathleen
Jaroslava	Miriana	Rachel
Andrew	Olga	Martha
Andrew	Richard	Stephanie
Vadim	Klaudia	Thomas
Hanna	Nicodemus	Diane
Alex	Nada	Michael
Carl	Mark	Linda
Laura	Catherine	

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

Special Petitions at the Augmented Litany:

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially for the victims in Ukraine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hear us and have mercy.

We also pray You, O Lord our God, to remember and have mercy on our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Russia and Ukraine, who are involved in violent conflict. Remove from their midst all hostility, confusion and hatred. Lead everyone along the path of reconciliation and peace, we pray You, hear us and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After venerating the cross, we will serve the **40-day memorial for Tom Mosak**, as well as the **1-year memorial for Bill Kovek**.

Following coffee hour, we will return to the Church for **Forgiveness Vespers**.

We were recently notified that **Tom Mosak left a bequest to the Church** in the amount of \$200,000. Thanks be to God! And may Tom's memory be eternal.

Mark your calendars:

Feb 27: **Clean Monday: Great Canon of St. Andrew I @ 6pm**

Feb 28: **Great Canon of St. Andrew II @ 6pm**

Mar 1: **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts @ 10am; potluck after Great Canon of St. Andrew III @ 6pm**

Mar 2: **Great Canon of St. Andrew IV @ 6pm**

Mar 3: **Presanctified Divine Liturgy @ 10am; potluck after**

Mar 24: **Annunciation Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts @ 10am
Blood Drive 12pm-5pm**

Mar 25: **Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Annunciation @ 10am**

Mar 30: **Canon of St. Andrew & Life of St. Mary of Egypt @ 10am**

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,632.84

Message for the Start of Great Lent from His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America: My Beloved Children in the Lord,

In the reading from the prophecy of Isaiah on the first day of the fast, we hear a word of caution. Our annual observance of times and seasons, our gatherings to worship, are not, in and of themselves, pleasing unto God. "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? Who requires of you this trampling of my courts? Incense is an abomination to me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my

soul hates. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen.” (See Is. 1:11–15.) Lest we set out to fast hypocritically, believing that our abstinence will win us God’s approval, the prophet reminds us that external religion is futile without moral reformation. The Lord calls upon his people to “learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. 1:17).

But our sins, as numerous as the sands of the seashore, are not so easily corrected. We may seem to make progress toward one virtue, or triumph over one temptation. We may make some progress in serving our brethren and neighbors. But then we recognize further sins, perhaps sins we had never recognized before. There is no one good but God alone, as Our Lord himself declares (Mk. 10:18). Our fasting is useless without real change for the good, but real change for the good can seem to lie beyond our grasp. We are called to wash ourselves, to make ourselves clean, but we cannot do so (Is. 1:16). But the Lord, who loves us, who desires our salvation, who in love grants us freedom and desires our participation in his saving act, promises, through the prophet, what we cannot do: he will make us clean, provided we are “willing and obedient”:

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land... I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. (Is. 1:18–19, 25)

Great Lent, then, is not a time to show how pious we are in our observance of the fast and attendance at services. Neither is it a time to prove our great virtue by imagining that we, on our own strength, can take the fast like a cudgel to our sins in an act of moral heroism. No, Great Lent is a time to humble ourselves, to present ourselves to God as “willing and obedient,” and to allow him to cleanse the scarlet and crimson stains of our sins.

“Cleansing” describes a process, and the process of cleansing our sins can be, at times, painful. In another Lenten reading, the prophet speaks of a Branch that will appear, “beautiful and glorious,” in the future (Is. 4:2). This Branch is Christ, and we hope, grafted onto his vine, to share in the splendor of his everlasting kingdom. But for now, we must endure the digging up of the vineyard (Is. 5:5–6). The hedge of our pride, the wall of our vainglory—all this must be torn up, burned, trampled down.

We strive to keep the fast, to attend services, to make our confession, to repent and change our deeds and minds and hearts. We strive to devote ourselves to the good and defense and liberation and well-being of our brethren, the “true fast” chosen by the Lord (Is. 58:6–7). But even as we make our noble religious, spiritual, and social efforts, we are constantly confronted with all of our deep-rooted sinful habits: not just pride and vainglory, but ignorance, laziness, despondency, fear of the world, heedlessness, and more. If we are willing and obedient and truly desire God to use the fast to cleanse us, we will suffer—not because fasting is suffering, but because Lent, when faithfully kept, reveals many painful truths about ourselves.

Yet, even in the midst of this process of cleansing, we still find ourselves filled with the hope and joy of God coming into the world. On Monday of the Third Week, the reading from the prophecy of Isaiah is one we associate more usually with the Nativity season: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shone. For unto us A Child is born; unto us a Son is given” (Is. 9:2, 6). But truly, that which began at Christmas continues throughout Lent. As our vices are uprooted, as our sins are cleansed, room is being made in our hearts, not for us, but for Jesus Christ. He came as a Child, and now he is growing. He is increasing as we decrease (Jn. 3:30). Just as cleansing is a process, so does Christ come to us gradually, as much as we can receive him. And, because he is the boundless God, the very Fountain of goodness, “of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end” (Is. 9:7). Thus, even in the most painful moments of ascetic struggle, repentance, and consciousness of our sinfulness, we are always full of hope, because the bountiful Lord always desires to give his gifts to us more fully.

We are also filled with hope because our cleansing is finite; we are headed towards an End. Yes, our purification lasts for a time—throughout this Lent, throughout this life, throughout our dying and passage to eternal life. But our purification, and the means of our purification, are bound to end. Just as God used Assyria to correct the Israelites of old, but then promised to “break the Assyrian in my land” (Is. 14:25), so God uses the time of our exile from paradise, the conditions of our mortality, to bring us to repentance and, we hope, to some measure of holiness. At the beginning of the fast, we leave the garden with our first parents; at the end of the fast, we return again with Christ. And this is the pattern of our life in this world. We

are thrown into mortality because of sin, but the Lord uses our mortality to correct us, to turn our attention back toward him. And then mortality will have done its work, and it will be cast away. In the end, the Lord who is the End, who tramples down death by death, will defeat death, the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26).

In order to overcome the consequences of our sin, Jesus Christ has taken on our nature; he is wounded to heal our wounds; he dies in order to put death to death. But his identification with us does not merely heal our nature; it also allows our greater identification with him. As the prophet Isaiah will announce on Holy Saturday, the Lord clothes us, unworthy though we be, in “the garments of salvation” and the “robes of righteousness” (Is. 61:10). These garments are not of our own making; they are the garb of his salvation and his righteousness. We are not only saved from sin and death; we are remade into the likeness of his goodness and his justice. “You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord... for the Lord delights in you” (Is. 62:2-4).

And so, as we enter into the mystery of the Lenten struggle, as we prepare to encounter the great mystery of the Lord’s Passion and Rising, let us be “willing and obedient,” making our efforts in good faith but relying on the Lord to cleanse us, fill us with hope, and lead us always closer to himself, who is the End for whom we are made, and who desires to fill us with good things, now and throughout eternity. To him be all glory, unto ages of ages.

Wishing you good strength during the forty days of the fast, and asking each of your forgiveness for all of my many sins, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Glory to God for all things!