

УСПЕННЯ ПРЕСВЯТОЇ БОГОРОДИЦІ

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, February 22, 2026

“1st Sunday of Lent”

“The Sunday of Orthodoxy”

Reflections for this Weekend

In John 1:43–51, we are drawn into the mystery of vocation and revelation. The gospel begins with a simple yet profound truth: Jesus finds Philip. Before Philip seeks, questions, or understands, he is already sought. This is the pattern of grace. Our spiritual life does not begin with our effort but with God’s initiative. “Follow Me” is not merely a moral command; it is a summons into relationship, into a new way of being shaped by His presence.

Philip, once called, becomes a witness. He seeks Nathanael and proclaims that they have found the One foretold by Moses and the prophets. Authentic faith is never self-contained. When Christ becomes real to us, we naturally desire to share Him. Yet Philip does not argue or attempt to overpower Nathanael’s doubts. When Nathanael questions “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip simply responds, “Come and see.” This is the language of the Gospel: invitation, not coercion; encounter, not debate.

Nathanael’s skepticism reveals something deeply human. We often expect God to act through what is impressive, powerful, or prestigious. Nazareth was obscure and insignificant. Yet God’s glory is often hidden in humility. The Incarnation itself is the great paradox: divine majesty clothed in ordinary flesh. Nathanael’s prejudice becomes the doorway to revelation. When Jesus sees Nathanael approaching, He declares, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.” These words echo the story of Jacob, whose name was associated with deception. Now, in Christ, a new and true Israel stands before Him one marked by sincerity of heart. Jesus sees beyond Nathanael’s doubts to his integrity. The Lord always sees deeper than appearances; He sees the hidden longing within us.

Nathanael is startled: “How do You know me?” Jesus responds, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Whatever Nathanael was doing in that quiet place perhaps praying, reflecting on Scripture, wrestling with hope Christ had already perceived it. This revelation transforms him. To realize that God has seen us in our solitude, in our questions, in our most private prayers, is overwhelming. We are not anonymous before Him. We are known.

Nathanael’s confession bursts forth: “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” A heart once doubtful becomes a heart proclaiming faith. Often the journey to belief is not resolved by argument but by encounter by the realization that Christ knows us personally and calls us into something greater.

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Yet Jesus promises even more: “You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” This recalls Jacob’s dream of the ladder between heaven and earth. Christ declares that He Himself is that living ladder. In Him, heaven is opened. The separation between God and humanity is healed. The divine and the human meet in His Person.

This Gospel invites us to see ourselves in both Philip and Nathanael. We are called, and we are sent. We doubt, and we are known. We question, and we are invited to “come and see.” Above all, we are reminded that Christ has already seen us under our own fig tree seen our struggles, hopes, and hidden prayers. And in Him, heaven is no longer distant. It is opened, and we are invited to walk the path of discipleship in the light of that open sky.



A gentle reminder

The holy season of the Great Fast, the Church, like a loving mother, gently calls her children to come closer to slow down, to return, to rediscover the quiet voice of God speaking within the heart. Lent is not simply a time on the calendar; it is a sacred journey toward Pascha, a path of repentance, healing, and renewal.

A gentle reminder that during the Great Fast we will celebrate the Presanctified Divine Liturgy each Wednesday in English and each Friday in Ukrainian, both beginning at 6:00 p.m.

These beautiful Lenten services are among the most moving treasures of our spiritual tradition. In their solemn chants, in the quiet prostrations, and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, we encounter Christ who strengthens us for the journey.

We know that life is busy and demanding. Work, family, and responsibilities can easily fill every hour. Yet Lent invites us to make an extra effort an offering of time and love to the Lord who gave everything for us. Even one additional step toward the church during this sacred season can open the door to unexpected grace. When we gather together in prayer, we support one another, we carry each other’s burdens, and we grow stronger as one Body in Christ. Come and be refreshed. Come and lay your worries before the Lord. Come and allow the peace of these sacred liturgies to quiet your soul.

Let us not walk this Lenten road alone, but side by side, encouraging one another as we journey toward the radiant joy of Pascha.

All are warmly invited and encouraged to take part in these holy services.

May this Great Fast be a time of deep blessing and spiritual renewal for each of you and for our entire parish family.

The courage to be still and to repent.

The Great Fast is a sacred invitation, not simply to change our habits, but to allow God to change our hearts. Lent comes to us each year as a gentle but urgent call to transformation. Yet transformation requires something many of us struggle with: courage.

It takes courage to be still. In a world that rewards noise, speed, and constant activity, Lent invites us into silence. It asks us to step away from distractions and to stand honestly before God. Silence can be uncomfortable, because in silence we begin to see ourselves clearly. We see our impatience, our resentments, our fears, our compromises. But we also begin to see our deep longing for God. And that longing is holy.

It takes courage to repent. Repentance is not humiliation; it is healing. It is the brave decision to say, “Lord, I want to be more. I want to love better. I want my heart to be clean.” True repentance is not driven by fear, but by love the realization that God desires our freedom more than we do. When we kneel in prayer, when we approach confession, when we bow in the quiet beauty of the Lenten services, we are not admitting defeat; we are opening ourselves to mercy. It takes courage to let ourselves be loved. Often we are ready to believe that God loves humanity in general, but we struggle to believe that He loves us personally, deeply, and patiently. Yet the Cross reveals a love that is not abstract. Christ embraces our brokenness, carries our burdens, and enters into our suffering. During Lent, He draws near to the places in us that are wounded and tired. If we allow Him, His love will begin to soften what has grown hard within us.

Transformation rarely comes in dramatic moments. It unfolds quietly in the extra effort to attend a Lenten service after a long day, in choosing prayer instead of scrolling, in fasting with sincerity rather than formality, in forgiving someone we have held at a distance. Each small sacrifice, offered with love, becomes a seed of resurrection. God does not overlook these hidden efforts. He multiplies them.

The love of God does not merely comfort; it renews. It reshapes our priorities. It teaches us patience. It restores peace where there has been restlessness. It gives us the strength to begin again again and again. Lent reminds us that no failure is final when placed in God’s hands. No heart is too cold to be warmed. No soul is too far to return.

Let us not walk through this holy season passively. Let us embrace it intentionally, bravely. Let us make the extra effort to pray more deeply, to fast more sincerely, to serve more generously, to forgive more freely. Let us give God space to work within us.

If we allow His love to touch us during this sacred time, we will not arrive at Pascha unchanged. We will arrive lighter, freer, more peaceful. The same love that carried Christ to Golgotha will carry us toward resurrection.

May this Lent be a season of holy courage a time when we dare to open our hearts fully to God’s transforming love, trusting that what He begins in us, He will bring to completion in joy

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Sunday Divine Liturgy:
8:50 a.m. The Third Hour
And
Prayer Service for Peace in
Ukraine.
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

Religious Education
September - May

Sacraments Penance:
Sunday before Liturgies
or by appointment

Baptism - Matrimony
In most instances
six-month membership
required

Funerals
Membership of an
immediate family member
required

**Communion to the
Homebound**
If you or your family
members are confined to a
health center or are
homebound, please contact
Fr. Hugo directly so that
arrangements can be made
for his visitation.

Sunday, February 22

"1st Sunday of Lent" "The Sunday of Orthodoxy"

Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40; 12:1-2. Gospel: John 1:43-51.

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and

Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine

9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, February 23

"The Holy Martyr Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna"

Reading: Genesis 3:21-4:7 Reading: Proverbs 3:34-4:22

Tuesday, February 24

"First and Second Finding of the Head John the Baptist"

Genesis 4:8-15 Proverbs 5:1-15

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 Gospel: Mathew 11:2-15.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, February 25

"Our Father among the Saints Tarasius"

Reading: Genesis 4:16-26; Reading: Proverbs 5:15-6:3

6:00 p.m. Presanctified Liturgy (English)

In loving memory of +Paulina Soutus from family

Thursday, February 26

"Our Father among the Saints Porphyrius"

Reading: Genesis 5:1-24 Reading: Proverbs 6:3-20

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, February 27

"Our Venerable Father and Confessor Procopius"

Reading: Genesis: 5:32-6:8; Reading: Proverbs 6:20-7:1

6:00 p.m. Presanctified Liturgy (Ukrainian)

Saturday, February 28

"2nd All Souls Saturday"

Epistle: Hebrew 3:12-16 Gospel: Mark 1:35-45

9:30 a.m. In loving memory of the souls of our deceased parishioners

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, March 1

"Second Sunday of Lent" "Commemoration of St Gregory Palamas"

Epistle: Hebrew 1:10-2:3. Gospel: Mark 2:1-12.

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and

Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine

9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends