

Reflections for this Weekend

Matthew opens the Gospel not with thunder or spectacle, but with names, generations quietly passing from one to another. This long genealogy is itself a confession of faith. God chooses to enter history not by erasing it, but by embracing it fully, with all its wounds and wonders. The lineage of Jesus carries saints and sinners, kings and exiles, moments of fidelity and moments of collapse. In this, we see that salvation does not come from a flawless human story, but from God’s unwavering faithfulness within a broken one. Grace does not bypass human weakness; it dwells within it and transforms it from the inside.

The names in this genealogy are not merely records; they are testimonies. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba stand out as women whose lives were marked by scandal, vulnerability, or foreignness. Their presence quietly proclaims that God’s mercy reaches beyond boundaries of law, ethnicity, and social expectation. God weaves redemption from places where human judgment would see only failure. What seems marginal or shameful becomes essential in the divine plan. This prepares the heart to understand the mystery of the Virgin Birth, where God once again acts in a way that overturns ordinary expectations.

When the genealogy ends, the Gospel shifts from public history to an intimate drama of obedience and trust. Joseph stands before a mystery that threatens his understanding, his honor, and his future. He is called “righteous,” not because he clings rigidly to the law, but because his righteousness is gentle, compassionate, and open to God. In silence, Joseph listens. In a dream, he receives a word that asks him to surrender control and accept a truth that cannot be proven, only trusted. His greatness lies in his willingness to let God redefine what justice, fatherhood, and strength truly mean.

The angel’s words reveal the heart of the Gospel: the child is named Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Salvation here is not merely rescue from external suffering, but healing from the deepest fracture within the human heart. Sin is not treated as an abstract concept, but as a lived reality that God enters personally. Emmanuel, God with us, is not a distant idea but a presence that shares our vulnerability, our uncertainty, and our night watches. God does not shout His salvation from heaven; He whispers it into human flesh. Joseph’s response is immediate and complete. He does not demand further signs or explanations. He rises and does as he is told. In this obedience, the new creation quietly begins. Where Adam once grasped and distrusted, Joseph receives and believes.

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Just a Note!!!

Recently, one of our parishioners asked me my opinion why many people leave the Catholic Church, including our own parish. This is a question that reflects a real concern for the health of our faith community, and I share these reflections with humility, not to defend or accuse, but to offer guidance and hope rooted in our Eastern Catholic tradition.

Across the U.S. and much of the Western world, many who were raised Catholic are no longer practicing. Surveys show that about 1 in 7 U.S. adults raised Catholic no longer identify as such. Of those who leave, nearly half become religiously unaffiliated (“nones”), while others join different Christian communities. Common reasons people leave include changes in belief or disagreement with Church teachings, weak personal commitment, loss of faith, and the pressures of cultural or generational secularization. Weekly attendance has declined from around 50% in 1970 to about 20% today, and fewer young people are entering vocations, while more adults drift from active practice.

In our Eastern Catholic tradition, parish life is much more than buildings or numbers. It is a living community, united in prayer, sacramental life, and the transmission of faith from one generation to the next. Our theology and history teach us that the Church is the People of God, not an institution measured solely by size. While the closing of a parish is painful, it reminds us that faith continues to live in the hearts of the faithful, in family prayer, and in the continuity of our liturgical and spiritual life.

At the same time, Christ calls us to go forth and evangelize all nations (Matthew 28:19). Our love for our heritage and cultural traditions should inspire us but not prevent us from reaching the broader community. To live fully in the United States and to touch the hearts of others, we must communicate and share the Gospel in ways that are accessible, meaningful, and life-giving. Holding too tightly to language or cultural forms risks turning our faith into nostalgia rather than a living witness to Christ’s love.

We face real challenges: smaller congregations, fewer vocations, and young people who may feel distant from parish life. Yet our Eastern Christian identity reminds us that the essence of the Church is not in buildings or numbers, but in living faith, shared liturgy, and the bonds of love that unite us across generations. By nurturing our traditions while also reaching out in the language and culture of our neighbors, we ensure the Gospel continues to bear fruit for generations to come.

Let us cherish our parishes as centers of prayer, culture, and community, and let us embrace the mission Christ has entrusted to us: to bring His light to all nations. May we remain steadfast in prayer, generous in service, and courageous in witness, always guided by the Holy Spirit. May Christ’s peace dwell richly in your hearts, our families, and our parish communities. May the Theotokos intercede for us, and may we be strengthened to carry forward our faith.

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Where fear could have closed his heart, faith opens it. His silence throughout the Gospel is not emptiness but reverence, teaching that holiness often speaks most clearly through humble fidelity.

The Gospel invites us to see our own lives within this sacred pattern. Our histories, too, are mixed with faithfulness and failure, clarity and confusion. Yet God does not wait for our perfection before drawing near. He asks only for a listening heart, willing to receive Him even when His presence unsettles our plans. Christ is still conceived in the hidden places of obedience, born into the quiet courage of those who trust God more than their own understanding.

In this passage, we learn that salvation begins in hiddenness, grows through trust, and is carried forward by those who dare to say yes when the mystery is greater than the explanation.

Emmanuel remains with us still, entering our imperfect stories and making them, by grace, places where God is truly at home



A thank You note,,

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who came last Wednesday to help decorate our church for the upcoming Christmas season.

Your time, effort, and dedication truly brought warmth and beauty to our sacred space.

A special thank you to Dr. Laurel for the stunning poinsettias, and to all the parishioners who generously donated for the flowers. Your gifts have made our church feel even more welcoming and prayerful.

It was deeply comforting and inspiring to see so many of you sharing your decorating skills and working together with such kindness and joy.

Your cooperation and creativity remind us that our parish is not just a building, but a living community united in faith and love.

May God bless each of you abundantly for your generosity, talent, and willingness to serve His Church.

With gratitude and prayers,

**Thank you for your generous financial donation to help maintain our church.
Your support sustains our parish and allows us to continue serving God and**

“The courage to trust God beyond our own understanding”

In our journey of faith, there comes a moment when human understanding reaches its limits. We analyze, calculate, and attempt to control, yet we discover that the mysteries of God’s providence are infinitely beyond our grasp. The Eastern Fathers teach us that God’s ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8–9). To live faithfully, we are called to **entrust ourselves to Him**, not in passivity, but in the courageous surrender of our hearts and minds.

Courage in the Eastern Christian sense is not mere boldness or fearlessness; it is the patient endurance and inner strength that arise from communion with God. When we face uncertainty, suffering, or the unexpected turns of life, trusting God requires a radical humility: the acknowledgment that our understanding is finite, that our vision is clouded by sin and fear, and that the ultimate good often lies hidden from our eyes. As St. Isaac the Syrian teaches, the soul that trusts God fully becomes a place where the Holy Spirit dwells, even amid trials, for God’s wisdom surpasses all human reasoning.

To trust God more than our own understanding is to live in **hesychia**, (from the Greek ήσυχία) the inner stillness in which we listen and discern the voice of God above the clamor of our desires and doubts.

It is to enter a space where prayer and contemplation allow the heart to see beyond appearances, where patience replaces anxiety, and where obedience is a manifestation of love rather than duty. Courage, then, is not the absence of fear, but the willing choice to place our steps in God’s hands, believing that He guides even through paths we cannot yet perceive.

This trust transforms our suffering into participation in Christ’s own journey. To yield our understanding is to partake in His kenosis His self-emptying love and to discover that even in confusion or loss, God’s providential care shapes our souls. The Eastern Fathers remind us that the ultimate healing of our intellect and heart comes not from knowing all things, but from **knowing Him who is the Source of all things**. In this, we learn the courage to rejoice in His timing, to obey His voice, and to rest in the certainty that God works all things for our salvation, even when our eyes cannot yet see.

Thus, the courage to trust God beyond our own understanding is a spiritual ascent, a continual practice of humility, obedience, and love. It is a call to live with **eyes fixed on eternity**, hearts anchored in the divine presence, and hands ready to serve, even when the path is uncertain. In embracing this courage, we participate in the life of the Trinity, becoming co-workers in the divine plan, illuminated not by human reason alone, but by the radiant light of God’s infinite wisdom.



Featured Performers



Inna Kovtun



Max Tovsty



Vydelka



U3zub



UKRAINIAN THEATER OF ARIZONA



Nicholas Novi with
Roman Flye and Hans-Leo Teuling

Location: 3720 W Maryland Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85019

www.arizonaukrainianfest.com

Ukrainian Catholic Parish

Pastor

Very Rev. Hugo Soutus

Address:

3720 West Maryland Ave.

Phoenix, AZ. 85019

Rectory: (602) 973-3667

Parish: (602) 347-9267

Emergency:

602-329-3281

E-mail:

DMofGod@cox.net

Website:

www.Ukrainianchurch.org

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, December 21

“Sunday before Christmas” “Sunday of the Holy Fathers”

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10; 17-23; 32-40. Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25.

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

In loving memory of +Lyle Pelot from Dr. Laurel Retay-Nagle

Monday, December 22

“The Holy Great Martyr Anastasia”

Epistle: Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19 Gospel: Mark 9:42-10:1

Tuesday, December 23

“The Holy Ten Martyrs of Crete”

Epistle: Hebrews 4:1-13 Gospel: Mark 10:2-12

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, December 24

“Christmas Eve”

Epistle: Hebrew 1:1-12. Gospel: Luke 2:1-20.

“Vigil of Christmas” “Christmas Eve”

(Strict fast & abstinence)

4:00 p.m. Great Compline (“God is With Us”) & Litija

Christmas Divine Liturgy

Thursday, December 25

“Nativity of Our Lord”

Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7. Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12.

9:30 a.m. Christmas Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 26

“Synaxis of the Mother of God”

Epistle: Hebrew 2:11-18. Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23.

9:30 a.m. In loving memory of +Constante Soutus from family

Saturday, December 27

“Saturday after Nativity” “The Holy Apostle, Protomartyr Stephen”

Epistle: 1 Timothy 6:12-16. Gospel: Matthew 12:15-21.

9:30 a.m. In loving memory of +Maria and +Roman Rydzaj from Soutus family

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, December 28

“Sunday after Nativity”

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19. Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23.

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

In loving memory of +Hanna and +Vasyl Bashta from family