Слава Ісусу Христу! Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory for ever!

Reflections for this Week!!!!

There are tragedies in life that do not begin with hatred, violence, or cruelty. Sometimes they begin with indifference. A heart gradually becomes accustomed to suffering until the pain of another person no longer disturbs its peace. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus reveals one of the most frightening possibilities of the human heart: we can live so comfortably with our blessings that we become blind to the person God has placed at our door.

The rich man is dressed in purple and fine linen. Every day, he enjoys abundance, while Lazarus lies at his gate, hungry, wounded, and longing for even the crumbs from the rich man's table. Their lives unfold side by side, yet their hearts remain worlds apart. Lazarus is close enough to be seen, but

apparently too far away to matter. The tragedy is not simply that one man is rich and the other poor. It is that one possesses so much and the other suffers so deeply, yet the suffering of his neighbor never awakens compassion in his heart.

How often does this same tragedy unfold in our own lives? Lazarus may be the neighbor who carries a hidden sorrow, the family struggling to pay its bills, the person sitting alone in church, or someone whose smile conceals a wounded soul. Sometimes Lazarus is not even a stranger. He may be a member of our own family, someone we have stopped listening to because we believe we already know their story.

We do not always ignore people because we are cruel. Sometimes we are distracted, exhausted, preoccupied with our responsibilities, or absorbed in our own concerns. Yet the Gospel gently but firmly reminds us that love requires more than good intentions. It requires attention. We must learn to see the person standing before us, not as an interruption to our lives, but as an opportunity to encounter Christ.

In our Byzantine spiritual understanding, the human person is called to communion with God and with one another. Sin wounds this communion, turning the heart inward until we begin to live as though our possessions, comfort, and personal happiness were the ultimate purpose of existence. But everything we receive is entrusted to us by God. Our time, abilities, resources, and opportunities to serve are not merely private possessions. They are gifts through which divine love can become visible in the world.

(continue to page 3)

(continue from page 2)
The rich man's sin was not simply that he had possessions. His tragedy was that his possessions never became instruments of mercy. He lived beside a suffering human being without allowing that suffering to change him. His gate, which could have become a place of encounter, became a symbol of the distance he had created between his heart and his neighbor.
Then everything changes. Lazarus dies and is carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also dies, and the comfort upon which he depended can no longer protect him. The man who once had everything now discovers the poverty of a heart that never learned to love. The parable reveals a sobering truth: death does not create the spiritual condition of our hearts; it reveals what we have allowed our hearts to become.
The great chasm described by Jesus is especially powerful because the distance between these two men began long before death. It began every time the rich man failed to respond to Lazarus. Every ignored cry, every opportunity for mercy rejected, and every closed door widened the separation. The warning is not intended to leave us in despair, but to awaken us while there is still time to change.
Notice also that Abraham speaks of Moses and the prophets. The rich man had not lacked the revelation of God's will. He had been given the truth, but truth that remains outside the heart cannot transform a life. Even the appearance of someone risen from the dead, Jesus warns, will not persuade those who refuse to listen. Faith is not merely hearing God's Word. It is allowing that Word to judge our indifference, soften our hearts, and change how we treat others.
This Gospel invites us to examine the gates of our own lives. Whom have we kept outside? Whose pain have we learned to overlook? Is there someone we need to forgive, someone we should visit, someone who needs our generosity, or someone who simply needs us to listen without judgment?
We do not need to solve every suffering in the world. But we can refuse to become indifferent to the suffering God places within our reach. A sincere visit, a generous gift, a patient conversation, a prayer offered with love, or a hand extended to someone who feels forgotten can become a small manifestation of the Kingdom of God.
Ultimately, Lazarus reminds us that every human being possesses a dignity that wealth cannot grant and poverty cannot diminish. Christ Himself identifies with the hungry, the suffering, the stranger, and the forgotten. When we turn toward them with compassion, we discover that we are not merely helping another person. We are opening our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Perhaps the most important question this Gospel leaves with us is not whether we have enough to give, but whether we have learned to see. The gate is still before us. Lazarus may be waiting on the other side. And today, while our hearts can still be transformed by grace, we have the freedom to open it.

The Courage to Enter the Silence of the Heart

The twenty-eighth step of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, which Saint John Climacus identifies with prayer, invites us to discover a courage that the world rarely understands. It is the courage to become silent before God, to stand honestly in His presence, and to allow Him to enter the places within us that we have spent years avoiding. Prayer is not simply the words we offer to heaven. It is the struggle to surrender our hearts to the living God, trusting that His grace can transform everything we cannot heal by ourselves.

We often imagine courage as the strength to confront enemies, overcome difficulties, or endure suffering without complaint. Yet there is another kind of courage, more hidden and perhaps more demanding: the courage to remain before God when our thoughts are restless, our emotions are wounded, our faith feels weak, and our hearts seem unable to find peace. It takes courage to kneel when we feel spiritually empty, to pray when God seems distant, and to continue seeking Him when we receive no immediate answer. This is where prayer becomes an act of faith rather than a search for consolation.

Saint John Climacus teaches us to understand prayer as a profound encounter with God, not merely as a religious obligation. In our Eastern Christian spiritual life, prayer gradually gathers the scattered movements of the heart and returns them to their true center, Jesus Christ. We carry within ourselves anxieties about tomorrow, regrets about yesterday, resentments toward others, and desires that compete for our attention. Our bodies may be in church, yet our minds may be wandering through countless concerns. The courage of this step is the determination to return, again and again, to the presence of God.

This return is not a sign of failure. It is part of the struggle. Every time we recognize that our attention has wandered and gently bring it back to Christ, we practice humility. Every time we resist the temptation to nourish anger, judgment, or resentment and instead offer our wounded heart to God, we take another step upward. Prayer does not make us courageous because it removes every struggle. It makes us courageous because we no longer face our struggles alone.

The Fathers of the Desert understood that the greatest battles often take place in the hidden chambers of the heart. A person may appear peaceful before others while carrying storms of bitterness, pride, jealousy, or fear within. Prayer brings these hidden realities into the light of divine mercy. This can be uncomfortable because we would often prefer to speak about the weaknesses of others rather than confront our own. Yet authentic prayer teaches us to stop defending our ego and begin asking for healing. Before the holiness of God, we discover not humiliation without hope, but the truth that makes repentance possible.

The Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” expresses this

(continue to page 5)

(continue from page 4)

courage with remarkable simplicity. It is the prayer of a heart that acknowledges its need for Christ and refuses to despair of His mercy. Repeated with attention and humility, it can help us turn away from the noise that dominates our lives and remember that our deepest security is found not in controlling everything, but in entrusting ourselves to God.

Nevertheless, prayer must never become an escape from the responsibilities of daily life. We cannot claim to love God in silence while refusing to love the people He has placed before us. Genuine prayer gradually changes the way we speak to our families, respond to difficult people, serve our communities, and forgive those who have wounded us. If our prayer makes us more judgmental, impatient, or indifferent, we must ask whether we are truly allowing Christ to transform our hearts. The fruit of prayer is not spiritual pride, but humility, mercy, patience, and love.

Perhaps the greatest courage of this twenty-eighth step is learning to trust God without demanding that He follow our timetable. We bring Him our illnesses, disappointments, unanswered questions, and deepest fears. We ask Him to change our circumstances, yet sometimes He begins by changing us. He teaches us to discover peace even before the storm has passed, hope even when the road remains uncertain, and love even when our wounds have not completely healed.

Dear friends, the ascent toward God does not happen in a single extraordinary moment. It unfolds in the quiet fidelity of ordinary days: a prayer whispered before sunrise, a moment of silence before reacting in anger, a sincere confession, a Psalm read with attention, or a weary heart turning once more toward Christ.

Do not be afraid of silence. Do not be discouraged by distraction. Do not abandon prayer because you feel unworthy. The Lord is not waiting for you to become perfect before you approach Him. He invites you to approach Him so that His grace may begin making you whole.

The courage to climb the twenty-eighth step is the courage to remain with Christ until His presence begins to reshape our hearts. When our prayer becomes an offering of our whole life, even our weakness can become a place where grace works. And slowly, quietly, the soul discovers that the deepest strength is not found in having control over everything, but in belonging completely to God.

A Note of Gratitude

With deep appreciation, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who continue to support our parish through their generous financial offerings. Your kindness, sacrifice, and love for the Church strengthen our community and help us carry out the mission entrusted to us by Christ.

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Sunday Divine Liturgy:

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

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, October 25
"Twenty-second Sunday"
Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18. **Gospel:** Luke 16:19-31
9:00 a.m. The Third Hour
9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, October 26
"Demetrius - Great Martyr"
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10 **Gospel:** John 15:17-27; 16:1-2

Tuesday, October 27
"Nestor - Martyr"
Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 **Gospel:** Luke 11:1-10
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, October 28
"Paraskevia - Martyr"
Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 2:1-8 **Gospel:** Luke 11:9-13

Thursday, October 29
"Anastasia - Venerable Martyr"
Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-14 **Gospel:** Luke 11:14-23
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, October 30
"Zenobius & Zenobia - Martyrs"
Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2:14-19 **Gospel:** Luke 11:23-26

Saturday, October 31
"Bl. Theodore Romza-Martyr"
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 **Gospel:** Luke 8:16-21
6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, November 1
"23rd Sunday after Pentecost"
Epistle: Ephesian 2:4-10 **Gospel:** Luke 8:26-39
9:00 a.m. The Third Hour
9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

We are most appreciative for your generosity in donations to the church, and pray that the Lord bless you all with many blessings and good health.