

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory for ever!

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, September 6, 2026

"15th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Week!!!!

In today's Gospel, a scholar of the law approaches Jesus and asks a question that appears simple but reaches into the very heart of our Christian life, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus does not hesitate. He brings everything back to love, love of God and love of neighbor. "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Then He adds, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." These two commandments are not separate paths. They are one movement of the heart toward God and toward the people God has placed in our lives.

For us as Eastern Christians, this commandment is especially profound because we understand salvation not simply as following rules, but as entering into communion with God.

The Divine Liturgy continually calls us to lift up our hearts, to receive Christ, and then to carry His presence into the world. We cannot truly receive the love of Christ and remain indifferent to the person standing beside us.

Jesus tells us to love God with our whole heart. This means that God cannot remain only a Sunday part of our lives. He must become the center of our decisions, our relationships, our priorities, our finances, our work, our family life, and even our struggles. We often give God what remains after everything else has received our attention. Yet Christ asks for the heart itself.

Loving God with all our soul also means trusting Him when we do not understand. There are moments when prayers seem unanswered, when relationships become difficult, when illness, disappointment, or uncertainty enters our lives. Faith does not mean that we understand everything. Faith means that even when we cannot see the road ahead, we continue to place our lives into the hands of the One who sees the whole journey.

Then Jesus says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This is where our spirituality becomes practical. It is easy to say that we love humanity. It is much harder to love the person who irritates us, misunderstands us, criticizes us, disappoints us, or simply sees life differently. Yet this is precisely where the Gospel becomes real.

For a parish community, this commandment has enormous importance. We can attend Divine Liturgy, light candles, venerate icons, pray beautiful prayers, and faithfully observe our traditions, but if we leave church carrying resentment, gossip, judgment, or bitterness toward another person, we have missed something essential.

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The altar calls us to communion, not competition. The Eucharist teaches us that we belong to one another because we belong to Christ.

Sometimes loving our neighbor means something very simple. It means calling someone who has been absent from church. It means welcoming a newcomer instead of asking where they come from. It means listening patiently to someone who needs to speak. It means forgiving an old wound. It means refusing to participate in gossip. It means helping someone quietly without needing recognition. It means choosing kindness when anger would be easier.

Jesus then asks the Pharisees a deeper question about the Messiah, “Whose son is he?” They answer, “David’s.” Jesus reveals that the Messiah is not merely David’s descendant. He is David’s Lord. Here we see the mystery of Christ. The One who commands us to love is Himself divine Love who comes among us. He does not simply teach love from a distance. He reveals love through His own life, His Cross, His forgiveness, and His Resurrection.

The practical question for each of us today is simple, “Where is Christ asking me to love more deeply?” Perhaps it is within my family. Perhaps it is toward someone in our parish. Perhaps it is toward someone I have already decided is difficult to love. Perhaps it is even toward myself, because we cannot love our neighbor rightly when our own heart is filled with hatred, shame, or unforgiveness.

Let us leave today remembering that the measure of our Christianity is not only what we know, but how we love. When we love God sincerely, His love begins to transform the way we see everyone else. And when we love our neighbor, we discover that Christ is mysteriously present in the person before us. This is the heart of the Gospel, to love God completely, to love our neighbor sincerely, and to allow that love to become the visible presence of Christ in our world.



Thank You, Fr. Abraham

With a heart full of gratitude, I sincerely thank you, Fr. Abraham, for your kindness and generosity in celebrating the Divine Liturgies and serving our parish community during my absence. Your presence among us was a true blessing. Through your prayers, priestly ministry, and faithful service at the holy altar, you brought Christ’s grace, peace, and joy to our parish family. We are deeply grateful for the warmth, care, and love you shared with everyone.

May our Lord bless you abundantly with good health, peace, strength, and many blessed years in your priestly ministry. May the Most Holy Theotokos always protect you under her loving mantle, and may St. Nicholas intercede for you always.

Please know that you are always welcome in our parish. Thank you for sharing your priestly heart and for being such a blessing to us.

With sincere gratitude and prayers,

Fr. Hugo

The Courage to Take the Twenty Second Step, Freedom from Vainglory

The twenty second step of the Ladder of Divine Ascent speaks about vainglory, that subtle desire to be noticed, admired, praised, or recognized by others. It is one of the most difficult spiritual struggles because it can hide itself even inside good things. We may serve the Church, help someone, give generously, pray faithfully, or speak about our faith, yet quietly hope that someone will notice. Saint John Climacus teaches us that vainglory can become a hidden thief. It does not always steal our good works from our hands, but it can steal the purity of our intention from our hearts.

The courage to take this twenty second step begins with an honest question, “Whom am I really serving?” Am I doing this for Christ, or am I doing it because I want others to appreciate me? Am I willing to do something beautiful even if nobody knows that I did it? Am I willing to serve when there is no recognition, no gratitude, and no applause?

This is difficult because the human heart naturally desires affirmation. We want to know that our efforts matter. We want others to appreciate us. There is nothing wrong with receiving sincere gratitude. The spiritual danger begins when gratitude becomes something we need in order to feel valuable. When our peace depends upon being recognized, we have slowly allowed the opinion of others to become more important than the presence of God.

Vainglory can enter even into our spiritual life. We can become proud of how much we pray, how faithfully we attend Divine Liturgy, how much we know about our faith, or how much we sacrifice for the parish. We can even become proud of our humility. This is why Saint John Climacus is so challenging. He teaches us to look beneath the visible action and examine the intention of the heart.

Our Lord gives us a beautiful antidote in the Gospel. He repeatedly teaches us to do good without seeking the praise of others. The Father sees what is hidden. That is enough. When we understand this, we begin to discover a tremendous freedom. We no longer need to perform for people. We no longer need to prove ourselves. We can simply love, serve, pray, forgive, and give because Christ is worthy of our love.

The courage to take this step means learning to become comfortable with being unseen. There are many holy things in parish life that nobody notices. Someone quietly prepares the church before everyone arrives. Someone cleans after everyone leaves. Someone prays for another person without ever telling them. Someone gives generously without placing their name on anything. Someone forgives an offense and never speaks about it. Heaven sees what earth does not see.

This is particularly important in a parish community. Churches can easily become places where

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people compare themselves, compete for recognition, become attached to positions, or become hurt when their contributions are not acknowledged. The Gospel calls us to something higher. The Church is not a stage where we display ourselves. It is the household of God where we learn to disappear into love.

Practically, we can begin by doing one good thing each day that nobody knows about. Give without announcing it. Pray for someone who may never know you prayed for them. Help someone without expecting thanks. Let another person receive credit. When someone praises you, quietly return that praise to God in your heart, saying, “Lord, whatever good has happened through me belongs ultimately to You.”

Another powerful practice is learning to accept correction without immediately defending ourselves. Vainglory wants to protect our image. Humility wants to protect our soul. When someone points out a weakness, we can become angry because our reputation feels threatened. Yet correction can become an unexpected gift when we receive it with prayer and humility. The twenty second step therefore asks us to move from being seen by people to being known by God. Human applause is temporary. God's knowledge of us is eternal. Human recognition can disappear tomorrow. God's love remains.

The courage of this step is not the courage to become insignificant. It is the courage to become free. We do not need to be the most important person in the room. We do not need everyone to understand us. We do not need our sacrifices remembered. We only need to know that Christ sees us.

At the end of our lives, the question will not be how many people admired us, but whether we loved God faithfully. May we learn to serve quietly, love sincerely, give generously, forgive freely, and rejoice when another person is honored. When we no longer need applause, our hearts become lighter. Then we discover that the deepest joy is not being noticed by the world, but being seen and loved by Christ.



Nativity of the Holy Theotokos

On **September 8**, we joyfully celebrate the **Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos**, the birth of the Mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Her birth is a beautiful sign of God's loving preparation for the coming of Christ into the world.

We warmly invite everyone to join us for the **Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, September 8, at 9:30 a.m.** Let us gather in prayer and thanksgiving, honoring the Mother of God and asking her to intercede for our families, our parish, and all those in need.

Come and celebrate with us this beautiful feast of the Mother of God!

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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, September 6

"Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15. Gospel: Matthew 22:35-46

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, September 7

"The Holy Martyr Sozon"

Epistle: Galatians 4:28-5:10. Gospel: Mark 6:54-7:8.

Tuesday, September 8

"The Nativity of the Holy Theotokos"

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11. Gospel: Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28.

9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, September 9

"The Holy and Righteous Forebears of God Joachim and Anna"

Epistle: Ephesians 6:2-10. Gospel: Mark 7:14-24.

Thursday, September 10

"The Holy Martyr Menodora, Metrodora"

Epistle: Ephesians 1:1-9. Gospel: Mark 7:24-30.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, September 11

"Our Venerable Mother Theodora of Alexandria"

Epistle: Ephesians 1:7-17. Gospel: Mark 8:1-10.

Saturday, September 12

"Saturday before the Exaltation of the Cross"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:6-9. Gospel: Matthew 10:37-11:1.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, September 13

"16th Sunday after Pentecost"

"Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross"

Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18. Gospel: John 3:13-17.

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.