

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory for ever!

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, August 9, 2026

"11th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Week!!!!

Today's Gospel reveals one of the most searching parables that Christ ever spoke. It reaches into the deepest places of the human heart and asks a question that every disciple must answer. Have we truly allowed the mercy of God to transform us, or have we simply received forgiveness without becoming forgiving people ourselves? In our tradition this Gospel is not merely about morality. It is about the healing of the heart. The inability to forgive is not simply a failure of kindness. It is a spiritual illness that darkens the soul and prevents us from entering fully into communion with God.

The king in the parable represents our heavenly Father whose mercy knows no limits. The servant owes an unimaginable debt, one so large that it could never be repaid by human effort. This is the condition of every human person before God. We stand before Him carrying not only individual sins but generations of brokenness, pride, selfishness, and disobedience. No amount of good works could ever erase such a debt. Salvation is not earned. It is received as the overflowing gift of divine mercy.

When the servant falls to his knees, he begs for patience, promising that he will repay everything. His promise is impossible. Yet the king does not merely extend the payment schedule. He completely forgives the debt. This is the astonishing heart of the Gospel. God does not simply reduce our punishment. He removes the burden entirely through the saving death and glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every time we approach the Mystery of Repentance we stand before that same King who delights not in condemnation but in restoration. He desires not to humiliate sinners but to raise them into the dignity of His children.

Yet the tragedy begins immediately after the servant leaves the presence of mercy. He encounters a fellow servant who owes him a very small amount. Instead of remembering the compassion he has just received, he seizes the man by the throat and demands payment. His memory has become distorted. He remembers the debt of another but forgets his own forgiven debt. This is the beginning of spiritual blindness. Whenever we magnify the faults of others while minimizing the mercy God has shown us, we begin to lose the likeness of Christ within us.

The Eastern Fathers teach that remembrance of God's mercy is the foundation of humility.

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A humble heart cannot remain resentful because it never forgets how much it has been forgiven. Pride always measures what others owe us. Humility measures what God has freely given us. One heart becomes imprisoned by bitterness while the other becomes free through gratitude.

The fellow servant falls to his knees with the very same words that had once been spoken by the first servant. The opportunity to imitate the mercy of the king stands directly before him. Instead he chooses revenge over compassion. Every day we face similar moments. Someone wounds us with careless words, betrays our trust, disappoints our expectations, or refuses to acknowledge their fault. The temptation is to hold tightly to the injury and allow resentment to become our companion. Yet every act of unforgiveness quietly chains the heart. We imagine we are imprisoning another person while in reality we have become prisoners ourselves. Forgiveness does not deny justice, nor does it pretend that evil never happened. Rather it places justice into the hands of God. Forgiveness is an act of freedom that refuses to allow another person's sin to continue ruling our soul. In the Byzantine tradition we repeatedly pray, Lord have mercy. Those words are not only a request to receive mercy but also a promise that we desire to become merciful ourselves. The one who constantly receives mercy from God gradually learns to reflect that same mercy toward others.

The king finally confronts the unforgiving servant and calls him wicked because he failed to imitate the mercy that had first been shown to him. The judgment does not come because of the original debt. That debt had already been forgiven. The judgment comes because mercy received never became mercy shared. Divine grace is always meant to flow through us and never remain trapped within us.

This Gospel invites us to examine our hearts before approaching the Holy Eucharist. Is there someone whose name immediately awakens anger, resentment, or bitterness? That person has become the place where Christ is asking us to begin the difficult work of forgiveness.

Such forgiveness may take time, many tears, and countless prayers, yet every small step opens the soul more fully to the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit. As we forgive, the image of Christ becomes brighter within us, our hearts become lighter, and we discover that the greatest miracle is not only that God forgives sinners, but that He gives sinners the grace to forgive one another.



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.

The Courage to Take the Eighteenth Step of The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Freedom from Insensitivity !!!

The eighteenth step of Saint John Climacus speaks about a danger that is often hidden beneath the surface of an outwardly religious life. He calls it insensitivity, the gradual hardening of the heart that no longer trembles before God, no longer grieves over sin, and no longer responds with compassion toward others. This step requires immense courage because few people recognize when their hearts have slowly become cold. Spiritual insensitivity does not happen in a single day. It grows quietly through repeated compromises, neglected prayer, unresolved resentment, constant distractions, and the habit of living only for oneself.

The Fathers of the Eastern Church teach that the human heart was created to be alive with the presence of God. It was meant to rejoice with those who rejoice, to weep with those who weep, to recognize the beauty of creation, and above all to be moved by the voice of the Holy Spirit. When the heart becomes insensitive, it loses its spiritual awareness. One may continue attending Divine Liturgy, reciting prayers, and observing the fasts, yet the soul remains untouched. The lips continue speaking while the heart remains silent.

This is why Saint John Climacus places this step on the Ladder. Before we can ascend higher, our hearts must awaken. God is not interested in religious performance. He desires living hearts that beat with love, repentance, mercy, and gratitude.

The greatest sign of spiritual insensitivity is not the absence of emotion but the absence of conversion. A person hears the Gospel week after week without allowing it to change his life. He receives Holy Communion without growing in humility. He sees the suffering of others without compassion. He notices his neighbor's faults while remaining blind to his own. Such a heart slowly becomes like dry ground that no longer absorbs the gentle rain of God's grace. The courage required for this step begins with honesty. It takes humility to admit that our hearts may no longer be as alive as they once were. We must ask ourselves difficult questions. Do I still hunger for prayer, or has prayer become only another obligation. Do I still examine my conscience honestly, or do I always justify myself. When I hear the Gospel proclaimed, do I allow Christ to speak directly to me, or do I immediately think about someone else who needs to hear it. These questions are uncomfortable because they uncover places where our hearts have become numb.

The Eastern Fathers remind us that tears are one of God's greatest gifts. These are not simply emotional tears but spiritual tears born from encountering the infinite mercy of God. A person whose heart is alive is not ashamed to weep over his sins, not because he despairs, but because he has discovered how deeply he is loved. Every sincere tear washes away another layer of hardness that has covered the soul.

Practical courage begins with small acts of awakening. Spend a few moments in complete silence before beginning your morning prayers. Listen instead of speaking. Read a few verses of the Gospel slowly, allowing one sentence to remain in your heart throughout the day.

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Before judging another person, remember one of your own weaknesses. Before complaining, thank God for one unexpected blessing. Visit someone who is lonely, call someone who is forgotten, forgive someone who has wounded you, offer help without expecting recognition. These simple actions soften the heart because they allow the love of Christ to flow through us. Another powerful medicine against insensitivity is gratitude. The grateful heart cannot remain spiritually asleep for long. Every sunrise becomes a reminder of God's faithfulness. Every breath becomes a gift. Every person becomes an opportunity to encounter Christ. Gratitude opens the eyes of the soul to the countless ways God quietly works in our lives each day. The Divine Liturgy itself becomes the school where our hearts are awakened. Every petition teaches us compassion. Every hymn invites us into wonder. Every prostration reminds us of humility. Every reception of the Holy Eucharist places the living Christ within us, not merely to comfort us, but to transform us into His living presence in the world. The eighteenth step is ultimately an invitation to recover the tenderness of the heart. Christ Himself possessed this holy sensitivity. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He had compassion for the hungry crowds. He welcomed little children. He forgave His executioners while hanging upon the Cross. His Sacred Heart remained open even when pierced by a spear. Saint John Climacus invites us to have that same heart. The climb is not toward becoming stronger, colder, or more self sufficient. It is toward becoming more alive, more compassionate, more merciful, and more fully united with Christ. The courageous soul does not fear having a tender heart. It understands that a heart softened by grace is never weak. It becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, where the love of God burns continually, giving warmth, healing, hope, and life to everyone it encounters.



A Note from Fr. Hugo

Next Sunday morning, Jolanta and I will be leaving to visit her family for a few days. After this visit, we are planning to continue our journey to Ukraine to spend time with my brother, Fr. Anibal, and his family.

I kindly ask for your prayers, especially during my time in Ukraine from August 27 until September 11. Please pray for a safe journey, for the people of Ukraine who continue to endure many hardships, and that this time of family reunion and spiritual renewal may be blessed by our Lord.

Be assured that all of you will remain in my prayers, and I ask you to keep us in yours.

With gratitude and blessings,

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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, August 9

"11th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy Apostle Matthias"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12. Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35.

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour

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

Monday, August 10

"The Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Lawrence"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:10-15. Gospel: Mark 1:9-15.

Tuesday, August 11

"The Holy Martyr Euplus"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:15-21. Gospel: Mark 1:16-22.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, August 12

"The Holy Martyrs Photius and Anicetas"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:11-16. Gospel: Mark 1:23-28.

Thursday, August 13

"Our Venerable Father Maximus the Confessor"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 7:1-10. Gospel: Mark 1:29-35.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, August 14

"The Transfer of the Precious Relics of Our Venerable Father Theodosius"

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16. Gospel: Matthew 11:27-30.

Saturday, August 15

"The Dormition 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

The celebration will be followed by a potluck dinner.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, August 16

"12th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Transfer of the Icon Not-Made-with-Hands of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26.

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour

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