

Reflections for this Weekend

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals the mystery of God’s longing for us. The story begins not with human initiative, but with the heart of a host who prepares a great banquet a feast of joy, communion, forgiveness, and abundance. The banquet is not a mere event; it is an image of the Kingdom, the very life of God offered freely to humanity. Before anyone responds, before anyone even realizes what is being prepared, the table is already set. Grace always precedes us.

But when the invitation goes out, the responses are strangely familiar. Those invited begin to offer excuses, reasonable, sensible, even socially acceptable excuses. A field, a business venture, a new marriage. None of these are evil; each is a good thing. Yet the good becomes the enemy of the best when it blinds us to the invitation of God. The parable reminds us that the greatest danger to our spiritual life is not open rebellion against God, but indifference being too busy, too preoccupied, too satisfied with lesser things to receive the One who calls. In this way, Jesus is not condemning work, property, or family, but inviting us to notice how easily our hearts cling to earthly responsibilities while the divine invitation remains unopened. God does not force us into His joy. Love never coerces. He simply invites and waits.

When the invited fail to come, the host sends his servant to the margins of the city: to the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Those who know their need are the ones who run to the feast. The broken, the overlooked, the ones who have nothing to offer, these discover that the invitation was never based on merit, but on mercy. The Kingdom is not earned; it is received. Still, the host is not satisfied until the house is full. He sends the servant even further, to the highways and hedges, to those farthest away. This widening circle of invitation reveals the relentless generosity of God. No distance is too great, no heart too lost, no story too damaged for Him to desire us at His table. The God of this parable is a God who seeks, who pursues, who insists that His joy be shared.

The final warning, “none of those who were invited shall taste my banquet” is not spoken out of anger but sorrow. It is the tragedy of grace refused. The feast is ready, but the door closes only to those who have chosen not to enter. The Gospel calls us to ask: What excuses keep me from the banquet? What lesser loves numb me to the love of God?

And it invites us to celebrate and the greatest tragedy would be to decline the invitation; the greatest joy is to accept it.

May we learn to let go of our excuses and step into the feast where Christ Himself is both Host and Food where every hunger is met, every wound is tended, and every soul finds its home.



Featured Performers



Inna Kovtun



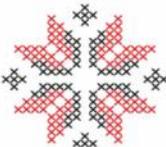
Max Tovsty



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

“The courage to recognize how easily our hearts cling to earthly responsibilities while the divine invitation remains unopened.”

In the quiet honesty of the soul, there comes a moment when we recognize how swiftly our hearts cling to the things that pass away. We wake each morning held by responsibilities, desires, anxieties, and plans none of them evil in themselves, yet all of them capable of placing a gentle veil between us and the One who calls. And the greater the weight of these earthly concerns, the easier it becomes to leave the divine invitation unopened, resting silently at the threshold of our hearts.

To face this truth requires courage, the kind of courage only grace can give. For it is not merely the bravery to renounce sin, but the deeper courage to expose our attachments, to admit how little control we truly possess, and to open our clenched hands to the presence of God.

The Christian life is not simply refraining from wrongdoing; it is daring to love God more than comfort, more than routine, more than the subtle pride we take in our own self-sufficiency.

A Catholic who wishes to walk the narrow way must often confront the painful realization that the soul can become saturated with noise even while the lips recite prayers. We approach the Liturgy carrying our burdens, our schedules, our opinions, our unspoken fears; sometimes we kneel while our hearts remain tethered to the world. But the mercy of God is patient and persistent: He continues to knock, not with force, but with the soft authority of divine love. He is the Guest who waits for an open door, even when He knows the house is cluttered.

Courage is needed to hear that knock, for it invites us to leave behind the false security of earthly concerns and to step into the freedom of trust. It is the courage to believe that the God who sustains galaxies has time for the smallest cry of our heart. It is the courage to surrender control when everything in us prefers to cling to what is familiar. And it is the courage to let God rearrange the priorities we have guarded so tightly.

When we finally dare to open that divine invitation, we discover that God does not ask us to abandon our responsibilities but to sanctify them to carry them with a lighter heart because we carry them with Him. The courage to turn toward God reveals that earthly duties, when surrendered to grace, become pathways rather than obstacles, occasions of love rather than weights of anxiety.

What holds us back is rarely the magnitude of our responsibilities but the reluctance to invite God into them. There is a depth of spiritual poverty in realizing that we prefer our own plans to divine communion, yet an even deeper joy in discovering that God desires us still.

The divine invitation is not a burden but a homecoming. It asks only that we trust the One

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gave us life, who sustains us in every breath, and who seeks to draw us beyond the temporary into the eternal. When we have the courage to open our hearts to Him, we begin to see that the world does not shrink, rather, it becomes radiant with meaning, because God is finally allowed to dwell where He has always longed to be.

And in that brave, trembling yes, the soul discovers its true freedom: that nothing on earth is lost when God is placed first, and everything entrusted to Him returns to us transformed, purified, and filled with grace.



A Note of Gratitude

With heartfelt appreciation, I extend a sincere thank you to all who continue to offer financial support to our church. May the Lord, who sees the goodness of every giving heart, grant you abundant blessings.

A note with an Invitation

With the beautiful Feast of the Nativity approaching, our hearts turn with joy toward preparing a worthy and welcoming home for the newborn Christ. This year, we would like our church to reflect the warmth, beauty, and hope of His coming, a place where every person who enters feels embraced by the love of God.

We warmly invite everyone to come and help with Christmas decorations on Wednesday, December 17 at 4:00 PM. Your presence, your hands, and your joyful spirit will make a wonderful difference. Whether you are able to join us for a little while or stay longer, your help will be greatly appreciated.

Let us come together as one parish family to create a beautifully adorned church that expresses our faith and gratitude for the gift of the Savior. With gratitude and Christmas joy,

A Note of Gratitude

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who so generously host, prepare, and serve the meals we enjoy together after the Divine Liturgy each Sunday. What began as simple coffee and sweets has blossomed, through your love, dedication, and creativity, into beautifully prepared, gourmet meals shared in a spirit of fellowship. The variety, flavor, and care you put into every dish is truly remarkable.

Your service is more than hospitality; it is a ministry of love that nourishes both body and soul. Each Sunday, you create a place where our parishioners and visitors can gather, share, and grow closer as a community. And to all who collaborate in preparing the potluck once a month, your commitment and generosity continue to strengthen the bonds that unite us as one parish family.

Thank you for your time, your hard work, your culinary gifts, and, most of all, your loving hearts. May God reward your kindness and bless you abundantly.

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



Ukrainian Christmas Pysanky Workshop

Join us for our beginner-friendly Ukrainian Pysanky (Egg Decorating) workshop where you will learn about the basic techniques, materials, colors, and designs of this ancient Eastern European art of egg decorating! After creating your beautiful Pysanky, we will turn it into a Christmas ornament! All supplies will be provided.

DATE & TIME	LOCATION	ENTRY FEE
20 DEC 2025 FROM 10 AM - 1 PM	DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD CHURCH 3720 W MARYLAND AVE. PHOENIX, AZ 85019	\$35 PER PERSON

FOR REGISTRATION & INFORMATION



[HTTPS://UKRAINIANCHRISTMASPYSANKY.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://ukrainianchristmaspysanky.eventbrite.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 14**“Sunday of the Forefathers”****“The Holy Martyrs Thrysus, Leucius”****Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11. Gospel: Luke 14:16-24.****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 **+Bill Nagle** from Dr. Laurel Retay-Nagle****Monday, December 15****“The Holy Priest-Martyr Eleutherius”****Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:20-26 Gospel: Mark 8:11-21****Tuesday, December 16****“The Holy Prophet Haggai”****Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4 Gospel: Mark 8:22-26****6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom****Wednesday, December 17****“The Holy Prophet Daniel”****Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:9-22 Gospel: Mark 8:30-34****Thursday, December 18****“The Holy Martyr Sebastian and His Companions”****Epistle: Titus 1:5-2:1 Gospel: Mark 9:10-16****6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom****Friday, December 19****“The Holy Martyr Boniface”****Epistle: Titus 2:1:15-2:10 Gospel: Mark 9:33-41****Saturday, December 20****“Saturday before Christmas”****“The Holy Priest-Martyr Ignatius the Godbearer”****Epistle: Galatians 3:8-12. Gospel: Luke 13:18-29.****6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom****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**