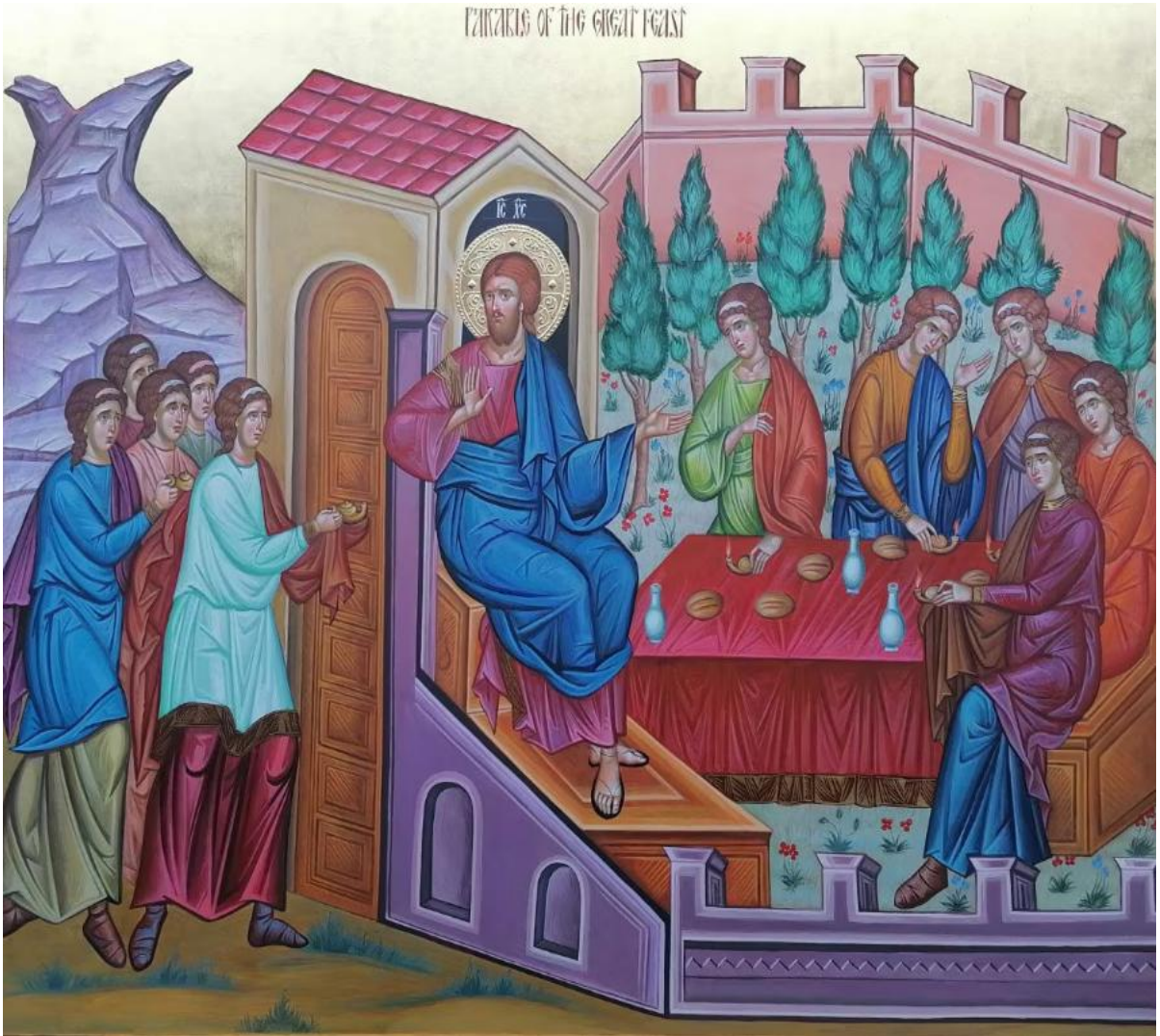


Слава Ісусу Христу!

Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory for ever!

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, August 30, 2026

"14th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Week!!!!

The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1 to 14 reveals the immense generosity of God and the profound invitation He extends to every human person. Jesus describes a king who prepares a great wedding banquet for his son. Everything is ready. The finest food is prepared, the celebration is waiting, and the king desires only one thing, that his guests come and share in the joy of the feast. Yet, tragically, many refuse the invitation.

This parable reveals the heart of God. The king represents our Heavenly Father, and the wedding feast represents the Kingdom of Heaven, the eternal communion and joy that God desires to share with His children. God does not create us simply to exist. He created us to participate in His love, to know Him, to receive His grace, and to rejoice in His presence. The first guests refuse the invitation because they are too occupied with their own concerns. Some are focused on their fields, others on their businesses. Their problem is not that they are doing evil things. Their mistake is that they allow ordinary things to become more important than God. This is one of the greatest spiritual dangers of our time. We can become so busy with responsibilities, plans, possessions, and distractions that we forget the invitation of the King.

The Lord continues to invite us today. He calls us through Sacred Scripture, through the Divine Liturgy, through the voice of the Church, through prayer, and through the people He places in our lives. The question is not whether God is inviting us. He is always calling. The question is whether our hearts are attentive enough to hear and respond.

The beauty of the parable is that when the invited guests refuse, the king does not cancel the feast. He opens the doors and invites everyone, the good and the ordinary, those who were not expected. This reveals the boundless mercy of God. His love is not limited by human expectations. He desires all people to come to Him and receive the gift of salvation.

However, Jesus includes a serious reminder. One guest arrives without a wedding garment and is removed from the feast. This teaches us that accepting God's invitation requires transformation. We cannot enter the Kingdom while refusing to allow Christ to change our hearts. The wedding garment represents the life of grace, repentance, humility, and love that should clothe every Christian.

God welcomes us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us unchanged.

(continue to page 3)

(continue from page 1)

His mercy receives us, and His grace transforms us. The Christian life is not simply about being invited. It is about becoming worthy of the invitation through a heart renewed by Christ. The Divine Liturgy itself is a foretaste of this heavenly banquet. Each time we gather around the holy altar, we are reminded that Christ invites us into deeper communion with Him. He offers Himself as the true Bread of Life and the eternal Bridegroom who rejoices in the salvation of His people.

This Gospel asks us a personal question. When Christ invites me to His banquet, do I come with joy, or do I allow the distractions of life to keep me away? Do I wear the garment of faith, humility, and love, or do I approach God while holding on to the old ways of the world? May we never ignore the invitation of our Heavenly King. May our hearts remain open, our lives be transformed by grace, and our souls be prepared to enter the eternal wedding feast where Christ welcomes His faithful people into everlasting joy.



A Thought for the Week

Faith is not simply believing that God exists, it is trusting that He is present in every moment of our lives. There will be days when the road is clear and days when we cannot see what lies ahead. Yet Christ continues to walk with us through both. When our hearts are troubled, He invites us to bring our burdens to Him. When we are discouraged, He reminds us that no prayer is ever wasted and no tear is ever unseen. Sometimes God answers our prayers by changing our circumstances, and sometimes He answers by changing our hearts. The greatest miracle is often not that the storm disappears, but that Christ gives us peace while we are still in the storm. Let us not be afraid of beginning again, for every new day is an invitation to receive God's mercy. Let us forgive before resentment takes root, speak kindly before our words become wounds, and reach out before someone feels forgotten. The love we give today may become the blessing someone desperately needs tomorrow. Our faith is meant to be lived, not simply spoken. It should be visible in the way we treat our families, our neighbors, our parish community, and even those with whom we disagree. Let us place less attention on what divides us and more attention on what brings us closer to Christ. May we learn to see God's presence in simple things, a sincere smile, a helping hand, a quiet prayer, a shared meal, or a moment of compassion. And when we do not know what to do, let us simply ask, 'Lord, what would You have me do today?' Then listen, trust, and take the next step. God does not ask us to carry tomorrow today. He gives us enough grace for this moment. Walk with Him, trust Him, and let your life become a small light through which someone else may discover the love of Christ."

The Courage to Overcome the Fear of Human Approval

The twenty first step of the Ladder of Divine Ascent leads us into one of the deepest battles of the human heart, the struggle with fear of people, the desire for approval, and the attachment to the opinions of others. Saint John Climacus teaches that the soul cannot experience true freedom in Christ while it remains imprisoned by the need to be accepted, praised, or admired by the world. This step requires great courage because it asks us to place our identity not in what people think of us, but in what God knows us to be.

From the beginning of life, we naturally desire acceptance. We want to be loved, understood, and appreciated. This desire is not wrong because God created us for communion and relationship. The danger begins when the opinions of others become more important than the voice of God. When we constantly seek approval, we slowly surrender our freedom and allow other people's expectations to become the measure of our worth.

The person who fears human opinion often carries a heavy burden. He may avoid speaking the truth because he is afraid of rejection. He may hide his faith because he fears criticism. He may change his behavior depending on who is watching. The heart becomes divided, always trying to please others while forgetting the joy of pleasing God.

Saint John Climacus invites us to discover a deeper freedom. The person who truly knows that he is loved by God no longer needs to build his life upon the praise of others. When we understand that we are children of the Heavenly Father, created and redeemed by Christ, human approval loses its power over us. We can receive encouragement with humility and accept criticism with peace, because our true identity rests in God alone.

The courage to overcome this fear does not mean becoming insensitive or careless about others. Christianity does not call us to be rude or indifferent. Christ Himself was compassionate, gentle, and attentive to others. The difference is that He never allowed human opinion to prevent Him from fulfilling the will of the Father. He loved people perfectly, but He did not live for their applause.

In our daily lives, this spiritual struggle appears in simple ways. We may hesitate to apologize because we fear looking weak. We may refuse to forgive because we want others to see that we were right. We may remain silent when kindness is needed because we fear being misunderstood. The path of holiness asks us to choose love and truth over the desire to protect our image.

The cure for this passion is humility. A humble person does not need to appear perfect because he knows he is already loved by God. He can acknowledge his weaknesses without despair and accept his strengths without pride. Humility creates a peaceful heart that is no longer controlled by the changing opinions of the world.

(continue to page 5)

(continue from page 4)

Prayer is essential in climbing this step. When we spend time before God, especially in the quiet of the heart, we begin to hear the only voice that truly matters. The prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," slowly frees the soul from the need to prove itself. In the presence of Christ, we discover that being known by God is far greater than being admired by people.

This step also challenges us to examine our motivations. Do we serve because we love God, or because we hope to receive recognition? Do we give because we desire to glorify Christ, or because we want others to notice our generosity? Even good actions can become empty when they are performed only for human praise.

The courage to overcome the fear of human approval is the courage to stand peacefully before God and say, "Lord, let me become the person You created me to be." It is the freedom to love without seeking applause, to serve without expecting gratitude, and to remain faithful even when no one notices.

As we climb this twenty first step, Christ invites us into a deeper freedom. He calls us away from the prison of human opinion and into the peace of divine love. When God's love becomes the foundation of our life, we no longer need the world to tell us who we are. We discover the greatest truth of all, that we are beloved children of the Father, called to walk with confidence, humility, and joy toward the eternal Kingdom.



The Beginning of the Liturgical New Year, September 1

On September 1, the Byzantine Catholic Church begins a new liturgical year.

This tradition comes from the ancient Christian practice of beginning the year in the month of September, following the custom of the Byzantine Empire and reflecting the Church's desire to place the entire year under God's blessing and guidance.

The first day of the liturgical year is a time of thanksgiving for God's blessings and a prayer for His grace in the year ahead.

It reminds us that all time belongs to the Lord, and every season of our lives is an opportunity to grow in faith, love, and holiness.

As we begin this new ecclesiastical year, let us ask God to renew our hearts, strengthen our families, bless our parish community, and guide us closer to Christ through prayer, worship, and service.

"The beginning of every good work is hope in God."

As we begin the new ecclesiastical year, may we place the coming months in the hands of the Lord, trusting that His grace will guide our steps, renew our hearts, and lead us closer to His Kingdom.

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:

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, August 30

"14th Sunday after Pentecost"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4. Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

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

Monday, August 31

"Deposition of the Cincture of the Theotokos"

Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7. Gospel: Luke 10:3&42,11:27-28

Tuesday, September 1

"Beginning of the Church year"

"Commemoration of Our Venerable Father Simeon"

Epistle: 1 Timothy 2:1-7. Gospel: Luke 4:16-22.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, September 2

"The Holy Martyr Mammias"

Epistle: Galatians 3:15-22. Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Thursday, September 3

"The Holy Priest-Martyr Anthimus of Nicomedia"

Epistle: Galatians 3:23-25. Gospel: Mark 6:30-45.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, September 4

"The Holy Priest-Martyr Babylas"

Epistle: Galatians 4:8-21. Gospel: Mark 6:45-53.

Saturday, September 5

"The Holy Prophet Zachary"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:17-5:5. Gospel: Matthew 24:1-13.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

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

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.