

# УСПЕННЯ ПРЕСВЯТОЇ БОГОРОДИЦІ

## Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, February 15, 2026

“Cheese-fare (Forgiveness) Sunday”

### Reflections for this Weekend

In today’s world, where life moves at such a fast pace, it can be hard for Catholics to find the time or space for deep spiritual reflection. Yet, the teachings of the Church are timeless, and the path to holiness remains constant, though we must seek it in ways that resonate with our present-day context.

Eastern Catholic theology, offers deep spiritual insights that resonate with a rich mystical tradition. While both Eastern and Western traditions share the same core beliefs, Eastern theology emphasizes the mystical and transformative nature of union with God, viewing salvation not merely as forgiveness of sins but as a process of divine transformation, becoming partakers of the divine nature (theosis). These insights can offer a deep, spiritual reflection for Catholics today.

Salvation is often seen as a journey rather than a one-time event. This journey begins with baptism but continues throughout our lives, where we are invited to become more and more like God. Eastern theology teaches that our participation in the life of God, the Trinitarian life, is the ultimate goal of human existence. Salvation, then, is not just about avoiding hell or being "saved" in a legal sense, but about being divinely transformed, being made one with the divine energies of God.

Engage in a continuous process of transformation through regular prayer, fasting, and works of charity. The aim is not just to follow the commandments but to be spiritually renewed. Regular use of the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” is a central Eastern practice, uniting the heart and mind in constant prayer, keeping the focus on God’s grace. Prayer becomes a way of continuously turning the heart toward God, regardless of what else is happening in life.

The approach to prayer is deeply rooted in contemplation and the idea of stilling the mind and heart before God. Eastern spirituality often emphasizes the importance of hesychasm, which involves quieting the mind through repetitive prayer to reach a state of inner stillness, where one can more deeply experience the presence of God. The goal is to become receptive to the Holy Spirit and the divine light that transforms us.

Practice silence and stillness in your prayer life. Set aside time for the practice of hesychasm, even if it's for just a few minutes. Let your heart be still, and repeat a prayer like the Jesus Prayer, focusing on the inner silence and letting go of distractions. Over time, this practice helps develop an inner peace that makes space for God’s transformative work within.

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The sacraments are not just symbolic acts. They are viewed as the actual means by which God works in the world, bringing His divine energies into human life. The Eucharist, especially, is central not just as a memorial but as an actual participation in the body and blood of Christ, uniting us to Christ and to one another as the body of the Church.

Always Approach the Eucharist with reverence and awe, remembering that in the Eucharist, you are not only commemorating Christ's death and resurrection but being spiritually nourished by His very presence. Before receiving the Eucharist, take time to prepare yourself by prayerfully considering your relationship with God and others. After receiving the Eucharist, take a moment to reflect on the mystery of divine union.

Another key aspect of Eastern theology is the mystical understanding of theosis, or deification, the process by which human beings are transformed into the likeness of God. It is not about becoming gods but about being divinely transformed, made holy by grace. This transformation is a participation in God's own divine energies, which are distinct from His essence but equally divine. Theosis is the process of becoming fully human in the way God intended, by being united to His divine life.

Seek to live out theosis in your everyday actions, by striving to reflect God's love and grace in all you do. When faced with challenges, see them as opportunities to grow in divine likeness. This could mean showing mercy to others, responding with humility when wronged, or practicing deep forgiveness. Through these actions, you become more like Christ, growing in holiness and in the divine image.

In Eastern thought, suffering is not seen as something to be avoided but as a means of purification and transformation. Christ's own suffering on the Cross is understood as the ultimate act of love, through which He reveals the depths of divine compassion. Suffering, when accepted with faith and trust in God, is a way of participating in Christ's redemptive work. It's not the suffering itself that has value but how one responds to it in love and faith. Embrace suffering with a spirit of faith, seeing it as a means of drawing closer to Christ. Instead of seeing suffering as something purely negative, try to view it as a way to experience God's love in a deeper way. Offer your sufferings to God, uniting them with Christ's Passion, and trust that He will bring good out of them for your sanctification and for the good of others. The Eastern Church's emphasis on community is profound. Salvation is not an isolated experience; it's a communal reality. The Church is not just a gathering of individuals but the Body of Christ, united together through Christ. This sense of community is integral to the Eastern understanding of the Christian life. Eastern Christians often speak of the Church as a family, where each member shares in the grace of the sacraments, prays for one another, and helps one another grow toward God.

Engage actively in the life of the Church by participating in the liturgy, praying for others, and offering your time and talents for the common good. In the Eastern tradition, there is a strong

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focus on intercessory prayer, where we ask the saints, particularly the Theotokos (Mother of God), to intercede for us. This practice fosters a sense of connection with the entire Church, both living and deceased, and emphasizes the reality of the communion of saints.

The Eastern approach to forgiveness is also striking. Instead of focusing on legalistic ideas of sin and punishment, Eastern theology places a heavy emphasis on the healing and transformative power of God's forgiveness. Through repentance, we are not just absolved of guilt, but we are healed and made whole. True repentance leads to spiritual transformation, not just an external act of penance.

Practice genuine repentance not just as a ritual act but as a means of being spiritually healed. Repentance in the Eastern tradition is a return to God, a turning away from the distractions of sin and a turning toward the divine light. When you seek reconciliation, whether through Confession or in your personal prayer, focus on the healing aspect of forgiveness, asking God to transform your heart and mind.

The church invites us into a deeper, more mystical relationship with God, one where we are transformed into His likeness through prayer, the sacraments, and a life lived in union with Him. This vision of salvation calls us to become more like Christ not through our own efforts but by participating in the divine life that He graciously offers.

How do you find this vision of the spiritual life? Do you see aspects of Eastern theology that resonate with your current spiritual journey, or perhaps challenge it in new ways?



**Mark on your calendar!!!!**

A gentle reminder to all our parishioners that during the Great Fast we will celebrate the **Presanctified Divine Liturgy each Wednesday in English and each Friday in Ukrainian.**

Both services will begin at **6:00 p.m.**

All are warmly encouraged to take part in these beautiful Lenten liturgies, a sacred opportunity for prayer, repentance, and spiritual renewal as we journey together toward Pascha..

**Tomorrow February 16<sup>th</sup> is the FIRST DAY OF THE GREAT LENT**

(Abstinence from meat and dairy products).

The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is used on all the Sundays of the Great Lent. The prayers are longer than we are used to hearing in the St. John Chrysostom's Liturgy, but the beauty of the prayers make them spiritually rich.

Please remember, in your prayers, all our parish members who are in convalescent homes or are homebound because of illness.

**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.**

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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, February 15**

**“Cheesefare (Forgiveness) Sunday”**

**“The Holy Apostle Onesimus”**

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4. Gospel: Mathew 6:14-21.

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

### **Monday, February 16**

**“First Day of the Great Fast”**

**“The Holy Martyrs Pamphilius”**

Reading: Genesis 1:1-13 Reading: Proverbs 1:1-20

### **Tuesday, February 17**

**“The Holy Great Martyr Theodore”**

Reading: Genesis 1:14-23 Reading: Proverbs 1:20-33

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

### **Wednesday, February 18**

**“Our Father among the Saints Leo, pope of Rome”**

Reading: Genesis 1:24-2:3; Reading: Proverbs 2:1-22.

6:00 p.m. Presanctified Liturgy (English)

### **Thursday, February 19**

**“The Holy Apostle Archippus”**

Reading: Genesis 2:4-19 Reading: Proverbs 3:1-18

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

### **Friday, February 20**

**“Leo of Catania, Bishop”**

Reading: Genesis 2:20-3:20; Reading: Proverbs 3:19-34.

6:00 p.m. Presanctified Liturgy (Ukrainian)

### **Saturday, February 21**

**“Commemoration of the Miracle of the Martyr Theodore”**

Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12. Gospel: Mark 2:23-3:5.

9:30 a.m. In loving memory of the souls of our deceased parishioners

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

### **Sunday, February 22**

**“1st Sunday of Lent” “The Sunday of Orthodoxy”**

Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40; 12:1-2. Gospel: John 1:43-51.

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