

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, November 23, 2025

"24th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Weekend

The parable of the rich fool is a mirror that Christ holds before our hearts. He does not condemn the man for his successful harvest, nor for the abundance that comes from honest labor. The tragedy lies instead in a life folded inward, a heart so preoccupied with self that there is no room left for God. Everything the man says circles around the same narrow point: I, my barns, my goods, my plans. His world has collapsed inward upon itself. In the Eastern tradition, this is the deepest form of spiritual poverty, for sin is seen not simply as wrongdoing but as the shrinking of the heart. Saint Ephrem the Syrian teaches that a heart made narrow cannot behold the Lord. Though the man's storehouses were filled, his heart remained empty and cramped.

In the Divine Liturgy we begin by proclaiming, Blessed is the Kingdom, a reminder that the center of our life is not the self, but the reign of God. The rich man, however, begins his interior liturgy very differently, blessing his own comfort and future plans. He remembers the gifts but forgets the Giver. Eastern spirituality teaches that the remembrance of God is like breath to the soul. When we forget Him, fear quietly takes root, greed grows, and we start looking for security in possessions rather than in the embrace of the Father. The man in the parable believes that peace comes from building bigger barns, while the Gospel shows us that true peace comes from cultivating a larger, freer, more generous heart.

When God speaks to him, it is a moment of revelation: Tonight your soul is demanded of you. Death in our tradition is not spoken of as a threat but as a bright lamp that reveals where our treasure truly lies. It unmaskes illusions. It exposes what the heart has loved. Saint Isaac the Syrian advises us to prepare our heart as though we will meet the Lord today, for that awareness brings wisdom to every moment. The essential question is not how long we will live, but how we are living before the Lord right now.

To be rich toward God, as Christ teaches, is not measured in wealth, storage, or earthly plans, but in mercy, humility, prayer, and the willingness to give ourselves in love. This is the path of kenosis, the self-emptying that Christ Himself lived. Saint Basil the Great says that accumulating possessions increases our burden, while sharing what we have lightens the soul. The one who pours himself out for others becomes truly full.

Our culture constantly whispers that life consists in gaining more, achieving more, securing more. But the wisdom of the Eastern Christian heart invites us to holy simplicity, a freedom from being enslaved by what we own. True richness is found not in clinging but in letting go. When we loosen our grip on possessions, fears, grudges, or the need to control, our heart becomes wide and spacious, able to receive God.

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The courage to recognize that true peace comes from cultivating a larger, freer, more generous heart.

In the mystical vision of the Eastern Fathers, the human heart is not a small organ hidden within the body it is the spiritual center of a person, the deep chamber where heaven and earth meet. They teach that the heart, when purified and expanded by grace, becomes a place vast enough to contain the whole world in love. But the heart does not expand by accident; it expands through courage. And it is this courage quiet, persistent, humble that opens the way for divine peace.

St. Macarius the Great said, *“The heart is but a small vessel, yet dragons and lions are there, and there also are the treasures of grace.”* The war for peace is fought within this vessel, not in the outer circumstances of life. Our struggles, our irritations, our anxieties, our resentments, all of these reveal not the poverty of the world but the smallness of our heart’s present capacity.

True peace comes when the heart grows larger than the things that disturb it.
Larger than the voices that accuse it.

Larger than the fears that bind it.

Larger than the ego that tries to control everything around it.

In Eastern spirituality, this enlargement of the heart is not emotional sentimentality; it is **the gradual transformation of the inner person by the fiery tenderness of the Holy Spirit**. It is the slow, sacred courage to stop living from the cramped rooms of self-will and to step into the spaciousness of God’s own compassion.

We often think courage means dramatic sacrifice or heroic deeds. But according to the Fathers, **the deepest courage is interior:**
the courage to allow God to touch the closed places within us.

To allow light into the rooms where bitterness has lived for years.

To allow mercy to flow into the memories we have long kept sealed.

This courage requires us to stop making excuses for our smallness

“That’s just who I am. That’s how I deal with people. That’s how life taught me to survive.”
Eastern theology gently but firmly invites us to see these not as facts but as wounds wounds Christ desires to heal so that His peace may enter.

St. Silouan the Athonite prayed, *“Lord, widen my heart through Your love, that I may love the sinner and the saint alike.”*

A widened heart does not mean ignoring injustice, but responding to it without hatred.

A widened heart does not mean becoming passive, but becoming free from the compulsion to control.

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To live this Gospel today means beginning with a gentle surrender each morning, offering our plans, our work, and our possessions to God. It means examining what weighs the heart down and choosing one thing to release into the hands of the Lord. It means practicing generosity, not only with money, but with patience, time, forgiveness, and compassion. It means remembering that we are meant for communion: with God and with one another. In Eastern spirituality, salvation is never isolation; it is always communion.

The rich man planned for many years, but he overlooked the present moment, the only moment in which God can be encountered. Christ calls us not to fear death, but to live so deeply and intentionally that when He calls our name, our hearts rise freely to Him. May we become rich in the things of God, rich in mercy, rich in prayer, rich in love. May our hearts become spacious enough to hold the Kingdom, and simple enough to recognize that the only treasure we truly keep is the one we give away.



News from the committee for the Arizona Ukrainian Festival

The Ukrainian festival planning committee needs your help! We are starting to collect items for a "Ukrainian Cultural Experience". This will be like a small museum or gallery at the festival. If you have any cultural items, artwork, clothing, or photographs that you would allow us to borrow and display at the festival please reach out to Sean, Rebecca, Leo, Martha, Kyle, or Ivy. We are also building a playlist of Ukrainian songs to play in between performers.

Please send the titles and artists of all of your favorite Ukrainian songs to ukiefest@protonmail.com. Last, If you are interest in volunteering at the festival, please sign up to volunteer at this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc7ua89jD_uI0c9yilTDXU2cUCGKd8IYGjF-zGw29EtBqQxhQ/viewform?usp=dialog or let one of us know!

A Note of Gratitude

With deep appreciation, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who continue to support our parish through their generous financial offerings. Your kindness, sacrifice, and love for the Church strengthen our community and help us carry out the mission entrusted to us by Christ. May the Lord, in His abundant mercy, grant each of you many blessings, good health, peace of heart, and a **hundredfold reward** for your generosity. May He remember your love for His Holy Church and grant you and your families every grace from above.

From the bottom of our hearts **thank you**, and may God richly bless you always.

The words, **“Let us love one another so that we may be of one mind in confessing,”** stand at one of the most sacred moments of the Divine Liturgy, just before the Church proclaims the Nicene Creed. They reveal a profound truth at the heart of Eastern Christian theology: that genuine confession of faith is possible only when it flows from a heart purified by love. In the mind of the Fathers, theology is never merely an intellectual activity. It is the fruit of a transfigured heart. St. Maximus the Confessor reminds us that only in love do we truly know God, for love is both the gift of God and the very atmosphere in which God is revealed. When the Church exhorts us to love one another, she is calling us into the spiritual condition necessary to see rightly, to speak rightly, and to confess rightly. Only a heart reconciled in love can recognize the God who is love.

This call to love prepares us to speak the Creed, because the Creed is not just a summary of doctrines but the Church’s shared proclamation of the mystery of God. Doctrine without love becomes cold and brittle; the Creed spoken without love becomes an empty recitation. But when spoken from a heart softened by grace, every phrase becomes an act of worship, every word becomes a flame that rises to heaven. Love is what grants clarity to the mind and harmony to the community. Love binds many hearts into one heart, so that many voices may become one voice in confessing the living God.

The Church Fathers saw unity not as an administrative achievement but as a spiritual miracle. The early Christians lived as “one heart and one soul,” not because they agreed on every detail of life, but because they were immersed in the one love of Christ. This love, flowing from the Holy Spirit, overcame differences, healed resentments, and united them in a common confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. In this unity of love, the Church becomes an icon of the Holy Trinity, where distinction exists without division, and unity exists without confusion.

Immediately after the exhortation to love one another, the Creed begins with the words, **“I believe in one God.”** This sequence is intentional. The Fathers placed love before confession because only a heart resting in love can perceive the mystery of God, especially the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God is perfect communion, perfect relationship, perfect love. To confess the Trinity without striving to love one another is to contradict the very reality we are proclaiming. The Trinity is not a concept; it is the living communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so, when we love one another, even imperfectly, we touch the very life of God.

The evil one, who thrives on division, trembles at these words. He knows that a community united in love becomes undefeatable. He knows that when we stand in love, our confession becomes radiant and powerful. Therefore, the moment before the Creed is spiritually charged; it is a moment when we cast out hidden resentments, pride, and judgments so that our hearts may stand clean and open before God. A heart that loves becomes too spacious for the enemy to enter. Love is the great exorcism of the Christian life.

St. John Chrysostom teaches that we cannot approach the altar if we harbor hatred or bitterness. The Liturgy demands authenticity. Before we dare proclaim the holiness of God, we must strive for holiness in our relationships. The offering of love sincere, humble, and free is the sacrifice God desires most. When we place love on the altar of our heart, our confession becomes pure incense rising toward the throne of the Almighty.

Thus, when the Church sings these words, she invites us into a mystery: that the unity of faith arises from the unity of love.

**DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
UKRAINIAN FUNDRAISER**

SPORTING CLAY SHOOT

Agenda:

Registration will begin at 8:00am

Safety Briefing 8:30am

Shoot Begins 9am

Lunch & Prizes immediately following

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- ✓ Lunch
- ✓ Ammunition & Shotgun
- ✓ Safety Review
- ✓ Raffle prizes!

DEC. 13TH, 2025

www.ukrainianchurch.org/sportingclayshoot

REGISTRATION:

- ✓ Individual Shooter \$200
- ✓ 4 Person Team \$800

SPONSORSHIP:

- ✓ Exclusive Title Sponsor \$2000 (Squad included, exclusive signage)
- ✓ Station Sponsor \$300
- ✓ Awards Sponsor \$400
- ✓ Door Prize Sponsor \$500
- ✓ Shell Sponsor \$600
- ✓ Lunch Sponsor \$700

**SQUADS OF 4 COMPETING FOR TOP INDIVIDUAL AND
TEAM PRIZES**

LOCATION

Rio Salado Sportsman's Club
3960 N Usery Pass Rd., Mesa, AZ 85207

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A widened heart does not mean losing oneself, but finding one's true self in the boundless mercy of God.

When Christ stretched out His arms on the Cross, He revealed the true breadth of the divine heart. There, between earth and sky, the infinite compassion of God entered the narrowness of human fear.

His outstretched arms are the icon of a love that refuses to shrink before suffering, a love that welcomes even its enemies. And so the Cross becomes our lesson in divine spaciousness. The more our hearts resemble His open, vulnerable, generous the more peace flows into us and through us.

Peace is not found by shrinking away from the world but by becoming large enough in grace to embrace it.

The Desert Fathers tell us that whenever they lost peace, they knew that somewhere their heart had contracted. Perhaps they had judged someone harshly, or clung too tightly to their own opinion, or sought praise from others, or allowed small resentments to harden within. They discovered that inner peace is the fruit of inner freedom, and inner freedom is the fruit of a heart continually expanded by love.

St. Porphyrios said, "The soul becomes wide and beautiful when it loves. Then it can contain all people within it." This is not poetry it is a mystical reality.

When the heart becomes spacious, the Holy Spirit fills it with a peace that the world cannot give, a peace that does not shatter under pressure but radiates quietly even in hardship.

What Does a Larger Heart Look Like? A larger, freer, more generous heart is characterized by: A readiness to forgive without waiting for the other to be deserving.

A gentleness that does not need to win arguments to be at rest.

A humility that sees one's own sins first and one's neighbor's sins last.

A compassion that recognizes the secret struggle in every person.

A trust that God's provision is enough, freeing us from clinging.

A silence that listens to God rather than reacting to impulses.

A hope that refuses to be extinguished even in darkness.

Such a heart becomes a sanctuary a refuge not only for oneself but for others. In a world filled with anxious striving, such hearts shine like quiet lamps of Christ's presence.

To cultivate this heart, we take the path of stillness. We allow God to breathe into us in prayer. We let the Jesus Prayer wash over the rough edges of our soul: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

It always begins with courage: the courage to believe that God desires to make our heart large; the courage to lay down resentment; the courage to trust His timing;



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)

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Very Rev. Hugo Soutus
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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, November 23

"24th Sunday after Pentecost"

"Our Holy Father Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium"

Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22 Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

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, November 24

"The Holy Great-Martyr Catherine"

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Gospel: Luke 17:20-25

Tuesday, November 25

"Our Holy Father and Priest-martyr Clement"

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 1:10-2:2 Gospel: Luke 17:26-37

3:00 p.m. Holy Mystery of Matrimony

Tiffany Anne Goldberg and Christian Andrew Walter Turner

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, November 26

"Our Venerable Father Alypius the Stylite"

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 2:1:12 Gospel: Luke 18:15-17; 26-30

Thursday, November 27

"The Holy Martyr James of Persia"

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5 Gospel: Luke 18:31-34

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, November 28

"The Venerable Martyr-Stephen"

Epistle: 2 Thessalonians 3:6:18 Gospel: Luke 19:12-28

Saturday, November 29

"The Holy Martyr Paramon"

Epistle: Galatians 1:3:10 Gospel: Luke 10:19-21

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, November 30

"25th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy and All-Praiseworthy Apostle Andrew the First-Called"

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6 Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

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

Gods blessings & good health for Lawrence, Christine (Lesya) Bell and their family
from the parish