

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory for ever!

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, August 23, 2026

"13th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Week!!!!

The parable of the wicked tenants in Matthew 21:33 to 42 is one of the clearest invitations to examine the condition of our hearts. Jesus tells the story of a landowner who lovingly plants a vineyard, surrounds it with care, provides everything necessary for it to flourish, and entrusts it to tenants. When the time comes to receive the fruit, the servants are rejected, abused, and even killed. Finally, the owner sends his beloved son, believing that he will be welcomed with honor. Instead, the tenants seize him and kill him, hoping to claim the inheritance for themselves.

This is not simply a story about ancient Israel or the religious leaders of Jesus' time. It is the story of every human heart. God is the generous landowner who has entrusted us with the vineyard of our lives. He has given us faith, family, friendships, talents, health, opportunities, and countless blessings. None of these belong to us absolutely. They are gifts entrusted to us so that they may bear fruit for His glory and for the good of others.

The tragedy of the tenants is not that they lacked resources. They lacked gratitude. They forgot that everything they possessed had first been received. Once gratitude disappeared, entitlement took its place. They began to act as though the vineyard belonged to them rather than to the one who lovingly entrusted it to their care.

This temptation remains alive today. We easily begin to believe that our accomplishments are solely the result of our own efforts. We protect our time, our possessions, our reputation, and even our spiritual lives as though they exist only for ourselves. Little by little, the heart becomes closed, not because God has stopped giving, but because we have forgotten how to receive with thanksgiving.

The servants sent by the landowner represent the prophets whom God continually sent to call His people back to faithfulness. Throughout history, God has never ceased speaking to His children. He speaks through Sacred Scripture, through the Divine Liturgy, through the wisdom of the Church, through the quiet voice of conscience, and through the people He places in our lives. Yet whenever His word challenges our pride or asks us to change, we often resist. Like the tenants, we sometimes reject the very voices that seek our healing.

The greatest moment of the parable comes when the father sends his beloved son. Here Christ speaks about Himself. The Father does not withhold His greatest gift. He sends His only Son into the vineyard of this world, knowing that He will suffer rejection and death. Divine love is

(continue to page 3)

(continue from page 2)

willing to risk everything for the salvation of humanity. The Cross is not an accident of history. It is the fullest revelation of a God whose mercy refuses to abandon His children.

Jesus concludes by quoting the Psalm, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Human judgment rejected Christ, but God's wisdom made Him the foundation of a new creation. What the world considered failure became the source of eternal victory.

The Resurrection transformed rejection into triumph, death into life, and despair into hope.

This truth speaks directly to our own struggles. There are moments when we experience rejection, disappointment, illness, or failure. We wonder whether God is still at work.

The cornerstone reminds us that God often builds His greatest works from what the world overlooks. A broken heart surrendered to Christ becomes stronger than a proud heart that never seeks Him. A repentant sinner becomes a witness to mercy. A quiet servant becomes a pillar of the Kingdom.

The vineyard entrusted to us is our daily life. Every conversation is an opportunity to bear the fruit of kindness. Every challenge becomes an opportunity to grow in patience. Every act of forgiveness allows Christ to live more deeply within us. Every Divine Liturgy reminds us that we are not owners of God's gifts but faithful stewards called to return the fruits of love.

The question this Gospel leaves before us is simple yet searching. When the Lord comes seeking fruit from the vineyard of my life, what will He find. Will He find gratitude instead of entitlement, humility instead of pride, generosity instead of selfishness, faith instead of fear, and love instead of indifference. If Christ truly remains the cornerstone of our lives, then every decision, every relationship, and every hope will rest securely upon Him. Only then will our lives bear the abundant fruit that glorifies the Father and leads us into the everlasting joy of His Kingdom.



Awake to God's Blessings

Sometimes we go through life with our eyes open, but our hearts asleep. We notice our responsibilities, our problems, and our busy schedules, but we forget to notice the many ways God is quietly working in our lives.

The Lord gives us countless blessings every day, yet sometimes we need a little reminder to slow down and recognize them. We remember to charge our phones when the battery is low, but we often forget to recharge our souls through prayer! We make time for many things, but the most important appointment of the day is always our time with God.

Being awake to God means seeing opportunities to love, to serve, and to bring peace. It means choosing a kind word instead of a sharp one, a prayer instead of a worry, and gratitude instead of a complaint. The Christian life is not lived only in big moments, but in the small choices we make every day.

The Courage to Keep Watch with Christ

The twentieth step of the Ladder of Divine Ascent invites us to embrace the sacred virtue of vigilance, a watchfulness that reaches beyond simply remaining awake. Saint John Climacus teaches that the Christian must become a faithful guardian of the heart, standing attentively before God with a mind that is clear, a soul that is alert, and a heart that is ready to welcome the Lord at every moment. This is not an easy calling. It requires courage, perseverance, and an unwavering desire to belong completely to Christ.

The Lord Himself repeatedly tells His disciples, "Watch and pray." These words are not meant only for the Apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. They are spoken to every believer who desires to walk the narrow path that leads to life. Spiritual sleep rarely comes suddenly. It begins with small compromises, neglected prayer, careless words, forgotten gratitude, and the slow acceptance of habits that separate us from the living presence of God.

The courage to remain watchful begins with recognizing that the greatest battlefield is not outside us but within us. Every day countless thoughts pass through our minds. Some lead us toward peace, humility, and compassion. Others quietly invite us toward pride, anger, envy, fear, or despair. Saint John Climacus reminds us that not every thought deserves our attention. The vigilant soul learns to welcome those thoughts that come from God and gently reject those that seek to disturb the peace of Christ dwelling within the heart.

This watchfulness is never driven by fear. It is inspired by love. A mother remains awake beside the bed of her sick child because she loves. A shepherd keeps watch over his flock because he loves. In the same way, the Christian watches over the heart because it has become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We protect what we truly treasure. If Christ is our greatest treasure, then guarding our communion with Him becomes our greatest priority.

The saints teach us that vigilance is practiced in ordinary moments. It is choosing patience before speaking in anger. It is refusing to entertain gossip when others criticize. It is recognizing pride before it grows into judgment. It is offering thanks before complaining. It is remembering God's mercy when discouragement begins to whisper that nothing will ever change.

Many people believe holiness is achieved through extraordinary works. More often it is formed through ordinary faithfulness. Every small victory over temptation strengthens the soul. Every quiet act of kindness purifies the heart. Every sincere prayer offered in hiddenness deepens our friendship with Christ. The vigilant Christian understands that the smallest choices often shape the greatest virtues.

There is also courage in remaining spiritually awake during seasons of suffering. Pain has a way of exhausting both body and soul. Illness, loneliness, disappointment, and uncertainty tempt us to lose hope. Yet these are often the very moments when Christ draws closest.

(continue to page 5)

(continue from page 4)

The watchful believer learns to recognize God's presence even when emotions cannot feel Him. Faith remains awake even when consolation seems absent. Love continues to trust even when answers do not come quickly.

The Byzantine tradition beautifully teaches us to guard the heart through continual remembrance of Jesus. The simple prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," becomes like the steady rhythm of breathing. It quietly gathers the scattered mind, calms anxious thoughts, and keeps the soul attentive to the presence of God. This prayer transforms ordinary work into worship, daily responsibilities into offerings, and every moment into an encounter with divine grace.

Vigilance also teaches us humility. The more attentive we become, the more we recognize our dependence upon God's mercy. We stop trusting our own strength and begin relying upon His grace. We understand that without Christ we cannot remain faithful even for a single day. This awareness does not discourage us. Instead, it fills us with gratitude because we discover that God's strength is always greater than our weakness.

The reward of vigilance is profound interior peace. The person who watches with Christ is no longer easily shaken by the changing circumstances of life. Success does not produce pride. Failure does not produce despair. Praise does not inflate the heart. Criticism does not destroy it. The vigilant soul remains anchored in the unchanging love of God.

As we climb this twentieth step of the Ladder, we discover that watchfulness is not about living in constant tension, but about living in constant communion. Every sunrise becomes another opportunity to welcome Christ. Every conversation becomes another chance to reveal His love. Every trial becomes another invitation to trust His providence. Every evening becomes an opportunity to place the day into His merciful hands.

The courage to keep watch with Christ is ultimately the courage to love Him above all else. It is choosing His presence over distraction, His peace over anxiety, His truth over deception, and His Kingdom over the passing attractions of this world. Those who remain spiritually awake will discover that Christ has been watching over them all along, leading them gently, patiently, and lovingly toward the eternal joy of His heavenly Kingdom.



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.

Sometimes the greatest spiritual challenge is not changing the world around us, but changing our own hearts! Thankfully, God is patient, merciful, and never gives up on us.

A Prayer for Ukraine on Independence Day

Tomorrow, August 24, Ukraine celebrates its Independence Day, a day of profound meaning for us and for all who cherish the gifts of freedom, dignity, and peace.

On August 24, 1991, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, proclaiming Ukraine as an independent and sovereign nation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This historic decision was confirmed by the Ukrainian people during the nationwide referendum on December 1, 1991, when an overwhelming majority expressed their desire to live as a free and independent nation.

For Ukrainians throughout the world, this day is not only a celebration of independence but also a day of remembrance and prayer. It is a moment to honor all those who sacrificed for the freedom of their homeland, those who defended its dignity, those who suffered because of war, and those who continue to work and pray for a peaceful future.

As we celebrate this important day, our hearts are also heavy because Ukraine continues to endure the pain and destruction caused by war. Many families have experienced loss, separation, fear, and uncertainty. Homes have been destroyed, lives have been changed forever, and countless people continue to carry deep wounds in their hearts.

In this difficult time, we turn to God with faith and hope. We ask our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, to bring an end to the violence, to soften the hearts of those who seek destruction, and to open a path toward a just and lasting peace. We pray especially for the protection of all who defend their homeland, for the families who wait anxiously for their loved ones, for those who have lost their homes, and for all innocent victims of war.

Let us also remember in our prayers those who have given their lives for the freedom of Ukraine. May the Lord grant eternal rest to the departed and comfort to their families. May He strengthen those who are suffering and bless Ukraine with healing, unity, and peace.

The Byzantine Catholic Church has always lifted Ukraine before the throne of God, asking the protection of the Most Holy Theotokos and the intercession of all the saints. Through our prayers, our compassion, and our support for one another, we become instruments of God's love in a wounded world.

On this Independence Day, let us join together in prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, look with mercy upon Ukraine and its people. Bring peace to their land, comfort to those who suffer, strength to those who serve, and hope to every heart. May justice, reconciliation, and lasting peace soon prevail.

May the Holy Theotokos, the Protectress of Ukraine, cover this beloved nation with her loving mantle and lead all people toward the peace that only Christ can give.

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 23

"13th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy Martyr Luppas"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24. Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42.

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 24

"The Holy Priest-Martyr Eutyches"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 12:10-19. Gospel: Mark 4:10-23.

Tuesday, August 25

"The Return of the Relics of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:2. Gospel: Mark 4:24-34.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, August 26

"The Holy Martyrs Adrian and Natalia"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 13:3-13. Gospel: Mark 4:35-41.

Thursday, August 27

"Our Venerable Father Pimen"

Epistle: Galatians 1:1-10; 1:20-2:5. Gospel: Mark 5:1-20.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, August 28

"Our Venerable Father Moses"

Epistle: Galatians 2:6-10. Gospel: Mark 5:22-25; 35-6:1.

Saturday, August 29

"The Beheading of John, The Baptist"

Epistle: Acts 13:25-33. Gospel: Mark 6:14-29.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

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

A Daily Moment with God

I warmly encourage everyone to take a few quiet moments each day to read the Scripture readings provided in our bulletin. Allow God's Word to become a source of strength, peace, and guidance in your home.

A few minutes spent with the Lord each day can transform our hearts, deepen our faith, and remind us that God walks with us in every moment of our lives. May the daily readings become a beautiful opportunity for prayer, reflection, and a closer relationship with Christ.