

УСПЕННЯ ПРЕСВЯТОЇ БОГОРОДИЦІ

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, March 1, 2026

“Second Sunday of Lent”

Reflections for this Weekend

Today’s Gospel, Christ reveals not only His power, but the very heart of salvation. The paralytic lies before Him, carried by others, unable to move, unable even to approach the Lord on his own strength. This is the human condition after the Fall. We are created for communion with God, yet sin leaves us inwardly immobile. We desire holiness, yet remain stuck in habits, fears, pride, and spiritual exhaustion. The paralysis of the body becomes an icon of the paralysis of the soul.

Before healing the man’s limbs, Christ speaks to his deepest wound: “Child, your sins are forgiven.” In the Byzantine understanding, sin is not merely legal guilt but illness—a distortion of our being, a breaking of communion. The Lord heals from the inside outward. He restores the heart before restoring the body. He reorders the soul before strengthening the muscles. This is why forgiveness is the greater miracle. It is the beginning of true movement, the first breath of resurrection within a fallen life.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus saw their faith—the faith of the four who carried the paralytic. The man says nothing. He is borne by love. Here the Church is revealed. We do not journey to Christ alone. We are carried by the prayers of others, by the faith of godparents, by the intercession of the saints, by the petitions offered at every Divine Liturgy. When we are weak, someone else believes for us. When we cannot move, someone else carries us. Salvation is always communal. The Church breaks open roofs of despair and lowers wounded souls into the presence of the Physician.

The scribes question Christ in their hearts, accusing Him of blasphemy. They are correct that only God can forgive sins, yet they fail to recognize that God stands before them. The miracle exposes not only the paralytic’s need, but the hardness of those who think they see clearly. Christ reveals His authority as the Son of Man, not to dominate, but to restore. His authority is mercy. His power is communion.

When He commands, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk,” the man stands. The bed that once carried him becomes what he carries. The symbol of weakness becomes a testimony of grace. In the spiritual life, Christ does not erase our past; He transforms it. Our wounds, once surrendered to Him, become signs of His mercy. What once defined us in shame becomes the very thing through which God is glorified.

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For us today, the house in Capernaum is the Church. The roof opens whenever heaven bends down to meet earth in the Holy Mysteries. The words of forgiveness are still spoken.

The same Christ stands in our midst. He sees not only our visible struggles, but the hidden paralysis within. He calls each of us “Child.” He restores dignity before strength. He heals communion before function.

In the Byzantine vision of salvation, this is the beginning of theosis not simply being cured, but being raised into participation in divine life. The paralytic does not merely walk again; he walks as one who has encountered God. And the crowd glorifies God because transformation is visible.

The Gospel invites us to ask where we are lying still, where we have accepted immobility as normal. It invites us to trust the prayers that carry us. It invites us to allow Christ to forgive first, to heal deeply, and then to command us to rise.

And when we rise, carrying even the memory of what once bound us, the world will see and glorify God



Please note!

Each Wednesday of Great Lent at 6:00 p.m. in English and each Friday at 6:00 p.m. in Ukrainian, we celebrate one of the most prayerful and moving services of the season: the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. These evenings offer a sacred pause in the middle of our busy lives, a time to enter more deeply into the spirit of repentance, reflection, and hope. Great Lent invites us not only to fast from certain foods, but to hunger more deeply for God. The Presanctified Gifts service helps awaken that holy longing. Its tone is quiet and contemplative. The chanting, the incense, the prostrations, and the dimmed lights create an atmosphere of reverence that gently opens the heart. It is different from the joyful celebration of Sunday; it carries the peaceful seriousness of a soul seeking renewal.

The name “Presanctified Gifts” refers to Holy Communion that was consecrated at a previous Divine Liturgy, usually on Sunday. In the early centuries of the Church, the full Divine Liturgy was not celebrated on weekdays during Lent because of its festive and Resurrectional character. Yet the faithful deeply desired to receive the Eucharist during the Fast. From this longing developed the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts a solemn Vespers service combined with the reception of Holy Communion.

Though there is no consecration during this service, Christ is fully present, offering Himself as strength for our Lenten journey. In the midst of fasting and spiritual struggle, He nourishes us with His mercy and love.

Please consider making this beautiful service part of your Lenten practice. Come with your burdens, your prayers, and your desire for renewal. Allow the quiet grace of these evenings to draw you closer to the Lord as we journey together toward Pascha.

The courage to accept the church as a hospital for sinners rather than a museum for saints.

From her earliest days, the Church has been called a hospital for sinners rather than a museum for saints. John Chrysostom once reminded his flock that the Church is not a courtroom where the guilty are condemned, but a clinic where the wounded are restored. To embrace this vision requires courage, because it asks us to admit something we often resist: we are not as whole as we pretend to be.

Every person who walks through the doors of the Church carries unseen wounds. Some are obvious, grief, disappointment, broken relationships. Others are hidden, resentment, pride, shame, fear, spiritual exhaustion. In a hospital, no one hides their illness; healing begins with honesty. In the same way, spiritual healing begins when we stop pretending before God. We dare to say, “Lord, I am not well. I need You.” That simple confession is not weakness; it is the doorway to grace.

Christ stands at the center of this holy hospital as the Divine Physician. Throughout the Gospel, He moves toward the wounded, not away from them. He touches the leper, speaks gently to the sinner, lifts the fallen, and restores the outcast. His love is not repelled by our brokenness; it is drawn to it. He does not expose our wounds to humiliate us, but to cleanse and bind them. His mercy is not sentimental; it is transformative.

In this sacred place, the sacraments become medicine for the soul. Confession is not a moment of shame but a cleansing of infection. The Eucharist is nourishment for the weak, strength for those who feel spiritually faint. Prayer is the steady therapy that reorders the heart and quiets the restless mind. Even the liturgy itself is healing, as its hymns and prayers gently reorient our gaze from ourselves to God.

Yet anyone who has undergone physical therapy knows that healing can be uncomfortable. Muscles must be stretched; habits must be retrained. So too in the spiritual life. Repentance can be painful because it requires truth. Forgiveness can be difficult because it asks us to release what we cling to. Growth is often slow. The Church does not promise instant cures; she offers patient accompaniment. Grace works quietly, like medicine dissolving into the bloodstream, often unseen but profoundly effective.

To see the Church as a hospital also changes how we see one another. If we are all patients under care, there is no room for superiority. Judgment softens into compassion. Harsh words give way to gentleness. We begin to recognize that the person beside us in the pew is also struggling, also seeking, also healing. Having received mercy, we learn to extend it. This vision fills the heart with hope. No wound is too deep for God’s love. No sin is beyond forgiveness. No life is beyond restoration. The Church stands as a place where brokenness meets mercy, where weakness encounters strength, where despair is met with hope. In this holy hospital, under the tender gaze of Christ, we are being healed, slowly, faithfully, completely until the day when all things are made whole in Him.

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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, March 1

“Second Sunday of Lent” “Commemoration of St Gregory Palamas”

Epistle: Hebrew 1:10-2:3. Gospel: Mark 2:1-12.

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, March 2

“The Holy Priest-Martyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia”

Reading: Genesis: 6:9-22; Reading: Proverbs 8:1-21

Tuesday, March 3

“The Holy Martyrs Eutropius and His Companions”

Reading: Genesis: 7:1-5; Reading: Proverbs 8:32-9:11

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, March 4

“Our Venerable Father Gerasimus of the Jordan”

Reading: Genesis 7:6-9; Reading: Proverbs 9:12-18.

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

Thursday, March 5

“The Holy Martyr Conon”

Reading: Genesis: 7:11-8:4; Reading: Proverbs 10:1-22

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, March 6

“The Holy Forty Martyrs of Ammorium”

Reading: Genesis 8:4-21; Reading: Proverbs 10:31-11:12.

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

Saturday, March 7

“3rd Saturday of Lent – An All Souls Saturday”

Epistle: Hebrew 10:32-38. Gospel: Mark 2:14-17.

9:30 a.m. In loving memory of +Loretta Retay from Dr Laurel

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, March 8

“3rd Sunday of Lent”

“Veneration of the Holy Cross”

“Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

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