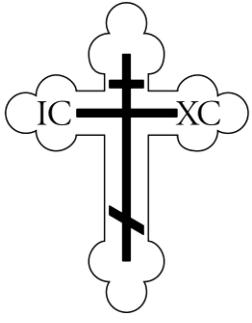
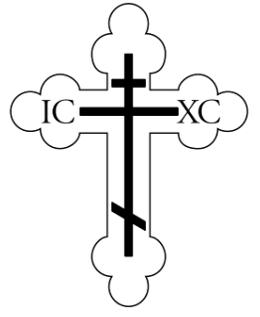


Protection of the Virgin Mary



Orthodox Church



A Parish of the
Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219) 384-6826 • frjacobvansickle@gmail.com

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confessions are heard before or
after Vespers or by appointment.

**Welcome visitors!
Please join us in
the parish hall after
Divine Liturgy for
coffee hour.**

March 10, 2019 Forgiveness Sunday

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent – the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated – is called Forgiveness Sunday.

On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ: “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses...” (Mark 6:14-15). Then, after Vespers – after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: “Turn not away Your face from Your child for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!”

and after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special memories, with the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

Forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us, so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies”? Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching about forgiveness. It is true that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them—in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize – be it only for one minute – that our entire relationship to other people is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual

“recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns, we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me – we begin to realize that it is Christ Who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery – and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists – we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage. Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting true fasting; our effort true effort; our reconciliation with God true reconciliation.

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 8 – Resurrectional Troparion

You descended from on high, O Merciful One!

You accepted the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//

O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to You!

Tone 4 – Our Patronal Troparion

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy,

illuminated by your coming, O Mother of God.

Beholding your pure image we fervently cry to you:

Encompass us beneath the precious veil of your protection.

Deliver us from every form of evil

by entreating Christ, your Son and our God//

that He may save our souls.

Tone 8 – Resurrectional Kontakion

By rising from the tomb You raised the dead and resurrected Adam.
Eve exults in Your Resurrection,
and the world celebrates Your rising from the dead, O greatly
Merciful One!

Tone 6 – Kontakion for Forgiveness Sunday

O Master, teacher of wisdom,
Bestower of virtue,
Who teach the thoughtless and protect the poor,
strengthen and enlighten my heart!
O Word of the Father,
let me not restrain my mouth from crying to You:
“Have mercy on me, a transgressor,//
O merciful Lord!”

Tone 3 – Our Patronal Kontakion

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,
And with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us.
Angels and bishops worship.
Apostles and prophets rejoice together,//
Since for our sake she prays to the eternal God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Romans 13.11-14.4

Brethren: Do this, knowing the time—that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand! Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat

judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel: Matthew 6.14-21

Jesus said to His disciples: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. David Envall
Anna Vahary
Chris Velo
Stephen Dearman
Archpr. John Mason

Ev.Mem. Georgii Revich ('19)
Risto Todoff ('29)
Maria Sarafin ('31)
John Akers ('89)
Archpr. Spiro Tanaskoski ('95)

Health & Salvation:

Protopr. George
Mat. Anna
Archpr. Peter
Archpr. John
Pr. John
Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer
Andrew
Gideon
Kevin
Jon
Tanya
Kimberly
Gail

William
Jovan
Charles
Barbara
Theodore
Michael
Julia
Warren

Loretta	Natalia	Cathy
Gilbert	Elizabeth	Laurie
Carol	Tom	Lennox
Peter	Paul	Laila
Janie	Alexander	Richard
Tom	Darlene	Paula
Elizabeth	Mira	Christopher
Tina	Kristin	Brian
Adam	Mitchel	Jennifer
Myah	Brittany	Janet
Margaret	Jennifer	Nicholas
Diane	David	Kevin
Madelin	Roger	Barbara
Villian	Tina	Thomas
Deborah	Chris	Allyson
Claudia	Benjamin	Daniel
John	Juliana	
Carisa	Joseph	

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please enjoy coffee hour after venerating the cross. In one hour, we will reconvene here and enter into Great Lent together by celebrating **Forgiveness Vespers**. Don't miss it!

Our website now has a **donate button** for receiving stewardship gifts electronically. In order to receive credit on your end-of-year tax receipt, make sure to enter your name when giving.

Mark your calendars:

Mar 11: Great Canon of St. Andrew @ 6pm

Mar 12: Great Canon of St. Andrew @ 6pm

Mar 13: Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts @ 10am
Great Canon of St. Andrew @ 6pm

Mar 14: Great Canon of St. Andrew @ 6pm

Mar 15: **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** at Descent of the Holy Ghost @ 6pm

Mar 17: **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** at St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago @ 7pm

Mar 24: **Mission Vespers** at our Church @ 6pm followed by a Lenten dinner

Mar 25: Divine Liturgy for the **feast of Annunciation** at Descent of the Holy Ghost @ 10am

Last Week's Offerings to the Lord:

General Fund: \$2,538

Mortgage: \$813

When the "Little Church" forms of two families coming together through Marriage by His Grace, our Bishop Paul

Over the last 30 years, remarriage has become a far more common experience in American family life. A man and a woman remarry, each bringing children with them from a previous marriage. They all begin to live a new life together under one roof. I have no statistics to offer on how many Orthodox Christians face this reality.

How does this reality impact on making the family home a "Little Church?" Three things come to mind.

- **Identity issues:** Each family has a history before coming together as a reconstituted family. What happens to that history? What can continue, and what needs to change? If a false unity is imposed on the whole, causing some to prematurely lose practices/norms they have brought with them, trouble may arise. This could involve such areas as family rules, how one communicates, and parenting styles. I think it is important that regular family meetings take place to hash some of this out. I am assuming work had been done in preparation for the parents' marriage. Such matters need to be discussed well before the marriage,

and children should be involved in some of these discussions.

- **Faith issues:** While it would be great if everyone in the new, blended family were of the Orthodox Christian faith, this is often highly unlikely. In some ways, if two different Christian faith traditions are present, it might be better for family members to attend their respective churches. This, of course, is not ideal, but it does seem to give members more time to address this issue. It would be my hope that all of the members would in time embrace the Orthodox Church, but this has to happen when the time is right — and by choice.
- **How does the family pray?** One could just allow each family member to pray in the manner with which he or she has been accustomed. But this is one place that the family might be able to pray as a group, even when different faiths are involved. How about taking prayers from the Orthodox Tradition and prayers from the other faith tradition and seeing where there is overlap? This could form the basis for establishing a unity in prayer. Over the years this could lead into a greater growth “in life and faith and spiritual understanding.”

These suggestions are educated guesses on my part. This appears to be an area that does not get discussed often. I put this on the table for further consideration, thought and questions, something that I welcome since the above is just a start.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,

The unworthy +Paul

Glory to God for all things!