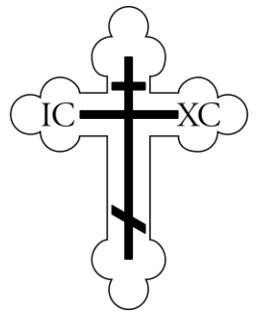


Protection of the Virgin Mary



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
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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.**

February 16, 2020 Sunday of the Prodigal Son

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is itself preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man and how his life was greatly changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Lk 19.3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Easter. It is the first movement of salvation.

The following Sunday is that of the Publican and the Pharisee. The focus here is on the two men who went to the Temple to pray—one a pharisee who was a very decent and

righteous man of religion, the other a publican who was a truly sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. The first, although genuinely righteous, boasted before God and was condemned, according to Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God (Lk 18.9). The meditation here is that we have neither the religious piety of the pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, and to beg for mercy.

The next Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Hearing the parable of Christ about God's loving forgiveness, we are called to "come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the movement of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Lk 15.11-24).

The next Sunday is called Meatfare Sunday since it is officially the last day before Easter for eating meat. It commemorates Christ's parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25.31-46). We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, his only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience.

... for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and in prison and you visited Me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me (Mt 25).

We are saved not merely by prayer and fasting, not by “religious exercises” alone. We are saved by serving Christ through his people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed.

Finally, on the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam’s exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord’s teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us.

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you (Mt 6.14–15).

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 2 – Resurrectional Troparion

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal,
You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.
And when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

Tone 4 – 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 3 – Kontakion for the Prodigal Son

I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father;
and among sinners I have scattered the riches which You gave me.
And now I cry to You as the Prodigal:
“I have sinned before You, O merciful Father;
receive me a penitent,
and make me as one of Your hired servants!”

Tone 3 – 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

Tone 2 – Sunday Prokeimenon (Psalm 117)

The Lord is my strength and my song;
He has become my salvation!

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6.12-20 (Sunday)

Brethren, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.

Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Gospel: Luke 15.11-32 (Sunday)

Jesus spoke this parable to His disciples: “A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But

when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' "

And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.' "

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Carlos Abila

Archpr. John Kuchta

Ev.Mem Vasili Milovsky ('19)

Anna Stacevich ('27)

Antony Pommers ('60)

Murtza Hassan ('69)

Anna Vahary (2019)

Health & Salvation:

Archpr. Peter

Pr. John

Pr. Gregory

Mat. Beverly

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Dn. Nicholas

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Julia

Warren

Carol

Tom

Elizabeth

Tina

Brittany

Jennifer

Lennox

Laila

Paula

Melissa

Jonathan

Matthew

Gail

Maria

Barbara

Thomas

Jessica

Eduardo

Christine

Nicholas

Natalie

Barbara

Kristin

Linda

Phyllis

Kay

Fred

Larry

Rollie

Joseph

Mark

Alexa

Paula

James

Joanne

Michael

Joseph

Kathleen

Paul

William

Frederick

Janet

Lea

Hania

James

Gerald

N.Ill. Koen

John

Miriana

Nadia

Charlene

Milka

Daniel

Russell

Brendan

Benjamin

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After the veneration of the cross we will celebrate the **1-year Memorial for Anna Vahary.**

For **Bible Study** this week, read Deuteronomy 31-34.

The **Ladies' Sodality** is collecting old but intact **eyeglasses** to be distributed by the Lions Club to those in need.

For Great Lent, which begins March 2, the **women's book group** will read **The First Fruits of Prayer: A Forty-Day Journal through the Canon of St. Andrew**, by Frederica Mathewes-Green. Lunch and discussion will be at the Church following the 10am Presanctified Liturgy on the last day of Lent: Friday, April 10 (Western Good Friday).

Our **Spring fashion show "Tropical Paradise"** will be Sunday, Mar 22 at Avalon Manor. Doors open at Noon with the Bake Sale. Luncheon is at 1:00 pm. Tickets are \$40.00 and NOT available at the door. This is our largest fundraiser of the year, so please be generous with basket donations (\$150.00 value), cash donations, checks (to PTVM Church), or Scrip to help defray the cost of the baskets that are raffled at the end of the show. Baskets and donations are due Sunday, Mar 1. Please see Elizabeth Pedersen, Sherry Mizamakoski, Rosemary Velasquez, or Nada Buczek for tickets and information.

Mark your calendars:

Feb 18: **Hall committee @ 6pm**
Parish Council @ 7pm

Feb 19: **Bible Study @ 7pm**

Feb 23: **St. Elizabeth's Trivia Night** at the Moose Lodge in Chesterton @ 4pm

Mar 1: **Forgiveness Vespers** after Divine Liturgy

Mar 8: **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** at our Church @ 5pm

Mar 22: **Spring Fashion Show** at Avalon Manor @ 1pm

Last week's offerings to the Lord: \$1,618

Autowhat?!?

A reflection by His Grace, our Bishop Paul

As many of you know by now, this year is the 50th Anniversary of the Orthodox Church in America receiving its Autocephaly from the Russian Orthodox Church. The word autocephalous literally means "self-headed." The Orthodox

Church in America is no longer overseen by another autocephalous church overseas. We elect and ordain our own Primate and bishops, and we have our own seminaries to prepare candidates for ordained ministry.

But what has this got to do with family life? Imagine an intact family in which the two parents discuss an issue with their children and make a decision about how to handle it. But then they are told they have to get permission from another parent outside the household before they do. Parents would not allow their family life to be hampered by others outside the family who have no understanding of what life in their family is like.

The fact that we are self-governing and not under a Patriarch or Archbishop overseas gives us the ability to decide on matters of church life (which may impact on family life) based on life in this country. Too many times events overseas have dictated the decisions made by mother churches in other countries on behalf of their churches here in America. Is this for the well-being of the churches in America? How can unity in America ever become a reality when the dictates of other churches become a hindrance to this?

I would encourage our families in the next year to become more familiar with this gift of Autocephaly that has been given to the Orthodox Church in America. We will be honoring our autocephaly with Deanery celebrations throughout the Diocese this year. This began with our first celebration in the Chicago Deanery on February 7th and 8th. Monthly reflections on Autocephaly starting in January have been posted on the DOM website. This will continue throughout the year. Clergy and lay people will be offering them. Download them to see if any of them can be used as talking points with your kids. You can also go to the OCA web page to learn more about the history of our autocephaly:

<https://www.oca.org/history-archives/orthodox-christians-na>

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,

The unworthy +Paul