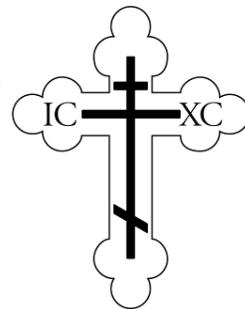
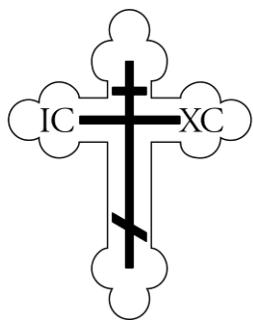


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America

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Merrillville, IN
(219)947-4748
www.ptvm.com

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

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or
after Vespers or by appointment

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

February 22, 2026

Forgiveness Sunday

Finding of the Honorable Head of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist John

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the women disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles:

“Death is overthrown!

Christ God is risen, //
granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 4 – Troparion for St John

The head of the Forerunner has shone from the earth,
sending forth rays of incorruption and healings to the faithful.
It gathers together a multitude of angels above
and summons the human race below//
to send up glory with one voice to Christ our God.

Tone 2 – Kontakion for St John

O Prophet of God and Forerunner of Grace,
we have found your head as a sacred rose.
Therefore we always receive healings from it,//
and, as in times past, now you preach repentance to the world.

Tone 6 – 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!”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 8 – Prokeimenon for Forgiveness Sunday (Psalm 75)

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God!

Tone 7– Prokeimenon for the Forerunner (Psalm 63)

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord / and shall hope in Him.

Epistle: Romans 13.11-14.4 (Sunday)

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.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4.6-15 (St. John)

Brethren: It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are hard-pressed on every side yet not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So then, death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Gospel: Matthew 6.14-21 (Sunday)

The Lord 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.

Gospel: Matthew 11.2-15 (St. John)

At that time John heard in prison about the works of Christ, so he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.'

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Richard Mirr
Dalton Richards
Bp. Seraphim (Sigrist)
Nickolas Resunenko
Jovan Savich
Lori Shaffer

Ev. Mem. George Dormichoff ('54)
Andrew Najmolovsky (1962)
Michael Alexeychuck (1967)
John Swalla (1985)
Joyce Krochta (2025)

Health & Salvation

Archpr. Peter
Mat. Cynthia
Hierom. John
Mat. Anne
Valer
Nun Theodora
Rollie
Claudia

Mary Ann
Raymond
Edward
Charlotte
Betsy
Klaudia
Maja
Gerald
Janet

Gerald
Rebecca
Christopher
Moses
Helena
James
Elijah
Lydia
Nina

Ezra	Meagan	Logan
James	Kimberly	Tanya
Rebecca	Stephanie	Christopher
Jesse	Robin	Olga
Autumn	Leonardo	Michael
James	Daniel	Sara
John	Tiffany	John
Jacob	Yelena	Kirby
Carol	Anastasia	Loretta
Snezana	James	Alex
Ryan	Rita	Trudi
Nathan	Alla	Michal
Kara	Betty	Anika
Sarah	Mary Ann	Sarah
Jamie	Maria	Richard
Kyleigh	Londyn	Christine
Lauren	Hattie	Mira
Kyle	Lisa	Joseph
Carolynn	Isabella	Jaroslava
Amelia	Alessandra	Cameron
Aaron	Jennifer	Regina
Marcietta	Steven	Matthew
Charles	Sergei	Cindy
Rosemary	Heidi	Aisha
Nicholas	Jennifer	Don
Natalie	Ethan	

To add the name of a loved one recently departed or on the anniversary of their repose, or someone living and in particular need of prayer, please speak to Fr Jacob.

Special Petitions at the Augmented Litany:

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially the victims in Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and Palestine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hearken and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today we serve **Forgiveness Vespers** following coffee hour. This is an important service. We begin Great Lent together by forgiving one

another and receiving forgiveness. It is already a taste of Pascha, which we set ourselves to prepare for.

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be at **Sts Peter & Paul Macedonian Orthodox Church in Crown Point at 6pm on March 1** with Bishop Andrei of the OCA Romanian Archdiocese presiding. A free dinner will follow in their banquet hall. **Please let Fr Jacob know if you plan to stay for the dinner**, so that he can RSVP for our parish.

Mark your calendars:

Feb 23: **Great Canon**, part 1 @ 7pm

Feb 24: **Great Canon**, part 2 @ 7pm

Feb 25: **Presanctified Liturgy @ 9am**
Great Canon, part 3 @ 7pm

Feb 26: **Great Canon**, part 4 @ 7pm

Feb 27: **Presanctified Liturgy @ 9am**

Mar 1: **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at Sts Peter and Paul in Crown Point @ 6pm**

Last Week's Gifts to the Lord: \$3,327.43

ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT from His Eminence, our Archbishop Daniel

To the Clergy, Monastics, Faithful and Friends of the Diocese of the Midwest, Beloved in the Lord,

I greet all of you with love as we enter into the grace-filled season of Great Lent. As the Doors of Repentance are opened to us, I ask your forgiveness for any way in which I have sinned against you as your Bishop and Archpastor, as your Father in Christ, and as your brother in the Lord.

Every year, at the beginning of Great Lent, the Church encourages and reminds us of the traditional practices we have at our disposal in order to continue growing in holiness and to focus most especially on our preparation for the great celebration of the Lord's three-day Paschal mystery which we commemorate in Holy Week

and on Holy Pascha. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, we are told of how we should behave in our practices of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer:

When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you. When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

When you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret...

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

As we hear in these words, it is the Lord Himself who counsels us on how we are to proceed in the season of repentance and renewal that lies ahead of us. Almsgiving. Prayer. Fasting. Focus, or refocusing on the things of heaven and not on the things of this world. These are the keys that open for us the doors of repentance, the doors that lead us into the Kingdom of Heaven.

In our Orthodox Christian tradition, we look to the weeks ahead of us as a holy, sacred time. Indeed, we look to Great Lent as a time during which we embark upon a journey. Great Lent takes us on a journey during which we are guided by the Church, supported by one another in maintaining our focus and our purpose through the very practices of which the Lord Jesus speaks. We understand this journey not merely as a time of dietary restrictions, fasting, more prayer, reaching out to those in need, and re-setting our priorities. This is a season in which we cleanse our hearts, minds and souls. We

deepen our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through prayer. We focus on the needs of others before our own needs in order to serve Christ by serving our neighbors. And we work to establish the right relationship between the “things” of this world and the treasures that await us in the Kingdom that is to come.

During these forty days, the Church invites all of us to:

- Fast with humility – not as an expectation or inconvenience, but as a way to free the soul from passions.
- Pray with sincerity – always seeking God’s mercy and guidance in every moment.
- Give generously – remembering that love for others is inseparable from love for God.
- Repent wholeheartedly – turning away from sin and the concerns of the world and placing our eyes on the things that really matter and so be embraced by the Father; and,
- Refocus intently on the things that matter most.

As we gather in our churches throughout the Diocese of the Midwest, I encourage you to participate in the Lenten Divine Services and join in prayer with our Orthodox sisters and brothers within the diocese and throughout the world; as we fast together and pray together and repent of our sins, as we minister together with all those who are in need. Let us do so, always being of one mind and heart, professing our faith in the One Who has saved us.

Please be assured that I share with you in all the spiritual challenges of the weeks that lies before us. Let us pray for one another that our efforts will benefit not only ourselves, but indeed, will bring blessings to the entire local Church, our diocesan family. May this Great Lent, be for all of us a season of peace, forgiveness, healing, and spiritual renewal so that with full hearts we may all greet with joy the bright and radiant feast of Pascha.

Be assured of my prayers and blessings for you, your families, and all your loved ones.

With love in Christ,

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

Glory to God for all things!