



Ridna Shkola – Christmas Play at St. John Parish

Вертеп Рідної Школи на Просфорі Ц. Св. Івана Хрестителя



Theophany for children of "Ridna Shkola"



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SAINT NICHOLAS
UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



УКРАЇНСЬКА КАТОЛИЦЬКА
ЦЕРКВА СВЯТОГО МИКОЛАЯ



N^o
4

ПІД ОПІКОЮ
ПРЕЧИСТОЇ ДІВИ
МАРІЇ ОДІГТРИЇ

UNDER THE
PROTECTION OF
MOTHER OF GOD



CHURCH BULLETIN

January 25 – 2015 – 25 Січня

ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК

Please pray often for Church UNITY!

Просимо молитися часто за ЄДНІСТЬ!



CHURCH BULLETIN

Jan. 25 – 2015 – 25 Січня

ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE



Saint Nicholas Church
Церква Св. Миколая
(Під Опікою П.Д.М.)

ПОР'ЯДОК СВ. ЛІТУРГІЙ

4:30 PM За Парохіян – For Parishioners

Jan. 25 S. Of Publ. & Phar. – Н. Митаря і Фарисея

12:00 +Joseph Procyk (Eliana Ivanychko)

Monday, January 26 Січня, Понеділок

9:00 AM +Hilary & Julia Holowaty
(Michelle, Michael Michalow)

Tuesday, January 27 Січня, Вівторок

8:15 AM Int. of Fr. Ray & Family (Peter Maxim)

Wednesday, January 28 Січня, Середа

8:15 AM +Oresta Pereyema (MaryAnn DuBois)

Thursday, January 29 Січня, Четвер

6:30 PM +Mary Beth Sukmann (Family) – 40 days →

Three Hierarchs – Трьох Святителів

Friday, January 30 Січня, П'ятниця

9:00 AM +Ann Sukmann (Graig & Gail Rose)

Sat. January 31 Січня Субота

9:00 AM +Теодозій Пришляк (Михайло Бельмеґа)

4:30 PM Dec. Members from Procyk Family:
+Михайло, Марія, Євдокія, Гринько, Іван
Софія (A. M. Petryshyn)

Feb. 1 S. Of Prodigal Son. – Н. Блудного Сина

12:00 PM За Парохіян – For Parishioners

The Eternal Light burns
in mem. of
+Mary Beth Sukmann

Вічне Світло в честь П.Д.М.
горить за
МИР В УКРАЇНІ

Христос Раждається! Славимо Його!

25 Січня: Н. По Богоявленні / Неділя Закхя

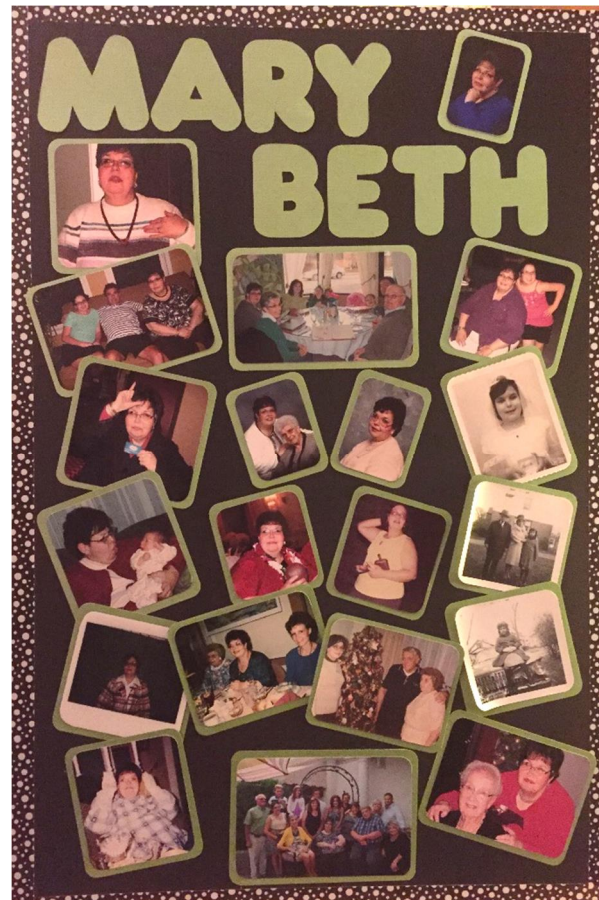
10:00 р. +Осипа і Михайло Захарків
(донька Галина Білоголовська)

П'ят. 30 Січня: **Св. Антонія Преподобного**

9:00 р. Диви за григоріянським

1 Лютого: Неділя Митаря і Фарисея

10:00 р. +Ірина Войчак (Роман)



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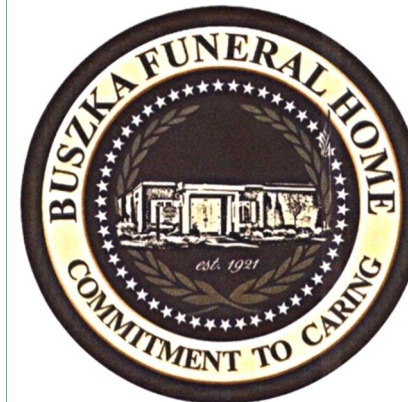
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Is the the web-page to find
More information and events
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Maria Plotycia



2015 LUC dues are now payable. Please
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League of Ukrainian Catholics, Niagara
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Dues can be sent to
Ihor Pereyma, 38 Lester St.,
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"The Vibrant Parish..."

The Word of God

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom," St. Paul teaches us in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col 3:16). Through the Word of God we come to know Christ, we encounter Him, and enter into a living relationship with Him. "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ," said St. Jerome. In our parishes we want to follow the example of the first Christians so that the Word of God might become the foundation of our ecclesial, parochial, family, social, and personal life. I strongly urge pastors to diligently prepare their homilies based on the proclaimed Word of God in such a way that this Word might become "living and active" in the life of our parishioners, capable of nourishing them, giving them answers to real issues of the day, and inspiring them to service.

The Word of God should bear visible fruit in our everyday lives because only those who keep this Word, that is, obey it, will be called blessed in the Lord (see Lk 11:28). In our parishes there should not be a single family which does not own a Bible. I encourage all our faithful to read the Sacred Scriptures on a daily basis; this is done ideally through participation in parish biblestudy groups or through prayerful reading at home. The newly published Catechism of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, "Christ our Pascha," is another essential volume which should become a handbook of faith for all the members of our Church – children, youth, and adults. The Catechism, according to Metropolitan Andrey (Sheptytsky), is the foundation of Christian life.

On this occasion I wish to emphasize that all the members of our Church have a personal responsibility throughout their whole lives to acquire an ever deeper knowledge of the truth of the Holy Faith, while the clergy must not neglect their responsibility of teaching the faith to their parishioners, not only through preaching, but also through catechetical instruction. When we speak of catechesis, we understand this to be a continuous process of entering into the mystery of the Church, to be applied not only to children who are preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments). Permanent and continuous formation for various age groups – children, youth, adults, and the elderly – is an essential component of the vibrant parish. Finally, I would to emphasize that just as it is with the Bible, so too the Catechism of our Church should be a hand-book for each member of our community as it is a most valuable aid for a proper understanding and reading of the Word of God.

(To be cont.)



Born on the first day of August in 1922, the loving woman known to most as Mary Bumbar was gifted with an indomitable spirit, boundless energy and a fiery will to live. Born to Dmytro and Maria Zhuk, Mary would spend her childhood in Zhukiw in Poland, giving her an all too early taste of the evils and cruelties of this world as she was forced to hide her very Ukrainian descent to avoid being mistreated by the locals. Mary was dealt yet another early blow when she, at the young age of 14, lost her mother to a sudden illness. An uneasy home life after this tragedy, drove Mary to leave home at age 16 to naively seek work in Nazi Germany.

It was in Germany when things somehow managed to get worse...a full scale war broke out and Mary found herself hiding from the bombing raids of the Americans and their allies. But God began to smile on her in this foreign land; Mary met the love of her life in a fellow displaced Ukrainian named Wasyl Bumbar. She married him and together they soon had another blessing, the birth of their new little daughter, Ursula (or, as you might know her...Orysia.)

God decided to bless Mary once again and Mary was able to come with her new family to the United States during one of history's most prosperous periods. She made a home for herself in the Ukrainian community of Buffalo, New York. It was here she eventually learned to drive, got her own car and even a nice house in the suburbs.

Mary would eventually lose her husband at a young age and found new focus in her daughter's family. Mary spent the next 32 years helping the church and her daughter, son-in-law and two grandsons with everything she could...and then some. In her free time, Mary enjoyed playing cards and bingo, attending church, baking and eating delicious sweet treats, going to her weekly seniors' group meetings and monthly trips to the casinos.

Sadly, God would have one more challenge for Mary. He took away her memories of all these events and left her with only an all-consuming desire to go home. For seven long years, years which must have felt like several more lifetimes for Mary, she was made to suffer; lost, confused and wanting to go home to her mother. On New Year's Eve of 2014, Mary called out to us and we were witness to her passing. She left us with one final gift, a comforting warmth washed over us as we realized that yes, she was gone, but she was finally done suffering this world's cruelties and was now home with her mother, husband, siblings and the Lord.

Dear Mary,

We will always miss you, Mama & Baba... but we're glad you're finally home and can be happy for all eternity. Thank you for everything you've done for us and all the good memories you left behind, we will always love you Babcia!

All Our Love,

Family



Sunday Coffee Hours: If anyone would like to volunteer to host a Sunday, please contact Elaine, Emily, Mary (B) or Anna.

- KITCHEN is now open.
- Thank you for your patronage.
We need your help in the kitchen. Thank you!
- Coffee Hour - Usually Every Sunday after Liturgy in Church Hall. Please join us!
- St. Nicholas Prospora Dinner – Sunday, January 11. No noon Liturgy that day.

TOP'S GIFT CARDS:

Please help us raise money for our Church by purchasing Top's Gift Cards from us. If you buy in Tops anyway, why not help. You do not lose or gain anything by doing this, but our Church will benefit greatly. We receive back 5% of your spending. To take advantage of this program, see Mary Bodnar or call 655-3810, or call the rectory. Thank you and God Bless!

Please note: You can purchase gasoline with this card at Tops Gasoline Station.



У нас успішно продаються Карточки з крамниці "Топс". Купуючи їх ви помагаєте церкві. Для Вас не робить різниці чи ви платили грішми чи карточкою, але церква дістане від „Топс” 5%. На \$1,000 церква одержить \$50. Що б закупити слід звертатися до п. Марії Боднар, або до канцелярії. Дякуємо!

CHURCH BULLETIN is published weekly.
Deadline for information is Friday Evening.
ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК видається тижнево.
Інформації подавати до П'ятниці вечора.

SAINT NICHOLAS UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

УКРАЇНЬКА КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЦЕРКВА СВЯТОГО МИКОЛАЯ

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Rev. Raymond Palko, visiting priest

**Please call if you are hospitalized,
homebound and need a priest.**

**Просимо закликати якщо ви у лічниці
або приковані до ліжка!**

My Ukraine photography exhibit

As I Wake, I Cry: Revisiting Ukraine weaves together recent travel photos to Ukraine with family photos and cultural artifacts to reveal the emotional story of one artist's road to cultural identification. This work is dedicated to the 'Celestial 100' who died at Euromaidan, the growing number of dead, wounded, and displaced, the many illegal prisoners of war, and the people of Russia – all suffering the effects of the illegal and undeclared Russian war in Ukraine.

Please join artist Lukia Costello in her solo exhibition at CEPA Gallery titled 'As I Wake, I Cry - Revisiting Ukraine'.

The show opens Friday January 30th 7-10 pm and runs through March 28th 2015. CEPA Gallery is located at 617 Main St. Buffalo, NY 14203

A portion of all sales will be donated in the name of Maria and Vasyl Sywenkyj to benefit the Ukrainian Freedom fund as administered through Ukr. Federal Credit Union @ Dnipro.

<http://www.cepagallery.org/portfolio/wake-cry-revisiting-ukraine-lukia-costello/>

СТИПЕНДІЙНА АКЦІЯ 49-ГО ВІДДІЛУ СУА ПОВІДОМЛЯЄ,

ЩО З 1-ГО ЛЮТОГО 2015 РОКУ,
РОЗПОЧИНАЄМО ЗБІРКУ НА
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НЕЗАМОЖНОЇ МОЛОДІ В УКРАЇНІ.

ЧЕКИ МОЖНА ВИПИСІВАТИ:
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LEAGUE. МИНУЛОРИЧНІ ЗВІТИ Є У
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Зірка Яцишин-Банчі - 668-9504
та Оксана Салдит - 832-9331

«Соборність є силою українського народу»

Отець і Глава Української Гр.-Католицької Церкви Блаженніший Святослав у День Соборності України під час Літургії в екуменічному храмі Непорочного серця Марії та українських новомучеників, що на вулиці Інститутській у Києві, закликав людей доброї волі та всіх вірних Греко-Католицької Церкви тривати в безперервній молитві й пості.

«Ми не маємо права послабити сьогодні наших молитов. Адже ця соборна молитва, яка лунає в різних частинах України, але об'єднує нас перед Божим обличчям, є запорукою нашої перемоги», – наголосив Предстоятель УГКЦ.

Сьогодні Україна відзначає день своєї Соборності. Що таке Соборність, що вона в собі несе? Чому нам так важливо собі усвідомити зміст цього поняття? «Слово «соборність» ми знаходимо в нашому Символі віри, - пояснив проповідник. – Святі отці в Нікеї і Константинополі, коли хотіли окреслити прикмети Христової Церкви, ісповідували так: вірую в єдину, святу, соборну і апостольську Церкву. Дослівно слово «соборна» перекладається «католицька». Це означає, що Христос заснував одну-єдину Церкву».

Для нас, українців, каже Блаженніший Святослав, слово «соборність» має ще інше значення. Зокрема, цього дня ми відзначаємо пам'ять історичної події – День злуки. «На Софійському майдані в єдину соборну державу була об'єднана Українська Народна Республіка і Західна Українська Народна Республіка. Наш український народ, який впродовж історії був пошматований між різними імперіями, нарешті здобув свою державу, до котрої входили всі ті, що хотіли жити в єдиній, вільній і незалежній Україні», – розповів Глава Церкви.

(Департамент інформації УГКЦ)



Letter from Fr. Ray Jan. 25, 2014 A.D.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear _____

(say your name right here for your very own personal letter)

It is with great joy that I am able, once again, to greet you and send your very own letter for this week. I've spoken to a number of people over the last several days, especially as I go out to bless homes, and you have been telling me how important this little note is, and how you look forward to getting "your letter" every week. Thank you for your kind words! Whatever good you find here, or however you are better able to see the Lord, give God the glory! I know I am only his instrument. It makes me very happy to know you enjoy this "letter about nothing."

As priest I am, as the little kid in the back of the church once said, "Fr. Ray, the Blessing Guy." The priest is indeed called to bless, and it is with great joy that I minister to you as "a Blessing Guy." I do rejoice when I can bring the presence, blessing and love of Almighty God to you, whether it be in these words of your letter, or the priestly blessing into your hand, or the blessings of the Liturgy over your bowed heads, or coming into your homes with the holy Jordan Water. Thank you for allowing me to bless you and yours. It is great to feel like a priest.....it is great to be a priest! God bless you and keep you and make His face shine upon you and grant you His Peace!

I hope your priest was able to make it to your house for that special blessing and re-dedication of your home and family to Almighty God. You do realize that if you would like your house blessed, and Father hasn't been there yet, it is ok for you to call him and make an appointment. Take my word for it, he will be very glad to come. We always hope to get to every house, but weather or some other obligation or call causes a change in schedule and before you know it, it is Lent. But please call, and we will come!

The carrying of the Jordan water to our homes is one of our very beautiful traditions. I think perhaps a long time ago it may have been a bit easier to take

the blessing to the homes, especially if it was a small village in "the Old Country." In those days the community would finish the water blessing at the church, or by the river, and return to their homes. Shortly after that, usually on the same day, the priest and the cantor would be out blessing the homes. Now we've all got our schedules and things to do, and also nearly every house is a bit of a drive to get to, so it is a little more time consuming, but that's what we do. We're "Blessing Guys" and we want to come.

I ran out of space last week and kind of abruptly ended your letter as I wrote about abortion and our spineless, godless politicians, who keep promoting the killing of babies. I was referring to a bill that the present governor of New York, and at least two before him, have been trying to get passed. It has ten points, nine of which are mostly good, but the tenth is simply an expansion of abortion on demand. So far it has not been able to pass, thank God. However, as I said, it has been there for many years as they chip away, chip away and continue to attack innocent life. This so called Women's Equality Act is supported by Naral and Planned Parenthood so Christians should take note of that fact. If those groups are for something, most likely it is against our faith and our belief in the sanctity of life.

All people of faith must be ever vigilant and ready to fight for the protection life from conception to natural death. Today is Wednesday January 21 as I write, and Washington, D.C. is rapidly filling with pilgrims of all ages, from all over this land. I take this opportunity to remind you of it, even though the actual march will be over when you are reading these lines. Thousands upon thousands of young and old, faithful Christians of many denominations gather each year to protest the Roe vs. Wade decision, whereby abortion on demand became the law of the land. Not only do they protest and demand repeal of that dastardly law, but perhaps more importantly they also become our conscience.

We are once again very clearly reminded about the horror and destruction of the evil attack on our lives and our country. Once again we are called to fight

against those who attack life. That side, as I wrote above, never rests in the battle, and neither should we. All of us need to be reminded of this and then ask ourselves, "What am I doing to protect human life?" We all can't leave our jobs and homes to march, even for this one or two days, but all of us can, and should, have an everyday commitment to the cause of Life. Then, after asking the question, "What am I doing to protect human life?", we will need to follow up and commit ourselves every single day, especially with prayer. *"It is necessary to reassert the strongest opposition to every direct attack on life, especially innocent and defenseless life, and the unborn child in the womb is the definition of innocence. Every Christian is responsible for this evangelical witness: to protect life in all its stages with courage and love."* Pope Francis to Pro-life Activists, 4/11/14.

"Without life, nothing else matters!" This is a quote, from a pro-life website in Stephenson, IL which I found one night as I was surfing the web. I think it is so very true. If we have little or no care for life, then everything else falls apart...nothing else matters. To prove that statement, all we need to do is to look around our town, country and world. Many years ago people like Fr. John Corapi, Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II warned us in many ways that as long as abortion and the culture of death prevailed, then our country would be on the road to destruction. To prove that point, just look around you....turn on the TV news, read the paper, talk to those with whom you live and work. Yes, the world is on the path to destruction unless we change and repent. To prove that statement, hear the word of the Lord! *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."* Deuteronomy 30:19 A Prayer for Victims of Abortion: *"O most merciful and compassionate Lord Christ our Savior. Son of God we entreat Thee, most gracious Master: look with compassion upon Thy children who have been condemned to death by the unjust judgment of*

men. And as Thou hast promised to bestow the heavenly kingdom on them born of water and the Spirit, and who in blamelessness of life have been translated unto Thee, and Who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"-we humbly pray, according to Thy unfailing promise: Grant the inheritance of Thy kingdom to the multitude of spotless infants who have been cruelly murdered in the abortuaries of this land; for Thou art the resurrection and the life and the repose of Thy servants and of these innocents, O Christ our God.

Turn the hearts of those who seek to destroy Thy little ones. We beseech Thee to pour forth Thy healing grace upon them, that they may be convicted in their hearts and turn from evil ways. Remember all of them that kill our children as on the altars of Moloch, and render not unto them according to their deeds, but according to Thy great mercy convert them-the unbelieving that they may turn from evil and do good.

O Holy Master, Almighty Father and pre-eternal God, Who alone made and directs all things; Who rises up quickly against the evil of the impious ones, Who by providence, teaches Thy people preservation of justice and the obliteration of evil on earth; Who condescends to raise up warriors for the protection of the people of God: we entreat Thee with compunction, that as Thou didst give David power to defeat Goliath, and as Thou didst condescend through Judas Maccabeus, to seize victory from the arrogant pagans who would not call on Thy Name; so too, grant protection to us, Thy servants against enemies rising against us as we go forth to do spiritual battle against the evil one and those who do his will, rather than Thine. For Thou art a merciful God, and lovest mankind, and unto Thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Have a blessed week, my Dear One! You are one of God's warriors! This day we choose LIFE! May our Holy Lady Protect you beneath her heavenly mantle!

In His Love, Fr. Ray

З радія "Милосердний Самарянин"

Дорогі радіо слухачі!

Одна ізраїльська легенда розповідає про володаря, що подивляв дивні речі, які діялися навколо Мойсея. Тому наказав він маляреві намалювати портрет цього пророка і законодавця. Коли твір був готовий, володар скликав усіх своїх мудреців і сказав, щоб описати особу, яка зображена на портреті.

Мудреці майже одногосно відповіли: "Ця особа мусить бути злочинцем, оскільки з його лица б'є бажання власності, несправедливість та зло". Це дуже здивувало володаря, тому вирішив сам піти до Мойсея, щоб на нього подивитися.

Прибувши на пустиню, показав Мойсеєві портрет і сказав: "Мої мудреці вважають, що ти мусиш бути злодієм, оскільки з твого лица б'є бажання власності, несправедливість та зло. Але я бачу, що вони мене обманули, ти ж великий в Божих очах!"

На це Мойсей відповів: "Твої мудреці не обманювали тебе, бо я ношу в собі всі ці риси. Але Господь дозволив мені побачити себе іншими очима. Я є таким, як описали тобі твої мудреці, але водночас також кимось іншим: я отримав своє життя від Бога!"

Неодноразово наш погляд зупиняється на зовнішньому вигляді речей чи осіб. На основі цього спостереження стараюся збудувати своє бачення щодо цього предмету чи особи. Але чи моя оцінка відповідає дійсності? Відповідь можна віднайти у сьогоднішній Євангелії.

Після сцени uzдоровлення сліпця євангелист Лука подає уривок з життя Закхея, ніби хоче вказати на певний зв'язок цих двох постатей. Закхея був багатим чоловіком, працював як митар, тобто той, який збирав податки з людей, а навіть був головою над митарями. З першого погляду можемо відразу дати певну "оцінку" про нього. Він працює для уряду і ми старали б ся обережно з ним говорити а по можливості оминати його.

...

Чи на порозі великого посту, який поволі наступає, хоча ще різдв'яний час не минув, і ми готові відчинити двері нашої душі, і впустити Христа до середини, запросити його на гостину, прибрати відповідно і щедро роздати відповідні подарунки? Чи зможемо сказати: "половину роздам і в четверо поверну", і "знаю що нічого мені не бракуватиме". Господь зрадіє з такого нашого наставлення і скаже нам, що спасіння зійшло і на наш дім.

"Кого образив учетверо поверну" сказав Закхея. Запитаймося кого ми образили, кого скривдили, кого очорнили, кого ненавидимо, кому хочемо відплатитися учетверо, від кого подвійно забрати... Але можемо наладнати, привернути спокій, очистити себе, простити тим що провинилися проти нас і шукати прощення у тих проти яких ми провинилися. І коли б наші гріхи були як багрянця червоні, Христос їх вибілить немов сніг і згадувати не буде і ми знов будемо його братами і сестрами й улюбленими дітьми Всевишнього.

Господь і нас знає, і бачить нас наскрізь, розуміє усі наші труднощі, і до нас запрошується у гостину, бо хоче нам принести спокій і радість. Приймім його до себе, заведем його до найбільш скритих закутків нашого серця. Хай він оселиться там і звідам випромінює світлом віри, для тих що Бога шукають, світлом надії для тих що її не мають, світлом любові, для тих яких ненависть опанувала.

Цікавість привела Закхея до Христа і він почав ним жити. Хай і нас подібна цікавість приведе до розп'ятого щоб і ми брали участь у його радості по воскресінню.

Зустріч грішника з Ісусом переімяє грішника, переімяє нас, бо кожний з нас є грішником перед Богом. Не можна з такої зустрічі вертатися то того, що було перешкодою на дорозі до Бога. В кожною зустрічі з Господом чуємо слова, якими Він промовив до Закхея: «Сьогодні до твого серця спасіння прийшло». Амінь

Христос Раждається! Славте Його!

The Blessings of Homes

I will attempt to bless as many homes as possible this year. If for some reason he does not make it to your home and you want your house blessed, or if you would like a certain time of day, please let me know.

Благословенн Домів

Постараюся відвідати з благословенням домів. Якщо не буду у вас а хотіли би, що б я прийшов, або є проблема часу через працю – просимо дати знати і постараюся прийти у відповідний час.

The Sisters Servants of Mary

Immaculate cordially invite you to St. Mary's Villa, on Sunday, February 8th as we celebrate the *Year of Consecrated Life* as declared by Pope Francis. We encourage you to "Come and See" and visit with the Sisters Servants for an afternoon. The Open House is from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm. The address is 150 Sisters Servants Lane, Sloatsburg, NY 10974. A schedule of the day is posted. If you would like to join us or have any questions regarding this day, please call Sr. Kathleen at 845-753-2840 or email at srkath25@gmail.com by February 2, 2015. We would like to plan accordingly for the number people attending the Divine Liturgy and lunch.

Thoughts about Humility

"These are the few ways we can practice humility:

To speak as little as possible of one's self.

To mind one's own business.

Not to want to manage other people's affairs.

To avoid curiosity.

To accept contradictions and correction cheerfully.

To pass over the mistakes of others.

To accept insults and injuries.

To accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked.

To be kind and gentle even under provocation.

Never to stand on one's dignity.

To choose always the hardest." (Mother Teresa)

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." (C.S. Lewis)

"As long as you are proud you cannot know God.

A proud man is always looking down on thing and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking

down you cannot see something that is above you."

(C.S. Lewis)

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self." (Ernest Hemingway)

"I believe that the first test of a great man is his humility. I don't mean by humility, doubt of his power. But really great men have a curious feeling that the greatness is not of them, but through them. And they see something divine in every other man and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."

(John Ruskin)

"If, when stung by slander or ill-nature, we wax proud and swell with anger, it is a proof that our gentleness and humility are unreal, and mere artificial show." (Francis de Sales)

"The more humble and obedient to God a man is, the more wise and at peace he will be in all that he does." (Thomas à Kempis)

"Never curse a fall. The ground is where humility lives." (Yasmin Mogahed)

From "Good Samaritan" Ukr. Radio pr.

Today is the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. It also marks a formal beginning to our preparation for the Great Lent. Therefore, we are now in a period of time to make ready ourselves – only few more weeks. Next week follows the Prodigal Son, then the Sunday of Last Judgment, and lastly the Sunday of Forgiveness. This time is given for us to reflect upon what it is that we need to do to improve ourselves. In today's Gospel reading, two men come to temple to pray. One man is a Pharisee, and the other man a publican. While the



Pharisee felt obligated out of habit and common display; the publican approaches with humility, teaching us how we should pray within the House of God. The Pharisee was a man who revered himself above others, and further believed that his fasting and tithing made him great among men. "God, I thank you that I am not like other men. I fast twice a week, and I tithe from all that I receive." The Pharisee was so confident of his own righteousness, that he looked down on everyone else around him, including the publican, and this is the exact reason why Jesus preached today's parable: to reach out to those who are proud or those who think that their own goodness makes them righteous before God. Righteousness is not something that we can obtain for ourselves. Only the publican understood that righteousness and mercy come from God's goodness alone. The publican stood at a distance and would not even look up to Heaven. He beat his chest repeatedly, deeply aware of his sinfulness, and bowed his head as he fell to his knees praying, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" The publican

was able to see that without God's mercy, he could not be saved.

In order to fully understand the lesson we must see that the Pharisee was not completely wrong and the publican was not completely right, and yet as the Gospel tells us, one of them was justified and the other was not. The most important line from today's parable serves as both a lesson and a stern warning: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted". There is some of the pride of the Pharisee and some of the humility of the publican in each of

us. To a greater or lesser degree, we are all called by Jesus in today's Gospel to make that journey from pride to humility. That is why in the parable the humble publican who asked God for mercy went home at peace with God and why the proud Pharisee did not. The publican goes to the temple in humility. It is above all in his prayer that we see his repentance, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) Unlike the Pharisee, he did not try to conceal who he really was or put on false pretenses to hide his real self from God. He came to the Lord completely vulnerable and aware of his shortcomings, and God met him where he was and lifted him up, so he went home justified and at peace. Jesus further warns us, "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5). The publican, he knew he was a sinner, he knew he was far from God in his life, so he came to the temple with the sole purpose of asking the Lord for mercy, whereas the Pharisee came out of obligation and to appear great before

others. This parable forces us to look deep within ourselves and ask: Why do we come to Church to pray? When we prepare to come to Church, are we more preoccupied with who will see us than we are about connecting with God?

There was a little boy who was kneeling by his bed with his mother to say his nighttime prayers. He began to shout at the top of his lungs, "Dear God, I have been real good this year so please let me get a new bicycle for my birthday." His mother said, "Son, God is not deaf, you do not need to yell." To which the boy replied, "God is not deaf but grandma is, and she is sitting in the next room." All of our acts of personal devotion must be sacred and personal – not intended for the listener but rather God - for the man or woman, who does not seek our Lord outside the temple, will surely lose sight of Him within. Our prayer is a constant communion with the Lord who never fails to hear our innermost appeal. *"Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."* Prayer marks our point of transcendence, from the human consciousness to the Divine Presence, the point at which we can completely surrender our heart and soul to God. But only a humble heart may truly be exalted, for only humility directs us beyond our sins and offenses, and points us toward the Lord who is all merciful. Genuine worship does involve spectators, but only an audience of one. When we come to Church to pray, we should only be concerned about developing our relationship with the Lord. Prayer and humility become the ways by which we struggle to be with God.

There was a very wealthy entrepreneur named Thomas, a well-known industrialist who travelled throughout the world negotiating multi-million dollar business deals. Thomas had many hired hands over the years. One of which was a man named Martin. He had been Thomas' limousine driver for the past 30 years; he went with Thomas on most of his trips and chauffeured him around from place to place. A few years ago Martin retired, Thomas was overseas

as usual for some important business venture, when he heard word that Martin had passed away. As soon as he received the news, Thomas canceled his meetings and immediately returned home. He went without delay to Martin's home and met with his family, expressing his sincere heartfelt condolences over their loss. He then asked the family something extraordinary, he wanted to know if he could personally transport Martin to his final resting place after the funeral services. When Martin's family agreed, Thomas had his limousine decorated with the finest flowers, the same limousine that Martin had chauffeured Thomas around in for many years. Then Thomas, himself, drove Martin and his family in the limousine on their journey from the church to the cemetery. When later asked about it, Thomas replied that Martin had served him faithfully day and night, and that this was the least he could do for the man he had grown fond of and was eternally grateful to. Thomas further added that Martin was a hardworking and devoted man who rose up from poverty and educated both his children very well. I just wonder how many people today would humble themselves in such a way as to drop everything and do such a thoughtful and kind deed for someone who worked beneath them. It isn't every day that those with great power show great humility.



"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:14) Those who are proud or boastful do not realize that everything they have comes from God. None of us has anything that was not first given to us by God; we have all been purchased for the Father at a great price. Christ died on the cross for you and for me, and for the person sitting next to us and the people living in our home, and also for the neighbors we may not always get along with, the people who perhaps annoy us at work, and even those persons who have hurt us deeply. Christ died for all of humanity, so we are all equally precious in the eyes of God. Unfortunately, in today's society it does not always work like that, which is probably why so many of our teens and young adults act as if the world owes them so much. But equality is Jesus' plan for His kingdom where we are all equally loved before God – no matter who we are or where we come from. St. Paul writes: *"Continue yourself in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them."* When we come before God, whether in Church or in prayer, we should come humbly, acknowledging our sinfulness without any excuses of righteousness or false pretenses. Let us simply pray as the publican did in today's Gospel: *"Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."*

It was King David who prayed in Psalm 50: *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins."* God will always welcome those who humbly trust in His mercy and righteousness. With today's Gospel reading, the Church is trying to prepare us so we can look inside ourselves, and learn more about our own relationship with God, since Lent will soon be upon us. We need to preserve ourselves with patience and charity. The Lord said, *"Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."* When someone smites us we are to turn the other cheek, and, if our enemy has us go with him one mile, we are told to go with him two. The Word tells us what seem to be impossible things, but Christ also taught us: *"What is impossible for man is possible with God."* Through our knowledge and faith in Christ, we can come before the Lord with the assurance that He forgives our sins and listens to our prayers. My brothers and sisters, may the presence of the Almighty in our lives, guide us through our coming Lenten journey, through the Passion of Christ, and onward to His Glorious Resurrection.

