



LENTEN PASTORAL OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF THE USA 2026

As we enter the holy season of Great Lent, the Church once again invites us to walk a sacred path - a path from darkness into light, from sin into renewal, from spiritual cold into the warmth of God's love. Lent can never be constrained to a certain period of time marked in red on the liturgical calendar. It is a pilgrimage of the heart, a gradual return to God, and a preparation to encounter the radiant joy of the Resurrection.

This year, however, we begin our Lenten journey while our world trembles under instability and suffering. Political tensions, both at home and abroad, social divisions, violence, uncertainty and moral confusion surround us. Our beloved ancestral homeland of Ukraine continues to endure the illegal invasion of a brutal foreign regime, which seeks not only to conquer territory but extinguish hope and life itself. The deliberate destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, now, during the coldest winter experienced for many years - leaving cities and families in freezing darkness - is a cruel attempt to break the spirit of a people.

Yet Lent reminds us that darkness is never final, cold is never interminable. Christ Himself entered the deepest and coldest night - betrayal, suffering, abandonment, death - so that He might fill the world with unquenchable light. What Russia attempts to impose externally upon Ukraine mirrors what sin attempts internally within every human soul: to isolate, to numb, to darken, to freeze the heart.

The Church, in Her wisdom, calls each of us to recognize the cold and darkness within ourselves. Sin slowly chills the heart. Pride hardens it. Indifference leaves it numb. Fear clouds it. Resentment darkens it. Just as winter robs the earth of warmth and light, so too, spiritual negligence robs the soul of grace. We may live in affluent comfort, yet our hearts can still grow cold. We may see the daylight but continue to walk in spiritual darkness.

Lent is God's springtime for the soul; it provides the antidote for what ails us if we take on the "easy yoke" of Lenten penitential practices prescribed by the Church. Through fasting we recognize our dependence on God. Through prayer we open the doors of the heart to His light. Through repentance we allow His warmth to melt what has hardened within us. And through good works we carry His light to those around us less fortunate.

As Ukraine suffers the literal cold and darkness brought upon it by violence, we confront the spiritual cold and darkness brought upon us by sin. And in both cases, Christ is the only true Light. When He walks towards Golgotha, He shows us that suffering united to God becomes the road to victory. When we travel along our Lenten journey faithfully, we participate in the same mystery that unites our suffering with God.

In our personal Lenten efforts, we are able also demonstrate our solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Many there fast not by choice but by hardship. Many pray in fear as sirens sound nightly. Many endure days and nights without warmth. When we fast intentionally, we unite ourselves spiritually with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. When we pray sincerely, we strengthen them. When we purify our hearts, we become instruments of God's grace for our suffering people.

Therefore, let us take advantage of this holy season. Every sacrifice we make - whether freely giving up comfort, restraining harmful habits, forgiving those who offend us, intensifying our prayer life, offering a helping hand to those less fortunate - becomes a small step leading us out of spiritual winter and into the springtime of reconciliation with God.

During this sacred time of Great Lent may our hearts be renewed, our faith strengthened, our desire to do good revived, and our compassion deepened. And, at the culmination of our Lenten pilgrimage, may we enter unhindered into the radiant warmth and light of Pascha.

† Borys Gudziak, Archbishop of Philadelphia,
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

† Paul Chomnycky, OSBM (author), Bishop of Stamford

† Benedict Aleksiychuk, Bishop of St. Nicholas in Chicago

† Bohdan Danylo, Bishop of St. Josaphat in Parma

SAINT NICHOLAS
UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



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ПІД ОПІКОЮ
ПРЕЧИСТОЇ ДІВИ
МАРІЇ ОДІГІТРІЇ

UNDER THE
PROTECTION OF
MOTHER OF GOD



CHURCH BULLETIN

February 22 – 2026 – 22 лютого

ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК

Молитва св. Єфрема Сирина (+373)

Господи і Владико життя мого, духа
лінивства, недбалости, властолюб'я і
пустослов'я віджини від мене. (поклін)

Духа чистоти, покори, терпеливості і
любви дай мені слугі твоєму. (поклін)

Так, Господи царю, дай мені бачити
провини мої, і не осуджувати брата
мого ні сестри моєї, бо ти благословен
еси на віки вічні. Амінь! (поклін)

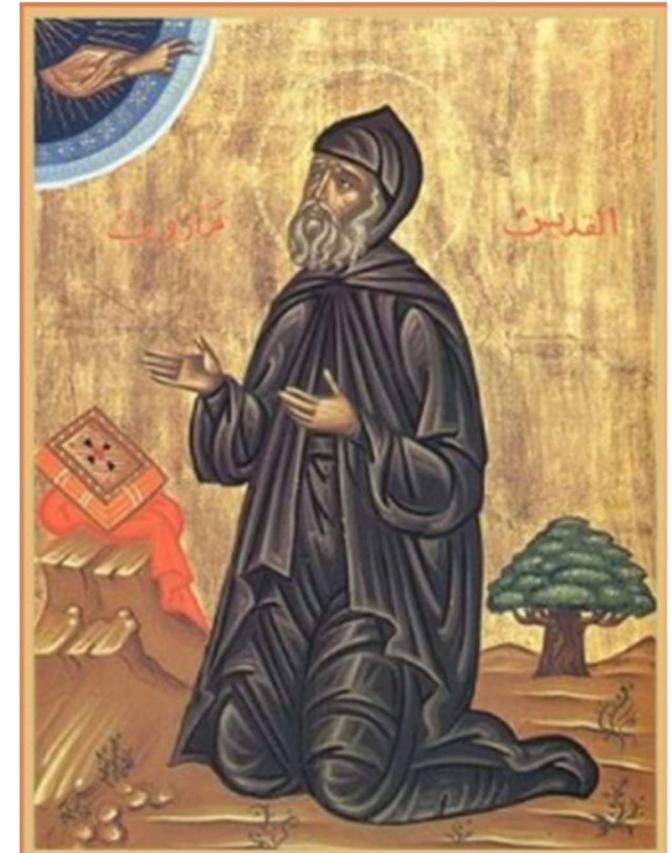


Prayer of St. Ephrem (+373)

✠ O Lord and Master of my life, Take away
from me the will to be lazy and to be sad,
the desire to get ahead of other people,
to boast and brag. (Profound bow)

2 Give me instead, a pure and humble
spirit, the will to be patient with other
people and to love them. (Profound bow)

✠ Let me realize my own mistakes, and
keep me from judging the things other
people do. For you are blessed, now and
forever, Amen. (Profound bow)



Преподобний Єфрем Сирина (306 в Нусайбін – 373 в Едесі)
St. Ephrem the Syrian, (306-373) Syriac-Aramean
Christian theologian and writer. He was born in
Nisibis, and later lived in Edessa.

CHURCH BULLETIN

February 22 – 2026 – 22 лютого
ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК
LITURGICAL SCHEDULE



St. Nicholas Ukr. Cath. Church
Церква Святого Миколая
(Під Опікою П.Д.М.)
ПОРЯДОК СВ. ЛІТУРГІЙ

4:30 PM +Wasył R. Puhacz – 3rd Anniversary
(Family) **STREAMING**

22 лютого: Сиропусна неділя **STREAMING**
February 22: Cheesefare (Forgiveness) Sunday

10:00 AM +Стефанія Козодій (р. Середюк) – 40 день
5:00 PM Forgiveness Vespers – Вечірня Всепощення
WE FORGIVE EACH OTHER – ПРОЩАЄМО УСІМ

Monday, February 23 лютого, понеділок
Початок Великої Посту - First Day of Great Lent

Tuesday, February 24 лютого, вівторок
Aliturgical day – нема відправи

Wednesday, February 25 лютого, середа
12:00 PM Presanctified gifts – Преждеосв. Дари

Thursday, February 26 лютого, четвер
Aliturgical day – нема відправи

Friday, February 27 лютого, п'ятниця
5:00 PM Presanctified gifts – Преждеосв. Дари
Sorokousty - Сорокоусти

Saturday, February 28 лютого, субота
8:00 AM For Parishioners – За Парохіян
4:30 PM +Hanya Kurlak – **STREAMING**
1st Anniversary (family)

1 березня: 1 н. Великої Посту **STREAMING**
March 1: 1st Sunday of Great Lent

10:00 AM +Марія Федерчик (чоловік з родиною)

Eternal Light burns
in memory of +Kami
(Elaine Nowady)

Eternal Light Honoring Mother of God
burns for Special Intention
(Maria Petryshyn)

Pray for victory and peace in Ukraine!
Помолімся за перемогу і мир в Україні!

Our Annual Parish Meeting
Being held today, Sunday, February 22, 2026,
after Divine Liturgy at 10 AM.
Please plan on attending!

Наші Річні Загальні Збори
Відбуваються сьогодні, у неділю 22
лютого 2026, по св. Літургії о 10-ій годині.
Просимо усіх взяти участь!

\$11,800.00	Sent by mail	← \$79,805.00
\$8,500.00	From other state	21 families
\$6,450.00		\$30,867.00
\$5,000.00	Living Trust	23 families
\$4,555.00		(\$1,000-\$1,965)
\$3,900.00	Sent my mail	\$26,210.00
\$3,815.00		38 Families
\$3,790.00	From other state	(\$500-\$985)
\$3,750.00	Sent by mail	19,115.00
\$3,435.00	Sent my mail	84 Families
\$3,200.00		(\$100-\$481)
\$2,845.00		\$2,801.00
\$2,785.00		Cash donations
\$2,370.00		\$1,744.00
\$2,350.00	From other state	43 donations
\$2,170.00		\$160,542.00
\$2,050.00	Sent my mail	Total. Thank you!
\$2,040.00		ДЯКУЄМО!
\$2,000.00		
\$2,000.00	From other state	
\$1,000.00	From other state	

Thanks are extended to all of you for your
generous donations in 2025. Please continue to
support our Parish. God Bless!

Сердечна подяка за Ваші щедрі пожертви у
2025 р. Просимо о дальшу підтримку. Хай
Господь благословить!

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<p>Buffalo Branch Ukrainian Home Dnipro 562 Genesee Street Buffalo NY 14204 (716) 847-6655 www.ukrainianfcu.org</p>	<p>Amherst Branch Ellicott Creek Plaza 2882 Niagara Falls Blvd Amherst NY 14228 (716) 799-8385 www.ukrainianfcu.org</p>
<p>Business Hours Closed Wednesdays, Зачинені по середах Mon., Tuesday, Thursday 9:30 am - 5 pm Пон., вівторок, четвер Friday / П'ятниця 9:30 am - 6 pm Saturday / Субота 9 am - 1 pm </p>	<p>Business Hours Closed Mondays, Зачинені по понеділках Tuesday - Thursday 9:30 am - 5 pm 3 вівторка по четвер Friday / П'ятниця 9:30 am - 6 pm Saturday / Субота 9 am - 1 pm </p>

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11am - 5pm

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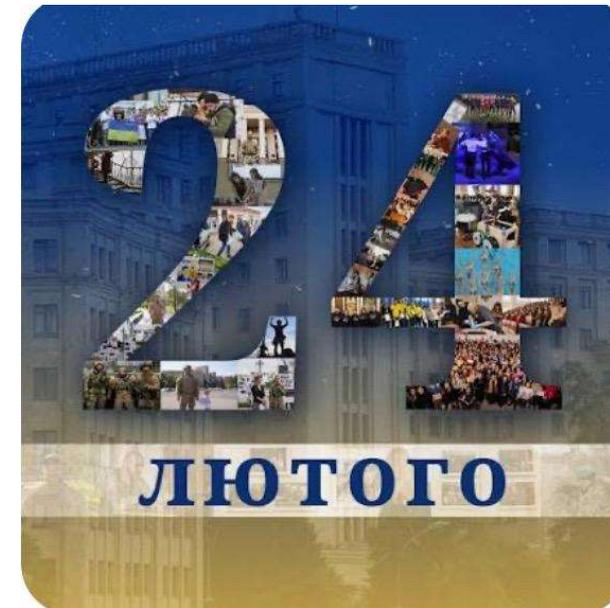
- February 28 лютого
- March 14 березня

Ліпимо вареники по суботах
(8:00 - 13:00)

Просимо прийти і допомогти!
Please come and extend helping hand!

If you have any questions that you would like to have answered, please write them down and place in your church envelopes.

Якщо маєте якісь питання і хотіли би одержати відповіді на них, просимо записати і поставити до кошика.



Commemorative Prayer Service marking the Fourth Anniversary of War in Ukraine, on February 22, 2026, at 2:00 pm.

St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church
3275 Elmwood Avenue
Tonawanda, New York 14217

Шановна українська громадо!

Наближається 24 лютого — дата, яка назавжди закарбувалася в серці кожного українця, де б він не був. Це день болю і втрат: рідних і близьких, дому, звичного життя та спокою. Але водночас це день нашої єдності, сили й віри.

Сьогодні ми живемо у час великих змін і викликів, особливо для новоприбулих українців. Саме тому запрошуємо вас об'єднатися у спільній молитві за Україну, за наших захисників, за мир і за кожную родину.

У неділю, 22 лютого о 14:00 у церкві Івана Хрестителя відбудеться спільна МОЛИТВА.

St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church (Українська Греко-Католицька Церква Святого Івана Хрестителя) 3275 Elmwood Ave, Tonawanda, NY 14217

Після молитви щиро запрошуємо всіх на тепле спілкування за кавою та солодощами. Будьмо разом. Підтримаймо одне одного. Молімося за Україну.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

The next two Spiritual works are to bear wrongdoings patiently and to be quick to forgive offenses. The sin of Pride makes putting those two works into practice very difficult, but we need to do our best to practice both.

The type of pride I'm referring to is not the satisfaction we get from successfully completing a difficult task or the gratification we feel when our children succeed in something. Those are good things and if we are honest, they have nothing to do with anything we have done, instead they are blessings from God who gave us the abilities to obtain or achieve those things. The pride I mean is the feeling we are somehow better than others, that we are the most deserving or believe that we are always right. That type of pride is sinful, and if we let it take root in our lives it will rob us of our salvation. The opposite of pride is humility. The way Jesus Christ lived his life gives us the perfect example of how to practice humility, and as followers of his we should try to do the same.

To learn how to bear wrongs patiently, we need to remember that Jesus was sinless and yet willingly bore the sins and offenses of all mankind. He did this for our redemption. Jesus underwent suffering without a word of protest or by insulting those who were persecuting Him. The prophet Isaiah speaks of this by writing, "He was oppressed and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7) If we pay attention to the Gospel readings, especially the ones during Passion Week, we will see how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy.

Human nature causes us to want to immediately defend ourselves when we are insulted, or to try and shift blame when we are wrong. Once we start acting that way, we begin to stray from the example Christ gave us. I know there are times when we need to defend ourselves, but we shouldn't be trying to seek vengeance or retribution for every offense given. Acting that way will cause us to constantly be angry, and anger can very quickly turn to hatred. There is no place for hate in the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Peter in his first epistle reminds us that "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly." (1Peter 3:21-23) When we are wronged, we need to turn to the Lord and

trust that he will guide us through whatever difficulty we face. By turning to our Lord for help, we draw closer to Him and also closer to our salvation. Bearing offenses patiently means remembering that we also offend others by our actions even if we offend unintentionally. Forgetting that causes us to think that every offense against us is somehow unjust. By bearing offenses from others, we begin to understand that even if the offense given is unjust there were times when we also gave offense. It's about accepting our own imperfections and our own need to accept the mercy Christ gives. Our Lord wants us to rely on him to help us through those difficult moments when we are being persecuted.

Forgiving the offenses of others is also extremely difficult, but it is essential for our salvation. We need to always forgive even if the person who hurt us does not ask for it. We cannot live our lives angry at someone for what they have done to us. The words Jesus gave us in the Our Father make it very clear that we are to forgive those who wrong us in the same way we want the Lord to forgive us for our own sinfulness. If we don't forgive, neither will we be forgiven.

Forgiving is not easy and forgetting the offense given can be even harder. I have no easy answer for how to do that, but one of my favorite biblical quotes is: "For mankind it is impossible but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26) The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the abundant mercy God offers us can't penetrate into our hearts if we have not forgiven those who have hurt us. By refusing to forgive our hearts remain hardened. That hardness makes us impervious to the Lord's merciful love. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2840) Learning to forgive means to recognize that we too have sinned and need to repent. Repentance brings us to receive our Lord's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Confession. Once Jesus Christ forgives us of our own faults, we must do the same to those who have hurt us. It might take a lifetime to truly forgive someone, but we need to make the effort. Our Lord will both strengthen us and reward us for that struggle.

This Sunday is the Sunday of Forgiveness. On this day it is especially important to ask forgiveness from anyone we have hurt, and then to give forgiveness to all who have hurt us. The Great Fast starts after that. Take that time of fasting to turn to the Lord in repentance. Allow His mercy to bring you the peace the world can't, and then go and share that mercy and peace with all you meet.

(Deacon David)



- **CHURCH KITCHEN is now CLOSED**
Check with us later – Things might change.
- Thank you for your help and patronage!
- Thanks are extended to all volunteers!
- Coffee Hour - Usually Every Sunday after Liturgy in Church Hall.

See you there!
HAVE A BLESSED DAY!!!

Forgiveness Sunday



Неділя Прощення

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Організація Оборони Чотирьох Свобід України
ODFFU – Buffalo, NY – Branch # 22
Emil Bandriwsky, President

CHURCH BULLETIN is published weekly.
Deadline for information is Thursday evening.
ЦЕРК. ВІСНИК видається тижнево.
Інформації просимо подавати до четверга.

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Confession: Before Liturgies
Сповідь: Перед Св. Літургіями
Baptism: By appointment
Хрещення: За домовленням
Marriage: Contact 6 months in advance
Вінчання: Голоситися 6 місяців скорше

Religion classes – Релігійна Програма
See bulletin for scheduled dates.

Ministry to the sick – Опіка над хворима
Family members should call the Rectory
Родина повинна повідомити священика

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Просимо закликати якщо ви у
лічниці або приковані до ліжка!

Believe in Ukraine 2026: UNBROKEN UNDER FIRE AND ICE

Saturday February 28th

Films & panel discussion & raffle 11 a.m. - 5pm

Music, drinks and dinner 5:30pm - 9pm

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1ExpfxBh4z/>

Films are free and open to the public; a suggested donation of \$10 for our evening music program. Film Program (18+): Content includes discussion of trauma, adult artwork and depictions of violence and war. Some scenes may be disturbing or re-traumatizing.

Snacks and drinks available for purchase at 11 a.m. and during the film program intermission from 3-4 p.m. Dinner and drinks available for purchase during our music program. Raffle announcement 3:45 (may be extended). 50/50 announcement 9:00 pm.

Film PROGRAM - free 18+ film advisory

11:00 am doors open

11:45 am Panel discussion with Ukrainians in Ukraine (guests TBA)

3:00 intermission - snacks and beverages available for purchase

4:00 Nina's Eyes (13 min) with BOHYNI /Godesses (7min) followed by Q&A with filmmakers Lukia Costello & Sasha

MUSIC, DINING & COMMUNITY - suggested donation \$10

6:00 pm Bria Blessing

This event is presented in collaboration with Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center, Spark Filmmakers Collaborative (Lukia Costello) and grassroots organizer Josh Onkala.

All Lenten services will be done according to the revised Julian Calendar, since officially in this Parish we follow Ukraine. This year it is a week apart from the Gregorian Calendar, which means that **First day of Lent will begin tomorrow, Monday, February 23rd. Palm Sunday will be on April 5th and Easter on April 12th.**

The Great Fast/Lent begins with Forgiveness Vespers celebrated today at 5:00 PM.

Великий Піст починається Вечірньою всепрощення Сьогодні о 5-й годині вечера.

PYSANKA WORKSHOP

Join us for a Pysanka Workshop on Saturday March 7th, 2026 at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Church, 308 Fillmore Ave, Buffalo NY 14206 from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

The Workshop is limited to 12 participants, minimum age is 10 years. The Workshop will be led by Master Pysanka Artist Irene Grassmann.

The Workshop costs \$40 per person and includes an egg, written instructions and the supplies necessary to make a pysanka. Please call Irene directly to register: (585)259-8488. Registration closes on March 1, 2026. Irene is "egg-cited" to share the tradition of writing pysankas with you!



СИРОПУСНА НЕДІЛЯ (ПРОЩЕННЯ)

Сьогодні Сиропустна неділя, а вже завтра розпочнеться Великий Піст. Впродовж 40 (сорока) днів постарасмося розважувати над Господньою наукою, Йо-го страстями й смертю, а також над нашим відношенням до розп'ятого і згодом воскреслого Христа.

Спеціальна увага тут звернена на молитву і на піст. «Коли постите, - говорить нам Христос у нинішньому євангельському читанні (Мт. 6,14-21), - не будьте сумні, як лицеміри, бо вони виснажують своє обличчя, щоб люди їх бачили, як вони постять. Істинно кажу вам, вони вже одержали свою нагороду. Ти ж, коли постиш, намасти свою голову і обмий своє обличчя, щоб не показати людям, що ти постиш, але Отцеві Твоєму, що перебуває в тайні; і Отець Твій, що бачить таємне, віддасть тобі».

Дуже часто ми робимо щось добре, але стараємося робити так, щоб інші були свідками цього, бо нам здається, що коли того ніхто не завважить, то наші добрі діла не матимуть значення. Коли, наприклад, Святий отець Миколай помагав потребуючим, то він завжди так робив, щоб того ніхто не бачив. Так само робили усі святі, яким залежало на Божому, а не на людському визнанні. Робимо бо добро на славу Божу, молимося на славу Божу, їмо на славу Божу і постимо на славу Божу. Все, що робимо, робім із думкою про Господа, не очікуючи і не вимагаючи нічого, У такий спосіб одержимо нагороду від Того, що дав нам силу, здоров'я і здібності все виконувати на Його славу.

Якщо від людей сподіваємося похвали, то на тому все і зупиниться. Нас похвалять, згадуючи добрими словами, поплещуть по плечах, але згодом забудуть. Пізніше нас можуть ще й зганьбити, коли припустимося чогось невідповідного у їхніх очах, і, зроблене нами добро, для них перестане мати вартість, а ми будемо продовжувати звертати увагу на те, щоб людям подобатися, забуваючи поволи, що Всевишній вимагає від нас лише того, що подобається Йому.

«Не збирайте скарбів на землі, а радше на небі. Бо де твій скарб, там буде і серце твоє», - закінчує Христос. Земні скарби зітліють, злодії їх вкрадуть, грабіжники присвоять, згорять вони у вогні, коли будемо переходити через двері, що ведуть до Небесного Єрусалиму, стережені Серафимом. А небесні скарби засвітять сильніше й ми самі опинимося у світлі, бо на суд Божий не прийшли з порожніми руками, не зяви-

лися перед Господом нагими, і так станули ми по Господній правіці.

40 днів посту перед нами. Число 40 є числом приготування до чогось великого і нового. 40 днів потопу. 40 років подорожі через пустелю. 40 днів Христового посту. 40 днів від Воскресіння до Вознесіння. Ми постимо 40 днів, щоб належно приготуватися до Христового Воскресіння.



"Піст не є новітнім винаходом», - каже Св. Василій Великий, - але скарбом по батьках. Усе, що давнє - гідне похвали. Пошануй же стародавність посту. Він такий давній, як саме людство. ...Тому, що ми не постили, нас вигнано з раю. Чинім, отже, піст, щоб повернутися до нього».

А як ми повинні постити?

У книжці «Пізнай свій обряд» о. Юліян Катрій пише: «Хоч наші часи принесли багато змін щодо церковних законів, традиції і дисципліни, і хоч по II-му Ватиканському Соборі прийшло велике злагіднення всіх постів взагалі включно із Великим постом, все таки і сьогодні час Чотиридесятниці має своє велике значіння для нашого духовного життя. Може сьогодні, задля різних причин, ми не в силі так строго постити, як постили колись наші предки, але й сьогодні тяжити на нас обов'язок духовного посту, тобто боротьби з нашими гріхами і злими нахилами, обов'язок молитви, практики чеснот та добрих діл. І якраз оця, духовна, обнова є властивою і найважливішою ціллю Великого Посту. Це є час, коли повинні ми зупинитися і поглянути на пройдений шлях, щоби перевірити себе, зрозуміти чи ми сповняли Божу волю, чи ми прийняли усі труднощі, що нас зустріли на цьому шляху, як Боже випробування, щоб загартувати себе, зробити кращими. Христос сам постив у пустині, і в такий спосіб приготував себе до своєї публічної діяльності. Там то його спокушав диявол, отой світлоноша, що його світло стало темрявою». Кілько більше ми підпадемо під спокусу? І у такі тяжкі хвилини надіймося тільки на поміч згори, від Того, Який і Сам перемагав спокусника.

Спаситель не раз картав фарисеїв за їхнє лицемірство під час посту, звертаючи і нам увагу на те, щоби не уподібнюватися до них. Про духів зла нагадував, що їх можна вигнати тільки молитвою та постом. З історії життя ранніх християнських спільнот довідуємося про їхні довгі й суворі пости. Хоча жили вони

життям праведників, близьким до Господньої святости, все ж таки вони вважали, що піст конче потрібний для ще більшої досконалости.

Коли ми постоимо, тоді краще зможемо розуміти таємниці Божої волі щодо нас. Ми спроможні з'єднатися з Христом, якого також спокушувано, з якого сміялися, якого розп'яли на хресті. І разом з Ним ми надіємося воскреснути у Його славі, опинитися по Його правіці.

Використаймо цю нагоду Великого посту, щоб призадуматися над своїм життям, зрозуміти, наскільки далеко чи близько ми від Бога, у молитві та покаянні дозволити Божій ласці знову проникнути у нас, щоб мир Христовий запанував у нас і щоби ми діждалися радости Христового Воскресіння. (Р.П. «М.С.»)

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY (FORGIVENESS)

"If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you". (Matthew 6:14-15)

A few years ago I saw a news item that was a follow up on a shooting that had happened a year before. An innocent woman was shot in the crossfire between two men. She became paralyzed by the injury, but had experienced a huge change in her life since the shooting. The thing that struck me most was her statement: "I have not forgiven them yet, but I know that I need to, because if I do not then God will not forgive me." I could see the pain that she was in, I could see the life that she had lost, but she knew the greater truth. That beyond the emotion of experiencing a terrible crime like this, unless we forgive those who have harmed us, then we cannot expect that God will forgive us. Next to love, forgiveness is perhaps the most misunderstood term in the human language. When you choose to forgive someone, this does not mean that you acknowledge his or her behavior as acceptable, for doing this would be dishonest. Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to repay evil for evil. The measure of such a decision is the love of God who draws us to Himself despite our sins. And it has its perfect exemplar in the forgiveness of Christ, who on the Cross and in great agony, prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If we can achieve a depth of forgiveness anything like that - which Jesus extends to us - we indeed shall find an incredible peace that will accompany us all our days.

An unforgiving spirit shuts the door on God, even though His compassion still surrounds us. He is ready to

forgive, but we are not ready to be forgiving. Each of us is able to forgive our brothers and sisters in the light of God's forgiveness, but we often choose to hold our grudges and remain in the shadows. Jesus lets us know that if we refuse to forgive, then we really have not grasped our own great need for forgiveness, or how much God has already forgiven us, and thus in our pride, we have not truly repented. But when we have our eyes fixed on the cross, and the pain and suffering that Jesus went through in order to forgive us and cleanse us from our sin, it can appear pretty minor to forgive those who have trespassed against us. In the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. Christ taught a love that forgives, when within our Lord's Prayer, he spoke... "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But what can forgiveness mean for us today? By forgiving one another, we are ultimately trusting that God is in control. By forgiving, we release our own right to get even, and allow the forgiveness that God grants each of us to flow through our own hearts. Forgiveness is a full pardon and a new beginning; it is the lifting of our heavy burdens. Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and loosens the bondage of hatred. It is the extraordinary power that breaks the chains of our grievances... and allows the Light of Christ to shine through our Spirit. True forgiveness is demonstrated in our willingness to pray for and to facilitate good things happening in the life of the one who has hurt us. We need to be willing to forgive one another, to be compassionate, or how can we expect that God will forgive us?

Michael could make a million excuses for what had happened, but none of them could justify how he reacted. It had been a few weeks since he first discovered Keith had cancer. The shock of it all was still fresh in his mind. There were times when numbness came over him, perhaps a shield to protect Michael from the affects of too much stress. Other times he lived right on the edge wondering, waiting for some bit of hope to cling to. But that day, nothing seemed to be going right. Michael was waiting for some crucial test results regarding his son's cancer. He pulled into the parking lot and found the gate wide open so he drove on through. The hospital had trouble with their system a few times before, so Michael thought nothing of it. He parked and headed into the



building. Several hours later, he decided to run to the store to pick up a few things that he would need for his stay overnight at the hospital. They permitted parents to sleep there so they could be near their children. Not in a bed, but on a bench built in the window. Michael had so much on his mind that he never stopped to think about his own comfort. He was just grateful to be there with Keith. As he headed toward the exit of the parking lot, Michael noticed there was a long line of cars. In his hurry to get back to Keith, he became more than impatient with the situation. He was becoming angry. Finally, as he approached the toll booth, Michael hurriedly explained that he did not get a ticket when he came in that day. "I'm so sorry, sir. We've been having problems lately. What time did you come in?" the woman asked. "What?" Michael replied. "I need to know what time you came in, so that I can charge you the appropriate cost," she said. "I can't even remember what day it is and you want me to know what time I arrived here?" Michael said angrily. "Sir, I can't open the gate until..." "My son is lying up there in a hospital bed. He could be dying from cancer, and you want me to remember what time I arrived in the parking lot?" "Sir, I am sorry but..." "I have no idea. How sad this is that you stand there worried about how many dollars I owe you and you have no concern for what is happening to my son," Michael screamed at her. "Here's five dollars. Keep it. Now get me out of here!" The gate went up and Michael drove off quickly. When he arrived at the store he couldn't even remember why he was there. Still shaking from the fury of his outburst, he wandered around inside the store thinking about what he had just done. He tried to justify it a hundred times, but Michael knew deep in his heart that the woman did not deserve what he had said. After he purchased a few items, he returned to the hospital. Ashamed, Michael entered the parking lot and hurried into the building. All he needed to do was see his son's face and the guilt of it all came rushing over him. "Did you get what you needed, Dad?" his son asked. "Ah, no. There's one more thing I need to pick up," he said. Michael went down to the gift shop and bought a small bouquet of flowers. Walking out the front door, he nervously approached the ticket booth across the road. Still faced with a long line of cars, the woman looked up at him. The next car to exit paused a few feet away when they saw that he was headed toward the booth. "I need to ask you to

forgive me. There is no excuse for the anger I aimed at you earlier. You are just doing your job. Please accept these flowers," Michael said, and then he turned and walked away. The woman stepped out of her booth in front of the line of cars. With his back toward her Michael heard, "Can I give you a hug?" "Oh, Lord," he said, perhaps thanking God for the compassion she held in her heart. "Yes, I would be honored," he said. "When you have worked here as long as me, you encounter many kinds of people, but no one has ever done something like this for me," the woman said. There they stood in the driveway exit - hugging each other. Two strangers whose lives crossed by chance! Two people blessed with compassion by embracing forgiveness. Who do you need to forgive today?



It was Mother Theresa who once said; "If we really want to love, then we must learn how to forgive"! When Peter asked the Lord if he should forgive seven times, Jesus replied, "Not seven times. But I tell you seventy times seven." Jesus did not mean that we should forgive 490 times and stop; he meant that forgiveness is

limitless. St. Paul reminds us that love keeps no record of wrongs. Love covers a multitude of sins. We should learn to forgive as God forgives. But how can each of us achieve this level of forgiveness? We must first allow God's Mercy and Grace to rule our lives. When we perform an act of kindness, or offer our sincere prayers, especially for the benefit of one who may have hurt us... we can change our own attitude as well as theirs. The mantle of righteousness that comes with forgiveness is made of vertical and horizontal threads. The vertical threads are the relationship between us and the Lord, representing our restored affiliation. Horizontal threads are the relationships we have with others, established by our forgiving one another. It is not possible to have a lasting garment made of just vertical threads, nor is such a garment useful if there are only horizontal threads. Our mantle can only be fashioned when both types of threads exist. St. Paul wrote, "We are to be kind and forgiving of each other, even as Christ forgave us" (Eph. 4:32). Because of Christ's actions, because of His Spirit living in us, we can here and now experience peace, reconciliation, wholeness and friendship with God, because Christ bridged the gap between sin and salvation, between death and life... between us and God!

("Good.Samaritan" Ukrainian Radio Program)