

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF HOLY IMAGES



Icon of the Restoration of Holy Images

February 26, 2023: First Sunday of the Great Fast

Epistle: Heb. 11: 24-26.32-12:2

Gospel: Jn. 43-51

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|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Mon., Feb. 27 | 9:00 | + Gloria Smetana (Legate) |
| Tues., Feb. 28 | 9:00 | + Christine Danylak (Leo Danylak) |
| Wed., March 1 | 6:00 | Stations |
| Thurs., March 2 | 9:00 | + Stella Sherman (Lauren Telep) |
| Fri. March 3 | 6:00 | Presanctified Liturgy |
| Sat., March 4 | No Morning Divine Liturgy | |
| | 2:00 | Confessions |
| | 4:00 | For Our Parishioners |
| Sun., March 5 | 10:30 | + Anna Mae Krisanda (Jule Harris); Sorokousty |

PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE GREAT FAST

“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean” (Mt. 8:2)

For the people of the ancient world, the most dreaded disease was undoubtedly leprosy. It was an incurable and pervasive disease that slowly spread over the body, covering it with painful, unsightly ulcers and condemning all who contracted it to horrible suffering and death. It was a merciless illness that honored no boundaries, ravaging the lives of everyone it touched: male and female, young and old, educated and illiterate, saints, and criminals, rich and poor alike. It was literally impossible to move beyond its reach.

But perhaps the most feared aspect of leprosy was that it condemned those afflicted to live out their lives in isolation, separated from normal society, from their families and friends. Because the disease was so contagious, lepers were driven out of their homes and forced to live in colonies, far from populated areas so that they could not infect anyone else. Those with leprosy truly suffered what could be termed a living death.

Because of this people were mortally afraid of lepers and strove to keep them as far away as possible. In fact, if a leper happened to encounter a healthy person at any time, he was

obliged to cry out: “Unclean, keep away”, in order to warn them not to approach.

Jesus must have encountered lepers many times during the course of his public life as an itinerant preacher. Fortunately for us, one of these encounters is recorded in the Gospels, and this chance meeting of Jesus with the leper holds deep meaning for us today and opens new horizons of hope and opportunities of healing.

We see that Jesus did not react like everyone else when he encountered this leper on the road. He did not turn away in fear and revulsion, he did not avoid him or ignore him as others did. Rather, he approached him, looking at him with love, treating him with the dignity of a child of God.

And the poor leper, overcome with disbelief and joy that anyone would address him in such a manner, dropped to his knees in front of Jesus and said: “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” And we read in the Gospel that Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man and said, “I am willing. Be clean!” (Mt. 8:3)

Is it not true, that we are very similar to this leper we see in the Gospel? Is it not true that our bodies, like his, are covered with sores, not necessarily physical sores, but wounds of the soul:

sin, pride, jealousy, lust, hatred? And is it not also true that this spiritual disease has isolated us from each other and most importantly from God? Is it not true that many times, like the leper, we cry out to Jesus: “I’m unclean! Stay away! You cannot help me!?”

Thankfully, we, as a Church, are entering a special time of the liturgical year that is designed especially to help us break down the barrier that our spiritual leprosy has erected between ourselves and God: the time of Great Lent.

How? By means of the spiritual tools and treasures the Church offers us during Great Lent: the unique liturgical services that we celebrate together in our churches, a more intense personal prayer regime, fasting from that which separates us from God, good works and acts of service to our neighbor, and, above all, the Holy Mysteries of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

During Great Lent, Jesus approaches all of us who are sickened with the leprosy of sin and pride, much as he approached the leper on the road. And even though we may protest that we are unclean, that we are unworthy, or unable to change, Jesus knows differently. He knows that with but a touch of his hand, we will be healed.

Therefore, in the blessed weeks of

Great Lent that lie ahead, let us cry out as did the leper: “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean!” Let Jesus approach us and allow His hand to touch the spiritual wounds which cause us so much pain and misery: the wounds of pride, lust, envy, and every other vice, and especially the spiritual and emotional wounds caused by the bloody war in Ukraine. Let us return

from the isolation of our sinfulness to the loving embrace of the Father.

As we embark upon these blessed days, we your hierarchs in the United States, impart upon you the blessings of the Holy Spirit for a fruitful and blessed Lent as we journey together towards Pascha.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Borys Gudziak (Archbishop of Philadelphia)

+Paul Chomnycky, OSBM (author & Eparch of Stamford)

+Venedict Aleksiychuk (Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago)

+ Bohdan J. Danylo (Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma)

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

When Philip told Nathaniel that they had found “the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth”, Nathaniel asks “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (Jn 1:46). Nathaniel reveals a common human characteristic, namely a tendency to make quick judgments. Jesus repeatedly instructed his disciples and the people to whom he preached to “Stop judging that you may not be judged” (Mt 7:1) He would ask why we look at the splinter in another person’s eye and

not the wooden beam in our own eye. Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone! Quick judgments are often revealed through the occasional use of inappropriate words or swearing. Jesus told his disciples that “on the day of judgment, people will render an account for every careless word they speak” (Mt 12:36). We ought to set aside any careless use of words. Setting aside our tendency to judge others while realizing our own huge imperfections is a necessity before welcoming the Lord into our hearts.

SPIRITUAL REGULATIONS FOR THE GREAT FAST

Although our Church traditionally prescribed abstention from meat and dairy products in days gone by for the entire duration of the Great Fast, the following are the minimal Lenten regulations today:

Abstinence from meat and all dairy products on the First Day of the Great Fast and on Good Friday.

Abstinence from meat only on all Fridays of the Great Fast as well as Holy Saturday. It is also traditional to abstain from meat on Wednesdays during the Great Fast.

Everyone should receive the Holy Mysteries of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist during the period from the onset of Great Fast to the Wednesday before Ascension Thursday.

The Fasting and Abstinence

regulations are not binding on persons 60 or older, the very poor, sick, nursing or pregnant women, children below the age of 14, and those who engage in physically very hard labor. However, all are urged, if able to do so, to observe the fasting and abstinence regulations.

All the faithful are urged to attend the Lenten services such as the Presanctified Liturgy, and the Commemoration of the Deceased (Sorokousty).

Such good deeds as almsgiving, visitation of the sick, Bible reading and praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life are most earnestly recommended to all the Faithful. This year, families are especially urged to pray together in the mornings and evenings.

IDENTITY - PART 5

Finally, how are we made a king? Simply because only a king, other than a prophet and a priest, was anointed in the Old Testament. In that case, it can be said that as we are made a priest and a prophet by our anointing at Baptism then we are also made a king at our anointing in baptism.

How are we made a baptized king? We live out our baptismal kingship in service. Our Lord Jesus, King of kings

says, "I have come not to be served, but to serve." When I asked a youth group member, "what does a good king do?", he responded, "He protects his people." It was a good answer but not an all-encompassing answer. A good king serves his people.

One of the most beautiful titles our Holy Father the Pope is called is "Servant of Servants" referring to the words of Christ, "I have come not to be

served, but to serve.

In our anointing at Baptism, our whole being was anointed, set aside to live out the words of Jesus “To Serve.” In this very real sense we are made a baptized king.

When we contemplate or reflect deeply on the Mystery of Baptism we cannot help but realize the profound and rich identity that we possess.

Through Baptism we become no more than just a creature of our Creator, but also an adoptive son or daughter of

God the Father and Creator. We saw that we become a Jesus person. At the anointing rite in Baptism, we saw how we are made a baptized Prophet, a baptized Priest, a baptized King. What an astounding, beautiful, and rich identity we have as followers and disciples, and missionaries of Jesus Christ. Because of this profound identity, it is most important to know and celebrate the day of our baptism.

WJW - Part 5 of 5

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations and Best Wishes to **Mickey John Almodovar**, along with his parents Jay and Alyss, on the occasion of his initiation into the flock of Jesus Christ during the 10:30 Divine

Liturgy. We welcome you into our Parish Family and pray that God may grant you Many Happy and Blessed Years. Mnohaya Leeta!

UPDATE: CLOTHING AND FOOD DRIVE:

MARCH 11TH AND 12TH

In October 2022, we reinstituted the Clothing and Food drive as a Church Community Service Project. It was a fast turnaround due to the emergency need for clothes for the “United Neighborhood - Angels Attic”. Items were not accepted from any of our events (rummage sale) during the pandemic at many of the organizations.

The Project was initiated in

November 2013. Once again, we are conducting a Clothing and Food Drive during March 2023. Clothes will be accepted for men, women, and children, including accessories and shoes for all seasons. All items should be clean and wearable. This is not a dumping ground for old, and dirty clothing. Clothes can be kept on hangers, or put in bags or boxes.

All non-perishable food will be accepted. If every parishioner brings at least 2 food items, we can fill the bread box at the “Restore and Rescue” Church on Willow Street, as Father Nestor suggested.

Items can be dropped off on Saturday, March 11th (3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.) and Sunday, March 12th (10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) before, or after the Divine Liturgy, at St. Cyrils School Gym. Volunteers will accept the clothes and food. You have 20 days

to gather clothes and non-perishable food. We thank you for your support and donations.

Volunteers will be needed to help transport the clothes to “The United Neighborhood” in Scranton. On Monday, March 13th, at approximately 10:00 a.m. the clothes will be loaded into cars or trucks. Come and lend a helping hand on March 6, 2023. Contact Lauren Telep at 646-241-9443 for any questions.

PARISH MEETING

There will be a Parish Meeting Saturday, March 4th immediately following the 4:00 liturgy. All parishioners are invited to attend this half-hour meeting, which has a very brief agenda:

1. Schedule of upcoming Parish fundraising events.
2. Clearance Rummage Sale details.
3. Ideas/feedback/suggestions regarding the above two items.

COLLECTION PROCESSING TEAM...

The Collection Processing Team for the month of February 2023 is Team #2: Eugene Zinsky, John Turko,

Jr, Leonard Mitchko, and Michael Shumek.

Sunday Collection for Feb. 18 & 19, 2023: \$

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

Happy Birthday and Mnohaya Leeta to the following Parishioners:

Dorothy T. Chezik

Andre Marcinko

Anne Nasevich

Andrea Novak

Samuel Sczesniak

Stefan Turko

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Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

On the Holy Images

In former times God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take His abode in matter; who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease honoring the matter which wrought my salvation! I honor it, but not as God. How could God be born out of things which have no existence in themselves? God's body is God because it is joined to His person by a union which shall never pass away. The divine nature remains the same; the flesh created in time is quickened by a reason endowed soul. Because of this I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and power. Through it my

salvation has come to me. Was not the thrice-happy and thrice blessed wood of the Cross matter? What of the life bearing rock, the holy and life-giving tomb, the fountain of our resurrection, was it not matter? Is not the ink in the most holy Gospel-book matter? Is not the life-giving altar made of matter? From it we receive the bread of life! Are not gold and silver matter? From them we make crosses, patens, chalices! And over and above all these things, is not the Body and Blood of our Lord matter? Either do away with the honor and veneration these things deserve, or accept the tradition of the Church and the veneration of images.

St. John of Damascus

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