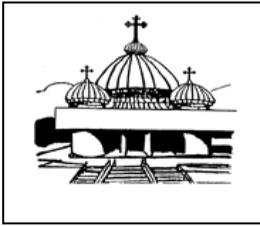


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St. Mary's Church Bulletin



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Pastor: Fr. Petro (Peter) Bodnar

DIVINE LITURGY:

SUNDAY: 9:00 a.m. (Ukrainian) **SUNDAY** 10:30 a.m. (English)

Confession: Before Divine Liturgies 9:00 am and 10:30 am on Sundays or anytime upon request.

Baptisms & Marriages: By prior arrangement (at least 1 year before the marriage date), through the parish office.

Visitations & Anointing of the Sick: Please notify the office if a member of your family is in need of a visit.

February 21, 2021

1st Sunday of the Great Lent

Epistle: Hebrews 11:24 - 26 see explanation on page 532

Gospel: John 1:43-51 see explanation on page 214

Propers for the Divine Liturgy: ***Tone 5***

Prayer Intentions February 14 – February 21

Saturday: 4:00 pm Thanksgiving and Health of Bill Kukurudz – Fr. Peter

Sunday: 9:00 am +Monsignor T. Pryjma (Anniv)

10:30 am For parishioners

Wednesday: 4:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Friday: 4:00 pm Prayers for the deceased - Sorokousty

Saturday: 4:00 p.m. Thanksgiving & health Conrad Houle -Fr. Peter

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. Parishioners

10:30 a.m. +Rose Ushick – Fr. Peter

Sincerest Prayers & Condolences – We extend our sincerest prayers and condolences to the Ushick family on the passing away of +Doris Suslyk. May her memory be eternal in God!

ВІЧНАЯ ПАМ'ЯТ – Відійшла у вічність наша дорога парафіянка Doris Suslyk. Родині складаємо наші співчуття. Вічна Її Пам'ять.

LOCKDOWN UPDATE. The Government of Ontario has announced that the lockdown and stay-at-home orders in our region will end on Tuesday, February 16. The ten-person limit at services will no longer apply and we may have up to 30% capacity once again. As a result, there is no longer a need to reserve a space at services ahead of time.

BLESSING OF ICONS today at the end of Liturgy.

On the Sundays of Lent, we take the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Expect the Sunday Liturgy throughout Lent to last between 10 and 15 minutes longer than usual.

The Eparchial Deanery maps have shifted slightly and new Deans have been appointed. The new Dean is the Very Reverend Petro Bodnar, of Holy Protection of the Mother of God Church in Sudbury.

St. Michael the Archangel (Coniston, ON)

St. Nicholas (Kenora, ON)

Holy Protection of the Mother of God (Red Lake, ON)

Nativity of the Mother of God (Sault Ste. Marie, ON)

Holy Protection of the Mother of God (Sudbury, ON)

Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Thunder Bay, ON)

Transfiguration of the Lord (Thunder Bay, ON)

St. Vladimir (Kirkland Lake, ON)

Prayers for the Deceased- Sorokousty every Friday at 4:00 pm.

INCOME TAX RECEIPTS: Income Tax receipts for 2020 have been mailed out.

Thank you very much for your generosity! Жертводавцям складаємо щирю подяку!

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Thursday, February 25 at 6:00 pm.

Lent, a Time of Transformation

God gives us the grace to see sin and also to repent.

Spring is a time of anticipation.

Winter has faded, and we all begin to look for signs of new life. The sun is closer to us and the earth is warmer. We can feel a sense of newness in the wind, a feeling that something wonderful is going on around us. Flowers begin to bloom; leaves start to bud; birds begin to sing; even the earth smells fresh and vital.

For those who garden, spring is also a time for tilling the ground and planting seeds. Looking for a good harvest, we watch closely the rhythms of sun and rain and keep an eye out for any signs of growth. We stand in awe of the mystery of God's creation as we ponder the relationship between soil, sun, seeds, and water as they work together to produce new life.

The season of Lent is related to spring and all that it evokes in our minds. The word "Lent" comes from the Old English word *lencten*, which means to lengthen and refers specifically to the lengthening of days in the springtime. Like its counterpart in the natural world, Lent is the season when we anticipate and prepare for the new life to come. It is a time of tilling the soil of our hearts, planting the seeds of faith and love, and watching eagerly for the fruit of our efforts at Easter.

The forty days of Lent recall the time that Moses spent on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18), Elijah's forty days in the desert (1 Kings 19:8), and, more specifically, Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). As always, God invites us during this season of Lent to reflect on our lives, both individually and together as his people. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were especially close to God during their forty days of reflection and prayer. We too can experience the Lord's love more deeply as we draw close to him and reflect on all he has given us in Baptism and as we ask him to free us from our sins and weaknesses (see Vatican II, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, 109).

Think of what it's like to plant a garden. Would you till the soil, plant the seeds, and faithfully monitor the crops if you had no hope for any growth? Would you spend your time, money, and energy for nothing? Of course not. We plant because we expect some return, some fruit, for our labors. With this in mind, we can understand how deeply God our Father is committed to the Church. God loves his creation. He loves each and every person. His intention that his Church bear lasting fruit is unshakable and unending. Full of love, God looks for a fruitful return on all he has given us.

A Season of Hope. Lent is a season of hope. Our hope rests in the fact that Jesus has defeated sin. He has delivered us from the bondage of sin and he will continue to deliver us with ever-increasing power. How he longs to gather his children together in his embrace (Mark 10:16). We have hope because God is for us, and no one can stand against us (Romans 8:31-32). He is on our side, eager to give us everything we need to grow more and more into the image of his Son, Jesus.

God will never abandon us. He will show us the way to our eternal home, and as we travel along the way, he will form us into his body. In his mercy, he has not left us helpless, but has given us wonderful gifts to help us follow him—faith and grace, his Body and Blood in the Eucharist, sanctifying gifts, and spiritual gifts. How wonderful is our God, so wonderful that we can see our lives change to reflect his life more and more!

Every Lent, God, like a farmer, wants to plant seeds in the Church and watch them spring up. He eagerly waits to see new fruit, both in our own lives and in our neighborhoods and communities. He wants to see his people experience all the grace and power they received when they were baptized. He longs to see his Church shine as a light to the world as the people proclaim the gospel in words and in acts of love.

The Seed of Baptism. Let's take a look at how a "transformation process" can help us understand how we can grow this Lent. The process begins with Baptism, when we are united with Jesus in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). In Baptism we were given, in seed form, everything necessary to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48); we were brought from the death of sin into Jesus' resurrection. All of this is the work of God's wonderful grace, freely given to all (Titus 3:5-6).

Wonderful as it is, Baptism is just the beginning of our life with God. As we mature, God wants us to experience the reality and hopeful assurance of all the blessings we have received. Just as parents want to see their children mature, so God wants to see us grow up in our faith and enter into our full inheritance as his sons and daughters.

Not only are we immature in faith, we are also weak and vulnerable to sin. Immersed in a sinful world, we have a disordered tendency (the "flesh") to commit personal sins. Consequently, our experience of the grace of Baptism is often hindered by our immaturity and our personal sins.

The Holy Spirit wants to nourish us every day so that we can move toward spiritual maturity. Just as God told Ezekiel to eat the scroll of his word (Ezekiel 3:1-4), the Spirit wants to feed us with the word of God—God’s very thoughts. The Spirit also invites us to draw closer to our Father in prayer and to receive Jesus’ Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Through the gracious work of the Spirit, we can be transformed into God’s likeness and come to love him more and more. The Holy Spirit will enable us to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12). We will want to love other people and take up Jesus’ call to share the gospel.

God knows that we all sin. In his mercy, he wants to reveal our sins and imperfections to us so that we can repent and be free (John 16:13). By choosing reconciliation, we choose to turn away from sin and toward God. Repentance leads to deeper conversion and greater joy as we see our life in the Spirit mature.

In this transformation process, God wants to shower his grace upon us. Grace is the power of God made active in our lives. As we turn to the Holy Spirit in prayer, at Mass, or as we read Scripture or other spiritual writings, God fills us with grace. We experience his love. We know peace, even happiness, as we grow in our desire to please the Lord who has been so good to us.

The Power of God’s Grace. Grace empowers us to repent and follow a more godly pattern. Through the power of God’s grace, we find ourselves increasingly uncomfortable with sin, even to the point of hating sin and its impact on our lives and the lives of our families. We find ourselves praying more, asking the Spirit for strength to resist temptation and turn away from sin. When we do see our sin, we are not discouraged; we are filled with hope, knowing that through repentance we can return to the Father who fills us with mercy and peace. We seek forgiveness and reconciliation, knowing that it is not achieved through our strength but by the indwelling Spirit. All of this is the power of God’s grace to transform us by his love.

During these lengthening days of spring, let us ask our Father for the grace to mature in our baptism and to turn away from sin. He who gives us the spring sunshine will also make the springtime of grace flow more freely. We need only ask, be open, and receive his grace.

Hope is the expectation that we can be transformed into the pattern of Christ. Our minds can be renewed as God our Father forms us according to his plan,

not according to the ways of the world (Romans 12:2). Lent is a time when we can expect to see God change the Church through his transforming grace. As we choose to accept his grace, it will become a part of us, transforming us through and through.

The natural season of spring brings change every year. Flowers begin to bloom, the earth comes back to life, the air becomes warm and inviting. Similarly, the spiritual season of Lent is a time to look for significant change. Just as God pours out a new spring of life in the natural realm, he is likewise eager to pour out a new spring of life in our hearts to renew and refresh his Church. This Lent, as we look to God, let us reflect especially on our baptism, and on the gift of repentance, with the assurance that God will produce abundant fruit in our lives and in our Church.

Transformed by Christ's Mercy Today we stand right on the edge of Great Lent, for the weeks of preparation to follow our Savior to His Passion begin tomorrow. We have already been challenged to prepare with the Sundays of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, and the Last Judgment. Now it is the Sunday of Forgiveness, when we are reminded that we must forgive one another if we hope to receive God's forgiveness for our sins. Every time we pray the Our Father, we say "and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Christ teaches in today's gospel lesson that "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." It is impossible, of course, to earn God's forgiveness or put Him in our debt by anything that we do. Before His infinite holiness, we stand in constant need of mercy and grace. At the same time, it is impossible to open ourselves to receive His mercy and grace if we do not extend the forgiveness of which we are capable to those who have wronged us. If we ask for the Lord's forgiveness and refuse to forgive others, we are in the false position of those who want something for themselves but will not give it their neighbors. That is a form of selfishness that reflects a lack of love for those in whom we encounter Him every day of our lives. It is a form of idolatry in which we imagine that we are serving a false god who simply does our bidding rather than a Lord Who calls us to die to self as we share more fully in His life. Forgiveness is not some kind of commodity that can be hoarded greedily. It is ultimately a divine energy of the Lord in Whom we participate by grace. If we refuse to forgive others, we refuse to be healed, transformed, and illumined like an iron left in the fire of the divine glory. We refuse to be truly in communion with Christ; indeed, we refuse Him. But if we

forgive, even as we acknowledge the imperfection of our efforts to control our thoughts, words, and deeds toward those who have offended us, we open ourselves in humility to become more like our Savior in holiness by the power of His grace. Like the rest of the Christian life, forgiveness is not simply a matter of how we feel about God, our neighbors, or ourselves. It is not about whether thoughts of past wrongs or future fears pop into our heads. It is not about whether we particularly like someone else. Forgiveness occurs when our vision of those who have wronged us is clarified or restored such that we see them not in terms of past wrongs, but as those who bear the image and likeness of God. Only our inflamed passions keep us from seeing our neighbors this way, for pride tempts us to hold on to anger and judgment that quickly condemn anyone who has ever dared to cross us. The “quarreling and jealousy” that St. Paul associates with “the works of darkness” will never end in our own souls if we do not find healing from such distorted desires. That process of healing is a way of speaking about putting “on the armor of light,” of “put[ting] on the Lord Jesus Christ, and mak[ing] no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” “Flesh” in this sense refers to our corrupt humanity, enslaved to death and the war of the passions within us. Adam and Eve were cast from Paradise when they stripped themselves naked of the divine glory by their prideful disobedience. They diminished themselves to a life focused on “making provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” We do not have to look very closely at our world or into our own souls in order to see that we have followed our first parents on a path out of Paradise. When their son Cain murdered his brother Abel, it became abundantly clear how powerful the passions are at destroying human relationships as God intended them to be, even within our own families. 10 If we are truly in Christ, the New Adam in Whom all the corruptions of the first Adam are set right, we must be in the processing of healing from the self-centered desires that separate us from Him and one another. The weeks of Lent provide us with profound opportunities to open even the darkest corners of our lives to His brilliant light. But no matter how strictly we fast, how fervently we pray, or how generously we give to the needy, we will be unable to receive God’s forgiveness if we do not forgive one another. That is the clear teaching of Christ in today’s gospel lesson. What greater sign is there of our brokenness than how easily we offend, harm, and disregard one another? Indeed, we often enjoy doing so and come up with all kinds of reasons to justify hateful thoughts, words, and actions toward others. At Forgiveness Vespers this evening, we will personally bow before one another as we ask for and extend forgiveness to everyone in the parish. We begin our journey toward the deep mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection with humility and reconciliation. Since none of us has lived as faithfully as possible, we have all weakened one another spiritually, for we are members of one Body in Christ. Now is the time to grant

to one another the forgiveness that we ask from the Lord as we prepare to follow Him to the ultimate manifestation of His forgiving love in the cross and empty tomb. Instead of wasting time and energy by judging others or holding grudges this Lent, we must focus on participating as fully as possible in the restoration of the human person that Christ has brought to the world. Since we have put Him on in baptism, we must live in a way that reflects and reveals His mercy and blessing. The Lord is very clear about what this means: If we want forgiveness for our sins, we must forgive others for their offenses against us. The prodigal son had no claim to restoration as a son, and he knew that, but the overwhelming love of his father healed the deep wounds that the young man's behavior had caused. If we want to open ourselves to the unfathomable mercy of our Heavenly Father, we must become channels of that same mercy to others, despite our unworthiness. If we are truly "partakers of the divine nature" by grace, our Lord's forgiveness will become characteristic of who we are. (2 Peter 1:4) Like an iron left in the fire takes on the qualities of the fire and conveys heat and light to other objects, those who truly share in Christ's life will share what they have received with others, especially those they are tempted not to forgive. Like prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, forgiveness requires a commitment of the will to do what is pleasing to God and is probably not immediately appealing to us. Like these other practices, forgiveness is a teacher of humility because it reveals our weakness. Like the healing of any passion, embracing forgiveness is a journey that begins with actions of thought, word, and deed that hardly seem sufficient to the task. God is gracious, however, and accepts the small acts of which we are capable. We cooperate with His grace as we do what we can to turn our attention away from the remembrance of past wrongs, to hold our tongues when we are tempted to remind people of their failings, and to say "I forgive you" even when we have a long way to go in fully embracing the meaning of those words. That should not be surprising, of course, because forgiveness is our participation in God's forgiveness. Before His infinite holiness, we cannot claim to have mastered forgiveness or to have accomplished anything simply by our own power. For us who are so accustomed to the darkness, it will be uncomfortable to open our eyes just a bit to the brilliant light. For us who are so addicted to our self-centered desires, it will seem impossible not to gratify them. But when we know our own weakness, then we will know how much we need His gracious strength, which conquers even the tomb. This Great Fast, let us open ourselves to the Lord's grace by showing His mercy to others, especially those who have offended us. There is no other way to follow Christ to His Passion and the brilliant glory of His Kingdom.