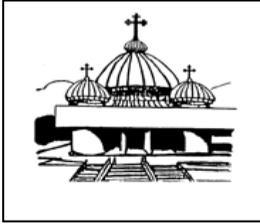


Св. Покрови Українська Католицька Церква
St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Ukrainian Church



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Pastor: Fr. Petro (Peter) Bodnar

DIVINE LITURGY:

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

SATURDAY : 4:00 pm (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.

3rd Sunday of the Great Lent

Epistle: **Hebrews 4:14 – 5:6** see explanation on page 519

Gospel: **Mark 8:34-9:1** see explanation on page 105

Propers for the Divine Liturgy: *Tone 7*

Prayer Intentions March 7- 15

Saturday: 4:00 pm +Harry Stupak (anniv) - Family

Sunday: 9:00 am +Steve Selisnyj - Family

10:30 Thanksgiving & Health Conrad Houle Birthday

Wednesday: 4:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

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

Saturday: 4:00 p.m. For health & blessings of Jean Gaba – B. Spak

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. John & Anna Jarema (Panakhyda) – D.B. Zelenchuk

10:30 a.m. Parishioners

Children are fascinated by so many things that we adults tend to take for granted.

For example, have you ever noticed how intrigued kids are with caterpillars? Long before they turn into butterflies, these odd-looking, fuzzy creatures have already captured young people's imaginations. Then, when they find out that these insects turn into beautiful butterflies, their fascination turns into admiration and fantasy. What was once a funny looking cross between a worm and an insect has turned into a thing of grace and beauty. Part of the reason why caterpillars and butterflies are so appealing is the transformation they undergo. Once unattractive and bound to the earth, they turn into beautiful creatures that can fly with the wind. That's probably why many parishes use the caterpillar as a symbol for the season of Lent. During this special season, the Church urges us to undergo a transformation of our own—a transformation that frees us a little more from the ways of this world and unites us a little more closely to Jesus.

Why Be Transformed? Lent is a time when we can affirm that every one of us is created in God's image and likeness. He loves each of us and calls us all "very good" (Genesis 1:31)—even though he knows that we commit sins. Lent is also a time when God offers us the chance to be set free from sin and to fill all that is good within us with his heavenly grace. This is the transformation that the Holy Spirit wants to do in us. While a caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly is a natural process, our transformation is not so automatic. We can't do it without the healing and renewing power of God's grace active in our lives. St. Paul tells us: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). While it sounds like Paul is challenging us to get to work renewing the way we think and act, that is only one part of the picture. Yes, we have to look at the way we behave. Yes, we have to examine our thoughts and intentions. Yes, we have to guard our minds and work on our faith. But we would be mistaken if we focused only on what we had to do and did not take into account the work of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, and the power of God's grace that is always showering down on us.

So as we enter this Lenten season, let's focus on the hope of transformation so that when Easter comes, we will find it easier to think and walk—and even fly—with God.

What Does This Transformation Mean? Let's begin by looking at the theory behind transformation in Christ. And for that, we need to go back to the baptismal font. Scripture tells us that when we were baptized, we were brought from death to life, from sin to freedom (Colossians 2:12-15). In the waters of Baptism, the Holy Spirit came to abide in our hearts, offering us the divine power to be transformed and renewed. But this powerful gift from God comes to us as a seed, not as a fully developed planting (1 Peter 1:23). While this

seed has the full potential to make us holy, it has to be nourished just as any other seed. It has to be nourished by a life of active faith, by prayer, obedience, the sacraments, and acts of love and kindness to those around us.

St. Paul called this the “new way of living” as opposed to the “old way.” When he told people how to move from the old way to the new way, he said they needed to “put to death” (Colossians 3:5) sins like “anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language” (3:8). But Paul didn’t tell them just to do away with the actions and thoughts that are opposed to Jesus. In the very next breath, he said to “put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator” (3:10). He then gave another brief list of examples: “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,” along with forgiveness, thankfulness, prayer, and love (3:12-14).

So living a new life means that we strive to be renewed in the way we think and act, and it means that we seek the grace of the Holy Spirit to help us make these changes. Our efforts to change are good, and they can bear fruit—but only to a point. In the final analysis, our efforts fall short; they cannot produce a renewed mind. Perhaps a more accurate way of stating it is to say that human striving is more like a *regrouping* of the resources that we already have, while living a new life has to do with possessing a new source of power—divine power.

When we experience this power—which comes as a release of the Spirit given to us in Baptism—we are inspired to please Jesus in everything we do. We become convinced that there is a new power within us that does not come from us, a power that draws us to love God. We also begin to see the limitless power of God’s grace lift up our human efforts, enabling us to think, act, and live more like Jesus. We see God’s grace building on our human nature.

Can you see the difference? On one hand, we can regroup and use what we have and develop our gifts and talents more and more each year. But this is different from new life in Christ. New life in Christ means that we accept and believe that God’s work of salvation is the only way we can be transformed and made holy. It’s God’s power working in us, helping us to sin no more and helping us to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14). Sure, we play a part in this transformation process, but where good human striving abounds, grace “overflows all the more” (5:20).

Faith or Futility? Scripture also urges us to be careful not to live in the “futility” of our old ways of thinking (Ephesians 4:17). This implies that it is possible to acknowledge the truth

about Jesus but still rely on our old ways of thinking. So much, it seems, has to do with what is going on in our minds. Why? Because divine power, heavenly revelation, and godly grace simply cannot have that much influence in a mind dominated by old ways of thinking. At its worst, futile thinking means that there is no reason for living. Futile thinking wonders, “Why was I even born?” Futile thinking sees life as a succession of events that we live through—but that are devoid of meaning. Ultimately, this kind of thinking leads to destructive behavior. This is one of the reasons why we see so many people locked away in prisons. It’s why we see a worldwide, multibillion dollar pornography industry. It’s why we see an increasing lack of respect for human life.

Deep inside, we all search for meaning. When we try to fill this void with futile goals and hope, they let us down. If we remain bound in the limitations of our own thinking, we will eventually come up short and be left feeling anxious and discouraged.

By contrast, if we seek to live a new life by faith in Jesus, we will find God’s power at work in our hearts. It’s a power that flows from Jesus’ cross and resurrection. It’s a power that enables us to lift up our hearts to heaven, where God can fill us with his love and change us to be more and more like his Son. It’s God permeating our lives, filling our deepest longings with his love and moving us to be transformed.

God Will Do His Part! So how can we tell if this power of God is at work within us? We begin to feel God’s presence and his love. We find ourselves moved to bow down to Jesus in worship. We find a new strength that helps us to stop sinning, a new dynamism that empowers us to be more like Jesus. We find ourselves acting like the Virgin Mary, when she carried Jesus in her womb—always turning inward, always thinking about Jesus, always looking to see what God wants to show us next.

As God’s power nourishes the seed of Baptism, we will find ourselves almost naturally bearing new fruit: perhaps being more loving, more kind, more forgiving, and more concerned with other people. We also find the strongholds of sin being loosened or even broken (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Brothers and sisters, the call to transformation in Christ is a lifetime calling. But Lent is a special season that calls us to set aside extra time to go to Jesus and say, “Lord, make me like you. I want to be transformed. I want you to renew my mind.” Over the next forty days, we really can see changes in the way we think and act. All it takes is a little effort on our part—and a lot of grace on God’s part!