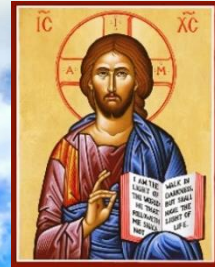


Sunday Bulletin
March 9th, 2025 – 1st Sunday of Great Lent
Sunday of Orthodoxy



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church
1025 N Belle Vista Ave, Youngstown, Ohio 44509



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian
Orthodox Church
Українська Православна
Церква Святих Петра і Павла
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Fr. Mykola Zomchak
Pastor

Anna Anderson
Choir Director

Chuck Woloschak
President of the Church Council

Ministries:

Altar Servers
Church Choir
Church School
Adult Education
St. Mary's Sisterhood
Sts. Peter & Paul Brotherhood
Senior UOL Chapter
Junior UOL Chapter
Youth Ministry
Orphanage Mission Ministry
Bingo Team

Fr Mykola Zomchak - Editor

Website:

<http://www.stspeterpauluoc.org>



STS Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church

*We invite you to a celebration
of the Resurrection of Christ*



Sunday Bulletin

March 9th, 2025 - Sunday of Orthodoxy

- **Liturgical Schedule & Announcem.** - bull 5
- **Join Us for a Hockey Game!** - Mar 29 - bull 7
- **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** - bull 7
- **UOL Lenten Retreat** - Mar 15 - bull 8
- **On Sunday of Orthodoxy** - bull 9
- **On Icons** - bull 10
- **On the Prayer of St. Ephrem** - bull 11
- **Orthodox Christianity 101** - bull 15
- **Bingo for Ukraine** - bull 16

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles: "Death is overthrown!
Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!"

Tone 2 Troparion (Sunday of Orthodoxy)

We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One; and ask
forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. Of Your own
will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and deliver
Your creatures from bondage to the Enemy.
Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to You:
"You have filled all with joy, O our Savior, //
by coming to save the world."

Tone 4 Kontakion (Resurrection)

My Savior and Redeemer as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. He has shattered the gates of hell, and as Master, //
He has risen on the third day!

Tone 8 Kontakion (Sunday of Orthodoxy)

No one could describe the Word of the Father;
but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described,
and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty.//
We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images.

Tone 4 Prokeimenon

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, /and praised and glorified is Your Name forever!
V. For You are just in all that You have done for us!



The Reading is from the First Letter of St Paul to Hebrews 11:24-26; 32-12:2

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Alleluia and Verses Tone 4

*V. Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His Name
V. They called to the Lord and He answered them. (Ps. 98:7a)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*



The reading is from the Gospel according to St. John 1:43-51

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following) Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace: the assembly of angels and the race of men.

O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins,

from whom God was incarnate and became a Child – our God before the ages.

He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! (Ps 148:1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

MEMORY ETERNAL

PLEASE PRAY FOR RESTING OF THE SOULS

Eleanor K. Laise, Julian Naumenko, Patricia Huly, David Scharba, John Senediak, Ann & George Klein, Sophia Karpa, Iryna Farion, Charles Demetrios, Nun Antonina, Elaine Cartier, Betty Ewanish, Mary Gula, Mykola Prychodczenko, Oleksander Dmytro. Victims of the war in Ukraine.

PRAYER LIST

PLEASE PRAY FOR HEALING, COMFORT, AND SPIRITUAL PEACE



Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Daniel, Tom Drabick, Walter Duzzny, Lori, Christine Kline, Arlene Hawryluk, Jerry Zets, Larry, Darlene Moon, Jeff Smith, Soldier Ivan, Bernard Gnat, Dolly Mehalco, Jeff Ulbrich, Richard Scharba, Brittany, Matt, Stephen Shonn, Thelma Zemko, Artur Bohuslav, Bohdan, Lori Hayda, Shirley Duffy, Michele (Senediak) Caulder, Dobrodiyka Lilya, Sandy, Marilyn O'Leary, Alice Dobransky, Harold Owens, Dave Zylka, Marianne Carmack, Nicholas Yurchyk, Pauline Witkowsky, Eileen Maluk, Peter Anderson, Albert Auden, Michael Gino Maluk, Boris & Kathleen Vuksanovich, Kathy Zebel. People suffering from any illnesses. Ukrainian people suffering from war.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1 Kathryn Walcowiec	20 Lindsay Anderson
3 Nadiya Lyubuska	20 Kimberly S. Bobersky
7 Marcia Goodge	25 Boris Vuksanovich
7 Samuel Goodge	25 Katherine Zomchak
7 Theresa Semchee	28 Gregory Battisti
10 Luba Medved	28 Alice Mae Gregory
12 Ronald N. Kichton	30 Thomas Lane
12 Michael III Woloschak	30 Laura Zavakil
16 Karen Yuschak	31 Nicholas Inchak

Liturgical Schedule & Feast Days



SERVICE AND FEAST DAY SCHEDULE

* (*HEARING CONFESSIONS ON SUNDAYS BEFORE LITURGY 8:30AM - 9:15AM*)

- Sunday, March 9, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 1st Sunday of Great Lent, of Orthodoxy**
- Sunday March 9, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers** – *at Archangel Michael Greek Orthodox Church. At 401 - 12th Street, Campbell, OH (Fr Mykola Zomchak – speaker)*
- Friday, March 14, 6:00 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, March 16, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, G. Palamas**
- Sunday March 16, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers** – *at Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church at 2220 Reeves Road Warren, OH*
- Friday, March 21, 6:00 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, March 23, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, Adoration of Cross.**
- Sunday, March 23, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers** – *at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church at 2053 North Road, NE, Warren, OH*
- Friday, March 28, 6:00 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, March 30, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 4th Sunday of Great Lent, Venerable John Listvychnyk**
- Sunday, March 30, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers** – *at St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church at 429 High St NE, Warren, OH*
- Friday, April 4, 6:00 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, April 6, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 5th Sunday of Great Lent, Venerable Mary of Egypt, Fellowship in Memory of Mykola Prychodczenko**
- Sunday, April 6, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers** – *at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church 220 North Walnut Street, Youngstown, OH*
- Friday, April 11, 6:00 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, April 13, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 6th Sunday of Great Lent**

PALM SUNDAY. THE ENTRY OF THE LORD INTO JERUSALEM.

Upcoming dates & events

- Every Friday during the Great Lent - **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- March Wednesdays – **Bingo for Ukraine** on every Wednesday in March.
- Mar 29 - **Hockey Game.** All are welcome – see more info in bulletin page
- April 6 - **Fellowship in Memory of Mykola Prychodczenko**
- April 6 – **Sisterhood Meeting** following the fellowship
- July 23-27, 2025 - UOL Convention in Florida – SAVE the DATE – July 23-27, 2025.

Church School Calendar

* Church School - Mar 9

* Church School – Mar 16

* Church School – Mar 23

Sr. UOL Calendar

- Saturday, March 15 – UOL Pan-Orthodox Lenten Retreat (OHIO / WESTERN PA) Sat, Mar 15

Pyrohy Schedule

ORDER BY DATE:	WORK DAY	WORK DAY	PICK-UP DAY
March 10	March 11	March 13	March 14
March 24	March 25	March 27	March 28
April 7	April 8	April 10	April 11
May 12	May 13	May 15	May 16

Choir Rehearsal Schedule

March	April
THUR, Mar 13 at 7pm THUR, Mar 27 at 7pm	WED, Apr 2 at 7pm WED, Apr 9 at 7pm

OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD	On Feb 23	On Mar 2
General:	\$ 2261.50	\$ 1719.00
Renovation:	\$ 32.00	\$ 115.00
Online Donations on Tithe.ly	\$ 35.00	\$ 20.00

Bulletin Dedication *(in memory or in honor)*

Sun Mar 2	Sun Mar 9	Sun Mar 16	Sun Mar 23	Sun Mar 30
1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	1. Available 2. Available	1. Available 2. Available	1. Dedicated 2. Available	1. Dedicated 2. Available
Sun Apr 6	Sun Apr 13	Sun Apr 20	Sun Apr 27	
1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	1. Available 2. Available	1. Available 2. Available	1. Available 2. Available	

For bulletin dedication please call – 330-799-3830 Fr Mykola


ANNOUNCEMENTS:


- Volunteer Opportunity / Help Needed for Sisterhood Bingo Kitchen to serve food on 2nd Mondays. Contact Stephanie – 330-716-2726. Thank you!
- Need Volunteers to help with Bingo (need people to call back & sell the cards).

Join Us for a Hockey Game!

Dear Parish Family,

We invite you—both adults and children—to join us for an exciting hockey game: Youngstown Phantoms vs Fargo Force !

 Date: Saturday, March 29, 2025

 Time: 6:05 PM

 Location: Covelli Centre, Youngstown, OH



The Parish will pay for the children under 18 y.o.!

This is a great opportunity for fellowship and fun as we come together as a parish community. Let's cheer on our local team and enjoy a wonderful evening together!

If you're interested in attending, please let us know by signing up in the back of the church or by email to stspeterpauluoc@gmail.com so we can organize tickets and seating arrangements.

We look forward to seeing you there!



The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

It will be celebrated every Friday at 6 PM during Great Lent.

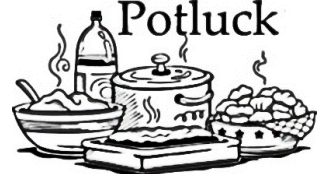
Is a beautiful and solemn service that sustains us spiritually as we journey through this season of repentance. Unlike a full Divine Liturgy, it does not consecrate the Eucharist but offers the faithful the already sanctified Body and Blood of Christ from a previous service.

This Liturgy reminds us of our need for God's grace and nourishment, even as we fast and repent. It is a service of deep reverence, marked by prayer, prostrations, and the longing for communion with Christ.

As we gather each Friday, let us come with humility and gratitude, seeking renewal and strength for the spiritual struggle of Great Lent. May this service help us draw nearer to Christ, preparing our hearts for the joy of Pascha (Easter)!

**Please Join us for Potluck Dinner
Every Friday after
the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts**

**Church
Potluck**





2025 Annual WPA/Ohio Pan-Orthodox Lenten Retreat

The Language of Orthodoxy

*Experience Great Lent through the Prophets and Saints
Embracing Christ's Call by using the Language of Orthodoxy*

9:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Saturday, March 15, 2025

River Valley Complex
320 Shenango Street
Pulaski, PA 16143

To register for the retreat:

e-mail s98carmack@gmail.com

or text 412-565-9441

Visit Website <https://www.uolofusa.org> starting 2/3/2025

It will be a day of prayer, reflection and transformation

*Includes: Breakfast, Morning Prayers, Speakers, Group Discussion,
Lunch, Snacks, Confession, Vespers*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without
him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light
of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*



Ukrainian Orthodox League of the USA
Dedicate to our Church. . . Devoted to its Youth

John 1:1-5

On Sunday of Orthodoxy

The Sunday of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday of Great Lent, is a powerful reminder of the victory of truth over falsehood, light over darkness, and faith over heresy. It marks the restoration of icons in the Church after years of iconoclasm, but its significance goes beyond mere images—it is about the very nature of our faith, the Incarnation of Christ, and the call to uphold and live by the truth of Orthodoxy.

1. The Triumph of Truth

The restoration of icons in 843 was not just about art or decoration; it was a theological victory. Icons affirm that Christ truly became man, taking on flesh, making the invisible God visible. This reminds us that our faith is not abstract or theoretical but deeply incarnational. The Church does not worship wood and paint, but through icons, we venerate Christ, His saints, and the reality of His presence among us.

2. Faith Handed Down Through Generations

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is also about continuity—the faith of the Apostles, the Fathers, and the Councils, preserved and handed down to us. In a world that constantly challenges and distorts the truth, we are called to stand firm in the faith of our ancestors, just as the defenders of icons did. Their struggle was not just historical but an example for us today, as we face new forms of iconoclasm, whether through secularism, indifference, or the rejection of sacred tradition.

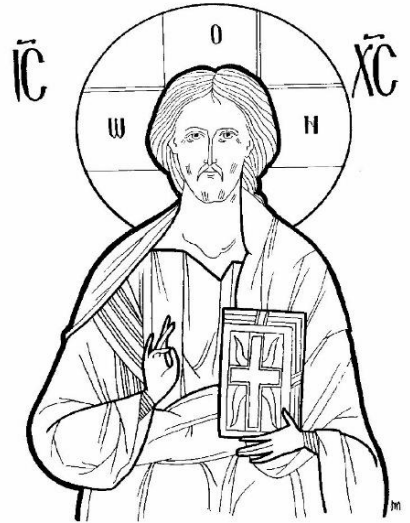
3. Personal Icons—Living the Faith

Each Christian is called to be a living icon of Christ. Just as icons reflect divine beauty and holiness, our lives should reflect God's presence to the world. We are called not only to honor icons in churches but to be transformed into the image of Christ through prayer, fasting, and repentance.

4. Bearing Witness to the Faith

The procession of icons on this Sunday symbolizes our public declaration of faith. This is not just a historical re-enactment but a personal challenge—are we willing to stand for the truth of Orthodoxy in our daily lives? Do we boldly confess Christ in a world that often rejects Him?

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is a call to reaffirm our faith, to be strengthened in our spiritual journey, and to bear witness to Christ in all aspects of life. As we continue our Lenten journey, may we strive to become true icons of Christ, reflecting His love, truth, and holiness to the world.



“Icons Are the Windows to Heaven”

The phrase “Icons are the windows to heaven” by St. John of Damascus beautifully captures the profound role that holy images play in Orthodox Christian spirituality. An icon is not just religious art; it is a sacramental window, allowing us to glimpse the divine reality beyond this earthly world. It connects us to the presence of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints, drawing us into the mystery of God’s kingdom.



1. A Window, Not a Barrier

Windows allow light to enter a room, revealing what lies beyond. Similarly, icons illuminate our faith, opening our hearts to God’s presence. They are not meant to be worshiped but rather to lead us into deeper communion with Christ. When we venerate an icon, we are not adoring wood and paint, but rather honoring the person depicted, just as we might kiss a photo of a loved one.

2. The Incarnation Makes Icons Possible

Icons affirm the central mystery of Christianity: the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Since God took on a visible, physical form in Jesus Christ, He can be depicted in images. This is why Orthodox Christians defend the use of icons—because they proclaim the truth of the Incarnation. If Christ truly became man, then His image can be represented, and through it, we can contemplate His divine presence.

3. A Call to Transformation

Icons are not only meant to be viewed; they are meant to change us. When we look upon an icon of Christ, we are reminded of our call to become more like Him. The saints depicted in icons serve as models of holiness, inspiring us to grow in virtue. Just as the iconographer fasts and prays while painting an icon, we too are called to become living icons of Christ—reflecting His love, mercy, and truth in the world.

4. A Glimpse of the Heavenly Reality

Icons remind us that this world is not our final home. They give us a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, where Christ reigns in glory. In the icon of the Pantocrator (Christ Almighty), we see the victorious Lord, ruling over all creation. In the icon of the Theotokos, we see the Mother who intercedes for us. Every icon points beyond itself, inviting us to lift our eyes toward heaven.

Icons are not merely decorations for churches and homes; they are sacred windows that draw us closer to God. They invite us to pray, to meditate, and to seek the holiness that they reflect. As we stand before an icon, may we open the windows of our hearts and allow the light of Christ to transform us, so that we too may become living icons of His love in the world.



The Prayer of St. Ephrem: A Practical Guide of Archbishop Daniel to Spiritual Renewal and Transformation

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother,
]for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Among the many prayers in Orthodox Christian tradition, few are as spiritually profound and transformative as the ***Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian***. This prayer, recited frequently during Great Lent, is a roadmap to repentance, humility, and renewal, making it one of the most beloved and essential prayers of the Orthodox faith. Though short in length, it carries within it a comprehensive guide for overcoming sin and acquiring virtue, serving as a mirror for self-examination and a ladder toward spiritual ascent.

Every year during Great Lent, Orthodox Christians prostrate themselves as they recite this prayer, embodying its words through physical humility. But this prayer is not meant to be limited to the Lenten season - it is a lifelong guide for the soul, challenging us to examine our hearts and turn toward Christ with sincerity and repentance.

The author of this prayer, St. Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306–373 AD), was one of the most remarkable spiritual fathers of the early Church. Born in Nisibis (modern-day Turkey), St. Ephraim was a deacon, theologian, poet, and ascetic, known for his deep spiritual insight and eloquence. His writings, particularly his hymns and prayers, played a crucial role in shaping Christian spirituality.

Despite his vast influence, St. Ephraim remained deeply humble. He refused the priesthood and chose instead to serve as a deacon, dedicating his life to prayer, fasting, and instructing others in the faith. His writings were not only theological but also deeply poetic and filled with imagery, making them accessible to both the learned and the simple.

St. Ephraim's hymns and prayers often focus on the themes of ***repentance, divine mercy, and the battle against sin***. His words continue to inspire Christians today, guiding them toward a life of holiness. The Prayer of St. Ephraim is perhaps his most well-known spiritual work, a powerful call to repentance that has been embraced by the Orthodox Church for over 1,600 years.

Why is this prayer so closely associated with Great Lent?

Lent is a time of spiritual struggle, a period when the Church calls every believer to ***self-examination, humility, and repentance***. This prayer perfectly encapsulates the **Lenten mindset** - not just sorrow for sin, but an active desire to be transformed by God's grace.

Each line of this prayer identifies key spiritual dangers - sloth, despair, lust for power, and idle talk - while also calling upon God to fill the soul with chastity, humility, patience, and love. It is a battle cry against the passions, a plea for healing, and an invitation to live a life of holiness.

But this prayer is not only relevant during Lent. **It is a daily challenge** - a call to constantly renew our hearts, to resist the forces that pull us away from God, and to actively cultivate the virtues that bring us closer to Him.

As we explore this prayer in detail, let us remember that its purpose is not just to be **recited** but to be **lived**. It is a prayer that, if taken seriously, can transform our thoughts, actions, and entire spiritual life. Let us now break down each section, uncovering its meaning and how it can be practically applied in our journey toward holiness.

First Petition: Asking for Deliverance from Destructive Passions

"O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk."

Before we can grow in virtue, we must first be freed from the passions that hinder us. This section of the prayer is a plea for spiritual purification, asking God to remove four specific destructive attitudes.

1. Sloth – The Enemy of Spiritual Growth

Sloth, in a spiritual sense, is not merely laziness but a deep indifference toward God, prayer, and our own salvation. It manifests as procrastination in spiritual matters, avoidance of repentance, and lack of enthusiasm for worship.

How It Affects Us:

- Neglecting prayer, church services, and spiritual reading.
- Feeling no urgency to repent or improve spiritually.
- Seeking distractions instead of spending time with God.

Practical Steps to Overcome Sloth:

- **Create a prayer rule** and follow it daily, even if it's short.
- **Prioritize church attendance** - commit to going even when it feels inconvenient.
- **Set spiritual goals**, such as reading a portion of the Gospel daily.
- **Surround yourself with people who encourage your faith.**

When we fight against sloth, we **invite the fire of the Holy Spirit** into our hearts, awakening a true desire for God.

2. Despair – The Loss of Hope in God

Despair is one of the devil's greatest weapons. It convinces us that we are beyond redemption, that our sins are too great, or that God is distant and unconcerned.

How It Affects Us:

- Feeling unworthy of God's mercy.
- Losing motivation to repent because we believe we won't change.
- Becoming overwhelmed by guilt instead of turning to Christ.

Practical Steps to Overcome Despair:

- **Remember the parable of the Prodigal Son** - God is always ready to receive us.
- **Confess regularly** - this sacrament is a direct encounter with Christ's mercy.
- **Meditate on the Psalms, especially Psalm 50 (51)**, which expresses repentance and hope.
- **Practice gratitude** - recognizing God's blessings can renew your faith in His goodness.

No matter how many times we fall, we must always rise again. The Saints were not people who never sinned, but those who never gave up on God's mercy.

3. Lust of Power – The Desire to Control and Dominate

Lust for power is the desire to **control, manipulate, or dominate others**. It stems from pride and leads to selfish ambition, conflict, and oppression.

How It Affects Us:

- Wanting to be in control of everything.
- Seeking recognition or authority over others for self-glory.
- Manipulating others to get our way.

Practical Steps to Overcome Lust of Power:

- **Practice servant leadership** - Christ, the King of Kings, washed His disciples' feet.
- **Accept that God is in control, not us** - learning to trust Him brings peace.
- **Be willing to listen and take advice** rather than always wanting to lead.
- **Cultivate humility** - seek ways to serve rather than be served.

True greatness comes from serving others, not ruling over them. The Saints became great not through power but through humility and love.

4. Idle Talk – The Power of Words

Idle talk includes **gossip, slander, empty chatter, and meaningless distractions**. Words have power - they can bless or harm, build up or destroy.

How It Affects Us:

- Wasting time on useless conversations instead of edifying ones.
- Gossiping or speaking negatively about others.
- Speaking without thinking, causing unnecessary harm.

Practical Steps to Overcome Idle Talk:

- **Think before you speak:** *Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?*
- **Use words to encourage and bless others.**
- **Spend more time in prayer and silence** - listening to God rather than speaking.

The tongue is small, but it can set **entire lives on fire** (James 3:5). When we control our speech, we **become more Christ-like**.

Second Petition: Asking for Virtues to Replace Our Sins

"But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant."

Once we ask God to remove negative passions, we must **replace them with virtues**.

1. **Chastity – Purity in Mind, Body, and Soul**

Chastity is often thought of as sexual purity, but it is much more - it is **purity of heart, mind, and soul**. It means being fully devoted to God and resisting sinful distractions.

Practical Steps to Grow in Chastity:

- **Guard your heart and mind** - be mindful of what you watch, listen to, and read.
- **Practice self-discipline** in all areas, not just sexuality.
- **Focus on Christ as your greatest treasure** - the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8).

A chaste heart is **free to love God without distractions**.

2. **Humility – Seeing Ourselves Truthfully**

Humility is knowing **who we are before God**—nothing without Him, but everything in His love.

Practical Steps to Grow in Humility:

- **Accept correction and criticism** without defensiveness.
- **Give credit to God** for your talents and achievements.
- **Serve others** without seeking recognition.

Christ humbled Himself unto death—when we are humble, we **reflect His image**.

3. **Patience – Trusting in God’s Timing**

Patience means **accepting trials without losing faith**, knowing that **God is working all things for good**.

Practical Steps to Grow in Patience:

- **When suffering, remember:** *This is temporary, but God’s love is eternal.*
- **Pray for those who test your patience.**
- **Trust in God’s plan, even when you don’t understand.**

Patience **brings peace**, even in suffering.

4. **Love – The Highest Virtue**

Love is **the core of Christianity**. Christ told us that **the greatest commandment is to love God and neighbor** (Matthew 22:37-39).

Practical Steps to Grow in Love:

- **Love even when it is difficult** - forgive and be kind.
- **Put others before yourself.**
- **See Christ in every person.**

Love **conquers all** and brings us closest to God.

Final Petition: The Key to True Repentance

"Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen."

This final part teaches us **self-examination** and **mercy**.

- **Stop judging others** - focus on your own repentance.
- **Be quick to forgive** - God forgives us as we forgive others.
- **Seek daily self-reflection** - examine your conscience each night.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian is far more than a set of words to be recited during Great Lent - it is a spiritual roadmap, a guide for overcoming sin, cultivating virtue, and drawing closer to God. Every phrase of this prayer invites us to self-examination, humility, and transformation, helping us to remove the obstacles that hinder our salvation and replace them with the light of Christ.

As we have explored, this prayer addresses the deepest struggles of the human soul: sloth, despair, the lust for power, and idle talk - all of which pull us away from God and entangle us in spiritual darkness. Yet, rather than leaving us in despair over these weaknesses, the prayer leads us forward, calling upon God to fill our hearts with chastity, humility, patience, and love - the virtues that reflect the very character of Christ Himself.

But the prayer does not stop there. It culminates in a plea for true spiritual sight - the ability to see our own sins rather than judging others. This final petition is the ultimate key to spiritual renewal because it shifts our focus from external distractions to internal transformation. When we stop obsessing over the faults of others and instead work on purifying our own hearts, we take the first step toward genuine holiness.

Though this prayer is central to Great Lent, it is beneficial for daily spiritual life. Consider incorporating it into your personal prayer rule, reciting it not as a mere habit, but as a serious commitment to inner change. Let each word sink into your soul, challenging you to live it out rather than merely saying it.

Here are some practical ways to make this prayer a reality in daily life:

1. Identify the passions you struggle with most - Do you battle spiritual laziness? Do you fall into despair easily? Are you tempted by pride or power? Use this prayer as a diagnostic tool to uncover areas where repentance is needed.
2. Seek to actively cultivate the virtues mentioned - Each day, make an effort to practice chastity in thought and action, humility in speech and attitude, patience in trials, and love in all things. Ask God for strength in these areas.
3. Commit to self-examination before judging others - When tempted to criticize or condemn someone, pause and reflect: *Have I looked at my own sins first? Have I repented today?* Keep a humble heart, always remembering that God alone is the judge.
4. Accompany the prayer with physical humility - During Orthodox services, this prayer is often accompanied by prostrations. Even in private prayer, consider bowing or making prostrations as an outward sign of the inner humility you are asking God to grant you.
5. Turn words into action - This prayer is not meant to remain just in our thoughts; it must translate into real-life change. If we pray for humility, we should actively seek to be humble. If we ask for patience, we should practice it in difficult moments. If we beg God to remove idle talk, we should control our tongues and speak only words that build up and encourage.

The goal of this prayer - and indeed, the goal of the entire Christian life - is freedom: not worldly freedom, but true spiritual liberation from sin. Many people mistakenly believe that Christianity is about restrictions and rules, but in reality, it is about freedom from the chains of sin and passions that enslave us.

When we allow sloth to rule our hearts, we become slaves to laziness and apathy. When we give in to despair, we become prisoners of hopelessness. When we seek power over others, we become trapped in pride and self-glory. When we indulge in idle talk, we lose control over our words and allow them to harm instead of heal.

But when we open our hearts to God through repentance and strive for chastity, humility, patience, and love, we experience true freedom - the freedom of a soul that is no longer weighed down by sin, but alive in Christ.

This is why the Church places this prayer at the heart of Great Lent. Lent is not just about fasting from food; it is about fasting from sin and replacing it with holiness. It is a time of spiritual warfare, a season in which we fight against the passions and strive toward Christ with renewed zeal.

But the struggle does not end with Lent. The battle for holiness continues every day of our lives. This prayer serves as a daily reminder of what truly matters - not wealth, power, or earthly success, but a pure heart that is pleasing to God.

As we conclude, let us take one final lesson from St. Ephraim the Syrian himself. Despite his immense wisdom and holiness, he never saw himself as righteous. He always approached God with deep humility, knowing that the spiritual life is a constant struggle and that only through God's grace can we truly change.

This is the same attitude we must have. We will stumble, we will fall, and we will fail at times. But we must never give up. Each time we pray this prayer, we are reminded that God is merciful, patient, and always ready to help us begin again.

So let us embrace this prayer not just with our lips, but with our hearts. Let us allow it to reshape our minds, transform our actions, and purify our souls. Let it be our daily guide as we journey toward Christ, who alone grants us true life, true love, and eternal salvation.

May God give us the strength to pray, to repent, and to be transformed. And may the words of this holy prayer lead us ever closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

- Archbishop Daniel

Orthodox Christianity 101

IMAGE AND LIKENESS

'So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them' (Gen.1:27). Because a solitary egocentric monad is incapable of love, God created not a unit but a couple with the intention that love should reign among people. And because the love of the couple is not yet the perfection of love and being, God commands: 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Gen.1:28). From two human beings the third, their child, must be born: the perfect family — husband, wife and child, is the reflection of divine love in three Hypostases. Indeed one cannot but notice the affinity of the interchange between the singular and plural when the Bible speaks of God ('Let *Us* make man in *Our* image' — 'God created man in *His* own image') and the singular and plural when it speaks of humans ('created him' — 'created them'). This interchange emphasizes the unity of the nature of the human race even when there is a distinction between the hypostases of each individual person.



The theme of image and likeness is central to Christian anthropology: to a greater or lesser extent it was addressed by nearly all early church writers. The Fathers of the Church usually equated 'the image of God' to the rational and spiritual nature of the human person. 'What is *after the image* if not our intellect?' asks St John of Damascus. 'We are created in the image of the Maker, we possess reason and the faculty of speech, which comprise the perfection of our nature', writes St Basil the Great.

'The image of God' has been understood by some Fathers as our free will and self-determination. 'When God in His supernal goodness creates each soul in His own image, He brings it into being endowed with self-determination', says St Maximus the Confessor. God created the person absolutely free: in His love He wishes to force him neither into good nor evil. In return, He does not expect from us blind obedience but love. It is only in our being free that we can be assimilated to God through love for Him.

Other Fathers identified as 'the image of God' the human person's immortality, his dominant position in the world and his striving towards good.

Our ability to create, as the reflection of the creative ability of the Maker Himself, is also regarded as being 'in God's image'. God is the 'worker': 'My Father is working still, and I am working', says Christ (John 5:17). The human person was also commanded to 'till' the garden of Eden (Gen.2:15), that is, to labour in it and to work the land. While the human person is unable to create *ex nihilo* ('out of nothing'), he can create from material given to him by God, and this material is the entire earth, over which he is lord and master. The world has no need to be improved by people; rather, humans themselves need to apply their creative abilities in order to be assimilated to God.

Some church Fathers distinguish 'image' from 'likeness' by identifying the image as that which had been originally fixed by the Creator in the human person, and the likeness as that which is to be attained through a life of virtue: 'The expression *according to the image* indicates that which is reasonable and endowed with free will, while the expression *according to the likeness* denotes assimilation through virtue, in as far as this is possible' (St John of Damascus). The human person is called upon to realize all of his creative abilities in 'tilling' the world, in creativity, in virtue, in love, so that he can be assimilated to God. For, as St Gregory of Nyssa says, 'the limit of a life of virtues is the assimilation of God'.

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