

Sunday Bulletin ~ February 15th, 2026
Sunday of the of the Last Judgment
The Meeting of the Lord



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



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian
Orthodox Church

Українська Православна
Церква Св Петра і Павла

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Fr. Mykola Zomchak
Pastor

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Choir Director

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President of the Parish

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:

<https://www.stspeterpauluoc.org>

STS Peter & Paul UOC

Let us celebrate the Resurrection of Christ



Sunday Bulletin - February 15th , 2026

Sunday of the of the Last Judgment

The Meeting of the Lord

In Memory of Catherine Pusch

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CHANGEABLE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

Troparion — Tone 1 *(Of the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord)*

Hail, Virgin Theotokos, full of grace; / for from you has shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, / giving light to those in darkness. / Be glad, O righteous Elder; / for you received in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, /
Who bestows upon us the resurrection.

Tone 3 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. He has trampled down death by death. He has become the first born of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world// great mercy.

Tone 1 Kontakion *(From the Lenten Triodion)*

As God, You rose from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Yourself. Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to You:// “You are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”

Kontakion — Tone 1 *(Of the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord)*

By Your birth, You sanctified a virginal womb, / and fittingly You blessed Simeon’s hands, O Christ God; / even now You have saved us by anticipation. / Grant peace to Your faithful people whom You have loved, O only Lover of mankind.

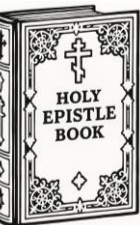
Tone 1 Kontakion *(from the Lenten Triodion)*

When You, O God, shall come to earth with glory, all things shall tremble, and the river of fire shall flow before Your judgment seat; the books shall be opened, and the hidden things disclosed; then deliver me from the unquenchable fire,//
and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O Righteous Judge!

Tone 3 Prokeimenon *(from the Lenten Triodion)*

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power, / His understanding is beyond measure.
V. Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God! (Ps. 146:1)

The Reading is from the Letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to Corinthians 6:12-20



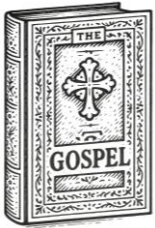
All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know

that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Alleluia and Verses Tone 1

V. God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me. (Ps. 17:48)

V. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever. (Ps. 17:51)



The reading is from the Gospel according to St. Luke 2:22-40 (For the Feast)

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.” And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to



their *own* city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

The reading is from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 25:31-46 (For the Last Judgment)

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

MEMORY ETERNAL

PLEASE PRAY FOR RESTING OF THE SOULS

Helen Fusco, Maria Koval-Melnykovich, Peter Hucul, Mary Bobersky, Walter Duzzny, Dennis Currie, Julian, Vasyl Zomchak, Heather Rhodes, Joe Zemko, Jeff Ulrich, Judy Cebriak, William Zylka, Serhiy, Pat Mamajack, Arlene Hawryluk, Mary C. Moon, Lidiia Zabrodina, Metro Senedak, Eleanor K. Laise, Julian Naumenko, Patricia Huly, John Senediak, Ann & George Klein. Victims of the war in Ukraine. In Memory of Mr. Darrel Swartz



PRAYER LIST

PLEASE PRAY FOR HEALING, COMFORT, AND SPIRITUAL PEACE

Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Daniel, Beth Zets, Patricia Mogish, Denny Lightner, Kevin Finnerty, Alice Dobransky, Jamie Maluk, Alexandr, Missouri, Jane, Sam, Lorenzo, Lori, Christine Kline, Larry, Soldier Ivan, Dolly Mehalco, Stephen Shonn, Thelma Zemko, Artur Bohuslav, Lori Hayda, Shirley Duffy, Michele (Senediak) Caulder, Dobrodiyka Lilya, Sandy, Marilyn O'Leary, Harold Owens, Marianne Carmack, Nicholas Yurchyk, Pauline Witkowsky, Eileen Maluk, Peter Anderson, Albert Auden, Boris & Kathleen Vuksanovich, Kathy Zebel. People Suffering from any Illnesses. Ukrainian people suffering from war.



Liturgical Schedule & Feast Days



SERVICE AND FEAST DAY SCHEDULE

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

- Sunday, February 15, 9:30AM – Divine Liturgy, Sunday of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46)
Meatfare Sunday **THE MEETING OF THE LORD** (Lk. 2:22-40)
- Sunday, February 22, 9:30AM – Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Expulsion of Adam from Paradise
Cheesefare Sunday (*The Last day before the Great Lent*) (Mt. 6:14-21)
- Monday, February 23 – ** THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT LENT **
(spend the first day of Lent reading Psalms)
- Tuesday, February 24, 7:00 PM – **Night of Prayer for God’s Peace in Ukraine**
4th Anniversary of Russia’s War Against Ukraine Tue, Feb 24 at 7 PM
at Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church at 526 West Rayen Avenue, Youngstown, OH.
- Wednesday, February 25, 6:00 PM – Penitential Canon of St Andrew.
- Thursday, February 26, 6:00 PM – Penitential Canon of St Andrew.
- Friday, February 27, 6:00 PM – Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner
- Sunday, March 1, 9:30AM – Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Triumph of Orthodoxy (Jn. 1:43-51)

Upcoming dates & events

- Sunday, February 15 - UOL Meeting
- Saturday, March 21 – **UOL Lenten Retreat** at Community Resource Center at 320 Shenango Street Pulaski, PA 16143 (724) 652-6184. For registration call Shirley Duffy at (412) 518-0912

Pyrohy Schedule (Updated)

ORDER BY DATE:	WORK DAYS	PICK-UP DAY
Feb. 16	Feb. 17 & 19	Feb. 20
March 2	March 3 & 5	March 6
March 16	March 17 & 19	March 20
March 30	March 31 & Apr 2	April 3
April 20	April 21 & 23	April 24
May 4	May 5 & 7	May 8
May 18	May 19 & 20 (Wed)	May 22
June 8	June 9 & 11	June 12



OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD	On February 1	On February 8
General:	\$ 4093.00	\$ 1347.00
Renovation:	\$	\$ 150.00
Online Donations on Tithe.ly	\$ 50.00	\$ 75.00

- Souper Bowl Sunday donations - \$1150.00

Bulletin Dedication

(in memory of a loved one, or in honor for an anniversary)

<u>Sun Feb 1</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	<u>Sun Feb 8</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<u>Sun Feb 15</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<u>Sun Feb 22</u> Not Available	
<u>Sun Mar 1</u> 1. Dedicated 1. Dedicated	<u>Sun Mar 8</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<u>Sun Mar 15</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Mar 22</u> Not Available	<u>Sun Mar 29</u> 1. Available 2. Available

Dear Parishioners and Friends, WE NEED HELP!

Please offer your time to help at the Bingo kitchen on available dates (?)

BINGO KITCHEN WORK SCHEDULE 2026 (Updated Feb 14)

Date	Register	Server	Server
Mon., Feb. 2,	Karen Semchee	Nadiya Lybushka	Barb Ross
Weds., Feb. 4,	?	Bobbi Yarosh	Chris Buccino
Mon., Feb. 9,	Crystal Walkowiec	Barb Ross	Erica Shonn
Mon., Feb. 16,	Karen Semchee	Carla Rogenski	Bev Henry
Mon., Feb. 23,	Crystal Walkowiec	Jeanna Savastano	Barb Ross
Mon, Mar. 2,	Karen Semchee	Nadiya Lybushka	Barb Ross
Weds., Mar. 4	Sharlene Senediak	Bobbi Yarosh	Chris Buccino
Mon., Mar. 9	Crystal Walkowiec	?	?

Please call or text Annie Woloschak if you would like to help – 330-766-0182

Night of Prayer

for God's Peace in Ukraine

4th Anniversary of Russia's War Against Ukraine

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 7 PM

Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church

526 West Rayen Avenue – Youngstown, OH

330-744-5820 / yngholytrinity@att.net

THIS MONTH OUR PARISH CELEBRATES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

February 6, 1971 Gerald & Elizabeth Zets
February 8, 1969 Patricia & James Nichols
February 13, 1999 Michael & Theresa Semchee
February 15, 1975 Peter & Bonnie Borovitky
February 27, 1982- Bohdan & Nadiya Lyubuska

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Rich Semchee	19 Ethan Rhodes
1 Avery McCormick	20 Tamara Betts
2 Katie & Bernie Rogenski's	21 Dee Bralish
3 James Nichols	23 Carole Senediak
7 Gertrude Senediak	2 Thomas G DeLuca
10 James Nichols	25 Kyle Crown
15 Christina M. Thornton	26 Walter Malys
16 Michael Semchee Sr.	27 Irene Hustic
	27 Sandy Burlock

ANNOUNCEMENTS & GREETINGS:

• **Outing for the Juniors**

The Junior UOL is planning an outing for Sunday, February 15, after Church School, for the Juniors and Church School students. After Church School classes, there will be pizza, chips, and drinks for all church school students. Then, all church school students are invited to come to the Funcity Adventure Park in the Austintown Plaza. A fun event for all ages!



Juniors Outing

• **House Blessing**

Dear Parishioners,
If Fr Mykola hasn't reached out to you yet but you would like your home blessed – please call Fr Mykola at 330-799-3830.

Fr Mykola is looking forward to blessing your homes this year and many to come!



IN MEMORY OF



**CATHERINE
PUSCH**

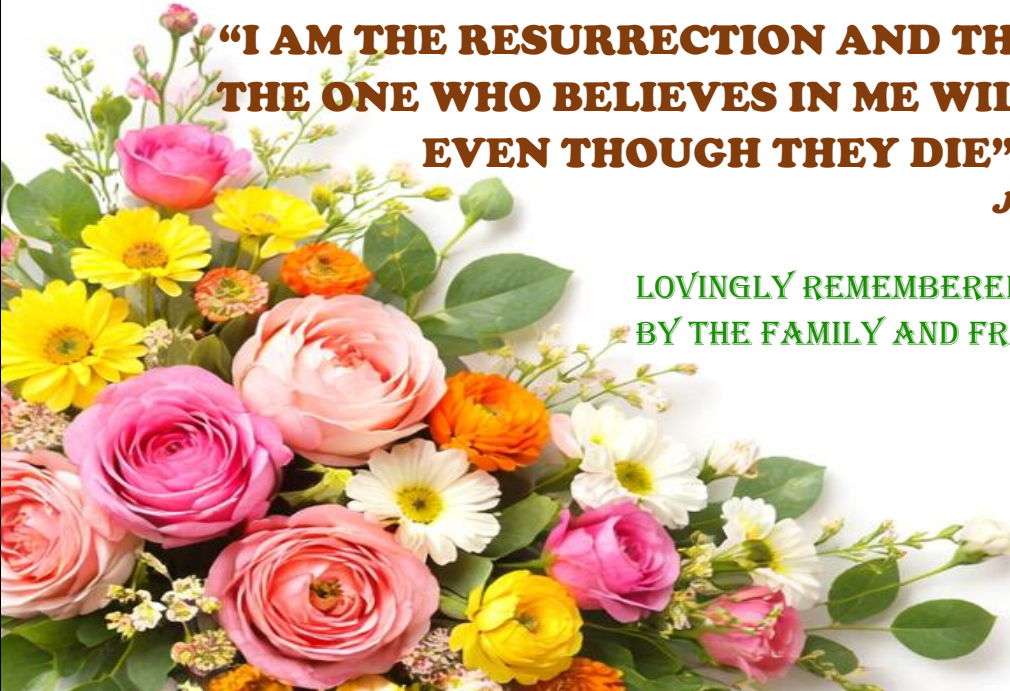
FEB 2, 1916 - SEP 20, 2009



**“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.
THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE,
EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE”**

JOHN 11:25

**LOVINGLY REMEMBERED
BY THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS**





— (ROMANS 12:12) —

2026 ANNUAL UOL REGIONAL

Lenten Retreat

Guest Speakers

Rev. Fr Timothy Paproski

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Warren, Ohio

Rev. Fr. Yuri Bobko

SS. Peter & Paul UOC, Lyndora, PA

Youth Program

Rev. Fr. John Charest

SS. Peter & Paul UOC, Carnegie, PA

Host Pastors

Rev. Fr. John Charest (Western, PA)

Rev. Fr. Mykola Zomchak (Ohio)



Saturday, March 21, 2026

Schedule:

8:15 AM Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:15 AM Morning Prayers/Morning Session

12:30 PM Lunch

1:15 PM Afternoon Session,

followed at 3:30 PM with Vespers & Confessions

Children & Youth Program

(Preschool & Elementary and Middle School & High School Students)

River Valley

Community Resource Center

320 Shenango Street

Pulaski, Pennsylvania 16143 (724) 652-6184

Registration

Adults \$30.00 • College Students \$20.00

Registration by March 16

Youth (Ages 10 to 18) Free

For more information or request a registration form, call Shirley Duffy at (412) 518-0912 or send an email to shirleykduffyesc@gmail.com

<https://www.uolofusa.org/>

TO REGISTER, SCAN THE QR CODE



The Last Judgment

Everything begins not with the end of the world, but with the revelation of the heart. The Last Judgment is not merely a future event marked by trumpets and thrones; it is the unveiling of what has been quietly forming within us all along. Judgment is not God deciding who we are — it is God revealing who we have chosen to become.

We often imagine the Last Judgment in images of fear — books opened, deeds weighed, sentences pronounced. Yet the Gospel presents something far more searching, and far more personal. Christ does not first ask about achievements, knowledge, or status. He speaks instead of love:

“I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in.” Everything is measured by love — love lived, love withheld, love ignored. For judgment begins wherever distance from love begins. Just as the prodigal was lost before he left home, so the soul grows cold long before the final day arrives. Indifference hardens quietly. Compassion delayed becomes compassion denied. We convince ourselves there will always be more time — another chance to forgive, to help, to notice Christ in the suffering person before us.

At first, this distance feels small. Life is busy. Concerns feel urgent. The needs of others seem secondary. Yet beneath that distraction grows a famine — not of bread, but of mercy. The heart, created for communion, becomes accustomed to passing by.

The tragedy revealed in Christ’s parable of the Judgment is striking: those who are condemned are surprised. “Lord, when did we see You hungry... or thirsty... or in prison?” They did not reject Christ consciously. They simply failed to recognize Him hidden in the least, the broken, the forgotten. This is the quiet danger — not hatred of God, but neglect of His living image in others.

Yet the Gospel also reveals radiant hope. Those who loved did not always realize the eternal weight of their actions. A cup of water. A visit. A welcome. Small acts, almost forgotten on earth, shine with everlasting light in the Kingdom.

For in the mystery of God’s love, no act of mercy is ever small. The Last Judgment, then, is not only about justice — it is about truth. The truth that every person we meet bears the face of Christ. The truth that love is the one treasure that passes beyond the grave. The truth that what we become in daily life is what will stand revealed in eternity.

In the Orthodox vision, this judgment is not separate from Christ’s presence — it is His presence. The same Lord whom the righteous longed for will be joy to them... and the same Lord whom others ignored will feel like fire to hearts unaccustomed to love. The difference is not in Him — but in us.

So the Church places this Gospel before us not to terrify, but to awaken. Now is the time of mercy. Now is the time to see. Now is the time to love. Because the final day will not introduce a new reality — it will reveal the one we have already been living. And even now, Christ stands before us in many forms: in the hungry, the lonely, the sick, the refugee, the prisoner, the grieving neighbor, the stranger at our door. The throne of judgment is still hidden... but the King is already among us. And blessed are those who learn, before that Day, to recognize His face — and to answer it with love.



The Blessing of Candles

on the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord

On the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord (February 2), the Holy Church commemorates the day when the Most Holy Theotokos and the Righteous Joseph brought the forty-day-old Christ Child to the Temple in Jerusalem, in fulfillment of the Law of Moses (Luke 2:22-40). There, the Righteous Simeon received Him into his arms and proclaimed Him to be **"A Light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel."**

Because Christ is revealed on this feast as the **Light of the world**, it is the tradition of the Church to bless candles on this day.

The blessed candles remind us that:

- Jesus Christ illumines the darkness of sin and death.
- We are called to receive His light into our hearts.
- We must carry His light into the world through faith and good works.

After being blessed, candles are taken home by the faithful and kept in a prayer corner.

They are often lit:

- During personal or family prayer
- In times of illness or distress
- During storms or danger
- At the bedside of the sick or dying

The candle's flame is a sign of Christ's presence, hope, and protection. As a candle gives light by consuming itself, it also reminds us of sacrificial love and a life offered to God.

This feast also marks a sacred meeting: the meeting of the Old and New Covenants. Simeon represents the faithful expectation of Israel, while the Christ Child reveals the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. In this encounter, we see that those who wait upon the Lord with faith will behold His light and rejoice in His salvation.

As we receive these blessed candles, we are invited to become bearers of Christ's light ourselves. Strengthened by prayer, the Holy Mysteries, and lives of mercy and compassion, may we shine with the light of Christ in our homes, our parish, and our community, glorifying God who has come into the world for our salvation.



The Prayer of Saint Simeon *(Luke 2:29-32)*

Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word;
for my eyes have seen Your salvation,
which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

Reflections:

Time is one of God's quietest gifts — given freely, yet never held for long. We often live as though it were endless, postponing kindness, delaying repentance, waiting for a better moment to love. Yet time does not wait; it moves gently but steadily, carrying our choices with it.

Each day arrives as a small offering placed into our hands. What we fill it with becomes our answer to God — whether with prayer or distraction, mercy or indifference, gratitude or complaint. The ordinary hours we overlook are the very places where eternity begins to take root.

Sometimes we feel we have wasted time, that moments lost can never be restored. But God, in His mercy, redeems even this. When the heart turns back to Him, He blesses the time that remains and fills it with deeper meaning.

Do not wait for the perfect hour to do good, to forgive, to pray, to begin again. The present moment is already holy — already sufficient.

For in the end, it is not how much time we were given that shapes the soul, but how much love we placed within it.



Glory, as the world sees it, shines brightly but briefly. It seeks recognition, praise, and remembrance. Yet earthly glory fades like light at sunset — admired for a moment, then gone.

The glory that comes from God is different. It is quiet, often hidden, born not from applause but from faithfulness. It grows wherever humility lives — in unseen sacrifices, in patient endurance, in love offered without witness.

Christ Himself revealed this glory not on a throne

of gold, but on the Cross. There, where the world saw shame, heaven revealed radiance. Divine glory is always clothed in self-giving love.

We need not seek glory for ourselves. When we seek God instead — His will, His mercy, His truth — glory comes as a gift, not a possession. It fills the soul without inflating it, illumines the heart without blinding it.

For in the end, true glory is not to be admired by the world... but to be known by God. And the soul that reflects His light will shine long after earthly praise has fallen silent.

Orthodox Christianity 101

Meeting of the Lord

Forty days after Christ was born He was presented to God in the Jerusalem Temple according to the Mosaic Law. At this time as well His mother Mary underwent the ritual purification and offered the sacrifices as prescribed in the Law. Thus, forty days after Christmas, on the second of February, the Church celebrates the feast of the presentation called the Meeting (or Presentation or Reception) of the Lord.

The meeting of Christ by the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna ([Lk 2.22–36](#)) is the main event of the feast of Christ's presentation in the Temple. It was "revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" ([Lk 2.26](#)) and, inspired by the same Spirit, he came to the Temple where he met the new-born Messiah, took Him in his arms and said the words which are now chanted each evening at the end of the Orthodox Vespers service:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel ([Lk 2.29–32](#)).

At this time as well Simeon predicted that Jesus would be the "sign which is spoken against" and that He would cause "the fall and the rising of many in Israel." He also foretold Mary's sufferings because of her son (Luke 22.34–35). Anna also was present and, giving thanks to God "she spoke of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" ([Lk 2.38](#)).

In the service of the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, the fact emphasized is that Christ, the Son and Word of God through Whom the world was created, now is held as an infant in Simeon's hands; this same Son of God, the Giver of the Law, now Himself fulfills the Law, carried in arms as a human child.

Receive him, O Simeon, whom Moses on Mount Sinai beheld in the darkness as the Giver of the Law. Receive him as a babe now obeying the Law. For he it is of whom the Law and the Prophets have spoken, incarnate for our sake and saving mankind. Come let us adore him!

Let the door of heaven open today, for the Eternal Word of the Father, without giving up his divinity, has been incarnate of the Virgin in time. And as a babe of forty days he is voluntarily brought by his mother to the Temple, according to the Law. And the elder Simeon takes him in his arms and cries out: Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, O Lord, who has come to save the human race—glory to Thee! (Vespers Verses of the Feast).

The Vespers and Matins of the feast of the Meeting of the Lord are filled with hymns on this theme. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated with the lines from the canticle of Mary forming the prokeimenon and the words of Simeon being the verses for the Alleluia. The gospel readings tell of the meeting, while the Old Testament readings at Vespers refer to the Law of the purification in Leviticus, the vision of Isaiah in the Temple of the Thrice-Holy Lord, and the gift of faith to the Egyptians prophesied by Isaiah when the light of the Lord shall be a "revelation to the Gentiles" ([Lk 2.32](#)).

The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord in the church is not merely a historical commemoration. Inspired by the same Holy Spirit as Simeon, and led by the same Spirit into the Church of the Messiah, the members of the Church also can claim their own "meeting" with the Lord, and so also can witness that they too can "depart in peace" since their eyes have seen the salvation of God in the person of his Christ.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those who sat in darkness! Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder; you accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls who grants us the resurrection (Troparion).



By Thy nativity, Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb. And didst bless Simeon's hands, O Christ our God. Now Thou hast come and saved us through love. Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, O only Lover of man (Kontakion). It is customary in many churches to bless candles on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord.

Church

In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church

Church as a word means those called as a particular people to perform a particular task. The Christian Church is the assembly of God's chosen people called to keep his word and to do his will and his work in the world and in the heavenly kingdom.

In the Scriptures the Church is called the Body of Christ ([Rom 12](#); [1Cor 10. 12](#); [Col 1](#)) and the Bride of Christ ([Eph 5](#); Rev 21). It is likened as well to God's living Temple ([Eph 2](#); [1Pet 2](#)) and is called "the pillar and bulwark of Truth" ([1Tim 3.15](#)).

One Church

The Church is one because God is one, and because Christ and the Holy Spirit are one. There can only be one Church and not many. And this one Church, because its unity depends on God, Christ, and the Spirit, may never be broken. Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine, the Church is indivisible; men may be in it or out of it, but they may not divide it.

According to Orthodox teaching, the unity of the Church is man's free unity in the truth and love of God. Such unity is not brought about or established by any human authority or juridical power, but by God alone. To the extent that men are in the truth and love of God, they are members of His Church.

Orthodox Christians believe that in the historical Orthodox Church there exists the full possibility of participating totally in the Church of God, and that only sins and false human choices (heresies) put men outside of this unity. In non-Orthodox Christian groups the Orthodox claim that there are certain formal obstacles, varying in different groups, which, if accepted and followed by men, will prevent their perfect unity with God and will thus destroy the genuine unity of the Church (e.g., the papacy in the Roman Church).

Within the unity of the Church man is what he is created to be and can grow for eternity in divine life in communion with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Church is not broken by time or space and is not limited merely to those alive upon the earth. The unity of the Church is the unity of the Blessed Trinity and of all of those who live with God: the holy angels, the righteous dead, and those who live upon the earth according to the commandments of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Church

The Church is holy because God is holy, and because Christ and the Holy Spirit are holy. The holiness of the Church comes from God. The members of the Church are holy to the extent that they live in communion with God.

Within the earthly Church, people participate in God's holiness. Sin and error separate them from this divine holiness as it does from the divine unity. Thus, the earthly members and institutions of the Church cannot be identified as such with the Church as holy.

The faith and life of the Church on earth is expressed in its doctrines, sacraments, scriptures, services, and saints which maintain the Church's essential unity, and which can certainly be affirmed as "holy" because of God's presence and action in them.

Catholic Church

The Church is also catholic because of its relation to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The word catholic means full, complete, whole, with nothing lacking. God alone is full and total reality; in God alone is there nothing lacking.

Sometimes the catholicity of the Church is understood in terms of the Church's universality throughout time and space. While it is true that the Church is universal-for all men at all times and in all places-this universality is not the real meaning of the term "catholic" when it is used to define the Church. The term "catholic" as originally used to define

the Church (as early as the first decades of the second century) was a definition of quality rather than quantity. Calling the Church catholic means to define how it is, namely, full and complete, all-embracing, and with nothing lacking.

Even before the Church was spread over the world, it was defined as catholic. The original Jerusalem Church of the apostles, or the early city-churches of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, or Rome, were catholic. These churches were catholic-as is each and every Orthodox church today-because nothing essential was lacking for them to be the genuine Church of Christ. God Himself is fully revealed and present in each church through Christ and the Holy Spirit, acting in the local community of believers with its apostolic doctrine, ministry (hierarchy), and sacraments, thus requiring nothing to be added to it in order for it to participate fully in the Kingdom of God.

To believe in the Church as catholic, therefore, is to express the conviction that the fullness of God is present in the Church and that nothing of the “abundant life” that Christ gives to the world in the Spirit is lacking to it ([Jn 10.10](#)). It is to confess exactly that the Church is indeed “the fullness of him who fills all in all” ([Eph 1.23](#); also [Col 2.10](#)).

Apostolic Church

The word apostolic describes that which has a mission, that which has “been sent” to accomplish a task.

Christ and the Holy Spirit are both “apostolic” because both have been sent by the Father to the World. It is not only repeated in the Scripture on numerous occasions how Christ has been sent by the Father, and the Spirit sent through Christ from the Father, but it also has been recorded explicitly that Christ is “the apostle . of our confession” ([Heb 3.1](#)).

As Christ was sent from God, so Christ Himself chose and sent His apostles. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you receive ye the Holy Spirit,” the risen Christ says to His disciples. Thus, the apostles go out to the world, becoming the first foundation of the Christian Church.

In this sense, then, the Church is called apostolic: first, as it is built upon Christ and the Holy Spirit sent from God and upon those apostles who were sent by Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit; and secondly, as the Church in its earthly members is itself sent by God to bear witness to His Kingdom, to keep His word and to do His will and His works in this world.

Orthodox Christians believe in the Church as they believe in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Faith in the Church is part of the creedal statement of Christian believers. The Church is herself an object of faith as the divine reality of the Kingdom of God given to men by Christ and the Holy Spirit; the divine community founded by Christ against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail” ([Mt 16.18](#)).

The Church, and faith in the Church, is an essential element of Christian doctrine and life. Without the Church as a divine, mystical, sacramental, and spiritual reality, in the midst of the fallen and sinful world there can be no full and perfect communion with God. The Church is God’s gift to the world. It is the gift of salvation, of knowledge and enlightenment, of the forgiveness of sins, of the victory over darkness and death. It is the gift of communion with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. This gift is given totally, once and for all, with no reservations on God’s part. It remains forever, until the close of the ages: invincible and indestructible. Men may sin and fight against the Church, believers may fall away and be separated from the Church, but the Church itself, the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” ([1Tim 3.15](#)) remains forever.

[God] has put all things under His [Christ’s] feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

for through Him we .??. have access in one Spirit, to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that he might sanctify her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish . This is a Great Mystery . Christ and the Church . ([Eph 1.21–23](#); [2.19–22](#); [5.25–32](#))