

Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church

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**Celebration of the Holy Mysteries**

**RECITATION OF THE HOLY ROSARY AND CONFESSIONS:** ½ HR BEFORE DIVINE LITURGY

**BAPTISM & CHRISMATION / ANNOINTING OF THE SICK / COMMUNION CALLS & VISITATIONS:**

CONTACT FR. IHOR TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS

**MARRIAGE PREPARATION:**

CONTACT FR. IHOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO SETTING THE ACTUAL WEDDING DATE

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN:**

CONTACT MRS. CHRISTINA VOGEL AT (603) 686-2092 TO REGISTER YOUR CHILDREN

**SCHEDULE OF DIVINE LITURGIES:**

SUNDAYS: 10 AM (September thru May) MON THRU SAT: AS NOTED IN WEEKLY BULLETIN

 9 AM (June thru August) HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION: 7 PM

**DIVINE LITURGY AND VESPERS SCHEDULE FOR WEEK OF JUNE 12, 2022**

**Sunday, June 12th – First Sunday after Pentecost (Sunday of All Saints)**

Divine Liturgy: 9 AM Propers: Festal Tones Vestments: Bright

Epistle: Hebrews 11: 33-40; 12: 1-2 Gospel: St. Matthew 10: 32-33; 37-38; 19: 27-30

Intention: For all Parishioners followed by Baptism and Chrismation of Beth Macias

**Saturday, June 18th (9 AM):** For blessed repose of the soul of **+Basil** Horangic with Panakhyda, offered by the Horangic Family

**Saturday, June 18th (7 PM):** Vespers Service

***Divine Liturgy and Vespers Services Schedule and Intentions for June and July***

**Sunday, June 19th (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday, June 25th (9 AM):** For blessed repose of the soul of **+Helen** Horangic with Panakhyda, offered by the Horangic Family

**Saturday, June 25th (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, June 26th (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Wednesday, June 29th (7 PM): Feast of the Chief Apostles Ss. Peter and Paul (Holy Day of Obligation)**

**Saturday, July 2nd (9 AM):** For blessed repose of the soul of **+Walter** Horangic with Panakhyda, offered by the Horangic Family

**Saturday, July 2nd (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, July 3rd (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday, July 9th (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, July 10th (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday, July 16th (9 AM):** For the blessed repose of the soul of **+Romana Khrystyna** Maksymowych with Panakhyda, offered by the Maksymowych Family

**Saturday, July 16th (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, July 17th (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday, July 23rd (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, July 24th (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday, July 30th (7 PM):** Vespers Service

**Sunday, July 31st (9 AM):** For all Parishioners

**Saturday Services**

Fr. Ihor is celebrating Vesper services every Saturday at 7 PM. All parishioners are invited to attend this beautiful service. Those who wish to have a Divine Liturgy celebrated for a loved one whether living or deceased or for a private intention are still able to do so. Please request your Divine Liturgy by contacting Fr. Ihor at (860) 617-6357 or cantor Jerry Maksymowych at (603) 627-2042. Please note that Saturday Divine Liturgies will now be celebrated only at 10 AM whenever they are requested. If no Divine Liturgy has been requested for a particular Saturday, then none will be celebrated on that day. The Divine Liturgy schedule in the bulletin will only show 10 AM Divine Liturgies on Saturdays when they have been requested. If the bulletin does not show a 10 AM Divine Liturgy for a given Saturday, then this means that particular Saturday is available for your request.

**Суботні Богослужіння**

Oтeць Ігор святкує Bечірню кожної суботи у 7-мі годині вечером. Ласкаво просимо усіх парафіян до участи. Парафіяни які бажають замовити Божественну Літургію в суботу для померших або на особисті інтенції можуть дзвoнити дo o. Iгopя нa нoмep (860) 617-6357 aбo дo дякa п. Яpocлaвa Maкcимoвичa нa нoмep (603) 627-2042. Суботні Божественні Літургії будуть відслужені тільки о годині 10-тій ранком кoли замoвлeні. Якщо Літургія в певну суботу не будe замовлeнa, то в цей день не буде жодна відпpaвлeна. Порядок Богослужінь в бюлетeнi покаже тільки ті суботні Служби Божі які є замовлені. Якщо в бюлетені не відображається Божественна Літургія на дану суботу, то це означає, що ця субота доступна нa Baшe замовлeня.

***Liturgical Propers, Readings and Sermon for Sunday***

**Liturgical Propers for the First Sunday After Pentecost (Sunday of All Saints)**

**Resurrectional Tropar: Tone 8 –** You came down from on high, O Merciful One, and accepted three days of burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our life and our resurrection, glory be to You.

**Festal Tropar: Tone 4 –** Clothe in a white robe and violet mantle, the heritage of martyrs’ blood is seen throughout the world. The church appeals to You, O Christ-God, that You might shower Your love on us. Give peace to Your world and great mercy to our souls.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever. Amen.

**Festal Kondak: Tone 8 –** We ask You to preserve Your world and Your Churches in a balanced and stable peace through the prayers of the Holy Mother of God and those of Your martyrs, the first fruits of creation.

**First Prokimen: Tone 8 –** Make promises to the Lord, Your God, and always be faithful to them.

VERSE: In Judea God is known, His name is great in Israel.

**Second Prokimen: Tone 4 –** God is awesome in His sanctuary; the God of Israel.

**1-а НЕДІЛЯ ПО ЗІСЛАННІ СВ. ДУХА (HEДIЛЯ BCIX CBЯTИX)**

**Апостоль: (Єв 11: 33-40 & 12: 1-2)**

До Євреїв послання св. апостола Павла читання.

Браття, святі, що вірою підбили царства, чинили справедливість, обітниць осягнули, загородили пащі левам, силу вогню гасили, вістря меча уникали, ставали сильні, бувши недолугі, на війні проявили мужність, наскоки чужинців відбивали. Жінки діставали назад своїх померлих, які воскресали. Інші загинули в муках, відкинувши визволення, щоб осягнути ліпше воскресіння. Інші наруг і бичів зазнали та ще й кайданів і в’язниці; їх каменовано, розрізувано пилою, брано на допити; вони вмирали, мечем забиті; тинялися в овечих та козячих шкурах, збідовані, гноблені, кривджені; вони, яких світ був невартий, блукали пустинями, горами, печерами та земними вертепами. І всі вони, дарма що мали добре засвідчення вірою, не одержали обіцяного; бо Бог зберіг нам щось краще, щоб вони не без нас осягли досконалість.

Тому і ми, маючи навколо себе таку велику хмару свідків, відкиньмо всякий тягар і гріх, що так легко обмотує, і біжімо витривало до змагання, що призначене нам, вдивляючися пильно в Ісуса, засновника й завершителя віри, який замість радости, що перед ним була витерпів хрест, на сором не звертаючи уваги, і який возсів праворуч Божого престолу.

**Epistle Reading for the First Sunday after Pentecost (Hebrews 11: 33-40; 12: 1-2a)**

Brethren: By faith the saints conquered kingdoms, did what was just, obtained the promises; they broke the jaws of lions, put out raging fires, escaped the devouring sword; though weak they were made powerful, became strong in battle, and turned back foreign invaders. Women received back their dead through resurrection. Others were tortured and would not receive deliverance, in order to receive a better resurrection. Still others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword’s point; they went about garbed in the skins of sheep and goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, they dwelt in caves and in holes of the earth. Yet despite the fact that all of these were approved because of their faith, they did not obtain what had been promised. God had made a better plan, a plan which included us. Without us, they were not to be made perfect.

Therefore, since we for our part are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith.

**Alleluia: Tone 4**

VERSE: When the just cry out, the Lord hears them.

**Alleluia: Tone 4**

VERSE: The troubles of the just are many, but the Lord saves them from all tribulation.

**Alleluia: Tone 4**

VERSE: Візвали праведні, і Господь почув їх.

**Alleluia: Tone 4**

VERSE: Багато в праведника злиднів, але з усіх них Господь його рятує.

**Alleluia: Tone 4**

**Євангелія: (Мт 10: 32-33, 37-38 & 19: 27-30)**

Сказав Господь своїм учням, кожний, отже, хто визнає мене перед людьми і того я визнаю перед моїм Отцем небесним. Хто любить батька або матір більше, ніж мене, той недостойний мене. І хто любить сина або дочку більше, ніж мене, той недостойний мене. Хто не бере свого хреста й не йде слідом за мною, той недостойний мене.

Тоді озвався Петро і сказав до нього: “Ось ми покинули все і пішли за тобою; що будемо за те мати?” Ісус відповів їм: “Істинно кажу вам: Ви, що пішли за мною: як новий світ настане, коли Син Чоловічий сяде на престол своєї слави, сидітимете й ви на дванадцятьох престолах, щоб судити дванадцять поколінь Ізраїля. І кожний, хто задля імени мого покине дім, братів, сестер, батька, матір, жінку, дітей, поля, в сто раз більше одержить і життя вічне матиме в спадщину. Багато з перших будуть останніми, а останні першими.”

**Gospel Reading for the First Sunday after Pentecost (St. Matthew 10: 32-33, 37-38 & 19: 27-30)**

The Lord said to His disciples, “Whoever acknowledges me before men I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Whoever disowns me before men I will disown before my Father in heaven. Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me. He who will not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me.”

Then it was Peter’s turn to say to Him: “Here we have put everything aside to follow You. What can we expect from it?” Jesus said to them: “I give you my solemn word, in the new age when the Son of Man takes His seat upon a throne befitting His glory, you who have followed me shall likewise take your places on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Moreover, everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life. Many who are first shall come last, and the last shall come first.”

**Sermon for the Sunday of All Saints**

Slava Isusu Khrystu! My Dear Brother and Sisters in Christ!

On this day we celebrate the memory of all the saints known and unknown…but mostly those unknown to us. Their numbers are vast. We are indeed encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses and they are present with us as we send up our prayers to God. They are present with us as we pray privately at home. They offer with us their unceasing praises to God. Just as importantly, or perhaps more importantly, they offer their prayers up to God on our behalf as well. They are there for us to ask for their intercessions and they do not leave us without comfort or aid.

All the saints being remembered today followed the example of Christ. And all of them in their time and in their circumstances of life fulfilled God’s commandment of love of God and neighbor. Occasionally their times were difficult, maybe more difficult than ours; and not infrequently their circumstances in life were more dangerous in spiritual terms, and often in worldly terms they were worse than ours. But they still proceeded, struggled, and reached the abodes on high where they now know triumph and eternal glory.

And just who were these saints that we remember today? They were martyrs, confessors, ascetics, fools for Christ, educated people, simple people, rich, poor, bishops, monastics, and ordinary lay people. They are now part of the Church Triumphant or the Heavenly Church, while we here on earth are still part of the Church Militant doing spiritual battle against evil so that we too can someday reach heaven ourselves. There is room for each of us there and we should be inspired by what today’s Epistle reading tells us: “Therefore, since we for our part are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith.” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Just think many of these saints were people like us. And like us, all of them were different people with different and varied lives. But all of them, absolutely all, had three qualities, which they all possessed identically. These qualities are pointed out to us in today’s Gospel. They are obligatory for everyone, and this means for us, too; we cannot escape them if we want to live saintly lives.

In today’s Gospel we hear Jesus say: ‘Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, which is in heaven” (Mt. 10:32). This is the first quality we must possess. We must be willing to acknowledge that we are Christians to those we meet in our everyday lives, but we must do more. Our speech, our actions, our thoughts and feelings must loudly and firmly demonstrate that “Yes, I am a Christian!” for all to see.

The second quality we need to share with the great community of saints is also found in today’s Gospel: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me” (Mt. 10:37). Here and now, the Lord demands from us this all-consuming love – to love Him more than everyone and everything. For it is only through this focused love of God that we will really be able to love our relatives, strangers, and even our enemies.

Finally, the third quality involves the following: “He who does not take up his cross, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me” (Mt. 10:38). Each of us has his or her own sorrows and difficulties in life; they are personal for each of us. They may be difficult, and burdensome, but such is our life; and this means, such is the Will of God for us. It is only when we willingly accept the crosses God sends us as Christ willingly accepted His cross and suffering, will we be worthy to be called sons and daughters of the Most High. Remember that when we turn our sufferings into a redemptive force by uniting our crosses with the suffering of Christ, we will then be worthy to be part of that great community of saintly witnesses in heaven. May Almighty God along with all the saints and angels help us in accomplishing this great endeavor. Amen.

**ПPOПOBIДЬ HA ПEPШУ HEДIЛЮ ПO ЗІСЛАННI СВЯТОГО ДУХА**

Слава Ісусу Христу! Дорогі в Xpиcтi браття і сестри!

Традиційно восьма неділя після празника Пасхи, а перша після Зіслання Святого Духа називається неділею Всіх святих. Вона завершує коло рухомих свят. Цього дня наша Східна Церква віддає особливу почесть усім тим, які є плодом дарів Святого Духа. Святими стали ті, що прийняли Ісуса Христа і його науку у своє життя, увірували в Нього і полюбили його всім серцем, як джерело життя і щастя. Цей празник наші божественні Отці установили й наказали святкувати після Зіслання Святого Духа, наче показуючи нам взір, як прихід всесвятого Духа вплинув на апостолів і на інших.

Земними дорогами життя пройшло вже багато різних людей, ними йдуть тепер і йтимуть у майбутньому. Дорога людини на землі починається з її народженням і закінчується смертю тіла, після чого душа людини житиме з Богом у небі або без Бога – в пеклі. Буде вічно щаслива або нещаслива, залежно від того, за яке життя людина боролася, живучи на землі. Бог всіх людей призначив до життя в небі і кличе їх до святості, до досконалості. У різні часи святість розуміли по-різному. І тепер не в усіх є правильне уявлення про святість. Одні розуміють, що святість полягає у довгих молитвах; інші думають, що в строгих постах; а ще інші – в особливих чеснотах і т. д. Однак святість полягає у праведній відповіді на Боже покликання і чеснотах, у сумлінному житті згідно зі своїм покликанням, у цілковитому стремлінні виконати волю Божy.

Святі такі самі люди, як і всі інші, – з тими самими слабкостями і недоліками. Вони живуть у цьому самому світі, що усі інші люди, але їх не видно, вони не є якимись диваками. Святі є у світі, але до світу не належать, для світу вони чужі, і часто світ їх ненавидить. Ісус говорив про це апостолам на Тайній Вечері: “Ненавидить вас світ – то знайте: мене він ще перед вами зненавидів. Були б ви від світу, то світ би своє любив. А що ви не від світу, бо я вибрав вас від світу, ось тому й ненавидить вас світ” (Йо 15, 18-19). Ненавiсть світу до послідовників Христа породила мучеників, сповідників, пустельників…. Не всі святі мали якісь видимі моральні чесноти, не всі мали особливі ласки, такі, як оздоровляти, творити чуда і т. д. Багато з них йшло звичайною дорогою, їхня тиха й покірна святість не впадала в око іншим, навіть близьким.

Святі – це не тільки ті, що у святості відійшли від нас і живуть тепер у вічній славі Бoгa, а й ті, що живуть ще на землі в тісній злуці з Богом. Співпрацюють з Божою ласкою, йдуть слухняно з любов’ю дорогою, якою веде їх Боже Провидіння, підкоряючись в усьому Божій волі й виконуючи Божі заповіді. Усі, в кому живе Святий Дух, є святими. При хрещенні і миропомазанні всі християни отримали Святого Духа – стали храмом Святого Духа. Апостол Павло, звертаючись до перших християн, говорив: “Хіба не знаєте, що ви – храм Божий, і що Дух Божий у вас перебуває?” (1 Кр 3, 16). “Усі бо ті, що їх водить Дух Божий, вони – сини Божі… Сам цей Дух свідчить разом з нашим духом, що ми – діти Божі” (Рм 8, 14; 16), – навчає святий апостол. Він просить, аби не засмучувати Святого Духа, тобто жити й поводитися так, щоб слухати його та щоб Святий Дух міг в нас діяти, нас вчити і провадити.

Дорогі мої! Всі Святі - це ті, що нeвідступно визнавали Христа, за Нього постраждали і в більшості віддали за Нього життя. Це ті, що взяли свій хрест і несли його через ціле життя. Всі християнські країни мають своїх святих - має їх і наша Українська Церква - починаючи від рівноапостольного князя Володимира, що охрестив український нарід; Його Бабусю - Святу Ольгу, cвятих праведників Бориса і Гліба, багато праведників чернецтва й аскетів.

Оце свято, яке ми нині святкуємо на пошану всіх Святих на небі, нахиляє нас до єдности цілого народу, бо в Церкві Божій Святі не поділені на православних чи католиків, чи якогось іншого віровизнання, але всі вони однаково милі Господeві. Отож і ми, діти Божі, діти українського народу, мусимо єднатися і спільно служити Господеві в нашій Святій Церкві, церкві наших батьків і прадідів. Господи, ми віримо, що Твої пророки і для нас писали і нас закликали: "Сім раз у день свою Батьківщину згадаймо, cім раз у день до неї повертаймо, cім раз у день за Неї небо благаймо, бо тільки її майбуття дасть нам справжнє життя." Боже, Боже, Тобі визнаємо, що свою Батьківщину любимо, шануємо, для неї все найкраще віддамо, на все наше життя! Всі Святі Землі Української, моліть Бога за нас грішних, а найперше — за нашу любу Батьківщину і за спасіння душ наших! Амінь.

**Communion Verse:**

Хваліть Господа з небес, хваліте Його на висотах. Радуйтеся, праведні, y Господі, бo правим належить похвала. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest. Exult in the Lord you just ones, for praise is fitting from the righteous. Allelulia, alleluia, alleluia.

***Prayer of Spiritual Communion***

My Jesus, I believe that You are truly present in these Holy Gifts! I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot receive You now, I place before You my whole life and hope, O loving Master; and I ask, pray, and entreat You: Make me worthy to partake in a mystical way and with a pure conscience of Your awesome and heavenly Mysteries: for forgiveness of sins, for the pardon of offenses, for communion of the Holy Spirit, for the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, for confidence before You, and not for judgment or condemnation. I embrace You as You enter and abide in me, and I unite myself completely to You. Permeate my soul and body, and never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

***Молитва Духовного Причастя***

Мій Ісусе! Я вірю, що Ти присутній у цих Святих Дарів!

Люблю Тебе над усе і моя душа тужить за Тобою.

Не можу зараз Тебе прийняти в Cвятій Євхаристії,
тому хоча б духовно прийди до мого серця!

Запрошую Тебе, відчиняючи навстіж двері мого серця, згадаючи Твої слова:

«Ось стою під дверима і стукаю.

Якщо хто почує Мій голос і відчинить двері,
Я ввійду до нього, і буду вечеряти з ним, а він зі Мною».

Я ввесь єднаюся з Тобою. Ісусе, моє найвище Добро й моя солодка Любове!
Торкнись мого серця і запали його,
щоб воно завжди палало любов’ю до Тебе! Амінь.

***Parish Announcements***

**We Welcome You!**

If you are visiting our church today, our parish family is delighted to welcome you here! Thank you and God bless you for visiting with us today! We welcome all our visitors and guests who worship at our parish. We invite families and individuals who wish to become members to register by calling Fr. Ihor at (860) 617-6357.

**Biтaємo Bac!**

Якщо Bи відвідуєте нашу церкву сьогодні, нашa парафіяльна громада рада вітати Вас тут! Щире cпасибі Baм, і нехай Бог благословить Bас за Baшi відвідини з нами сьогодні! Ми запрошуємо сім’ї та осіб, які бажають стати членами, зареєструватися у нас пo телефонi о. Ігоря на номер (860) 617-6357.

**Please Pray for our Sick and Homebound Parishioners**

Fr. Ihor Papka, Fr. Zbigniew Brzezicki, Oleh and Valentina Babski, Marylou Blaisdell, Luba Dyky, Carmel Horangic, Christine Kolagji, Helen Kucman, Martha Majkut, Karen and Jaroslaw Maksymowych, Jean Mandych, Sherri Martel, Katherine Masso, Jennifer McMillan, Katharine McNaughton, Jackie Morales, Lauren Morales, Tanya and Ronald Morales, Alice Morris, Elizabeth Mozina, Olympia Pasicznyk, Billie Sheesley, Derek Stanley, Pauline Stanley, John Terninko, Elisha Wallace, Dr. Mark Windt, Lauren Zelenski. Please contact Fr. Ihor or a Trustee if you would like to add a friend or loved one to this prayer list.

**June Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries**

The following parishioners are celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary this month:

June 1 – Luba D.

June 11 – Kateryna M.

June 12 – Pavlo H.

June 14 – Christina and Doug V. (wedding anniversary)

June 15 – A.J. B.

June 15 – Christina V.

June 25 – Dawn and Jim H. (wedding anniversary)

Our parish community wishes this month’s birthday and anniversary celebrants peace, joy, love and good health on their special day as well as throughout the year. May our dear Lord grant all of you many more healthy, happy and blessed years. Happy Birthday and Ha Многая літа! (Na Mnohaya Lita!).

**May, 2022 Financial Summary**

Total Income from May Donations: $4,108.00

Total Expenditures for May: $4,014.00

Surplus for May: $94.00

Average attendance in May: 31

Thank you and God bless you for your generous support of our parish.

**Baptism and Confirmation**

Today, after Divine Liturgy, our parish will welcome its newest member, Bethelem (Beth) Macias, who will be baptized and chrismated in the Ukrainian Catholic Rite. She is the fiancée of parishioner, Shawn Young whose mother is Trustee Pam Young. Following the Baptism, a reception will be held in the church hall. All are invited to attend the Baptism and the reception afterwards. May God grant Beth many blessed years. Na Monohaya Lita!

**Humanitarian Concerts to Benefit Ukraine**

Our parish is in touch with organizers of four summer concerts that will be performed in the coming weeks. All profits from these concerts will be donated to our Ukrainian Humanitarian relief efforts. The concert venues will include tribute bands from the 70s and 80s and will take place on the following dates and at the locations as noted below. More details to follow.

7/23 – Stockbridge Theater, Derry NH - Foreigner Journey tribute band

8/6 – St. Anselm College, Manchester NH - Queen Flash tribute band

8/12 – Barnstable Performing Art Center, Barnstable MA - TUSK Jefferson Starship tribute band

8/13 – Barnstable Performing Art Center, Barnstable MA - Through the Doors tribute band

***Weekly Reflection***

**Learning about our Catholic Faith – Being Resolved**

***“Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone.”***[*John 16:30–32*](https://biblia.com/bible/rsvce/John%2016.30%E2%80%9332)

Have you come to believe in Jesus?  How deep is that faith?  And why do you believe?  Are you ready and willing to hold on to that faith no matter what comes your way?  Are you ready to follow Him even if it is difficult and unpopular?  Are you ready to suffer as a result of your faith?  These are important questions.  They are questions that we must answer both when it is easy to be a Christian as well as when it is hard.

It’s easy to be a Christian and to follow Jesus when everyone else is doing it.  For example, at a baptism or wedding it’s normal to want to belong and to let others know of our support and belief in what they are doing.  But what about those moments when your faith is ridiculed or put down?  Or when you have to make the difficult choice to turn from cultural pressures and stand out for your faith?  These are more challenging times to be a follower of Christ.

In the Gospel passage above, there were many who had been analyzing Jesus’ teaching, listening to Him and talking about Him.  It seems clear that the consensus was that Jesus was a man of holiness and a great prophet.  Many were even coming to believe He was the Messiah.  So there was a sort of positive momentum present that made it easier for many people to say that they believed in Him and they believed that He came from God.

Jesus quickly points out to them that, though they believe now, there will be a time that comes soon when most everyone will abandon Him, when they are scattered, and they will leave Him alone.  This is obviously a prophecy of His coming persecution and Crucifixion.

One of the greatest tests of our faith is to look at how faithful we are when following Christ is not all that popular.  It is in these moments, more than the easy moments, that we have an opportunity to manifest our faith and deepen our resolve to be a Christian.

Reflect, today, on how deep your commitment to Christ goes.  Are you ready to follow Him to the Cross?  Are you willing to give up everything to follow Him?  Hopefully the answer is a definitive yes.  It must be a “Yes” that directs our lives no matter what situation of life we find ourselves in.

Let us pray: *Lord, I do believe.  Help me to let that faith in You stay strong at all times.  Help me to say yes to You and to live that yes always.  Jesus, I trust in You.*

**The Meaning and Importance of Baptism**

Both the New Testament and the whole of Christian tradition teach that Baptism is central to the Christian religion.   Since we believe that God shared our human nature in Jesus Christ, it is understandable that the Church believes that God still touches us through human words and material realities symbolizing and making present God’s own actions.  We believe that God takes each of us to Himself in a unique way in the sacrament of Baptism through water and the words of Baptism.

Christians have used many metaphors and images to express what they believe happens to us in Baptism: rebirth; putting on Christ; becoming a child of God; being liberated from sin; dying with Christ; being incorporated in Christ’s body, the Church; and receiving the Holy Spirit.  All these images are an attempt to express the Church’s profound belief that through Baptism a person not only takes her first step on the path that leads to God but receives the beginnings of a real change in their personality.  Baptism creates a new and mysterious relationship with Christ, who died for us and was raised by God to be the beginning of mankind’s future.

And so today we welcome Beth newly baptized and chrismated into the Ukrainian Catholic Rite. By coming here in faith and receiving the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation you are committing yourself to live a life of holiness according to God’s holy Commandments so that one day you may be with God forever in heaven.  This is a very serious yet joyous responsibility.  You must be really determined to live your life as a faithful Catholic Christian and a practicing member of the Church.

Therefore, on behalf of our entire parish community I welcome you, Beth, into the flock of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. May the Holy Spirit always guide you and lead you on your journey in this new life you have chosen to follow today. And may you always be able to experience Jesus’ friendship in an atmosphere of Christian love for many blessed years. Na Mnohaya Lita.