



# ***MISSION DAYS GUIDEBOOK***

*From the Ascension of our Lord to the Descent of the Holy Spirit*

*(unofficial English translation by Archeparchy of Winnipeg)*

2024

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## **Prayer for Vibrant Parish**

Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd, as once You embraced the lost sheep so that they would know Your voice and be Your flock, so today look kindly from the heavenly heights on our parish and let Your Holy Spirit descend on it, so that it will be a place of knowing the joy of Good News. Seal us with Your presence and unite us daily in prayer. Give us the spirit of service to our neighbor, so that in our parish everyone can meet You, merciful God.

Bless our spiritual leadership with Your wisdom and grant that none of us spares time, talents, or material goods for the development of Your Kingdom. Unite us in peace and harmony, so that we may be Your community of love. Instill in us a missionary spirit, so that we become that luminary of the Gospel word, prayer and good works that calls everyone to participate in the Divine life, so that Your Name may be glorified, Savior, with Your eternal Father and Your most holy, good and life-giving Spirit today, and forever and ever. Amen.

## **About Mission Days**

Through our active participation in the spiritual efforts of these ten Mission Days, once again we are called upon to discover and understand anew that our parish communities and families (domestic churches) are missionary in nature. Such understanding flows from the gift of our Baptism, by virtue of which, and through the power of its mystery, we have committed ourselves to believe, live, serve, and share the experience of our faith in Christ; and not simply with our family members, but with everyone we meet in life. Thus, the mission of our parish community is to allow Christ to enter deeper into our lives, to carry the Good News beyond our own community and to support those who expand the boundaries of the Kingdom of God with their missionary activity and chaplaincy ministry. From the feast of the Ascension to Pentecost, together with our entire parish community, let us pray that the Lord might renew our life in God by the grace and intercession of the Holy Spirit. If circumstances do not allow your parish to conduct Mission Days during the week or if you personally cannot participate in them, you are invited to observe Mission Days in your own home, setting aside at least five minutes of family time in order to read the Guidebook together (Word of God, Meditation, Quotation-witness, Prayer), and then to discuss among yourselves the Missionary Tasks provided for each day. Another possibility is to observe Mission Days in a prayerful gathering together with other families, with your neighbors, for example.

## **Prayer**

Lord our God, spread the light of Your Holy Gospel, that it may shine through us who are baptized, as children of the Light. Grant that the Christian faith may spread in our society, that we may bear witness to Your living presence in our lives and in our parish community; O Lord, hear us and have mercy. O Holy Spirit, bestowing all: You send prophets, perfect priests, teach the uneducated wisdom, transform fishermen into theologians, and unite the entire church community. Consubstantial and co-reigning with the Father and the Son, O Comforter, glory be to You!

## **Introduction**

**Thursday, May 9 (June 13)**  
**FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD**  
**"Personal Affirmation in Faith" (*Gospel of Luke 24, 36-53*)**

**Prayer.** You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, giving joy to Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit, and assuring them through Your blessing that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. (*Troparion for Ascension*)

**Invitation.** On this solemn day of the feast of the Ascension of Christ, we encourage everyone to respond to the invitation of the Head of our Church, His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, to prepare for the great feast of Pentecost, by taking on the prayerful journey of the Missionary Decade of 2024. During these ten days — starting on the Ascension thru Pentecost, we will reflect on the texts of the Gospel of John, which are read during the Divine Liturgy, and together we will listen to the teachings that the Lord speaks at a time when the war continues in Ukraine for the third year in a row. The themes to which the evangelist John draws our attention resonate with our search for resilience and indomitability, service and leadership, healing and treatment of wartime trauma. The source of stability and endurance for us has always been prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures and participation in the Holy Mysteries. At the same time, the Christian family, the home church and the closest circle of communication with friends are very important places for the formation of stability, solidarity and healing for us. The experience of meeting God in church and at home, especially now, encourages us to attend services more often and to accept the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of which are our active volunteering and service in local parish communities, [military] hospitals, centers for assistance to displaced persons and persons who are the most vulnerable in times of crisis and trials.

**Reflections in time of war.** This is already the third year that we celebrate Easter and Pentecost in the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people against the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. We remember how the disciples of Christ during His Passion and even after His Resurrection hid from fear in the face of death. Many of us are still "scared and full of fear", alarmed and with doubts that arise in our hearts (cf. Lk 24, 37-38). We want to run away or take revenge or somehow express our anger and frustration, but often we keep everything inside, seething with anger and hatred for the enemy and all the injustice that surrounds us. However, Christ then and now enters our homes and communities, gives us peace and his Holy Spirit. He shows us his wounds and invites us to touch them. Although He is no longer crucified, He continues to suffer with us. Although He has already defeated death, He continues to die with us to show us that He is near, that He understands us, He teaches us to appreciate every moment of our life and every person who is near us. In this way, He helps us turn fear into calmness, anxiety into endurance, confusion into the ability to make the right decisions. He gives us his Spirit and his peace and gives us the mission to preach "repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all nations" (Luke 24:47), so that people can prepare for His Second Coming and His rule in the Kingdom of God through effective love.

**Prayer intention.** Today, let us thank God for the stability of the Ukrainian State, for every defender and their families, for volunteers and doctors. Let us remember them in prayer

every day!

**Mission task:** Despite the difficult circumstances of life, find three things today for which you want to thank God, and thank Him for them.

**Friday, May 10 (June 14)**

**Day One**  
**"A divine Love that brings joy" (Gospel of John 14:1-11 )**

**Word of God.** Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

**Reflections on the first day of the Decade.** The human heart always has a desire to meet its Creator. Saint Augustine says: "My heart is restless, Lord, until it rests in You" (Confessions I, 1). On the one hand, God takes the first step: "He, existing in God's nature, did not consider his equality with God a prize, but humbled himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming like a man" (Phil. 2, 6-7). On the other hand, man is invited to fully trust God: "Let not your heart be troubled! Believe in God, believe in me too. In my Father's house there are many inhabitants" (John 14, 1-2). Where can a person get the strength of spirit and the desire to take a step towards God on the way to the Father's house, in which there are many inhabitants? The answer is simple - LOVE. It was out of love for man that the Lord created him and made him the crown of all creation. It was out of love for man that the Lord became man in order to free him from sin and slavery. From the very beginning, God placed love, kindness, a sense of beauty and harmony in the depths of the human soul. A person is happiest when he loves and when he is loved. Sin has distorted our ability to love. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, revealed to us that God IS Love and that we, being His children, are also called to be icons of God's goodness and love.

**Reflections in time of war.** The most natural state of the human soul and everything that exists in this world is a state of love and peace. Because God himself is love (cf. 1 John 4:8). The world came into being out of love, out of love we came into this world, and at the end of history, love and justice will once again rule definitively in the world of the Kingdom of God. If we seek a source of resilience in these times of war, we must turn to the First Source. Although at times disappointment, despair, hatred and a thirst for revenge fill our hearts, for resilience and the ability not only to survive, but also to win, we must push aside these destructive feelings that devastate our hearts and be filled with God's power. Jesus speaks very clearly to us today: "Let not your heart be troubled! Believe in God, believe in me too" (John 14, 1). He also says: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), "he who sees me sees the Father" (John 16:9). If it is difficult for us to find a connection with the source of love, let's look again at the crucified Christ and also at the resurrected Christ, at the cross and at the icon of the Resurrection. Let's try to touch His feet on the cross, and then put our fingers in His side of the resurrected Body together with Thomas, to cry out with him "My Lord and my God" (John 20, 28). This meeting, this look and this touch, before the Crucifixion, in the Eucharist, in communication with a person who needs God's mercy, is the strongest source of stability and indomitability in times of war. We need to learn to do this often, constantly and personally. And to draw inspiration from this meeting for further acts of mercy.

**Prayer intention.** We pray for the power of the Holy Spirit for every Ukrainian to have the

strength to love and support each other and especially those who need it most.

**Prayer.** When You had fulfilled Your plan for us and united things on earth with those in heaven, You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, in no way distant, but remaining inseparable, You cried to those who love You: I am with You and there is none against you. *(Kontakion, Ascension Thursday)*

**Mission task:** Yesterday we thanked God for His gifts, and today find three things that brought you joy. Smile again.

**Saturday, May 11 (June 15)**

**Day Two**  
**“Holy Spirit — Comforter”** (*Gospel of John 14: 10-21*)

**Word of God.** “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

**Reflections on the second day of the Decade.** Modern man is very concerned about how other people treat him. And a Christian follows Christ and does not worry about what the world thinks about him. When sins dominate a person, he wants God to not exist at all, because the memory of God torments the human conscience and creates spiritual and psychological discomfort. Sin for her is at first invisible, and then it becomes a clear slavish yoke. Sin paralyzes a person, destroys families and communities, quarrels entire nations and makes them enemies. Sin becomes a habit that is very hard to eradicate and hard to get rid of. When the Holy Spirit fills the human heart, the eyes begin to see in a new way. Deep changes are taking place in a person. God ceases to be an enemy for man, but becomes Light. He is the One who sacrificed his own Son for the sake of man. What God wills now becomes man's good will. Jesus says: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14, 15). From now on, a person is no longer a slave, but a son or daughter, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a person can turn to God with the words "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8, 15), deeply convinced that he/she is a child of God himself. This is what it means to be born of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Church invites us to this, and a person shares this joy with other people.

**Reflections in time of war.** We have already mentioned that sin is capable of inflicting deep wounds on a person: from a troubled conscience, to psychological trauma, to hatred of neighbors whom a person begins to offend, to so-called institutional sins, such as slavery, racism, atheism, imperialism, unjust war against neighboring nations, etc. Entire generations of the faithful of our Church have experienced the consequences of such sins, which even today take on new forms. The mother of all sins is pride, self-love, which creates the illusion that a person does not need a God who loves him, and a person loves only himself and thinks that this is enough for him to be completely happy. "I" wants to be its own master and measure what a person can and cannot do. This is how modern man lives, forgetting that God's law reigns over him, and that God is the measure of everything.

But the Lord does not leave a person with his sin alone. Even during a terrible war, the Lord is near. Out of His great love, He came to man to help him get out of a dead end, from which man is unable to get out on his own. Today, the Lord encourages us to believe: "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; if not, believe by the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you: whoever believes in me, you will do the same for them, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14, 11-13). In the face of deep traumas - personal, family, community, church, national and global, we are powerless by ourselves. Even modern knowledge of the laws of the psyche, the development of the economy, society, international relations and the experience of pastoral ministry prove how much we all need God and His mercy. Only Jesus



gives complete healing of wounds. However, this healing is possible only when we follow Him and receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. When a person accepts God into his life, his actions become similar to the actions of Christ himself, and in our service to God and people, a person glorifies God the Father himself.

**Prayer intention.** We pray that the heart of every Ukrainian will not be filled with despair, sadness and pain due to losses, bitterness and passivity. We pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen hope and endurance in each of us.

**Prayer.** Come, O faithful, let us climb the Mount of Olives with the apostles, let us lift our minds and hearts on high. Let us behold the Lord as He is taken up. Let us cry out with joy and thanksgiving. Glory to Your ascension, O most merciful One. (*Aposticha, Ascension Thursday*)

**Mission task:** Think about what signs of His presence the Lord sent you today. Ask yourself, do you feel His closeness throughout the day?

**Sunday, May 12 (June 16)**

### Third Day

#### **"God is with us – we belong to God" (Gospel of John 17:1–11)**

**Word of God.** When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent..." "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."

**Reflections on the third day of the Decade.** A modern person feels the need to belong to some community: to a family, small or large community, culture, people, language, profession, vocation. And despite all the technical possibilities of social communication, she longs for a real personal connection with another person. The most special moment is when one person says to another: "I am yours", "I am yours" or "you are mine", "you are mine". In this moment, a person feels that he "belongs" to someone, that he is part of some larger, important mutual connection. When a person thinks about God, the connection between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit becomes clear to him, because such a connection finds analogs in human experience. In God, everything is common: will, mind, life: "and all that is mine is Yours, and Yours is mine" (John 17, 10). A person who does not know God thinks that God lives his own separate life, and why should He interfere in my life, or should I interfere in His life. But the Kondakion of the Ascension helps us to understand that man is invited to participate in God's life: "what is on earth, connecting with the heavenly. You call out to those who love You: I am with you and no one is against you!". In a special way, God is present for us in the Holy Eucharist: "Take, eat: this is my body. Drink from it all of you, this is my blood of the New Testament..." (Mt. 26, 26-28). Christ says to man: "I am yours, and you are mine," and man says to Christ: "I am Yours, and You are mine."

**Reflections in time of war.** God created man out of love and for love. And sin deprives a person of feeling God's love, and then a person replaces it with self-love, which leads to even greater injuries both at the personal level and at the social, even international level. War is the height of hatred and malice. The Russian "authority" and even their so-called "church" declare that they are fighting against the "criminal Kyiv regime" and "the West that has fallen into Satanism", but in fact they themselves, sanctioning an unjust war of aggression against Ukraine, have become a victim of the devil. The Russian-Ukrainian war may become the beginning of the Third World War, or it may, on the contrary, become the time of another victory over the devil and the conversion of enemies. This perspective seems impossible to some, but "nothing is impossible for God" (Lk. 1, 37). Today, Christ himself intercedes for his own: "I pray for them, I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me, because they are yours. And all that is mine is yours, and all that is yours is mine, and I am glorified in them" (John 17, 9-10). Our salvation consists in fully belonging to God, as we sing at the Liturgy: "let us give ourselves, and each other, and our whole life to Christ God." For

"he who secretly slanders his neighbor," says the Lord through King David, "I will bring him to silence. Whoever has a proud eye and pride in his heart, I will not tolerate him" (Ps. 101 (100), 5). And in order to fully belong to God, we need a deep conversion of our hearts, we need fervent prayer - especially prayer for the conversion of our enemies - and works of mercy, we need unshakable faith in God and the unification of all our forces in helping our army, as well as people who have suffered as a result of the war.

**Prayer intention:** We pray for those who lost their home and property and were forced to leave Ukraine, fleeing from the war, and for the strengthening of their hope and trust in their future in God's hands.

**Prayer.** Lord, I am here. Lord, I am Yours! *(Let us repeat this prayer throughout the day.)*

**Mission task:** Look at the church calendar and find out which saints the Church remembers today. Pray to these saints or to other saints who are close to your heart.

**Monday, May 13 (June 17)**

**Day Four**  
**“Branches that bear fruit”** (*Gospel of John 14:27 – 15:7*)

**Word of God.** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.”

**Reflections on the fourth day of the Decade.** In the Church of Christ, one of the most important branches is the eparchy. It has its own territory and its own bishop, who is responsible before God for the flock entrusted to him. He makes sure that his faithful have good spiritual care in the person of the priest-pastor. The parish priest is not only a leader, but also, above all, a teacher, a priest and a spiritual father. He is called to be an example of love for his neighbor, to lead the activities of his community and to organize the whole life of the parish. Not only the priest-pastor, but also all its faithful participate in the mission of the parish. All together, clergy and laity, should discuss the needs of the parish and opportunities to work on God's works in their place of residence. It is necessary to remember that every parish needs, in addition to God's grace, human and material resources. In particular, we should pay attention to three types of gifts that are needed in the Church so that it can fulfill its mission - gifts of time, talents and treasure (material goods). Pastoral and economic councils play a special role in the parish. The most important thing is that no one feels useless, because there is so much work in the Lord's vineyard! In the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, we read: "Serve one another, each with the gift he has received, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4, 10).

**Reflections in time of war.** A severe consequence of war is the feeling of helplessness, loneliness, bitterness, anger and hopelessness. War seems to cut off the branches of relationships between relatives, with one's own land and even with God himself. This war brought with it maiming and orphanhood, destruction of homes and places of work or rest, entire cities and villages of Ukraine, forests and meadows, diversity of nature, animals, birds and fish disappear from the face of the earth. Every family in Ukraine has suffered irreparable losses, and millions of Ukrainians are forced to move to other countries, seeking refuge and peace there. However, faith in God opens us up to a deeper understanding of the connections between the visible and invisible world and with each other. The Lord reminds us that He is the "true vine", and the Father of Christ is the "vineyard". Jesus tells us: "every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he (the Father) cuts off. Every one that bears fruit, he purifies so that it bears more fruit" (John 15, 1-2). Therefore, more than ever, we are faced with the task of cultivating a relationship with God and our neighbors. The Father himself cares for us, gives us healing and the power of endurance in times of great trials. Our task is to make every effort to nurture this connection in personal and liturgical prayer, to nurture love and mutual understanding in our families and communities, to bring the fruits of the Holy Spirit in works of charity and missionary preaching of the Kingdom of God to all who are most need God's mercy and restoration of ties with God and His Church.

**Prayer intention.** Let us cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, without whom we can do nothing. For this, let us find time every day to be with Him in silence at prayer.

**Prayer.** Remember, O Lord, those who have brought these gifts, and those for whom, through whom, and on behalf of whom they have been brought. Remember, O Lord, those who bear fruit and do good work in Your holy churches, and who remember the poor. Reward them with Your riches and heavenly gifts of grace; for earthly things grant them heavenly ones; for temporal ones, eternal, for corruptible, incorruptible. (*Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*)

**Mission task:** Open your Holy Scriptures today and read a small passage (if you don't do it every day). Ask yourself what God wants to say to you through these words?

**Tuesday, May 14 (June 18)**

**Day Five**  
**“Where to look for truth?”** (*Gospel of John 16: 2–13*)

**Word of God.** “They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you...” “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you...” “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

**Reflections on the fifth day of the Decade.** Jesus Christ sent the Comforter, who teaches and educates new generations of Christians. Through the Holy Spirit, a person has the opportunity throughout his life to learn more deeply the truths of the holy faith. These truths are transmitted in the Holy Scriptures, which were created for centuries under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and given to man to know God, himself and the world. God's truths are transmitted in the texts of our Divine Services, in the writings of the Church Fathers, in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and in other manifestations of the Magisterial Government of the Church. In the Catechism of the UGCC "Christ is our Passover" everything is very well collected that every believer should know. To know God's truths, a bright light is needed, and this light is the Spirit - a burning fire (Mt. 3, 11; Dan. 7, 9). At the Liturgy we sing: "we have seen the light of truth, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found true faith...". But to the light we must add our efforts: to cultivate openness to God's truth, to constantly seek that truth, to read the Holy Scriptures daily, to enrich our knowledge with good Christian books and studies. God's truth requires our personal sacrifice and our willingness to share it with others, remembering that the goal of our life is always union with the living Christ, the incarnate Word of God.

**Reflections in time of war.** When the air raid alarm sounds, we run to the shelters and wait for this dark hour to pass. We look into various social media groups or other means of communication to find out what awaits us in the next few minutes. We understand that innocent people, adults, women and their children can die or do die in these moments. And once again hatred and curses creep into our hearts. When Jesus says in today's Gospel: "the time will come when everyone who kills you will think that he is serving God", then these words are like a Russian invader who thought that he was doing good, but in fact "no Father, neither did they know me (Christ)" (John 16, 2-3). But let's try to open the pages of the Holy Scriptures or the Catechism or another good Christian book during times of air anxiety or even in times of peace. Let's learn to pray fervently during bombings. Let's learn to shift our attention from malice and hatred to the thought of what I can do to help save the life of my neighbor. Paradoxically, we do not experience healing when we focus on ourselves, but when we open ourselves to the action and leading of the Holy Spirit. And this Spirit is the spirit of creation, healing and service. He directs us to bring compassionate and merciful love and concrete help to our neighbors. Our Lord said about this evangelical paradox: "Whoever saves his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for Me will find it" (Mt. 10, 39). To lose one's life for Christ means to dedicate it to the service of one's neighbors, in particular,

soldiers, volunteers, relatives, as well as in a special way those whom the Lord calls his "least of brothers" and says that everything we did to one of them, we did to Him ( cf. Mt. 25, 40). Therefore, in serving one's neighbor in love, a person "finds his life", returns to the greatest truth about himself as a beloved child of God, created out of love and called to justice and love.

**Prayer intention:** We pray that our parish will be a place where everyone can serve with their talents and gifts.

**Prayer.** May our mouths be filled with Your praise, O Lord, that we may sing of Your glory. For You made us worthy to partake of Your holy divine, immortal and life-giving Mysteries. Preserve us in Your holiness that we may meditate all the day upon Your justice. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Mission task:** Try to find at least ten minutes for yourself today to be in silence. Listen to how your heart beats, how you breathe. In this moment, the Lord wraps you in His arms of love in a special way.

**Wednesday, May 15 (June 19)**

**Day Six**  
**"Personal responsibility" (Gospel of John 16:15-23)**

**Word of God.** "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

**Reflections on the sixth day of the Decade.** Jesus Christ knew that His death on the cross would cause great pain and sorrow to His frightened disciples. He was preparing them for this: "A little while, and you will see me no more, and again a little while, and you will see me: for I am going to the Father" (Jn. 16, 16). After the Ascension, the Church is in a similar situation. She again eagerly awaits the return of Christ, but this time she can wait confidently and in full joy, because her sons and daughters, having received the Holy Spirit and being "Christ's", have direct access to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. This direct access to the Father imposes certain obligations on us and should evoke in us a sense of personal responsibility for the spread of Christ's Gospel - both where we live and throughout the world. To be Christ's disciples means to be "like Christ", as the apostle Paul aptly noted: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2, 20). Therefore, we must creatively give all our God-given gifts, whether natural or supernatural, for the spread of God's Kingdom. Having personal responsibility means not being afraid to take some initiative yourself and boldly ask God the Father for strength, wisdom and everything we need to work for God's glory and for the development of the Church.

**Reflections in time of war.** A great tragedy in war is the death of people, civilians and soldiers. Members of their families, women, parents, children, relatives and close friends bear this loss especially painfully. In this war, the enemy chose cruel and immoral tactics to target not only the military, but also primarily the civilian population in order to frighten and demoralize Ukrainians. It is not every day that the enemy attacks civilian infrastructure facilities to deprive us of light, heat and means of livelihood. Children suffer the most. More than 1,790 children were injured in Ukraine as a result of Russia's full-scale armed aggression. According to official information, 535 children died and more than 1,255 were injured of various degrees of severity. At least several thousand Ukrainian children, especially orphans, were forcibly taken to the occupied territories or to the Russian Federation. And these children are not innocent in anything. They saw what they were not supposed to see: death, violence, destruction and death. They went through something they shouldn't have gone through.

God does not want the death of any one. The God of peace wants to give children and us peace and strength of endurance. Only He is able to free us from the fear that paralyzes our ability to seek at least some explanation of what is happening, and at least do something to stop this unjust war. The merciful Lord wraps his loving arms around every person and child and heals their hearts with his parental love. God becomes the spiritual guardian of parents who have lost their children. He promises them that during the general resurrection, all families



will be reunited and meet in God's Kingdom. Today, the Lord also inspires people of good will to adopt orphans. Each of us can become a prayer guardian for all children, and each young family can take responsibility and adopt or adopt one child who lost their parents during the war.

**Prayer intention:** Let us pray for volunteers, medics and military chaplains.

**Prayer.** In the morning, we were filled with Your mercy, and we rejoiced and were glad in all our days. Let us be glad in return for the days when You humbled us, the years when we saw evils. Look upon Your servants and upon Your work and guide their children. May the radiance of the Lord our God be upon us, and direct the work of our hands for us; direct the work of our hands. *(Psalm 90(89):14-17)*

**Mission task:** Find some photos from your childhood (photo album, photo gallery on your computer, etc.) and remember those moments when you were filled with happiness. And today you have the opportunity to be happy, despite the difficult life circumstances that surround you.

**Thursday, May 16 (June 20)**

## Day Seven

### “Community of prayer and mercy” (*Gospel of John 16:23–33*)

**Word of God.** “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”

**Reflections on the seventh day of the Decade.** Let us be kind to one another, as befits the beloved of the Father. When we come to the Divine Liturgy, let's remember what a big family we belong to. This sense of community-family must be constantly nurtured. Let's not forget to greet each other when we gather in church. We know some people well, others only a little, and still others we don't know at all. But we are one family of God's children! Let's make an effort not only to get to know other members of the parish, but also to be interested in their life challenges, joys and pains, to know what to ask God for, what to thank for. God's third commandment - "Remember to celebrate the holy day" (Exod. 20, 8) - obliges us to visit the church at least on Sundays and on major holidays. However, we know that many of our neighbors, relatives and friends go to church only on the biggest holidays. In order to go more often, they must feel part of a large Christian parish family. Our task, therefore, is to show them that we are glad to see them praying with us in the community of Christ's beloved disciples. And when someone does not respond to all our invitations or encouragements, let's not judge them, but pray for them to the Holy Spirit. He is the One who moves hearts, reveals Christ to everyone, leads to the Father.

**Reflections in time of war.** In this Missionary Decade, we reflect on the words of Christ at a time when a brutal war is going on and innocent people are dying. It seems impossible to find solace and comfort when the enemy is doing so much evil and wrong. Nevertheless, the words of Christ resonate with us in a special way: "For the Father himself loves you, because you have love for me and faith" (Jn. 16, 27). How important it is to be open to the love of God the Father himself for us, how important it is to feel and cherish it in the heart. And in order to survive it and draw strength from this divine love, it is important for us to believe in Christ and love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our thoughts and all our strength (cf. Mt. 22, 37). When we experience this mutual love, then the courage to ask God for everything we need grows in our hearts: "ask, and you will receive, so that your joys may be abundant" (Jn. 16, 24), and the strength to give this love to others when they need it. And to give it in concrete acts of mercy: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to welcome the traveler into the home, to visit the sick and the imprisoned, etc. (cf. Mt. 25, 35-36; Is. 58, 6-7). In practice, this means directing your attention and help to specific people whose requests for help do not reach the ears of state social services or international aid organizations. It is we, in our parishes and in our communities, who know best who is the neighbor who needs our support: mothers, women and children of fallen soldiers, displaced persons, people who have lost work or health, etc. We may not be able to provide for them materially, but we can surround them with our love and prayer care.

**Prayer Intention:** Let us pray that the hearts of each of us will not be hardened, and that we

will be sensitive to the needs of those who suffer around us.

**Prayer.** Remember, O Lord, the people here present and those who are absent for just causes, and have mercy on them and on us according to the multitude of Your mercy. Fill their storehouses with every good thing; preserve their marriages in peace and concord; nourish the infants, guide the young, strengthen the aged; comfort the fainthearted; gather the scattered; bring back the wayward, and join them to Your holy, catholic and apostolic Church. (*Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*)

**Mission task:** Today, call or send a short message to your friend who is very dear to you, but you have not been in contact with them for a long time, and just ask how they are doing.

**Friday, May 17 (June 21)**

**Day Eight**  
**“Christian family is a domestic Church”**  
*(Gospel of John 17: 18–24)*

**Word of God.** “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

**Reflections on the eighth day of the Decade.** The parish is a spiritual home, the Father's house, where a person meets God, where the Holy Mysteries are performed, where people share joy and sorrow with each other, where they offer support to those who are looking for answers to life's questions, where they help to heal the wounds caused by life trials and tragedies. The parish is a place where people can learn the love and kindness of God through the open heart and good deeds of Christ's disciples. Who needs our help the most? The homeless, the poor, orphans, widows, people with special needs, singles, families in which men or women are at war or have died, etc. These are our neighbors who live near us. It's hard for us to understand them if we've never been through what they're going through. We are lucky to have family and friends who can help us in times of need. But let's imagine for a second that in one moment the whole world turned away from us. Then it seems to us that God himself has forgotten about us. It is in such a most difficult situation that a kind word and a gesture of kindness from a true Christian are invaluable. If we really intend to enter the Kingdom of Heaven together with Christ, then let us take close to our hearts the words of Jesus Christ: "For whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me" (Mt. 25, 40).

**Reflections in time of war.** A strong marital relationship is based on love, affection, mutual understanding, trust and care for each other. At the same time, it is extremely important for a good Christian family to pray together, eat together, spend leisure time together, etc. We observe how during the war our families experience special difficulties due to the loss of relatives and friends, the departure of women with children abroad, the participation of men and women in military operations at the front, etc. Many families are falling apart. Many young people are afraid to start families, and those who are already married are sometimes afraid to have children because of uncertainty about the future. People feel exhausted both morally and spiritually. This is accompanied by financial difficulties, low salaries, and sometimes layoffs. And who feels this crisis and uncertainty the most? These are our children, because their hearts feel everything that is happening around them with special sharpness and fragility. And parents feel that they are not prepared to raise their children wisely and in God's way and to explain to them what war is and how to behave during this time. How important it is for our families to be together, to restore good relations between those close to us, to remember that every family, like a monastic community, is a reflection of the community of the Holy Trinity, the Father-Son-Holy Spirit, and the support of the people. Without strong Ukrainian Christian families, it is difficult to imagine a strong and prosperous Ukraine. Christ's prayer for all Christians is very similar to the prayer for unity

in our families: "that all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17, 21).

**Prayer intention:** We pray that every family during the war will not lose the courage to communicate with each other about their experiences and fears, hopes and hopes.

**Prayer.** For You, Lord, are the help of the helpless, the hope of those without hope, the Savior of the storm-tossed, the haven of those at sea, the physician of the sick. Be all things to all people, O You Who know each one and their request, each household and its needs. Deliver, O Lord, this city (this village, this monastery), and every city, town and village, from famine, plague, earthquake, flood fire, sword, foreign invasion and civil war. (*Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*)

**Mission task:** See if you sometimes have things, clothes, books, stationery, etc. in your house that you could share with needy families. Take these items and take them to the nearest family or military aid collection center.

**Saturday, May 18 (June 22)**

**Day Nine**  
**“Tend my sheep”** (*Gospel of John 21:15–25*)

**Word of God.** When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

**Reflections on the ninth day of the Decade.** For John the Theologian, Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. He is the One who "lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), knows his own, and his own know him (cf. 10:14). He calls the sheep, and they listen to his voice (cf. 10, 3). In the Church, the pastor is called to be the same - to know his own and to be ready to give his life for them. Every believing soul will follow the voice of such a pastor, because in him they can see the image of Christ himself. To follow a good shepherd means to support him in his various work, morally, prayerfully and, yes, financially. A good shepherd makes sure that his flock grows in understanding the truths of faith, gathers together in joy for prayer, and helps others in need. But the Church cannot fulfill its mission without some kind of financial base. We all understand that. Construction, repairs, light, heating, dishes, books, helping the poor - all this requires money. And when it comes to church-wide missionary activity, to which the Missionary Decade is dedicated, it is necessary for each parish to look outside and think about how to support His Beatitude Sviatoslav and the local Bishop, so that God's Word reaches those who have not yet heard it, and thus Christ's flock increases.

**Reflections in time of war.** God is Great and God is Almighty! God is the master of life and death. Soldiers who gave their lives in the fight for the independence of the Ukrainian land die in the war, because they defended their faith, culture, and land from enemies. They fight for our peaceful life, for well-being and peace, they save cities and villages and protect the Motherland. We pray to God's Mercy for the warriors killed in the war, we ask for the forgiveness of all the sins they committed knowingly or unknowingly. The Lord himself said that "no one is incapable of love more than when he lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Without belief in the resurrection, their sacrifice would be measured only by the well-being of future generations, who would enjoy their possessions, security, and the victory that warriors win for us. But since we firmly believe that their souls join the hosts of heavenly heroes, then even after the general Resurrection, they will join their relatives and loved ones, together with their ancestors and descendants.

Now we see their wounds and torments, we hear their moans and sufferings, although we do not even know what unbearable trials they endured, being in privations, hardships, toils and wakefulness, sometimes surrounded and captive, hungry, thirsty and exhausted. But we know very well that they labored courageously in terrible and age-old battles. The Lord accepts their sacrifice, which they made for their neighbors. God Himself clothes them in bright and clean clothes, because they washed their clothes here in their blood. The Lord makes them partners in victory together with all those who fought under the banner of the Cross against evil, injustice and the devil himself. Having departed to eternity, they continue

to pray for us from the heavenly Jerusalem. The merciful Lord joins them to the council of glorious martyrs, benevolent martyrs, defenders of Ukraine, the Heavenly Hundred, all the righteous and all the saints.

**Prayer intention:** Let us pray for all the dead soldiers and victims of war and that God will accept their souls into his Kingdom.

**Prayer.** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. *(Psalm 22(23))*

**Mission task:** If you have the opportunity, make another donation for the needs of the Armed Forces. If you do it all the time, ask three of your friends if they do it too. If not, tell them how to do it.

**Sunday, May 19 (June 23)**

**Day Ten — Sunday of Pentecost**  
**“Our mission: to carry the Holy Spirit to others”**  
*(Gospel of John 7:37-52; 8:12)*

**Word of God.** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified... Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Reflections on the tenth day of the Decade.** What a wonderful image of the Holy Spirit - a river of living water that flows from the inside of those who believe in Christ. Each of us, when we see a river, wants to stop and look at how the water flows. Our thoughts fly around those to whom that water brings life and joy. In the same way, the Holy Spirit works through us and makes us God's instruments so that we bring life and joy to others. He gives us various gifts (cf. Is. 11:2-3: wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, and the fear of God), and we, in turn, are called to bear His fruits (cf. Gal. 5:22 -23: love, joy, peace, patience, mercy, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, restraint) for the growth of the Church of Christ. We can say that the Holy Spirit makes us know Christ as the Light of the world and leads us to life in Christ. He makes each of us a bearer of God's grace, an apostle of Christ, a witness of His truth and a beacon of God's goodness. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the Lord calls us to an active Christian life. He invites us to boldly take responsibility and thereby change our society for the better, transform our parishes, and improve our lives in the light of the Good News. Jesus overcame the world (John 16:33) and, giving us his Holy Spirit, calls us to holiness and testimony of his goodness and mercy. Do not be afraid to share the gift of faith with other people. Let's feel the support of Jesus Christ, who did not leave us alone. We ask for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's will in everything.

**Reflections in time of war.** Righteous Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky during the Second World War called for a new understanding of God's Commandments as the basis of any society that seeks peace and justice at archdiocesan councils. Because only by reminding yourself of the words of the Decalogue, which is the law and the basis of a just life, you can expect the restoration of God's peace. If humanity does not obey God's Commandments, then the whole world faces such a threat, which may turn out to be the last. This call is especially relevant in the conditions of Russian aggression even today. "Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same forever" (Heb. 13, 8). The Lord wants His disciples to be, as they once were at the beginning of Christianity, to be brave in faithfulness to the truth; so that they do not close their eyes to injustice, looking for economic profit and peace of mind. The life of Jesus - His teachings and deeds - is a light for us and an example of how to be real people, created in the image and likeness of God and carrying the peace-making power of the Holy Spirit. Our task is to become a holy people, to testify about God's wise and just rule in the world and to bring the Good News to all nations that God has defeated the devil and we are joining this battle for life. The example of Christ is so pure and clear that it cannot be replaced by any human compromises and concessions, since it is about the dignity and rights of people and the freedom of the entire civilized world.



**Prayer intention:** Let us pray for the spiritual revival of Ukraine and the preservation of the integrity of its borders.

**Prayer.** Blessed are You, O Christ our God who revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending them the Holy Spirit; through them You caught the entire world. Loving Master, glory to You. (*Troparion for Pentecost*)

**Mission task:** If you have the opportunity, go to the priest in your parish and ask in a friendly way what small thing you could contribute to the development of your parish.