



# THE MESSENGER

“No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.  
For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go.” Psalms 91: 10-11



<https://sccmparish.org/newsletter-the-messenger>

## **I went to a Ukrainian Catholic Church to pray a rosary for peace. I didn't expect to find Muslims there in solidarity.**

By Kerry Weber, “America, The Jesuit Review” magazine

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/03/01/ukraine-christian-muslim-rosary-242487>

I do not have time to go to the church's rosary for peace in Ukraine, but I go anyway. I have to do something, even though I feel like my small gesture will amount to nothing. So I drive our minivan to the Ukrainian Catholic Church a few towns over. The building is made of yellow brick with a scalloped roof; blue and yellow tulle bunting, the colors of the Ukrainian flag, hang along the handrails ascending the stairs.

Just inside the door, a woman in a fleece vest embroidered with the church's name stands arranging donation envelopes and blue and yellow ribbons of remembrance on a table that also holds a sign advertising a St. Patrick's Day corned beef dinner.

The church is small but slowly becomes full; the eldest members arrive first, then families with small children, then teenagers loping in last, shoulders slouched. The inside of the church is mostly painted gold, but in a way that feels organic, not ostentatious. We are surrounded by statues and saints, icons written onto the walls,

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angels with striking blue wings cradling church buildings in their arms. A dove looks down on us all.

A priest in a black cassock speaks in heavily accented English of receiving news from his parents and his many relatives who still live in Ukraine. “Putin does not care about his country,” he tells us. “He does not care about the world. Hopefully the world can stop him.”

In this tiny town, we begin to pray for the whole world.

The priest and scattered members of the congregation sing a song in (I assume) Ukrainian and (I assume) dedicated to Mary. They are singing loudly and passionately with strong, beautiful voices, but not necessarily well, and I like everyone even more because of this.

We pray the sorrowful mysteries. Each person is ready for their assigned decade, announcing their mystery with boldness. The agony in the garden. **“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me...”** Together we pray the strange, small prayer between decades that often feels old-fashioned but today feels terrifyingly topical, as stories of residential apartment buildings hit by Russian missiles fill the news: **Save us from the fires of Hell.**

Perhaps in a moment of confusion about language, or poor acoustics, when the priest prays his decade of Hail Mary's, I hear him say **“blessed are those among women,”** ten times over. The woman in front of me glides her fingers along her green glass rosary beads. The woman in the next pew snuggles her toddler, their faces close. In Ukraine, videos show dozens of pregnant women, and those who have just given birth, huddled together in bomb shelters turned maternity wards. Earlier in the day I cried watching a fleeing Ukrainian mother cry as she said goodbye to her adult son, who was staying in the country to fight.

We pray for perseverance. We pray for all those crucified on the cross of ego, of politics, of greed.

The final prayer washes over us: **“Hail, Holy Queen.... To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.”**

**We are there on the first day of the Great Fast—Lent in the Byzantine rite church**—and so the congregation is invited to conduct prostrations. This is a penitential ritual that has elderly members of the faithful falling to their knees over and over, touching their heads to the floor and singing in their native tongue a song I later would learn translates to a request to avoid “a spirit of slothfulness, of negligence, of lust of power, of vain babbling.” Instead they ask to secure “the spirit of continence, of meekness, of patience and of love.” And, as tanks slowly crawled across their ancestral homeland, they pray, “Yea, Lord and King, grant that I may perceive my transgressions and judge not my brother, for You are blessed forever and ever.”

When the singing is over, the woman with the parish-branded fleece vest stands and thanks everyone for coming and asks if anyone has anything they want to share, which is always a dicey question in church.

At the front of the church, near where an American flag, a Vatican flag and a Ukrainian flag stand in a row, a woman with long, dark curly hair and a black puffy winter coat rises to her feet and smiles. “As you can tell, we are Muslim,” she says while gesturing to about a dozen family members—serious looking men, women in headscarves, children in masks—seated beside her. Under the cobalt domed ceiling, the angels with long trumpets, she says she came to America from Turkey three years ago to flee the fighting there. She says the experience of sharing this rosary has left her emotional, that Mary is so special to the Muslim faith, too. She tells us how her family wanted to be here in solidarity with the suffering of people in Ukraine, and she invites everyone to events at their faith community.

The woman in the vest has tears in her eyes. There is a beat, and then people begin to call out their appreciation for her gesture. And we all start to rise as the priest and the woman in the vest remind us of the envelopes and the websites where we can donate money. They promise that the money will not go to

support war but will support people suffering because of it. They urge us to contact politicians to advocate for no-fly zones. People line up to speak with the Muslim woman, to shake her hand, smile at the children, nod to the men.

When I get home, I learn that a 40-mile-long convoy of tanks is headed to Kyiv. I draw a sharp breath as my stomach drops. Everything feels worse than it was before I left. And so it goes, those moments of exquisite grace and excruciating pain, inextricably bound on the world stage. Had I really expected our prayers to make an instant difference?

**“Save us from the fires of Hell.”**

I close my eyes and see the church again, a tiny building in a small town where nothing happens, except maybe tonight something does, even if it’s not what we thought we asked for. I see the infant napping in her stroller and the elderly kneeling, the prayers shouted to the heavens, a man in a Red Sox jacket and a priest in a cassock. I see it all conclude with the Ukrainian Catholics, Roman Catholics and Muslims embracing. At the front of the church the shimmering icon of the Theotokos (**Mary, Mother of God**) shelters us all under her veil.

[FYI below is a photo of the interior of St Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church, located in Grand Rapids at 154 Gold Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 — <https://stmichaelgrandrapids.org/> **The Theotokos icon is the second from the left in the photo below**]



## **Eucharistic Adoration**

**by Annette Vandervort**

The list of what the Catholic Church considers devotions would probably surprise you. It is lengthy (for example, see <https://waterloocatholics.org/catholic-devotions>) and includes such activities as the Rosary, different types of Adoration, Litanies, Novenas, Pilgrimages, Sign Of The Cross, Veneration of the Cross, lighting of Votive or Vigil Candles, etc. However, this article will focus on one, Eucharistic Adoration...



There are many ways to adore Jesus, but Eucharistic Adoration is time that we spend in adoring the True Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In simplest terms, Adoration is the worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass. At our parish, the Holy Eucharist is exposed in a beautiful Monstrance after a brief prayer of Exposition by Deacon Jeff at 11:00 am. A small number of parishioners meet at that time to offer a Holy Hour for the Dying, where vocal prayers are offered for family, friends, and also for strangers who may die suddenly, unprepared to meet God. Everyone is welcome to attend this first hour of Adoration and join us for a Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Holy Rosary, and other appropriate prayers. For those that prefer silent prayer, the hour starting at noon is a time where you may pray, read from the Bible or other spiritual writings, meditate, or simply sit in the presence of the Lord in humble silence. Prayer suggestions and guiding materials are available at the Baptismal Font upon entering the church during this time. This second hour is closed by Deacon Jeff in a beautiful expression of Benediction.

So why do I attend Adoration? It is not because God needs me; rather, that I need him. This is a chance for me to privately praise and worship Jesus, without distractions. This time alone with Jesus strengthens me and leaves me a peace that I don't find anywhere else. Particularly when this world seems driven to conflict and war, this is a time for me to allow the Divine Mercy of Jesus to enter my heart to help me heal and to beg that same mercy for those in most need. I come away strengthened and with renewed resolve to be a peacemaker and a better imitator of Christ to those I meet. I find myself eagerly anticipating the Wednesdays that I encounter Jesus in this special way, where I know he is waiting for me personally.

Many of our saints have spoken eloquently in encouraging this devotion. A few of my favorites include:

St. Alphonsus Liguori: "Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest of the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us."

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration."

St. Therese of Lisieux: "Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you – for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love."

Finally, from the Divine Praises:

***"May the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, be praised adored and loved with grateful affection, at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen."***



## “The Mass Has Ended...” Or Has It?

This article is the fourth and final part in covering the Mass  
By Lisa Heflin, Tom Madden, the US Bishops and a host of others...

You’ve been at Mass for an hour now and things are beginning to wind down. You’re feeling good about this Mass: You’ve paid attention during the readings. Father’s homily caught your attention. The music was lively. And, although

your mind wandered a bit, the Eucharist Prayers hit home (fueled, of course by these wonderful little articles that you’ve been reading in the parish quarterly Newsletter.)

Maybe you’ve embarrassed yourself a bit by thinking, “It’s finally almost over... I hope there aren’t too many announcements. All that’s left is a quick prayer, a blessing, then the closing hymn and it’s off to the Hall for coffee and maybe a chocolate covered donut! (Boy could I use some coffee!)”

Don’t worry, we’ve all been there and had that thought, no judgment here. It’s understandable. A lot happens during the Mass, and it takes a lot of energy to concentrate on the liturgical action. At this point you’re likely so distracted by the thought of coffee or breakfast that you’ve risked missing your great commission...

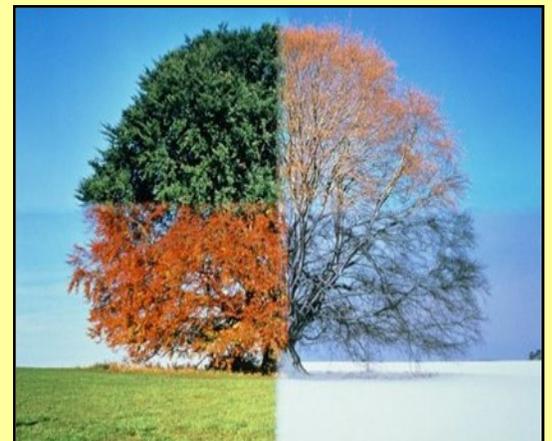
“My great what?” You heard that right, your great commission. Nothing said or done in the Mass is random. Everything has an origin either biblically or from Catholic tradition. In this case the Great Commission refers to Jesus’ final command to the Apostles “Go... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Matt 28:20 Oh, and by the way, that statement is a key part of the parish vision & mission statement.

That mission is now assigned to each of us. We are the “boots on the ground” for Christ and the Catholic faith but let’s back up some. After Communion the Priest or Deacon will then begin the process of purifying the sacred vessels and pouring some water in the Chalice, and drink it to assure that every bit and drop of the Precious Body and/or Blood are consumed. After the purification everyone stands while the Priest recites a prayer after Communion. This prayer is on our behalf so that the Body and Blood of Christ received via Communion will bring us spiritual strength: to grow in holiness.

Then in the concluding prayer (our Commission), the Deacon or Priest offers us God’s Blessing before we are dismissed when he says “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” This dismissal reminds us that the Mass may be over, but we have just been challenged to take the mysteries contemplated during the readings, and the nourishment we’ve received, and go out into the world to transform it by allowing ourselves first to be transformed. First, some coffee...

## “RENEWAL”

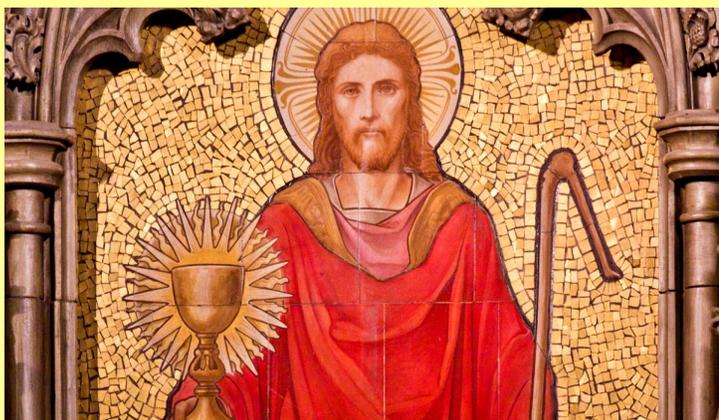
Each season of the year is a renewal of one sort or another but most of us consider Spring as the ultimate renewal season. It’s all around us: snow disappearing replaced by rain, more sunshine and warmth, Robins (and other Snow Birds!) have returned, and plant life has started appearing in the garden. There is an air of optimism in the air. This is also true of our spiritual life, as it starts with Lent and prepares us for the joy of Easter. During these six weeks Christians devote themselves to prayer, fasting, and works of compassion as they prepare themselves for Christ’s



death and then celebrate His Resurrection at Easter.

The parallels between the natural world and Lent go deeper than you may recognize. The word Lent is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word lengthen (or lencten) meaning "spring." We are "to spring" into action, do the tasks of the season, prepare for new growth and graces that overflow at Easter time. For the farmer and gardener, Spring is the most important season as they prepare the soil, decide what to plant, do the planting and begin to care for the crop in anticipation of an abundant harvest or beautiful flowers. Spiritually our prayers, fasting, and good works evolve in much the same way.

By the time you read this edition of Messenger we will be at the end of the Lenten season and Easter may have just passed. Now, prayerfully consider how you can carry your Lenten efforts forward into the remainder of your year; it will do the body, soul n' spirit good...



## “The Presence” Lenten Retreat, Exit Survey Results

The Parish Council

On March 26 of this year we hosted a retreat for all parishioners on the Real Presence and as the basis of the retreat we used short clips from “Presence, The Mystery of the Eucharist” the full series can be found on Formed.org. As you know Formed is found on the internet and is available to all parishioners free of charge.

There were nine attendees, Patty Powers, Patty Hudson, Helen Gardner, Bruce Vandervort, Betty Barton, C.Lee Pavlak, Bob May, Gerry Orszula and Father Evelio. We wanted to share their exit survey responses with you. They did not have to sign their response so we can't tell you who wrote what but if you have questions about the retreat we encourage you to talk to any of them or Tom Madden, Jan Kuhtic or Annette Vandervort. As a side note, the Lenten Retreat in 2021 for Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers was also very well received. **Bottom line, as a Parish we know how to put-on a good retreat, look for others in 2022.**

- “I really benefited from this retreat. I wish all Catholics could and world embrace and practice the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist. The retreat format was great, topics interesting.”
- “I thought it went well – the videos interspersed with table discussions seemed a good mix. The message was powerful. Now, how do we get more people to come? The time was good for building community as well as the teaching opportunity. We learn better when we share our experiences.”
- “Thank you for putting the time and effort into this wonderful retreat. I only wish more people could be here to experience the wonderful and meaningful information that answers many questions about our faith and our belonging to the Catholic Church. I really enjoyed the format and in the way the videos and questions were broken down. Let's do this again!”
- “Anytime I come to a presentation it opens my eyes to something I didn't know or didn't understand. It provides me with more knowledge to go out and evangelize. It helps me take a step closer to Jesus. It

- Con't: makes me feel that my church family is on the same journey. Family means my friends who think like me and will help me lead me by their example and commitment to the faith. The effort of those putting this-on is appreciated and I will try to encourage more to attend and myself to attend more classes. This is a Thank You Jesus!"
- "Very well presented and worthwhile, so thank you."
- "Topics were very interesting; the videos were informative and inspiring. Glad to know that they are available on 'Formed'. Format was effective: Short videos followed by questions and reflection allowed the messages to really sink in and be absorbed. Third video was particularly good. *The drawing together of the events on the Old and New Testaments was something I had not seen before.*"
- "It was very informative and enlightening information and the table discussions kept me engaged. The leaders kept us on task (thank you!). Good muffins too! Thank you for helping us participate in our faith, especially during Lent. Your effort is appreciated."
- "Thank you for all your efforts to make this an inspiring retreat. I look forward to the next one. I have no idea how to get people to attend. I can't think how anyone would not be inspired by what you presented – yet they weren't here."
- "Great Material! Fit the theme perfectly, time was respected, we learned, people were sharing and it was nicely coordinated. *In my opinion the material would work well for a younger (teenage) group.*"

If you are interested in attending an SSCM retreat but Saturday mornings do not fit your schedule let any council member know what would fit your schedule.

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**“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”**  
**Ephesians 2:19-22**

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**You have made it to the end,  
CONGRATULATIONS!!**

**If you have content ideas for the newsletter pass them along  
to any Parish Council member or email**

**[SSCMParishCouncil@gmail.com](mailto:SSCMParishCouncil@gmail.com)**