

DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA + WILKES-BARRE DEANERY

**ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
WILLIAMSPORT, PA.**



**4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT**

**ST. JOHN CLIMACUS**

**APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2019**

# ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## *Today's Scripture Readings:*

*Epistle:* Hebrews 6:13-20

*Gospel:* St. Mark 9:17-31

*Welcome to EVERYONE this morning to our visitors and guests!  
Please join us over in the Parish Hall after the Liturgy for some  
fellowship!*

## Services, Events & Announcements

- \*\*Mission Vespers – TODAY @ 4pm, St. Nicholas, Olyphant**
- \*\*“Holy Week & Pascha in the Orthodox Church” An Evening with Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm**
- \*\*Pre-Sanctified Liturgy - Wednesday Apr 10<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00pm**
- \*\*Pre-Sanctified Liturgy – Friday Apr 12<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00pm (Potluck)**
- \*\*Great Vespers - Saturday, Apr 13<sup>th</sup> @ 5pm**
- \*\*Divine Liturgy - Sunday, Apr 14<sup>th</sup> @ 10am (Hours @ 9:40)**

**Regarding Confession & Holy Communion: Only those faithful who are Orthodox Christians and have properly prepared themselves by fasting, prayer, confession [and who were at least present for the reading of the Epistle and Gospel] should approach to receive the Holy Eucharist. We should all be at peace with each other too. ☺**

**LAST SUNDAY - Mar 31**  
**Attendance 80 - Regular Offering - ?**  
**Candles - ? / Monthly Special - ?**  
**Memorial - ?**

**NEXT SUNDAY - Apr 14**  
**Reading of the Hours - Mat. Mary**  
**Reading of the Epistle - Herman A.**

**Fellowship Hour**  
**Apr 7<sup>th</sup> - Hranitz/Schecter/Brown**  
**Apr 14<sup>th</sup> - Thetford & Lordi**  
**Apr 21<sup>st</sup> - Affsprung, Chelko, Occhino**

**Help with clean-up after our meals together is greatly appreciated,  
so let's ALL help each other! ☺**

*A Word from Your Pastor . . .*

**Mat. Mary and I want to thank everyone for your prayers,  
cards, love & support since the repose of my Dad (Woodrow). It has  
surely been a tough week, BUT, we have been comforted by our God  
and you all! Thank you . . . we are truly blessed.**

***With Love and God's Blessing,***  
**+ *Fr. Seraphim***

### **The Seal of Confession**

The Seal of Confession is a hard and fast rule throughout the history of the Orthodox Church. Since the priest, in Orthodox theology, is but a witness to the confession, since the confession is given to Christ Himself, confidentiality is an absolute must. The secrecy of this Mystery of Penance is vital, for one could not expect a sincere and open confession if the penitent was doubtful of the confidentiality of his confession. Breaking the Seal of Confession is so serious, in fact, that betrayal of this secrecy can lead to canonical punishment of the priest, including the possibility of being deposed from the holy priesthood, as suggested in *The Rudder*.

Recently I had a man contact me by email, sharing his grief at not feeling he could trust his priest, having heard the priest was known to have violated the confidentiality of this Mystery of the Church. He

continued that another priest refused to hear his confession, so he was feeling cast aside, seeing his spiritual need unfulfilled by the very men called by God to offer spiritual direction. He concluded by sharing his wonderment that non-Orthodox Christians seem more joyful, for his own spiritual journey seemed devoid of joy.

Reading this man's words brought sorrow to my heart, for joy should be our common inheritance as Orthodox Christians. How is it possible we do not experience this joy? The ability to confess one's sins, and receive Christ's absolution is so very central to our Christian faith, it would seem the ultimate failure of his priestly duties, for any priest to refuse to hear a confession, or to cause anyone to avoid confession for fear of having their sins revealed to others.

It is also imperative that the spiritual direction given by a priest in confession must be for the penitent's ears only. If the priest is not permitted to divulge what the penitent says in confession, then the penitent should not divulge what his confessor says. This does not mean sharing what was said by the priest during your confession is anywhere near as reprehensible as having your sins revealed by the priest, but sharing anything said by either the priest, or the penitent, opens the door to breaking the Seal of Confession, for this could easily lead to a friend sharing your confidentially shared words with another person, and having it passed on as gossip to any number of people.

I remember hearing members of a parish accuse their priest of having broken the Seal, only to find out later that the penitent was the one who'd revealed the content of the confession, thus betraying the priest and the congregation. One slip of the confidentiality of the confession, led a whole congregation to believe they could not trust their priest! Another good reason to always refrain from sharing what was said in confession is that your spouse will feel they have a right to ask what was said, fearing they might look bad in the eyes of the priest. Confession must be the one place where the penitent can always be upfront, if spiritual therapy is to result in healing. Honesty has to be central to the confession.

*Love in Christ,*

*Abbot Tryphon, All Merciful Saviour Monastery, Vashon Island, WA.*