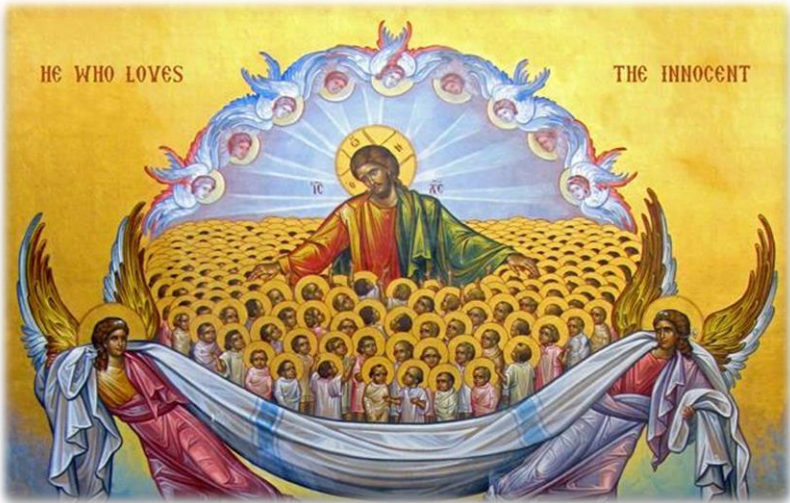


Orthodox Church in America + Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania  
Wilkes-Barre Deanery

# Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church Williamsport, PA.



*Sanctity of Life Sunday*

*New Martyrs and Confessors of  
Russia*

January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

# Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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## **Scripture Readings:**

*Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17; Romans 8:28-39*  
*Gospel: St. Luke 18:35-43; St. Luke 21:8-19*

***A very warm welcome to everyone, and especially to our visitors this morning! Please join us for some fellowship after in the Parish Hall!***

## **Services, Events & Announcements**

### **TODAY IS SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY!**

- + *Compline/Bible Study* - Wednesday January 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30
- + *Great Vespers* – Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup> at 5pm
- + *Divine Liturgy* - Sunday January 29<sup>th</sup> at 10am (Hours @ 9:40), fellowship following in the Hall. Church School / Orthodoxy 101
- + *House Blessings* are now going on! Please see Fr. Seraphim to set up a day and time to have your home blessed (*before Lent*). Having our homes blessed each year is part of our Orthodox tradition. 😊

### **Our Giving – January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Tithes/Offerings - \$2,905.00 / Online Offerings - \$100.00  
Candle Offerings – \$69.00

*Thank you all for your generosity!*

**Regarding Holy Communion:** Only those faithful who are Orthodox Christians and have **properly prepared themselves** by **fasting, prayer** [i.e., *Prayers Before Communion*], **recent 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 everyone too.* If you have any questions about Communion, please see Fr. Seraphim. 😊

***On Sunday, January 17, 2021, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon delivered the following address at the annual Prayer Service for the Unborn sponsored by ZOE for Life!.***

The world often denies the power of prayer and claims that “thoughts and prayers” are not sufficient in the face of social injustice. But we must never lose hope in the efficacy of the fervent and effectual prayer that arises from our hearts.

In the Old Testament, we find several examples of the power of such prayers of supplication. In Genesis, Abraham, the father of all those of faith, supplicates God to spare the city of Sodom for the sake of the few righteous who live there (Gen 18:16–33).

Begging for God’s mercy on the sinful city, Abraham prays to God that he save the entire city, if only 50 righteous men are found living there. He then bargains with God, lowering the necessary amount of righteous to save the city, first to 45 righteous, then to 40 righteous, to 30 righteous, and to 20 righteous. In the end, Abraham intercedes with enough fervor that God promises that He will not destroy Sodom if but 10 righteous men are found there. By this example, we see that Abraham, through fervent and honest prayer, was able to ask for God’s mercy. In kind, when we offer our

prayers with such fervor, we can obtain the Lord's great mercy for the sake of others.

This kind of powerful prayer does not just belong to ancient times, but is also accessible to us today. One of our modern saints, the Saint and Elder Porphyrios of Athens, who died in 1991, would often speak of the power of fervent prayer. His well-known biography, *Wounded by Love*, records Saint Porphyrios' teaching that in prayer it is not length that matters as much as intensity. He relates the following example:

A monk was walking in the wilderness one day and there he met another monk. He greeted him and asked how things were going in the village nearby. The local monk replied: "We're suffering a dreadful drought, and we're at our wit's end." The first monk asked: "Have you prayed?" The second monk answered: "We have, but it did not rain a drop." The first monk said: "It seems then that you haven't been praying intensely enough. Let's pray to God here and now to ask for His help."

And so, the two monks prayed together, more intensely, and in but a few minutes a cloud appeared. It quickly grew bigger and bigger, and darker and darker. Soon after, Saint Porphyrios says, it began to release buckets of rain.

It is likely, knowing the humility of Saint Porphyrios, that he himself was the first monk in this story. But either way, the saint explains that this miracle happened because the prayer was earnest and intense. The two monks truly cared about the people of the village, and they did not want them to become desperate or starve, so they prayed fervently, sincerely, and with faith—and God quickly brought the rain.