

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania + Wilkes-Barre Deanery

Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church Williamsport, PA.



Veneration of the Holy Cross
3rd Sunday of Great Lent
March 22nd, 2020

Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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Williamsport, Pennsylvania 17701-2749

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Mr. Michael (Cory) Chelko, Parish President
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Today's Scripture Readings:

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Gospel: St. Mark 8:34-9:1

Welcome to ALL our visitors and guests this morning, and those via our live streaming! You are most welcome to be with us anytime!

Services, Events & Announcements

****Services are being streamed live on our Facebook page****

++Vespertal Liturgy for the Annunciation – Wed. Mar 25th @ 6pm

++Pre-Sanctified Liturgy – Fri. Mar 27th @ 6pm (Hours @ 5:45)

++Sat. Mar 28th – Great Vespers @ 5pm

++Sun. Mar 29th – Divine Liturgy (Hours @ 9:40)

****In accordance with Archbishop Mark's directive, ALL Services and gatherings (Church School, Council, etc . . .) and Fellowship Hours are suspended until further notice. Lenten Mission Vespers are canceled for the remainder of Lent.**

Our Giving – Mar 15th, 2020

Attendance 44 - Tithes/Offerings - \$1,429.00

Candles - \$51.00 / Auxiliary Gift - \$2,000.00

Missions - \$10.00

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 each other too.* If you have any questions about this, please see Fr. Seraphim.



THE THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT: SUNDAY OF THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

The commemoration and ceremonies of the Third Sunday of Lent are closely parallel to the feasts of the Veneration of the Cross (September 14) and the Procession of the Cross (August 1). Not only does the Sunday of the Holy Cross prepare us for commemoration of the Crucifixion, but it also reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ.

As we have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24), and will have mortified ourselves during these forty days of the Fast, the precious and life-giving Cross is now placed before us to refresh our souls and encourage us who may be filled with a sense of bitterness, resentment, and depression. The Cross reminds us of the Passion of our Lord, and by presenting to us His example, it encourages us to follow Him in struggle and sacrifice, being refreshed, assured, and comforted. In other words, we must experience what the Lord experienced during His Passion - being humiliated in a shameful manner. The Cross teaches us that through pain and suffering we shall see the fulfillment of our hopes: the heavenly inheritance and eternal glory.

As they who walk on a long and hard way and are bowed down by fatigue find great relief and strengthening under the cool shade of a leafy tree, so do we find comfort, refreshment, and rejuvenation under the Life-giving Cross, which our Fathers “planted” on this Sunday. Thus, we are fortified and enabled to continue our Lenten journey with a light step, rested and encouraged.

Or, as before the arrival of the king, his royal standards, trophies, and emblems of victory come in procession and then the king himself appears in a triumphant parade, jubilant and rejoicing in his victory and filling those

under him with joy, so does the Feast of the Cross precede the coming of our King, Jesus Christ. It warns us that He is about to proclaim His victory over death and appear to us in the glory of the Resurrection. His Life-Giving Cross is His royal scepter, and by venerating it we are filled with joy, rendering Him glory. Therefore, we become ready to welcome our King, who shall manifestly triumph over the powers of darkness.

The present feast has been placed in the middle of Great Lent for another reason. The Fast can be likened to the spring of Marah whose waters the children of Israel encountered in the wilderness. This water was undrinkable due to its bitterness but became sweet when the Holy Prophet Moses dipped the wood into its depth. Likewise, the wood of the Cross sweetens the days of the Fast, which are bitter and often grievous because of our tears. Yet Christ comforts us during our course through the desert of the Fast, guiding and leading us by His hand to the spiritual Jerusalem on high by the power of His Resurrection.

Moreover, as the Holy Cross is called the Tree of Life, it is placed in the middle of the Fast, as the ancient tree of life was placed in the middle of the garden of Eden. By this, our Holy Fathers wished to remind us of Adam's gluttony as well as the fact that through this Tree has condemnation been abolished. Therefore, if we bind ourselves to the Holy Cross, we shall never encounter death but shall inherit life eternal (**orthochristian.com**)

"It is impossible to follow the Lord as a crossbearer without a cross, and everyone who follows Him, unfailingly goes with a cross. What is this cross? It is all sorts of inconveniences, burdens and sorrows—weighing heavily both internally and externally—along the path of conscientious fulfilment of the commandments of the Lord, in a life according to the spirit of His instructions and demands. Such a cross is so much a part of a Christian that wherever there is a Christian, there is this cross, and where there is no such cross, there is no Christian. Abundant privileges and a life of pleasure do not suit a true Christian. His task is to cleanse and reform himself. He is like a sick person, who needs cauterization, or amputation; how can this be without pain? He wants to tear himself away from the captivity of a strong enemy; but how can this be without struggle and wounds? He must walk counter to all practices surrounding him; but how can he sustain this without inconvenience and constraint? Rejoice as you feel the cross upon yourself, for it is a sign that you are following the Lord on the path of salvation which leads to heaven. Endure a bit. The end is just around the corner, as well as the crowns!"

St. Theophan the Recluse