

GENERAL & SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

Regarding the Temple: In our tradition, the church temple is a house of prayer. Upon entering it, please refrain from unnecessary conversation before, during and after church services, most especially during the Divine Liturgy. Prior to divine services, or during coffee hour in the Church Hall is the appropriate place to exchange personal greetings and converse with one another. May God bless your reverence and piety!

Sick/Emergency Calls/Institutional Visitations: are answered as requests are received. All visitations are by request. Call to schedule an appointment.

Confessions: Are heard one half-hour before every service at Holy Assumption, and once a month at Ss. Peter & Paul. Special arrangements by necessity, and thereby, appointment only.

Sacraments of Illumination: In the case of infants, Baptism, Chrismation, & Eucharist are administered on ordinary Sundays of the church year, preferably in the context of Divine Liturgy. At least one sponsor must be of the Orthodox Faith and in good sacramental standing. The newly baptized must have one name that is Biblical or Christian in its origin.

What is Church Membership? By regulation, active membership in the church consists not merely in the payment of a set sum, or by fulfilling a *minimum* sacramental obligation, but rather in participation in the life of the church (commensurate with your physical ability). This includes entering into the spirit of the faith through regular and frequent attendance, participation in the divine mysteries, sustained financial support (at a percentage that reflects your ability), and adherence to the parish, diocesan, and national church statutes.

Receiving Communion: while all are welcome to pray with us, we politely offer a reminder that the Orthodox Church maintains a closed communion. All are welcome to Antidoron bread following the Divine Liturgy, but only prepared Orthodox Christians may receive the Eucharist. Orthodox Christians do not commune in non-Orthodox churches, and the non-Orthodox are not communed in an Orthodox Church. Thank you!

Lapsed Members: You are always welcome home, and we need you! Generally speaking, sincere Confession, Communion, and regular attendance are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Elijah for specific details.

New Members/Adult Chrismation: new members are always welcome. In the case of interested adults seeking Chrismation, a period of catechesis prescribed by the pastor is necessary before the administration of Holy Mysteries. An Orthodox sponsor is required.

Weddings: A minimum six-month notice is requested. Either Bride or Bride-groom must be an Orthodox Christian, and a parishioner in good standing. Dispensations may be required for inter-faith marriages (the marriage of an Orthodox & any non-Orthodox person). Banns of matrimony published 3 weeks before ceremony. No Weddings performed during fasting seasons!!!

Burial in Church Cemetery: Burial in consecrated ground is reserved for the Orthodox and their spouses/children. Charity burials, or odd circumstances are at the rector's discretion. It is strongly encouraged to hold viewings and visitation of the reposed in the church.

Our Stewardship of the Church: "Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the good steward, who redeemed Adam and Eve of their failed stewardship by offering Thyself for the life of the world. Thou didst teach us in the feeding of the multitudes that whatever we give to God is returned to us multiplied. Thou didst praise those good and faithful servants in the parable of the talents who returned to the Master their gifts. So help us to learn the joy of stewardship, remembering that everything we have comes from Thee and belongs to Thee. We know, Lord, that we often live in fear of the future and insecurity. Help us to remember the lilies of the field and so to trust in Thy providence. Grant to us a cheerful and generous spirit. Enkindle in the hearts of all Thy people a zealous love for Thee. For Thou art the Good Steward, and to Thee we give thanks, praise and glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting and Thine all holy good and life-giving Spirit now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Prayer When Lighting A Candle: "Set our hearts on fire with love for Thee, O Christ our God, so that in this flame we may love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that by keeping Thy commandments we may glorify Thee, the giver of all good gifts. Amen."

HOLY ASSUMPTION ORTHODOX CHURCH

629 Sunshine Avenue • Central City, Pa. 15926

SS. PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Tipple Road • Goodtown, Pa. 15530



Very Rev. Archpriest Elijah J. Bremer, Rector
412 Short Cut Road • Alum Bank, Pa 15521
814-977-7397 • otets.ilya@yahoo.com

3rd Sunday of the Great Fast/Veneration of the Cross, 23 March 2025

Кресту Твоему покланяемся Владыко, и святое воскресение Твое славимъ!

We bow down before Thy Cross, O Master, and we worship Thy holy Resurrection!

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: 23 - 30 MARCH 2025

“Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord.” (Joel 1: 14)

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|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Sunday 23 March Tone 6 | 3rd Sunday of Great Fast Adoration of the Cross Epistle: Hebrews 4: 14 – 5: 6 Gospel: John 1:43-51 | 8:40 am , Hours of Prayer (CC) 9:00 am , Divine Liturgy (CC) |
| Friday 28 March | 4th Friday of Great Fast | 6:00 pm , Presanctified Liturgy (CC) (Liturgy of St. Gregory) |

Unless otherwise stated, **Presanctified Liturgy** will be celebrated every Friday evening of the Fast.

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|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 30 March Tone 7 | 4th Sunday of Great Fast St. John Lestvichnik Epistle: Hebrews 6: 13-20 Gospel: Mark 9: 17-31 | 8:40 am , Hours (PH) 9:00 am , Liturgy (PH) |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|

Important Liturgical Reminders: The text of the Presanctified Liturgy begins on page 181 of the black pew book, while the text of St. Basil's Liturgy begins on page 101 .

~Important Considerations ~

All persons are present at their own risk. Please refrain from attending if you are currently sick, or if you were exposed to a contagious disease. Also understand that if you do not attend Church for more than three weeks without just cause, according to canon law you must go to confession prior to receiving Holy Communion.



Спаси, Господи, люди Твоя...

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victory to the Orthodox Christians, over their adversaries, and by virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation.

O Thou Who wast lifted up willingly on the Cross, bestow Thy mercies upon the new community named after Thee, O Christ God; gladden with Thy power the Orthodox Christians, granting them victory over enemies; may they have as Thy help the weapon of peace, the invincible trophy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lenten Services: the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (also known as the Liturgy of St. Gregory) will be celebrated every Friday evening of the Great Fast at 6 pm unless otherwise noted. All are encouraged to attend. All are welcome, and indeed, encouraged (expected) to attend the Liturgy.

Next Sunday: next Sunday, 3/30, Divine Liturgy will be at Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, Pine Hill. Everyone is welcome and encouraged (expected) to attend!

Lenten Charity Projects: we are collecting dog and cat treats for the Somerset County Humane Society, and monetary donations (which will be used to purchase supplies) for the Women's Help Center in Johnstown. Cash donations continue to arrive – thank you! Dog and Cat treats, however, are still needed, and a “wish list” accompanies the box in our foyer. Participation is encouraged as a form of Lenten almsgiving. Thank you!

Lenten Mission Vespers: Today, Vespers will be in St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, at 5pm. On 3/30 Vespers will be at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in DuBois at 5 pm, and on 4/6 at St. Mary's in Madeira at 5pm. All are welcome!

Archepiscopal Visit: Vladyka Melchisedek will visit Holy Assumption Orthodox Church on Sunday, 6 April (the commemoration of St. Mary of Egypt). We look forward to receiving His Eminence! Vespers will be celebrated on Saturday evening, and there will be a Lenten Social following Divine Liturgy. All are invited and encouraged to attend!

Polite Request: Please continue to make sure that church and hall doors are locked, and, in the case of the church proper, make sure Fr. Elijah knows who is there, and for what purpose. The sacred objects must be kept safe at all times, which means keeping the building locked when not used for worship. Thank you for helping us keep the church secure!

Half-way Point: we have reached the half-way point of the Great Fast! Congratulations, especially if you have been keeping the liturgical services and the fasting to the best of your ability. The effort is appreciated. Also, willows, in preparation for Willow (Palm) Sunday, were cut. Thank you, Nick and Fr. Elijah! A bundling party will be scheduled to prepare the willows for blessing.

Confessions: please remember to “beat the rush” and get your Lenten Confessions out of the way before Wednesday of Holy Week. This helps Fr. Elijah keep the services moving without interruption and is very much appreciated. As always, there is a warning: communion on Pascha is reserved for those who have been confessed during the Lenten Season. Thank you!

Sincere Condolences: to the family of Steve Lonesky, a communicant of Holy Assumption Orthodox Church, who reposed this past week.

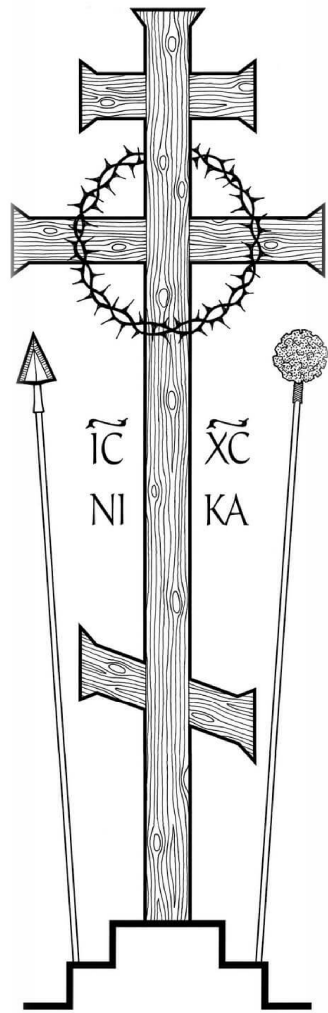


Orthodoxy:

Four out of five patriarchs recommend it.

CROSSES WE BEAR

Source: Archpriest Michael Gillis



Freedom is one of the crosses we bear. This cross is particularly painful in relation to those whom we love the most. There is no love without freedom.

We want the best for those we love. We do not want them to suffer. We do not want to see them suffer. And sometimes, we can no longer bear suffering with them. We want the suffering to stop, yet we see no end. We do not see how the confusion of the tongues—the pride of mankind resulting in our inability to communicate—how this too is part of God’s saving love. We do not see how being crucified by those we love saves them.

In my opinion, the greatest tragedy of theology is that it reduces the Cross to a plan, a schema, a balanced and antiseptic explanation of how. The Cross cannot be explained; it can only be suffered, it can only be endured.

Just as Jesus could have called down legions of angels to avoid the cross, so we can set up defences, legions of explanations, excuses, denials, reasons, theologies, plans, and hopes rooted in delusion, all to avoid the pain of love in freedom, all to keep from having to really let go, to let our hearts be crucified through the freedom we give those we love.

We do not believe the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We do not believe the Parable of the Lost Coin. We do not believe that the suffering of the shepherd in search of the lost sheep will be rewarded. We would rather not suffer so much. Its easier (and makes much more sense too) to keep our heart close to the ninety-nine. But love doesn’t make sense. And so love suffers. And so love is crucified.

The enigma of the Prodigal Son is that the loving Father gave everything to his son so that the son could all but destroy himself by means of it. How is that love?

Ah, there I go again, asking for a how. There is no how. Love just

is, and it suffers.

The enigma continues in the son coming to his senses. Suffering makes him remember what he had always known. And when he comes to his senses, the son knows that his Father will receive him again. He knows this because his Father has already given him freedom, real freedom—freedom to go and thus freedom to return. Hidden in the heart of the son is the knowledge of his Father’s love, a loved demonstrated to him in giving, in suffering, and in freedom, which is the cross.

Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save him, the Lord shall raise him up”

– James, 5: 14-15

| Abp. Nathaniel Mat. Sasha | Abp. Melchisedek Mat. Laryssa | Abp. Michael Fr. Jim | Fr. Michael Mat. Sarah | Mat. Valeria |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Allison | Elaine | Charles | Katie | Pat |
| Sandi | Stephanie | Sophie | Nancy | Damian |
| Noah | Emma | Henry | Natalia | Ashley |
| Mary-Evelyn | Bryan | Gregory | Debbie | Mike |
| Donna | Kevin | Nick | Anne | Agnes |
| Robert | Mary Etta | Cory | Sharon | Kara |
| Helen | Sandy | Kenneth | Scott | Jon |
| Bill | Sam | Betty | Jerry | Allan |
| Charles | Dakota | Kathy | Sue | Debbie |
| Mary-Elizabeth | Darcel | Jennifer | Mary | Karis |
| Lisa | Thelma | Shane | Mary Ann | Peter |
| Jonathan | Tammy | Kathie | Chris | Larry |
| Betty Lou | Renée | Alexandra | Roxanne | Alexis |
| Izzy | James | Curtis | Lita | Suzanne |
| George | Jean | Dale | Allen | Steven |
| Mitch | Johnnie | Charles | Nancy | Annette |
| Johnnie-Mac | David | Agnes | Barbara | Katherine |
| Jan | Larry | Daniel | Monica | Dwain |
| Magdalena | Dorothy | Francesca | Kara | Andrew |
| Taissia | Daniel | Barbara | Mary Ann | Dave |
| James | Eric | Mary-Louise | Barbara | Denise |
| Andy | Andrea | Amanda | John, Jr. | Mike |
| Ann | Mark | Samantha | Susan | Mary |
| Robert | Tim | Don | Mary Ann | Judith |
| Phyllis | George | Mary | Heidi | Dee Ann |
| Jeanne | Tim | Samantha | Bernie | Gene |
| Eleanor | John | Dave | Chuck | Anna-Sophie |
| Ray | Helen | Maryann | Julia | Jim |
| Shirley | Greg | Megan | Bob | Ann-Marie |
| Walt | Edward | Shaun | Hayes | Sue Y. |
| Betty | Robert | Jennifer | Ron | Linda |
| Judy | Richie | Ray | McKenzie | Brady |
| Richard | Josephine | Shirley | Sandy | Karl |
| Janet | Tammy | Donna | John S. | Paige |
| Pastor Dave | Keith | Johannes | Marcella | Linda |
| Tammy | Jodi | Nancy K. | Rod | Larry |
| Marsha | George | Louise | Jessica | Matthew |
| Michelle N. | Mike | Hannah | Mike | Lubomyr |

Do you have prayer intentions? Remember you may add or remove intentions at any time. You do not have to be members of our parish, or even Orthodox to be placed on the list!



LOSING OURSELVES IN LOVE

by: Fr. Anthony Hughes

Today's Gospel reading from Mark chapter 8, marks a turning point in the Lord's ministry. From chapter 8 to chapter 13 we read the account of Christ's final journey to his crucifixion in Jerusalem.

Jesus announces his death and meets with resistance. Peter rebukes him, and Jesus rebukes him back. The polarity between Christ and this broken world is exposed. Christ reveals the Way of the Cross and the world resists insisting on its own way. Interestingly, in the earliest days, the faithful referred to the Church as "the Way." It is a different and unique Way.

If we look at the temptation of Christ in the wilderness we find the same war of opposites. Satan tempted Jesus with power, wealth, and fame and Jesus refused even to engage him in dialogue, choosing only to quote scripture to dispel him. In Mark 8:33 it is Peter who metaphorically represents "Satan." Let's read it.

"Turning and looking at His disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'" There we have it – the Great Divorce (using CS Lewis' colorful title) between the mind of God and the mind of "this world." The Prophet writes these words as the voice of God:

⁸ "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord.

"And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Today, Jesus invites his disciples and the crowd to follow His example, to adopt his thoughts, to become true disciples.

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

So, we must ask, "What does this look like? What does it mean to deny ourselves? Simply put, it means to lose ourselves in love. Here is a first step: the reconciliation of our internal life.

Last week we spoke about how this effects the external life – how we treat one another. Today, let's talk about how the Cross effects the internal life.

I like to speak about the transformation of the internal world for two reasons. First, so few do. And second because the only way to bring the light of Christ to the world is to become the light of Christ.

When I was researching what I would say today, I found something interesting about Evagrius of Pontus, thanks again to Fr. Tom Hopko. Evagrius was an amazing psychologist. He wrote in the fourth century about things modern depth psychology has only now begun to discover.

Evagrius, the great mystic and writer, taught that human beings have two selves. The first, he called the "Christ-Self," the original and defining self, the image of God. And the second he called, "the legion of other selves." These "other selves" are represented in us by the myriad thoughts, feelings, passions, and emotions that we experience moment by moment. We are fragmented; it seems, into many parts.

At some point, Evagrius continues, by the grace of God working in us through Holy Baptism, the Christ-Self awakens to its own beauty and worth and turns its compassionate gaze upon the legion of other selves within us. Reconciliation begins to flow, fragmentation is overcome, and the inner world is united in love. The whole of life, external and internal is swallowed up in love.

St. Maximos the Confessor speaks of this reunification as "attaining perfect love" by the re-ordering of one's whole life with love; in other words, by losing ourselves in love.

So, it is not the Christ-Self that must "be denied," but the legion of other selves. And here "denial" does not mean rejection, but transformation. The Christ-Self brimming with the energy of God becomes the primary leader, the director of the symphony of the internal landscape. The whole inner world awakens to the presence and power of the grace of God and begins to adopt the Way of the Cross, the Way of love, self-sacrifice, and humility as its natural way of thinking and living.

The internal war of opposites comes to an end and the "peace that passes understanding" envelops the whole of life, inside and out. The world outside begins to mirror the peaceful world inside. Because we have become peace, we make peace.

And all that is not love withers and fades for only love is eternal. Everything else passes away.

As we elevate and venerate the Cross today, let us elevate it daily in our hearts, reordering our lives to the Way of Love, always choosing the narrow and selfless path that Christ Jesus calls us to walk.

