

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

This year the Feast of the Annunciation, according to our calendar, falls just at the end of the week when we venerate the Cross (*as it does this year as well*). And perhaps is it particularly significant, because you remember the words which were spoken to the Mother of God when She brought Her Child, Jesus, to the Temple: that a sword will pass Her heart, a sword will pierce Her heart. This sword was the death of Christ upon the Cross. And to see at the same time the promise of Salvation given to the whole of mankind, indeed, the promise that one day God will be all in all, and that the whole Creation will become the shining, glorious vestment of God on that day we see also the Cross above the Annunciation.

Let us reflect on this conjunction of events. The Mother of God received today the greatest promise which mankind can receive. At the same time, in Her perfect surrender: Let it be unto me according to His will! In this perfect surrender She accepts the tragedy that will follow. We are saved by Her faith, we are saved by Her surrender; without Her the Incarnation would have not taken place, but at what cost to Her.

And this is why it could be said once that if the Mother of God can forgive us our unfaithfulness, our betrayal of Christ, a life unworthy of the faith which we proclaim, if She can forgive us, no power in Heaven or earth can reject us. And this is why we pray to Her, and say, All-Holy Mother of God, save us!.. Not because She can save us apart from the sacrificial love, the Incarnation, the life, the death, the descent into hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Her Son, the Only-Begotten Son of God become the son of man; not because She can plead for us, but She can, in the very words of Christ at the Cross, say, Forgive! They do not know what they are doing...

But it is not enough to be forgiven: one must bear fruit of repentance. If we understand at what cost we are forgiven by God: the life and the death of His Only-Begotten Son, at what cost the Mother of God can intercede for us: the surrender of Her life but also the gift unto death of Her Only-Begotten Son, gratitude alone should prompt us to be worthy of this love, to be worthy of God, worthy of Mary the Virgin, worthy of our own selves... Because God's gift of self to us, Mary's gift of Him to us speaks to us of our eternal, immeasurable value in the eyes of God,

Let us therefore venerate worshipfully the event; and respond, respond with all our life, all our heart and mind, all there is in and of us to the trust which God has put into us. Because He gave His life for us, She surrendered to God for us, She gave Him unto death for us because God believes in us, because God hopes all things from us let us respond to Him with all our life. Amen.

St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Christian Church

108 East Main Street

PO Box 134

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Scripture Readings

Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Mark 8:34-9:1

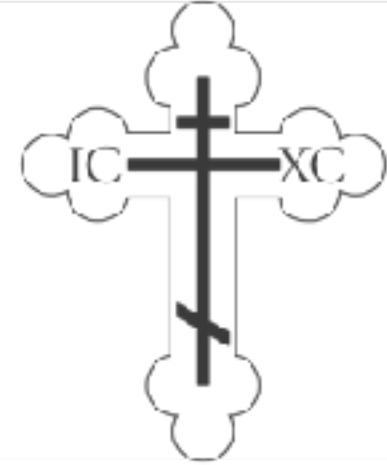
Commemorations

Veneration of the Cross.

Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria, and those with them at Rome: Claudius, Hilaria, Jason, Maurus, Diodorus the Presbyter, and Marianus the Deacon (283). St. Innocent of Komel', disciple of St. Nilus of Sora (Vologdá–1521). Martyr Pancharius, at Nicomedia (ca. 302).

Information

Rev. Steven Hosking, attached
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Welcome to our Guests

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Please sign our guest card and join us for refreshments and fellowship after the services.

Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Any member of our Council or Congregation are glad to assist you. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the narthex (back of the Church).

Our Parish Council Representatives are:

President - Susan Hayes
Vice President - Deborah Bray
Secretary - SubDeacon Joseph Brubaker
Treasurer - Susan Egan
Member at Large - James Pepitone
Member at Large - Demetra Tolis



This week's services and events

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

8:30a - Lenten Matins followed
by Bible Study
6:30p - Woman's Gathering at St Sophia's
in New London

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

4:30p - Open Doors
6:30p - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, March 23, 2017

8:30a - Daily Matins
7:00p - Bible Study

Friday, March 24, 2017

5:30p - Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts
St. Nicholas, Norwich

Saturday, March 25, 2017

9:30a - Liturgy for the Annunciation
5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday, March 26, 2017

9:30a - Divine Liturgy
4:00p - Lenten Vespers at Sts Peter &
Paul in Meriden

Announcements

The Annunciation is celebrated on Saturday this year, which means we will celebrate the Feast with Liturgy in the morning. Because the parish of St Nicholas has no priest, I have been asked to celebrate the Feast with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Friday evening.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

SUNDAY OF THE CROSS

18 March 1990

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

As we progress deeper and deeper into the weeks of Lent, we can say with an ever-growing sense of gratitude and of joy, of a serene and exulting joy the words of a Psalm, 'My soul shall live, and with gratitude I will give glory to the Lord'.

In the first week of Lent we have seen all the promises of salvation given in the Old Testament fulfilled: God became man, salvation has come, and all hopes are possible. And then, in the second week of Lent, we had the glorious proclamation of all the Saints of Christendom that not only did God come and dwell in our midst, but He has poured out upon us, into the Church, and into every human soul ready to receive Him the presence, the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us gradually commune ever deeper to the Living God until one day we become partakers of the Divine nature.

And today, if we ask ourselves, 'But how that? How can we be forgiven, how can evil be undone?' - one step brings us deeper into gratitude, deeper into joy, deeper into certainty when we consider, when we contemplate the Cross.

There is a passage of the Gospel in which we are told that when Christ spoke of salvation and of its conditions, Peter said to Him, 'Who then can be saved?' - and Christ answered, 'What is not possible to men is possible for God!'. And He Himself came; the fullness of God abided in a human person, and He has power to forgive because He is the victim of all the evil, all the cruelty, all the destructiveness of human history. Because indeed, no one but the victim can forgive those who have brought evil, suffering, misery, corruption and death into their lives. And Christ does not only forgive His own murderers, when He says, 'Father, forgive - they don't know what they are doing': He goes beyond this, because He had said, 'Whatever you have done to one of My smaller brethren and sisters, you have done it to Me' - not only in good, but indeed, the worst: because in compassion, in solidarity He identifies with every sufferer: the death, the pain, the agony of each of those who suffer is His. And so, when He prays, 'Father, forgive! They do not know what they are doing, what they have been doing', He prays for each of us not only in His own name, but in the name of all those upon whom evil has visited because of human sin.

But it is not only Christ who forgives; everyone who has suffered in soul, in body, in spirit, - everyone is called to grant freedom to those who have made him suffer.

And so, we can see why Christ says, 'Forgive so that you may be forgiven' because both the victim and the culprit are tied in one knot of solidarity and reciprocal responsibility. Only the victim can say, 'Lord - forgive him, forgive her', and only then can the Lord say, 'I do!'.

But do you realise what responsibility it puts on each of us with regard to all and everyone? But also the depth, the glorious depth of hope which opens up to us when we look at the Cross and see that in solidarity with all mankind Christ taking upon Himself all the suffering of the world, accepting to die an impossible death has said in the name of all the sufferers, 'Yes, - we forgive!'

This is one more step towards freedom, this is one more step towards the moment when we will be faced with Christ's resurrection that engulfs us also because the risen Christ is risen and is offering all and each of us the fullness of eternal life.

And so again, and again we can say that Lent is a spring of a new life, a new time, a time of renewal, not only in repentance, but in being taken by Christ Himself as the shepherd took the lost sheep, as the Lord took up His Cross, brought it to the place of death, and undid death, undid evil by forgiveness and giving His life. Once more we are confronted with another step of our freedom and of newness. Let us enter ever deeper into this mystery, into this wonder of salvation, and rejoice in the Lord, and rejoicing, step after step, more and more, let us also express our gratitude by newness of life. Amen!

Please continue to pray for...

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Robert, Olga, Daria, Daria, Dori,
John, Evelyn, Alla, June, Nina,
Joan, John, Alex, Alan, Luke,
Kathryn, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene,
Nancy, Dionysian, Elena, Jevon,
Ivan and Joscean.

and for...John, Jennifer, Nicholas,
Isabel, Elizabeth, John, Jordan,
Michael, Lee, Eva, Neil, Gina,
Joey, Michael, Madelyn, Sofie,
Katrina, Olena, and Valeriy.

and for our catechumens; Kyle
Hollis and Stephen Wexell.

Please keep Anastasia Elliott and
Malcolm Littlefield in your prayers
as they travel to the Israel.

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The Diocese of New England is
making its annual ONE
Steward appeal. Please
consider making a donation to
this worthy cause.