



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, April 04, 2021

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Members of our Parish Council are:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary
Carolyn Neiss - Vice President
Marlene Melesko - Council Member at Large
Kyle Hollis - President
Roderick Seurattan - Treasurer

Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

The tentative schedule for Holy Week is now on the parish calendar (which can be found on our web site). Currently, the plan is to hold most of the services via Zoom. The PenkoffLedbeck clan (with Anastasia directing and supported by Malcolm and Jeff) will be singing the music from home. Please note, also, that the Paschal Divine Liturgy will be seperated from the Resurrection Nocturn and Matins service. Liturgy will be held on Sunday Morning "live" and via Zoom.

If you have any suggestions, recommendation or concerns about the Holy Week schedule, please feel free to share with me at any time.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Dennis,
Archpriest Michael,
Deacon Timothy, Evelyn,
Katheryn, Anne, Aaron,
Veronica, Richard,
Nancy, Susanne, Carol,
Alexander, Gail, Vincent,
Nina, Ellen, Maureen,
Elizabeth, Christopher,
Joshua, Jennifer, Petra,
Olivia, Jessica, Sean,
Sarah, Justin, Arnold,
Carol-Anne, Anthony,

Natasha, Gene, John, John, Michael, Kelley,
Krisha, Alix, Natalie, Edward, Nathan, Caila,
Julianna, Paul, John, Jacob, Lynn, Anna,
Richard, Robert, Dorothy, Elaina

Many years to Maureen Skuby on the occasion of her birthday!

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- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalize, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all

- those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

Veneration of the Cross. Ven. Joseph the Hymnographer (883). Ven. George of Mt. Maleon in the Peloponnesus (6th c.). Ven. Joseph the Much-ailing, of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—14th c.). Ven. Zosimas, Abbot of Vorbozómsk (ca. 1550). Ven. Zosimas, of Palestine (4th c.). Virgin Martyr Pherbutha of Persia, her sister, and servants (341-343). Martyr Nikita of Pojani (1808). St. Isidore, Bishop of Seville (636). Ven. Theonas, Archbishop of Thessalonica (1545).

Parish Calendar

Parish Calendar

April 4 to April 12, 2021

Sunday, April 4

Maureen Skuby
 Sunday of the Holy Cross
 9:15AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, April 5

Monk-Martyrs Claudius, Diodore, Victor, Victorinus, and those with them

Tuesday, April 6

Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople
 8:30AM Daily Matins followed by Lenten

Reflection

Wednesday, April 7

St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, Apostle to America
 Calliopus and Akylina the Martyrs
 8:30AM Akathist to St Tikhon
 6:00PM Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, April 8

The Holy Apostles of the Seventy Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, and Hermes
 8:30AM Daily Matins
 6:30PM Lenten Vespers followed by Lenten Reflection

Friday, April 9

The Holy Martyr Euphrosyne of Caesarea
 6:30PM Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos

Saturday, April 10

Fourth Saturday of Lent
 5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, April 11

Sunday of St. John Climacus
 9:15AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, April 12

Watson
 Basil the Confessor, Bishop of Parium

Saints and Feasts

April 04

Sunday of the Holy Cross

With the help of God, we have almost reached the middle of the course of the Fast, where our strength has been worn

down through abstinence, and the full difficulty of the labour set before us becomes apparent. Therefore our holy Mother, the Church of Christ, now brings to our help the all-holy Cross, the joy of the world, the strength of the faithful, the staff of the just, and the hope of sinners, so that by venerating it reverently, we might receive strength and grace to complete the divine struggle of the Fast.

April 04

George the Righteous of Maleon

This Saint took up the monastic life from his youth, and went to Mount Maleon, where a community of monks gathered about him. He foretold his death from three years before, and reposed in an odour of sanctity.

April 05

Monk-Martyrs Claudius, Diodore, Victor, Victorinus, and those with them

Of these Martyrs, Saint Claudius died when his arms and legs were severed; Saint Diodore was burned alive; Saints Victor, Victorinus, and Nicephorus were crushed to death by a large boulder; Saint Serapion was burned alive; Saint Pappias was cast into the sea. According to some accounts, they contested in Corinth under Decius in 251; according to others, in Diospolis in Egypt under Numerian in 284.

April 07

Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America

Born in 1865 in the region of Pskov, our Father among the Saints Tikhon was tonsured a monk in 1891 and ordained to the priesthood in the same year. In 1897 he was consecrated Bishop of Lublin, and a year later appointed Bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, with his see extending to all of North America from 1900 onwards. He did much to unite the Orthodox Christians of a great many ethnic backgrounds in North America, so that there was indeed one flock under one shepherd. In 1907 he was made Archbishop of Yaroslavl and Rostov, and in 1913, Archbishop of Lithuania.

In 1917, when he was Metropolitan of Moscow, he was elected to be the first Patriarch of Russia in over 200 years, in times that could not have been more difficult. After the Revolution of 1917, the persecution of the Russian Church by the atheist government grew more bold and more fierce with every year. By nature a meek and peace-loving man, Tikhon sought to determine, while giving only to God that which is God's, what could be given to Caesar to preserve peace and avoid the shedding of blood. At his departure on the feast of the Annunciation in 1925, Saint Tikhon made the sign of the Cross thrice, pronouncing the words, "Glory to Thee, O God!" Because of the many unspeakable sufferings he endures as Patriarch, he is honoured as a Confessor.

Note: St. Tikhon's repose was on the Feast of the Annunciation according to the Old Calendar (March 25), but on the New Calendar his repose falls on April 7.

April 08

**The Holy Apostles of the Seventy
Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus,
Phlegon, and Hermes**

The Apostle Herodion, whom Saint Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Romans (16:11) and calls his "kinsman," was ordained presbyter and then Bishop of New Patras, where he was slain by Jews and pagans. Saint Agabus is mentioned in Acts 21:10-11, where he prophesied Saint Paul's arrest in Jerusalem at the hands of the Jewish leaders. In Acts 11:27-28 it is mentioned also that this Saint foretold the great famine that would come to pass in the time of Claudius Caesar. Having preached the Gospel throughout various regions, he departed to the Lord. The Apostle Rufus became Bishop of Thebes in Greece. The Apostles Asyncritus and Phlegon preached Christ in many places, suffered many afflictions at the hands of the pagans and Jews, and departed unto the Lord. The Apostle Hermes is mentioned with them in the Epistle to the Romans (16:13-14).

Hymns of the Day



**Tone 2 Troparion
(Resurrection)**

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal, You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.

And when from the

depths You raised the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out://
"O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

Tone 1 Troparion of the Cross

O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance! Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Your Cross,// preserve Your habitation!

Tone 7 Kontakion (Cross)

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; it has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for You, O my Savior, have come and cried to those in hell://
"Enter again into Paradise!"

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full

of Grace: the assembly of angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child – our God before the ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

COMMUNION HYMN

The light of Your countenance has shone on us, O Lord. Alleluia 3X

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 6th Tone. Psalm 27.9,1.

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6.

BRETHREN, since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf

of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"; as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

Gospel Reading

Sunday of the Holy Cross

The Reading is from Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

The Lord said: "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? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Wisdom of the Fathers

And see how He also makes His discourse unexceptionable: not saying at all, "whether you will, or no, you must suffer this," but how? "If any man will come after me."

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 55 on Matthew 16, 1. B#54, p.339., 4th Century

"I force not, I compel not, but each one I make lord of his own choice; wherefore also I say, 'If any man will.' For to good things do I call you, not to things evil, or burdensome; not to punishment and vengeance, that I should have to compel.

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 55 on Matthew 16, 1. B#54, p.339., 4th Century

Beyond the Sermon



An Orthodox Christian perspective on the Cross of Christ

Having come to the middle point of the path of the Fast that leads to Thy precious

Cross, grant that we may see Thy day that Abraham saw and rejoiced, when on the mountain he received Isaac back alive as from the tomb. Delivered from the enemy by faith, may we share Thy mystical supper, calling upon Thee in peace: Our light and our Savior, glory to Thee! [Matins of Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Great Lent]

The misunderstanding may still persist that the Orthodox Church downplays the significance of the Cross because it so intensely concentrates on the Resurrection, or on other such themes as transfiguration, deification, mystical encounter with God, and so forth. This is an implicit criticism that there is some deficiency in the Orthodox Christian presentation of the place of the Cross in the divine dispensation "for us and for our salvation." Such criticism may not hold up under further reflection and inspection, for the Orthodox would say that based upon the divine economy of our salvation, resurrection - and any "mystical encounter" with God - is only possible through the Cross. As this was "the purpose of his will" and "the mystery of his will" (Ephesians 1:5,9), our salvation could not have been accomplished in any other way. The "Lord of Glory" was crucified (1 Corinthians 2:8) and then raised from the dead. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul writes that "Jesus our Lord" was "put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes of "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the shame, and is

seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). A text such as this could be behind the hymn we sing at every Divine Liturgy after receiving the Eucharist: "For through the Cross, joy has come into the world." Jesus himself said "that the Son of Man must suffer many things...and be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8: 31). Of the Greek word translated as "must" from these words of Christ, Archbishop Demitrios Trakatellis wrote: "This expresses the necessity (dei) of the Messiah's terrible affliction. Judging from the meaning of the verb (dei) in Mark, this necessity touches upon God's great plan for the salvation of the world" (Authority and Passion, p.51-52).

Many such texts can be multiplied, but the point is clear: The Cross and the empty tomb - redemption and resurrection - are inseparably united in the one paschal mystery that is nothing less than "Good News." Like Mary Magdalene before us, one must first stand by the Cross in sober vigilance before gazing with wonder into the empty tomb and then encountering the Risen Lord (John 20:11-18).

As something of an aside, part of this misunderstanding of the Orthodox Church's supposed neglect of the Cross in the drama of human redemption could stem from a one-sided emphasis on the Cross in other churches at the expense of the Resurrection. The redemptive significance of the Cross somehow overwhelms the Resurrection so that it is strangely reduced to something of a glorified appendix to the salvific meaning of the Cross. As Vladimir Lossky wrote: "This redemptionist theology,

placing all the emphasis on the passion, seems to take no interest in the triumph of Christ over death." Since the "triumph of Christ over death" is so integral to the very existence of the Church—and since it is the ultimate paschal proclamation, as in "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death!"—then the Orthodox Church will never concentrate on a "theology of the Cross" at the expense of the Resurrection. Rather, the one paschal mystery will always embrace both Cross and Resurrection in a balanced manner. Within the Church during the week of the Cross (beginning on the third Sunday of Great Lent), we sing and prostrate ourselves before the Cross while chanting, "Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify!"

In addition, and perhaps more tellingly, the growth, development and continuing existence of certain theories of atonement that have proven to be problematic today, but not shared by the Orthodox Church, have had an impact on evaluating the Orthodox Church's understanding of the Cross on the whole. These theories of atonement will portray God as being primarily characterized by a wrath that demands appeasement, or "propitiation," something only the death of His Son on the Cross could "satisfy." These theories would stress the "judicial" and "penal" side of redemption in a one-sided manner. They may also bind God to act within certain "laws" of eternal necessity that would impose such categories as (vindictive?) justice on God in a way that may obscure God's overwhelming mercy and love.

Not sharing such theories of atonement as developed in the "West," the Orthodox Church may face criticism for lacking a fully-developed "theology of the Cross." However, such "satisfaction" theories of atonement are proving to be quite unsatisfactory in much of contemporary theological assessments of the meaning and significance of the Cross in relation to our salvation "in Christ."

The Orthodox can make a huge contribution toward a more holistic and integrated understanding of the role of both Cross and Resurrection, so that the full integrity of the paschal mystery is joyfully proclaimed to the world. From the patristic tradition of the Church, the voice of Saint Athanasius the Great can speak to us today of this holistic approach (using some "juridical" language!): "Here, then is the...reason why the Word dwelt among us, namely that having proved His Godhead by His works, He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death in place of all, to settle man's account with death and free him from the primal transgression. In the same act also He showed Himself mightier than death, displaying His own body incorruptible as the first-fruit of the resurrection" (On the Incarnation, 20).

In soberly assessing too great of a dependency on juridical language when speaking of redemption, and anticipating some later theories that would narrowly focus on the language of "payment" and "ransom" in relation to the sacrifice of Christ; Saint Gregory the Theologian argued that a "price" or "ransom" was not

"paid" to the Father or to Satan, as if either would demand, need or expect such a price as the "precious and glorious blood of God." Saint Gregory says, rather, the following: "Is it not evident that the Father accepts the sacrifice not because He demanded it or had any need for it but by His dispensation? It was necessary that man should be sanctified by the humanity of God; it was necessary that He Himself should free us, triumphing over the tyrant by His own strength, and that He should recall us to Himself by His Son who is the Mediator, who does all for the honor of the Father, to whom he is obedient in all things Let the rest of the mystery be venerated silently" (Oration 45,22).

However, getting it right in terms of a sound doctrine of atonement is one thing - essential as it is - but assimilating the necessity of the Cross in and to our personal understanding and the conditions of our life is another. In fact, it is quite a struggle and our resistance can be fierce! If this is difficult to understand, assimilate and then live by, the initial disciples of the Lord suffered through the same profound lack of comprehension. Their (mis)understanding of Jesus as the Messiah was one-sidedly fixated on images of glory, both for Israel and for themselves. A crucified Messiah was simply too much for the disciples to grasp, ever though Jesus spoke of this in words that were not that enigmatic. When Peter refused to accept his Master's words of His impending passion and death in Jerusalem after just confessing His messianic stature and being blessed for it; he is forced to receive what is perhaps the most stinging rebuke in the Gospels when Jesus turns

to him and says: "Get behind me Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mark 8:33). It was Satan who did not want Jesus to fulfill His vocation by voluntarily dying on the Cross, so Peter's refusal to accept Christ's words was his way of aligning himself with Satan.

The disciples were not enlightened until after the resurrection of their Lord and Master. We are raised in the Church so that we already know of Christ's triumph over death through the Cross. Our resistance is not based on a lack of knowledge, but of a real human dread of pain and suffering. It may be difficult to us to "see" the joy that comes through the Cross until we find ourselves "on the other side," for "now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). It is our hope and the "certainty" of our faith that Christ has indeed triumphed over death, "even death on a Cross" (Philippians 2:8). God has blessed us with yet another Great Lent and upcoming Holy Week and Pascha in order to share in that experience of His glorious triumph that begins with the life-giving wood of the Tree of the Cross.

Father Steven Kostoff

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