

Orthodox Church in America + Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Elevation of the Holy Cross

Orthodox Church

Williamsport, PA.



Sanctity of Life Sunday

Venerable Maximus the Confessor

January 21st, 2024

Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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Today's Scripture Readings:

Epistle: Colossians 1:12-18

Gospel: St. Matthew 22:1-14

A warm welcome to EVERYONE this morning!!

UPCOMING SERVICES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- + Church **OPEN** for prayer/Confession/Talk to Fr. – Tuesday Jan 23 - 7 to 9:30am
- + *Compline/Bible Study* – Wednesday January 24th at 5:30pm
- + *Great Vespers* – Saturday January 27th at 5pm
- + *Hours, Divine Liturgy* – Sunday January 28th at 9:40am – Fellowship following in the Hall.
- + *Confessions heard Saturdays before Vespers or by appointment.*
- + Benevolence Fund for January: - *Priest's Discretionary*
- + House Blessings are now happening! Please contact Fr. Seraphim to set up a day and time. 😊
- + **THANK YOU** to ALL who helped with the luncheon yesterday! It was a blessing to everyone!

OUR GIVING — JANUARY 14TH, 2024

Tithes/Offerings - \$704.55 / Online Giving - \$255.00

Candle Offerings – \$39.00 / Benevolence - \$200.00

Thank you all for your generous giving to our Parish!

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 must be at peace with everyone too.*** If you have any questions, please see Fr. Seraphim. 😊

**** Please remain (quietly) for the *Prayers of Thanksgiving* after the Liturgy, before going over to the Hall for Fellowship.**

ON THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE AND ITS UNTIMELY TERMINATION – June 19, 2022

Our salvation begins with a conception. The Mother of God's miraculous conception of her son and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ marks the beginning of new life and hope in the world. As we sing in the Troparion that celebrates the Annunciation, "Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery!"

Our liturgical calendar includes other feasts of conception, including the Righteous Anna's Conception of the Mother of God and the Conception of John the Baptist by his parents Elizabeth and Zachariah. The Church has integrated these celebrations into its life not only as an affirmation of these figures who played such important roles in salvation history, but also because these feasts teach us that human life is bestowed by God and that the origins of every new human being are clearly inseparable from conception. Therefore, human life in its earliest manifestations in the womb is sacred and inviolable. Any act to terminate life in the womb – whether by abortive medications, medical procedures, or destructive behavior – denies this truth, is considered murder, and risks terrible spiritual consequences for those involved.

As with any instance of sin, mercy and healing – not retribution and punishment – are the way of the Lord. The Church is called to minister to those seeking abortions, those who have had or those who have been forced to have abortions, and those who have performed abortions, knowing that abortions are often sought because of poverty, abuse, coercion, neglect, despair, or the influence of a life-denying ethos that has become a societal norm. Church-sponsored and other programs that provide spiritual, physical,

psychological, and financial support to expectant single mothers and couples in situations in which abortion is being considered, and to young families in need of extra care, should be vigorously supported by the Church and the faithful. Current societal trends condone abortions for what some perceive as non-desirable human qualities, including physical or chromosomal abnormalities, or a less desirable sex. The Church appreciates, respects, and cares for all manner of human life and, therefore, never condones abortion in these cases.

A consequence of our God-given free will is that humans are capable of either rejecting or communing with God. The Orthodox Church grieves the rejection of God in the deliberate taking of human life and celebrates the possibilities of drawing closer to God that come with the understanding of human life as sacred and inviolable. We are intended to experience abundant life through communion with our Creator. We, the Assembly of Bishops, hope that the understanding of human life as a good and true gift will radiate through the Church and the world, and continue to pray, alongside the faithful, “for the peace of the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all.”

Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America

Prayers For the Health and Salvation of those in need: Many Years!

Priestmonk Ambrose (Young), Abbot Tryphon, Mitred-Archpriest Nicholas (Harris), Mitred-Archpriest Daniel & Mat. Myra (Kovalak), Archpriest Michael (Evans), Priest Gregory (White), Pres. Eva (Koutroulelis), Pres. Rosy (Tanveer), Mat. Mary Lynn (Henry), Mat. Deborah (Belonick), Mat. Barbara (Matusiak), Mat. Daria Pelesh, Xenia Crews (child Odette), Anastasia Linnehan & Sarah Gunter (children to be born of them), Paul Beard, Evelyn Chabal, Michael Kuzmiak, Juliana Matusiak, Elias Ciaccio, Elizabeth Wadsworth, Sebastian Fillar, Anna Conrad, Isaac Bannister, Christine Perrin, Agnes Andreanoff, Michael Lazorchak, Edward Hojnicky, Brian Gunter, Vladimir Kerkendall, Alec Litchard & those suffering from the wars in Ukraine, Russia, & the Middle East

Prayers for the Newly Departed: Memory Eternal!

Archpriest Moses Berry +1/12, Archpriest Robert Stephen Kennaugh +1/12, Matushka Rosemary Mariamna Soot +1/16, Mother Elizabeth Lutz +1/6, & Those who have lost their lives in the wars in Ukraine, Russia, & the Middle East