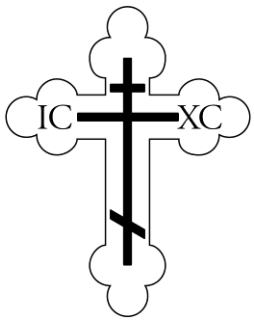


# Protection of the Virgin Mary

## Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago  
and the Midwest  
Orthodox Church  
in America



8600 Grand Blvd.  
Merrillville, IN  
(219)947-4748  
[www.ptvm.com](http://www.ptvm.com)

Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle  
(219)384-6826 • [frjacobvansickle@gmail.com](mailto:frjacobvansickle@gmail.com)

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or  
after Vespers or by appointment

Welcome visitors!  
Please join us in the  
hall after Divine  
Liturgy for coffee hour.

# March 23, 2025

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Great Lent

# The Life-Giving Cross

*During Great Lent, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great (on page 101 of the black Liturgy books)*

On the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Services include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week.

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 commemora-

tion 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.

## HYMNS OF THE DAY

### **Tone 6 – Resurrectional Troparion**

The Angelic Powers were at Your tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.

Mary stood by Your grave,  
seeking Your most pure body.

You captured hell, not being tempted by it.

You came to the Virgin, granting life.

O Lord, Who rose from the dead, //

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 of the 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!”

### **Instead of the Trisagion:**

Before Your Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Your  
holy Resurrection we glorify! (*3x with prostrations*)

Glory... Now and ever... And Your holy Resurrection we glorify!

Before Your Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Your  
holy Resurrection we glorify! (*prostration*)

# SCRIPTURE READINGS

## Tone 6 – Prokeimenon of the Cross (Psalm 27)

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your inheritance!

### Epistle: Hebrews 4.14 – 5.6

Brethren: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses; He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.”

As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

### Gospel: Mark 8.34 – 9.1

When Jesus had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

# WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

**N.Dep.** John Hiatt

Stephen Christoff ('84)

Joyce Krochta

George Sevulka ('68)

**Ev.Mem.** Michael Shendrick (2016) Alexander Markovtsoff ('60)

Olga Yudt (2000)

<b>Health &amp; Salv.</b>	Christopher	Steven	Natalie
Archpr. Peter	Brianna	Jamie	Jovan
Mat. Cynthia	Logan	Kyleigh	Michael
Hierom. John	Olga	Lauren	Abram
Archpr. Jonathan	Janie	Kyle	Zoë
Mat. Vera	Sharon	Linda	Brenda
Pr. Patrick	Tanya	Denise	Lisa
Pr. Gregory	Renee	John	Mazzy
Mat. Beverly	Ashton	Cindy	Terry
Mat. Anne	Michael	Ron	Angie
Nun Theodora	Chris	Matthew	Irina
Brendan	Nina	John	Elizabeth
Rollie	Carissa	Erin	Vitaliy
Claudia	Carol	Aaron	Maria
Mary Ann	Snezana	Marcietta	Viktorija
Raymond	Ryan	Maria	Rebecca
Edward	Nathan	Alla	Pauline
Charlotte	Kara	Elizabeth	Meagan
Joseph	Karen	Samuel	Minnie
Janice	Alisa	Joseph	Richard
Klaudia	Michael	Dwight	Rosie
Maja	Moses	Renee	Sarah
Raymond	Helena	Dominik	Milton
Anne	James	Monica	Andrew
Desiree	Elijah	Charles	Carol
Robb	Lydia	Kimberly	Lidia
Gerald	Nina	Abigail	Daisy
Janet	George	Charles	Julie
Gerald	Linda	Rosemary	
Rebecca	Kimberly	Nicholas	

*To add the name of a loved one recently departed or on the anniversary of their repose, or someone living and in particular need of prayer, please speak to Fr Jacob*

## **Special Petition at the Augmented Litany:**

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially the victims in Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and Palestine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hearken and have mercy.

## **Communion Hymn:**

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

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Tonight at 6pm, we are hosting OCA parishes of the **Chicago Deanery for Lenten Vespers**, followed by a dinner. This is an excellent opportunity to meet other Orthodox Christians from around the region and enjoy a good meal during the fast!

**John Hiatt**, a friend of the parish, **died on Thursday** after a bout with cancer. Before his death, he was received into the Orthodox Faith. **His funeral will be at the church this Saturday at 10am.** Visitation is Friday at Moeller funeral home in Valparaiso at 3pm until a Panikhida at 6:30. The general Panikhida that was scheduled for that morning at the cemetery will instead be served at the church before Vespers at 5:30pm.

During Great Lent, Orthodox Christians **make more time for prayer, fast from rich and satisfying foods**, and find opportunities to **help those in need**. They also examine their consciences and repent of their sins before the Lord in the **Sacrament of Confession**. Confession is available before or after evening services. You can also make an appointment with Fr Jacob, including before Sunday Liturgy or after coffee hour, if necessary.

Once again this Lent, PTVM will deliver **72 Easter ham dinner baskets to the Ross Township food pantry** for local families in need. **There is a posterboard in the narthex with more details**, where you can sign up to bring the various shelf-stable foods that are needed.

Following Vespers this Saturday, March 29, Fr Nicholas will offer a Lenten talk entitled **“Lament and Joy: Orthodox Lenten Liturgy.”**

The **church school** is organizing a viewing of the movie “**The King of Kings**” at Emagine Theaters in Portage on April 11 at 4:15pm. Please let Elizabeth Wysocki know if you would like to come.

At its annual Spring meeting last week, the Holy Synod of bishops of the OCA, in recognition of their years of ministry, elected to elevate **Fr Nicholas to Archpriest** and to award **Fr Jacob the Gold Cross**.

### **Mark your calendars:**

**Mar 25: Vespereal Liturgy for the Annunciation of our Lord @ 10am  
Guys’ Night Out at Maxim’s in Merrillville @ 6pm**

**Mar 26: Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm**

**Mar 28: Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts @ 10am  
Blood Drive 12 – 6pm**

**Mar 29: Funeral for John Hiatt @ 10am  
Memorial Saturday Panikhida @ 5:30pm  
Talk on “Lenten Liturgy” by Fr Nicholas after Vespers (7p)**

**Apr 3: Great Canon & Life of St Mary of Egypt @ 10am  
Men’s Reading Group @ 6:45pm**

**Apr 5: Church Spring Cleaning @ 9am**

**Apr 11: Church School outing to see the “The King of Kings” @ 4pm**

**Apr 12: Lazarus Saturday Liturgy, pancakes, and palms @ 10am**

**Last Week’s Gifts to the Lord: \$7,585**

# **On the Cross of Christ**

**by St Ephraim the Syrian**

Death trampled our Lord underfoot, but He in His turn treated death as a highroad for his own feet. He submitted to it, enduring it willingly, because by this means he would be able to destroy death in spite of itself. Death had its own way when our Lord went out from Jerusalem carrying his cross; but when, by a loud cry from that cross, he summoned the dead from the underworld, death was powerless to prevent it. Death slew Him by means of the body which He had assumed, but that same body proved to be the weapon with which He conquered death. Concealed beneath the cloak of his man-

hood, His godhead engaged death in combat; but in slaying our Lord, death itself was slain. It was able to kill natural life but was itself killed by the life that is above the nature of man. Death could not devour our Lord unless He possessed a body, neither could hell swallow him up unless He bore our flesh; and so He came in search of a chariot in which to ride to the underworld. This chariot was the body which he received from the Virgin; in it he invaded death's fortress, broke open its strong room and scattered all its treasures.

At length He came upon Eve, the mother of all the living. She was the vineyard whose enclosure her own hands had enabled death to violate, so that she could taste its fruit; thus the mother of all the living became the source of death for every living creature. But in her stead Mary grew up, a new vine in place of the old. Christ, the new life, dwelt within her. When death, with its customary impudence, came foraging for her mortal fruit, it encountered its own destruction in the hidden life which that fruit contained. All unsuspecting, it swallowed Him up, and in so doing, released life itself and set free a multitude of men.

He who was also the carpenter's glorious son set up His cross above death's all-consuming jaws and led the human race into the dwelling place of life. Since a tree had brought about the downfall of mankind, it was upon a tree that mankind crossed over to the realm of life. Bitter was the branch that had once been grafted upon that ancient tree, but sweet the young shoot that has now been grafted in, the shoot in which we are meant to recognize the Lord whom no creature can resist.

We give glory to You, O Lord, who raised up Your cross to span the jaws of death like a bridge, by which souls might pass from the region of the dead to the land of the living. We give glory to You who put on the body of a single mortal man and made it the source of immortality for every other mortal man. You are incontestably alive. Your murderers sowed Your body in the earth as farmers sow grain, but it sprang up and yielded an abundant harvest of men raised from the dead. Come then, my brothers and sisters, let us offer our Lord the great and all-embracing sacrifice of our love, pouring out our treasury of hymns and prayers before Him who offered His cross in sacrifice to God for the enrichment of us all.

# Glory to God for all things!