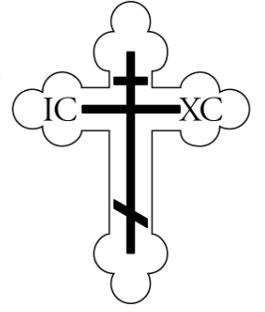
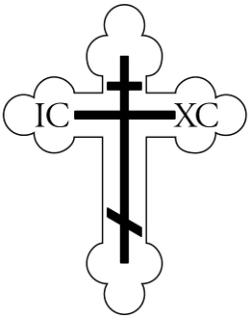


Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America

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Merrillville, IN
(219)947-4748
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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219)384-6826 • 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 15, 2026 3rd Sunday of Great Lent: The Life-Giving Cross

*During 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 7– Resurrectional Troparion

By Your Cross You destroyed death.

To the thief You opened Paradise.

For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy.

And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God,

to proclaim that You are risen,//

granting the world great mercy.

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. Joseph Neumann	Blagoy Nikoloff (1948)
Richard Mirr	Eugene Pilipovich (1951)
Dalton Richards	George Christoff (1953)
Bp. Seraphim (Sigrist)	Gust Simonoff (1956)
Ev. Mem. Bogdan Drakulich ('15)	Vasily Ordinsky (1957)

Health & Salvation	Nina	Natalie
Archpr. Peter	Ezra	Meagan
Mat. Cynthia	James	Kimberly
Hierom. John	Rebecca	Stephanie
Mat. Anne	Jesse	Robin
Valer	Autumn	Leonardo
Nun Theodora	James	Daniel
Rollie	John	Tiffany
Claudia	Jacob	Yelena
Mary Ann	Carol	Anastasia
Raymond	Snezana	Christine
Edward	Ryan	Mira
Charlotte	Nathan	Joseph
Betsy	Kara	Jaroslava
Klaudia	Sarah	Cameron
Maja	Jamie	Regina
Gerald	Kyleigh	Matthew
Janet	Lauren	Cindy
Gerald	Kyle	Aisha
Rebecca	Carolynn	Don
Christopher	Amelia	Patricia
Moses	Aaron	Charlette
Helena	Marcietta	Elias
James	Charles	Shaun
Elijah	Rosemary	Cecilia
Lydia	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, Palestine, Iran and the Middle East. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Chicago Deanery Lenten Vespers** return at 6pm on Sundays:

March 15 at St Nicholas in Joliet

March 22 at St George Cathedral in Chicago

March 29 at St Elizabeth in Chesterton

April 5 Bridegroom Matins at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chicago

During Great Lent, Orthodox Christians **make more time for prayer, fast from rich and satisfying foods** (meat, dairy, fish), and find opportunities to **help those in need** (almsgiving). 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 Liturgies, if necessary.

Once again this Lent, PTVM will deliver **Easter ham dinner baskets to the Ross Township food pantry** for local families in need. **Please remember to bring in the items you are donating for the baskets no later than Sunday, March 29th, Thank you!**

St. Clement's is having their Pascha Bake Sale! Grab an order form in the vestibule and make sure to get your orders into Elizabeth Pedersen by Wednesday, March 25th.

Mark your calendars:

Mar 17: **Parish Council meeting @ 7pm**

Mar 18: **Presanctified Liturgy @ 6pm, followed by potluck**

Mar 13: **Presanctified Liturgy @ 9am**

Mar 21: **Spring Cleaning! @ 9am**

Memorial Saturday General Panikhida @ 5pm

Mar 24: **Vigil of Annunciation @ 7pm**

Mar 25: **Vesperal Liturgy of Annunciation @ 6pm**

Mar 27: **Red Cross Blood Drive 12pm-6pm**

Mar 28: **Pysanki Making Classes 9-12 & 12:30-3:30**

Catechism @ 4:30pm

Last Week's Gifts to the Lord: \$4,846

Financial Health Initiative:

A Reflection from His Eminence, our Metropolitan Tikhon

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

During the sacred season of Great Lent, the Church calls us to sobriety and renewed stewardship. Through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, we learn again that every aspect of our life—spiritual and material alike—is entrusted to us by God and must be ordered toward his service. Among those entrusted with a particular stewardship are our clergy and their families.

The priest, called to celebrate the Divine Services and care for souls, carries sacred responsibilities week by week in the life of the parish. His household shares in the demands and sacrifices of that calling.

In recent years, it has become clear that many clergy households experience financial strain—not as a dramatic crisis, but as a steady pressure. Some priests have reflected that financial concerns absorb attention that would otherwise be devoted to parish life. Others have noted the necessity of outside employment in order to provide stability for their families. These realities invite a measured and responsible response.

Through the Office of Pastoral Life, the Orthodox Church in America has established the Financial Health Initiative. Supported in part by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, this initiative provides clergy households with financial literacy education, practical planning tools, and professional coaching. Upon completing the program, families may submit a simple application to receive a grant administered by the Office of Pastoral Life, assisting with debt reduction, emergency savings, or retirement preparation.

The Lilly grant requires matching funds. For every dollar distributed in assistance, a dollar must be raised. Gifts offered to this initiative are therefore doubled, directly increasing the support available to clergy families.

Such support is not charity. It is an expression of stewardship of our shared life in Christ. When a clergy household gains financial

stability, the priest is freer to devote his attention to the pastoral ministry entrusted to him. When a family stands on firmer ground, the parish it serves is strengthened.

In this Lenten season, I invite you to consider supporting this matching effort. In doing so, you participate directly in strengthening the households of those who serve at the altar and labor for the salvation of souls.

May the Lord, who provides for all our needs, bless this work and grant peace and perseverance to all who serve in his vineyard.

To him, together with his Father and his All-holy Spirit, be all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Glory to God for
all things!