



ST. MARY ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

A PARISH OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR MARCH 22, 2020

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- In accordance with the regulations set by our President and Governor, ONLY 10 PEOPLE MAY ATTEND THE LIMITED SERVICES WE ARE PERMITTED TO PERFORM. So everyone is aware, only our seminarians, Sub-deacons and Father George will be present. ALL OTHERS must unfortunately remain at home but may view the services via the live streaming we have set up on Facebook.
 - Father George created links to enable you to watch the services live streamed from our Church at your home and/or obtain the service texts and important information regarding the crisis from the Archdiocese Webpage.

The first link takes you to the Archdiocese page for all the Church services but the second of the two links below takes you to a page containing an outline of the "Reader's Service" for use at your home. The "Reader's Service" is used whenever a priest is not present and can be said at home. You need only copy and then paste either of the following links in your browser to obtain texts of the services.

<https://www.antiochian.org/liturgicday/2314>

<https://www.antiochian.org/dashboard?name=COVID-19>

- **Please remember** ... to watch the Matins Service at 9 a.m. and Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m. tomorrow (Sunday) please go to the Parish Facebook page (if you are on Facebook) or click on the link below if you do not have Facebook. This link will take you to our Parish Facebook Page where you can watch the video. You do not need a Facebook Account to access this page. When you go to <https://www.facebook.com/StMaryAO/> you then need to click on Posts and then scroll down the page until you see the video.
- Please note ... Father George will be at the Church if anyone wants to come to the Church to light a candle or say a prayer. He will be at the Church on the following dates and times:
 - Monday, March 23 from 3-6 p.m.
 - Tuesday, March 24 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 - Wednesday, March 25 from 3-6 p.m. prior to the Vesper-Liturgy
 - Thursday, March 26 from 2-5 p.m.
 - Friday, March 27 from 3-6 p.m. prior to the Akathist (if it is to be served) ...

If you would like to come to the Church, you must come to the Office Door as the main doors and ramp door will remain locked.

- One last note, if you would like to keep up with your pledge during this time when our Church is closed, you can do so by going to our parish website--stmaryorthodox.com-- and clicking the donate button. You will need a credit card to make your donation.

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 commemoration 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.