

# St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church

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**Sunday, March 22, 2020 – Cross Veneration**

**All services and Office Hours have been cancelled temporarily. However, based on the most recently received directive from Archbishop Michael, I hope that we will be able to open the church to allow our faithful to receive the Eucharist and receive Confession**

**The Coronavirus outbreak and response of New York State has forced Archbishop Michael to close all the churches in the diocese and cancel services with the exception of those parishes where the Priest and Matushka are able to serve alone. I so very much wish that this closure was not necessary, because it is at times such as these that we all need the church more than ever. Still we must be obedient to the government officials as is directed by Christ, since it has pleased God to place them in authority over us for our good.**

**We expect to be live-streaming the services on Facebook as soon as possible. This was done last evening as a test broadcast. Tomorrow morning we will broadcast the Liturgy at 8:30 AM. Temporarily, please look up my Facebook page, Michael Speck on Facebook and I will friend you, or you may access the service through others who are friends as well. As soon as possible, we will use our own church Facebook page to broadcast. I will send out e-mails with future schedule of services.**

**All members of our parish and families will be remembered at Proskomedia, and I ask that you e-mail the names of family members whom you would like us to pray for to [mspeck100@gmail.com](mailto:mspeck100@gmail.com).**

**We pray that our normal schedule will resume in the near future. I will be sending out updates on a regular basis to all those who have sent me their e-mail addresses.**

**Donations –**

**-\$25 in memory of Ann Marie Netti and Dr. William Foresman - by Jacquelyn Aversa - for the Benevolence Fund**

**-\$200 to be used for A.C. system purchase - donated by Glenn & Pauline Peters**

**-Flowers for Cross Veneration Sunday – By Jaci and Beverly Aversa in memory of the founders of St. Nicholas Church**

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**The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary  
Commemorated on March 25**

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as “good tidings.” This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God’s promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.” The Fathers of the Church understand “her seed” to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

We see this echoed in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, as well: “When man disobeyed Thee, the only true God who had created him, and was deceived by the guile of the serpent, becoming subject to death by his own transgressions, Thou, O God, in Thy righteous judgment, didst send him forth from Paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Thy Christ Himself.”

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to Saint Joseph: “Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel’s message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature. Then said Mary unto the angel, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34).

“And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1: 35-38)

The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of Saint Basil or Saint John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent. It is one of the two days of Great Lent on which the fast is relaxed and fish is permitted (Palm Sunday is the other). (OCA Lives of the Saints)

## Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,  
<sup>2</sup> will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

<sup>3</sup> For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;  
<sup>4</sup> he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

<sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you.  
<sup>8</sup> You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

<sup>9</sup> Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your habitation,  
<sup>10</sup> no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

<sup>11</sup> For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.

<sup>12</sup> On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

<sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

<sup>14</sup> Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.  
<sup>15</sup> When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble,  
I will rescue him and honor him. <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

While there is nothing new in the trouble humanity is currently experiencing, we have something that David the King did not have at the time that he wrote this beautiful and familiar psalm. And it is the only thing that matters. It is the only thing in which we base our hope. It is the only thing by which we are saved. It is the Holy Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

That God would send His Son to us to die on a cross for us was an idea that intellectuals who heard the preaching of the apostles in the early church (and even to this day) could not grasp.

St. Paul wrote of it so eloquently in his First Letter to the Corinthians saying, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

**The reason why the message of “Christ crucified” could not be accepted by many of the philosophers and religious leaders of the time was that they tried to understand it with their minds, not their hearts. Those who tried to understand the message of the cross with their minds only saw it as a senseless and pointless act.**

**But all who did accept the message saw the indescribable love of God for us in this act of salvation and many happily went to their deaths as martyrs embracing great sufferings joyfully.**

**We must remember the truths of Psalm 91 as we endure what the next weeks will bring.**

**As believers in Christ Crucified, we are not to be afraid, because Jesus tells us, “do not let your hearts be troubled, for I have overcome the world.”**

**As believers in Christ Crucified, we trust in His protection, for he sends His angels to help and comfort us.**

**As believers in Christ Crucified, we must follow our Lord’s example bringing comfort and assistance to our brothers and sisters as Jesus did even praying for those who had crucified Him with His last breath!**

**We will not be in church, but we are not exempt from praying as we never have before!**

**We will not hear the words of the Gospel read to us, but must immerse ourselves in the Holy Scriptures as in the healing waters of Holy Baptism.**

**We may not taste the precious Holy Eucharist for several weeks, but we must understand that we can remain in communion with God as those in the prisons and gulags of the world did by constantly thanking God for everything, even this time of trouble.**

**The Cross is Life! The Cross is our Joy! The Cross is our Promise of Life Everlasting!**

**Glory Be to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!**

### **2 Chronicles 7:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup> When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.**