



Church website: www.hrocby.org

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*Holy Resurrection
Orthodox Church*

222 Mary Street, Rostraver Township, PA
(Serving the faithful of Belle Vernon and surrounding areas)

Reverend Father Stephan Gresh

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March 29, 2020

**Per the Holy Synod, the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and
His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek:
Effective March 17, 2020:**

1. All parishes of this Archdiocese are to *immediately* cease all services, activities, social gatherings, etc. with the exception of 2 items below. This closure will continue until the end of March at which time further directives will be issued by the Chancellor. (***This is a directive of the Bishop, NOT an option for the parishes.***)
 - a. Special services (i.e., funerals, baptisms, etc.) may only be held IF discussed with the Chancellor before scheduled – attendance is limited to immediate family ONLY.
 - b. The Archdiocese has limited the opening of parishes to a few hours on Saturdays ONLY.
Fr. Stephan will have our parish open ***Saturdays from Noon to 3 pm*** to offer parishioners time for private prayer and light candles. (High risk individuals such as senior citizens, people with ongoing health problems and people not feeling well currently should not consider this act.)
2. Confession are suspended, except for deathbed confessions.
3. Informal spiritual discussions are permitted via phone and e-mails with Fr. Stephan.
4. Fr. Stephan is available to his faithful in emergency situations, following personal safety protocols. However, he will not be able to visit his homebound during this health emergency period.
5. Please contact Fr. Stephan if any Parishioner is in need of assistance in obtaining the basic staples of life since they cannot visit the grocery stores. He has a group of volunteers ready and able to help!

Please note, much care was used in making these decisions by His Eminence after much prayer, dialogue with members of the Holy Synod, consultation with medical professionals and lengthy conversations with the Chancellor. These decisions were not made lightly! We must eliminate the spread of this virus NOW! His Eminence stated that out of “something bad, perhaps something good can come about” -- this period of limited interaction “opens the window of opportunity” to individually “plunge” into the quiet depths of Holy Lent by increased personal prayer, Bible study, and time with the myriad of “good” Orthodox material available through the Internet and our Orthodox bookstores.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

Epistle

(Hebrews 6:13-20)

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

saying, “*Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.*”

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute.

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,

that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil,

where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel

(Mark 9:17:31)

Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.

“And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.”

Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood.

“And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.”

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!”

Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.”

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*.

For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

*Next Sunday’s scriptures readings:

Resurrection: ***Epistle:*** Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel Reading: Mark 10:32-45

St. Mary of Egypt: ***Epistle:*** Galatians 3:23-29

Gospel Reading: Luke 7:36-50

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent:

Our Holy Father John of the Ladder ("Climacus")

By Very Rev. Fr. Lawrence Farley

St. John was Abbot of the Mt. Sinai monastery in the seventh century, and he wrote his *Ladder of Divine Ascent* for his monks. The volume became a classic whose value was recognized even by those struggling to serve Christ in the non-monastic world. The book was read by the monks of Mt. Sinai during the Lenten season, and this Sunday of Great Lent commemorates the writer with gratitude, thereby commending his work to the entire Orthodox world. Below is a little background on Holy Father John.

John was born about 579 and came to the monastery at Mount Sinai when he was sixteen, learning from his spiritual father Martyrius, who tonsured him a monk at about age twenty. Martyrius died soon after, and John retired to Tholas, five miles from the monastery, to live as a hermit. He lived in prudent moderation, eating everything allowed but in small amounts. He slept very little and received the grace of continual prayer and the gift of tears. He became famous as a spiritual guide and received many visitors—so many that some criticized him as a chatterbox. After this he kept silence for a year, finally speaking only when entreated by those who had once criticized him. John visited a large monastery in Egypt but continued to live at his hermitage. After forty years there he was elected abbot of Mount Sinai. John was a great spiritual director, and he placed much emphasis on mourning for one's sins, attaining inner stillness, and being constantly in prayer, invoking the Name of Jesus. It was for his monks that he wrote his famous book of monastic direction, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which is read by monks during Great Lent. In it, he said, "When we die, we will not be criticized for having failed to work miracles. We will not be accused of having failed to be theologians or contemplatives. But we will certainly have to offer some explanation to God for not having mourned unceasingly." Before his death he resigned as abbot and returned to the quiet of a hermitage. He died in peace in about 649.

Announcements from Fr. Stephan:

1. Prayer Request from Fr. Stephan ~~ I am asking for a special prayer request for Buck Winterhoff, my closest friend from Ohio and his wife Cathy. Buck wasn't feeling well and Cathy took him to the hospital. She was not even able to take him to the door of the hospital; they took him and turned her way. Because of the pandemic restrictions, Cathy is also not able to be at the hospital with him, only getting reports via telephone. Please remember all caregivers who face this situation in times of restrictions. It is a hard situation for anyone who would have a loved one in a hospital or nursing home and not being able to be there.
2. Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City is permitted to keep their schedule of service. The services are closed to the public but they are all live streamed. *Follow this link to their YouTube channel: [EllwoodCityChapel](#).*
3. The request for parishioners to call friends and neighbors is working well. I have received a lot of positive feedback from those who I have talked to. We will need to continue to be in communication with each other as this continues.
4. The Synod is scheduled to meet again this week to discuss actions as we move forward. The updates will be communicated as soon as we receive them. Matushka Denise is updating the website and Facebook as changes are happening.
5. Paska bread baking has been cancelled due to the situation.

Sunday of St. John of the Ladder ("Climacus")

