

Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

March 19, 2023

Tone 7



Third Sunday Of Lent

*Veneration of the Cross
Ss Chrysanthus & Daria
of Rome (283)*

Divine Liturgy Readings

(Readings on Back)

- ◆ **Hebrews 4:14-5:6**
- ◆ **Mark 8:34-9:1**

Announcements:

Feast of the Annunciation

Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation will be held this Friday, March 24th at 6pm.

Lenten Pierogi Dinners Help Needed

This Friday is our second, and last Lenten Pierogi Dinner of the year. We will need some help this Thursday making Stuffed Cabbage (11am) and pierogies (3pm). As always, we appreciate any and all help we can get!

Deanery Akathist

Akathis to the Precious Cross will be said tonight, Sunday, March 19 at 5:00pm at Holy Archangel Michael Church, 5025 E Mill Road, Broadview Heights. Light Meal to Follow.

This Week

Wednesday, March 22

6:00pm - Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts

Friday, March 24

4:00pm - Pierogi Dinner
6:00pm - Vesperal Liturgy for
Annunciation

Saturday, March 25

6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, March 26

9:00am - The Hours
9:30am - Divine Liturgy



Gospel Meditation

In today's gospel lection, taken from Mark 8:34, Jesus says: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." According to accepted English dictionaries, "deny" means to refuse, reject, repudiate and/or to declare something untrue. If we limit ourselves to these definitions, we do an injustice to the deeper meaning of Christian self-denial. For a clearer picture of what Jesus means, we must return to the original Greek text. The Greek is "aparnisastho" and it has the meaning of renunciation and absolute rejection of whatever is incongruous with Jesus' planned salvation for us.

There are those of us who have a narrow and limited understanding of self-denial. We pick and choose at random what we will give up and what we will do in the name of Christianity. We proceed to label them "Our little crosses we must bear." "I'll give up movies and/or TV during lent." Thus we conclude with a list of trivialities that have no bearing on the "self-denial" Jesus speaks about in our gospel lesson for today. Christ-like self-denial goes much deeper. It penetrates the facade which hides our hidden sins, our shortcomings and our faults.

Utter denial does not mean depriving ourselves of the necessities of life, nor does it mean we must become paupers and live in rags. Neither does it mean we must lose our individuality, personality and identity. When Jesus speaks of total and utter denial of self, He means we must subordinate our clamoring ego that prohibits us from being the Children of God we were intended to be. Good intentions are not enough. This is why Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Take up your cross and follow me" means to get started on our journey to salvation. If the road we are on does not have God's Eternal Kingdom as its destination, then we had better make a U-turn and find the right one!

"Taking up our cross and following Jesus" means trying harder when those moments of calamity, tragedy, sorrow and loss and grief beset us. It means bringing under control our uncontrollable anger, our undue insensitivity, our impatience and impetuosity. It means subduing our temperament and disposition so that we can master them rather than their mastering us.

There is another reason this gospel passage is read at the Divine Liturgy of the Third Sunday of Lent. The Synaxarion, that portion of the Orthros service book which both announces and describes the observed Feast Day for today, says the following:

"On this the Third Sunday of Great Lent, we observe the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross and for this reason: Inasmuch as in the forty days of fasting we in a way crucify ourselves and become bitter, despondent and failing, the Life-giving Cross is presented to us for spiritual refreshment and assurance, for remembrance of our Lord's Passion and for comfort. Like those who are following a long and tedious path are tired, see a beautiful tree with many leaves, they would sit in its shade and rest for a while and then, as if rejuvenated, they will continue their journey. Likewise today, in the time of fasting and difficult journey and effort, the Life-giving Cross was planted in its midst by the Holy Fathers of the Church to give rest and spiritual refreshment, to make us light and courageous for the remaining task.

Christ comforts us who are, as it were, in a desert until He will lead us up to the spiritual Jerusalem by His Resurrection. Just as the Precious Cross, which is also called the Tree of Life, was planted in the middle of Paradise, so our Holy Fathers planted the Cross in the middle of holy and Great Lent, as a sacred reminder of both Adam's bliss and how he was deprived of it. Remembering also that by partaking of this Tree of Life, the Precious and Life-giving Cross, we no longer die but are kept alive."

St. John Chrysostom, a fourth century Patriarch of Constantinople describes the Cross this way: "The Cross is the proof of the love of God. The Cross is the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the Kingdom of virtue. The Cross has torn asunder our mortgage and rendered useless the prison of death. The Cross has opened Paradise, it has admitted the thief and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God."

Jesus extends His invitation to us once again to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him." Our Church gives us this Third Sunday of Lent--Mid-point to Golgotha--to pause with Jesus, to refresh ourselves spiritually, to assess our Lenten journey and to continue with greater determination. But the initiative is still ours. There is no way into spring but that we endure the rigors of winter. There is no way we can arrive to Easter Sunday if we do not live the agonies of all our Good Fridays. There is no way we can achieve eternal life with God unless we deny ourselves utterly and totally in Christ. This we do when we endure and sustain our own personal crosses and follow Him. - Fr. George Nicozisin

Sunday of The Cross

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.

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.

The most common icon associated with the Veneration of the Cross is the same icon used on the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, September 14. In the icon, Patriarch Macarius is standing in the pulpit elevating the Cross for all to see and venerate. On each side of the Patriarch are deacons holding candles. The elevated Cross is surrounded and venerated by many clergy and lay people, including Saint Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine.

In the background of the icon is a domed structure that represents the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. This church was one of

Prayers Appreciated for:

Living:

Katherine, Alex, Sam,
Lisa, Paula, Marianne,
Brianna & Infant Jack
Natalie & Infant Caleb
Steve

Departed:

Ionne, Lester, Gwen, Clyde

Tall Candles

Are sponsored by
Sam & Kathy Jacob
For the health & well-being:

Sam Babic
and in memory of:
Wasil Livchak
Michelle Dudukovich
Millie Halamay

WEEKLY READINGS

Monday, March 20

St Photini (the Samaritan Woman)

Genesis 8:21-9:7

Proverbs 11:19-12:6

Tuesday, March 21

St. Thomas, (1610)

Gen. 9:8-17

Prov. 12:8-22

Wed, March 22

Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra

Gen. 9:18-10:1

Prov. 12:23-13:9

Thurs, March 23

Martyr Nikon (251)

Gen 10:32-11:9

Prov. 13:19-14:6

Friday, March 24

Ven. Zachariah the Recluse

Gen. 28:10-17

Prov. 9:1-11

Saturday, March 25

Annunciation

Heb. 2:11-18

Luke 1:24-38

the churches constructed and dedicated by Emperor Constantine on the holy sites of Jerusalem.

Tropar: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; grant victory to the faithful over their adversaries. And by virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thine habitation!



Today's Scripture Readings

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

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, but 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 He 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."

Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

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