

Remember that the Lord is in every Christian. When your neighbour comes to you, always have great respect for him, because the Lord is in him, and often expresses His will through him. 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13). Therefore, do not grudge anything to your brother, but do unto him as unto the Lord; especially as you do not know in whom the Lord will come and visit you; be impartial to all, be kind to all, sincere and hospitable. Remember that sometimes God speaks even through unbelievers, or disposes their hearts towards us, as it happened in Egypt when the Lord gave Joseph favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (Gen. 39:21).

Saint John of Kronstadt



**Sunday 14 September 2014 is the Sunday of the Elevation of the Holy Cross**

**Matins Gospel:** John 12:28-36

**Epistle:** 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

**Gospel:** John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance, granting to faithful Christians victory over their enemies, and protecting your commonwealth by your Cross.

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### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday:** Colossians 1:24-29, 2:1; Matthew 10:16-22  
Great Martyr Nikitas; Philotheus the Wonderworker

**Tuesday:** 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Luke 7:36-50  
Great Martyr Euphemia; Sebastiana, Disciple of Paul

**Wednesday:** Galatians 3:15-22; Mark 6:7-13  
Joachim, Patriarch of Alexandria; Martyrs Sophia, Pistis, Elpis & Agape

**Thursday:** Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 6:30-45  
Eumenius, Bp. Of Gortyna; Martyr Ariadne

**Friday:** Galatians 4:8-21; Mark 6:45-53  
Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, & Dorymedon; Afterfeast of the Holy Cross

**Saturday:** Ephesians 6:10-17; John 8:21-30  
Martyr Eustathius & His Companions; Eustathius of Thessalonica



## ***Evangelion***

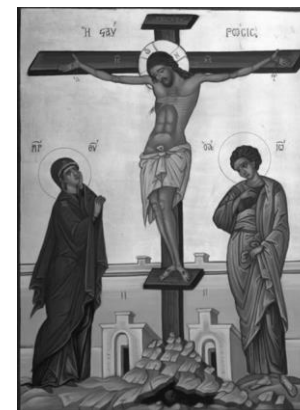
*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

14 September 2014

### **Behold Your King!**

Today, on the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, we hear a condensed version of Saint John's account of the Passion of Jesus Christ. The crucifixion and death of Christ is absolutely central to our faith as Christians. Yet, as Saint Paul reminds us in today's Epistle, "the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing." To place an act of such seeming defeat at the centre of our faith might indeed seem crazy.

We live in a world that values success and power – and that has no time for weakness and defeat. And yet throughout His life Jesus Christ turned these values on their head. Although He was God, He assumed our human nature, was born in a stable, worked as a carpenter, went around ministering to people with "no place to lay His head," and associated with those who were considered outcasts. Even when He entered Jerusalem and was acclaimed as King by the people, he rode on a humble donkey rather than on a horse fit for a king.



The ultimate expression of the way Jesus Christ turns the values of the world on their head is seen in His death on the Cross. Here we see the apparent powerlessness of the All-powerful God. And yet here we also see the power of suffering love. This is what Saint Paul calls folly to the wise, for how can a crucified God save us? And what power does love really have in our world? And yet in giving Himself up freely for us in love and accepting crucifixion and death for our sake we see how God's power is revealed, for in accepting death Christ conquers the power of death once and for all.

For Orthodox Christians, the Cross of Christ does not signify death and defeat, but rather Christ's victory over all the forces of death. And it teaches us that the power of suffering love will ultimately triumph over all that seeks to destroy it.

The knowledge of the Cross is concealed in the sufferings of the Cross.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

## Joining Heaven and Earth

*An Introduction to the Orthodox Understanding of Icons*

We saw last week that, after a period of controversy, the Church reasserted the legitimacy and importance of using and venerating icons. This was based on our fundamental belief in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, who, by assuming a human body, enabled us to see Him and depict Him. The Second Council of Nicaea (787 AD) taught that:

*The pictorial image in iconography and the verbal narrative in the Gospels are in agreement with one another, and both alike emphasise that the Incarnate God the Word is genuine and not illusory.*



In response to the claim that to venerate or to kiss an icon was to worship matter, the Church distinguished between the nature of the matter that was used in making the icon and the person who was depicted. Saint John of Damascus pointed out that:

*When we venerate images, our veneration is not offered to matter, but to those who are portrayed through matter in the images. Honour given to the images passes to its prototype, as Saint Basil says.*

It is therefore the person, or the prototype of the image portrayed, who is central in the icon. When one enters an Orthodox church and sees people venerating or kissing icons, or when one venerates them at home, it is the person depicted in the icon who is being venerated. Just as someone might kiss a photo of someone precious to them because there is a connection between that person and the photo, so venerating icons is a natural way of expressing love for those depicted. And, as Saint Basil tells us, the honour that we give passes to the person depicted.

In an Orthodox understanding, the human person is of inestimable value and this value is only truly understood when we are seen in relation to Jesus Christ, in whose Image we are created, and whose radiance we are called to reflect. The saints who are depicted in the icons have become radiant with the light of Christ; they have become deified or transfigured by the Divine Light. Saint John of Damascus tells us:

*I do not worship the creation rather than the Creator, but I worship the one who became a creature, who was formed as I was, who clothed Himself in creation without debasement or departing from His divinity, that He might raise my nature in glory and make it a partaker of His divine nature.*

*To be continued...*



The unspeakable and prodigious fire hidden in the essence of things, as in a bush, is the fire of divine love and the dazzling brilliance of God's beauty inside everything.

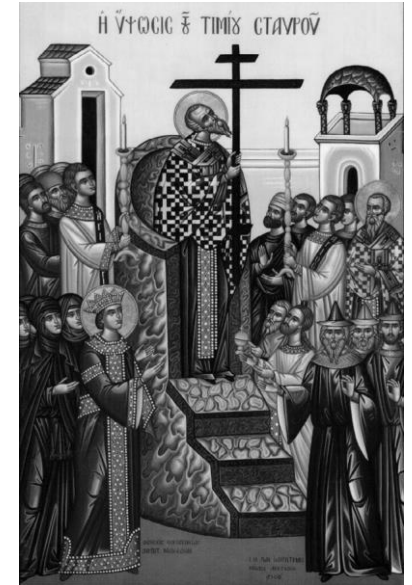
Saint Maximus the Confessor

## The Exaltation of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross

Today we celebrate the Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. On this day we commemorate two specific incidents. The first is the finding of the Cross upon which Christ was crucified by the Empress Helena during her travels in Palestine in 326 A.D. On reaching Golgotha she ordered that the pagan temple be destroyed and when this was done three crosses were found on its site. Uncertain which one was the Cross of the Lord, they were placed on a dying woman who was miraculously healed when the True Cross touched her. The second incident commemorates the recovery of the True Cross in 628 A.D. after it had been captured by the Persians.

This feast is a day of fasting and repentance. The Cross is placed in the centre of the Church, and is surrounded by flowers and basil. As we venerate the Cross, we prostrate ourselves before the Lord, pledging Him our loyalty and pleading for His mercy.

The Cross was originally an instrument of torture and death, and it reminds us of the sufferings of Christ and of His great love for us, a love that the world could not understand. However, it is also a sign of His victory over death. Through His death on the Cross, Jesus Christ has conquered death and so Saint Paul tells us that we find our glory in the Cross of Christ.



The Tree of true life was planted in the place of the skull, and upon it hast Thou, the eternal King, worked salvation in the midst of the earth.

From Vespers for the Feast

Many indeed are the wondrous happenings of that time: God hanging from a cross, the sun made dark and again flaming out; for it was fitting that creation should mourn with its creator. The temple veil rent, blood and water flowing from his side: the one as from a man, the other as from what was above man; the earth shaken, the rocks shattered because of the rock; the dead risen to bear witness to the final and universal resurrection of the dead. The happenings at the sepulchre and after the sepulchre, who can fittingly recount them? Yet no one of them can be compared to the miracle of my salvation. A few drops of blood renew the whole world, and do for all men what the rennet does for the milk: joining us and binding us together.

Saint Gregory the Theologian