

What does it mean to take up your cross? It means the willing acceptance, at the hand of Providence, of every means of healing, bitter though it may be, that is offered. Do great catastrophes fall on you? Be obedient to God's will, as Noah was. Is sacrifice demanded of you? Give yourself into God's hands with the same faith as Abram had when he went to sacrifice his son. Is your property ruined? Do your children die suddenly? Suffer it all with patience, cleaving to God in your heart, as Job did. Do your friends forsake you, and you find yourself surrounded by enemies? Bear it all without grumbling, and with faith that God's help is at hand, as the apostles did.

Saint Nikolai Velimirovich



**13 September 2015 is the Sunday before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:1-12

**Epistle:** Galatians 6:11-18

**Gospel:** John 3: 13-17

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Angelic powers were above Thy tomb, and they that guarded Thee became as dead. And Mary stood by the grave seeking Thine immaculate Body. Thou hast despoiled Hades and wast not tried thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst grant us life. O Thou Who didst arise from the dead, Lord, glory be to Thee.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

The Church is shown to be a many-lighted heaven that doth shine a guiding light upon all them that do believe; wherein while standing we cry aloud: Do Thou Thyself now establish this house, O Lord.

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

**Monday:** John 12:28-36; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30  
Elevation of the Holy Cross; Commemoration of the 6th Ecumenical Council

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

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

**Thursday:** Ephesians 1:1-9; Mark 7:24-30  
Martyrs Sophia, Pistis, Elpis & Agape; Herakleides & Myron of Crete

**Friday:** Ephesians 1:7-17; Mark 8:1-10  
Eumenius, Bp. Of Gortyna; Martyr Ariadne

**Saturday:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2:1-5; John 8:21-30  
Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, & Dorymedon; Afterfeast of the Holy Cross



# ***Evangelion***

***A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith***

13 September 2015

**Archbishopric of Good Hope  
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

## **For God So Loved the World...**

Today is the Sunday before the Feast of the Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross and so the Church helps us to prepare for this great Feast by focusing our attention on Jesus' words in Saint John's Gospel. In today's Gospel He tells us how God sent His Son to us to save us, for He wishes all to be saved and to have eternal life.

In this Gospel Jesus Christ uses Old Testament imagery and applies it to Himself. When the people of Israel were afflicted by snake bites while wandering in the desert, God commanded Moses to fashion a bronze serpent so that everyone who looked at it would be healed. This healing was a foreshadowing of the ultimate healing that we find in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Just as looking at the serpent enabled the Israelites to be healed, so we need to look to the Cross of Christ in order to find healing and salvation.



The Gospel tells us that God desires our salvation, but it also tells us that we need to respond to Him. God will not force salvation on us; instead we need to acknowledge our own need for healing and turn to Him. The Fathers tell us that, just as the people of Israel had to leave behind their slavery in Egypt, so we need to turn our backs on sin and to enter into the promised land of salvation. By looking to the Cross, we seek to be healed from our sins as we seek the vision of God's Glory that is displayed on the Cross of Christ.

Why did Christ stretch himself out on the cross for sinners and why did He give His holy body over to suffering for the sake of the world? I suggest that God did this for only one reason: to make His love known to the world, so that our ability to love, increased by such a discovery, would be the prisoner of His love.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

# Ordained to Serve the Church

*A series on the meaning of Holy Orders*

We have seen there are three orders of ministry in the Church, the bishops, priests, and deacons. The bishop is the overseer of the local Church. He is its focus of unity and also connects the Church of his diocese to the universal Church in all times and places. However, the bishop cannot be everywhere, and he is therefore assisted by priests and deacons.



## The Priesthood of Jesus Christ

In the earliest days of the Church, it was the bishop who was the head of the local community and who presided as the faithful gathered to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. However, as the Church grew multiple parishes were often founded and priests (or presbyters) were ordained to lead these communities. A priest is therefore usually ordained to serve as pastor and leader of a parish community. He presides at the Liturgy in the name of the bishop, and he can be authorized by the bishop to preach, counsel and exercise the ministry of forgiveness and healing.

When a priest exercises his priestly ministry, it is really the priesthood of Jesus Christ that he is exercising. In a certain sense all Christians share in Christ's "royal priesthood" (1

Peter 2:5,9), but the ordained priest does this in a very specific way. He shares in Christ's ministry of offering himself to the Father for the salvation of all, of teaching the words of life, and by participating in Christ's pastoral identity as the Good Shepherd who cares for His flock. Christ's priesthood is continued in the Church through her ordained ministers.

Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that priests are not angels, but men. They are human beings with limitations and weaknesses and this enables them to empathise with the weaknesses of their flocks. But they are also given grace from God to fulfill their task, which means that it is truly Jesus Christ who acts through them, making them bearers of divine grace.



This grace is so exceedingly great that were men able to see the glory of this grace, the whole world would wonder at it; but the Lord has veiled it that His servants should not be puffed up but find salvation in humility... Truly noble is a priest – the minister at God's altar. Whoever gives offence to him offends the Holy Spirit who lives in him... If people could behold in what glory a priest celebrates the divine office they would swoon at the sight; and if the priest could see himself, could see the celestial glory surrounding him as he officiates, he would become a great warrior and devote himself to feats of spiritual endurance, that he might not offend in any way the grace of the Holy Spirit living in him.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

# The Exaltation of the Holy & Life-Giving Cross

Tomorrow 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.

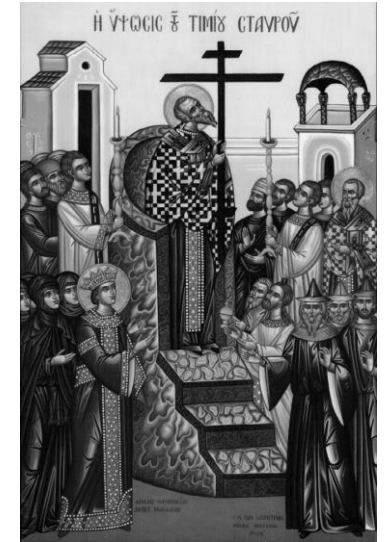
This feast is a day of fasting and repentance. The Cross is placed in the centre of the Church, and is surrounded by flowers and basil. As we venerate the Cross, we prostrate ourselves before the Lord, pledging Him our loyalty and pleading for His mercy.

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.



Abba Joseph told Abba Isaac: "Once I was with Abba Poimen and saw him fall into ecstasy. Because I had great boldness with him I made a prostration and said to him 'Tell me, where were you?' He was forced to admit, 'My thoughts were there at the Cross of the Saviour, where Holy Mary the Mother of God was standing, and so I always wanted to cry like that.'"

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers



**Lord, save Your people and  
bless Your inheritance,  
granting our rulers to  
prevail over adversaries,  
and protecting Your  
commonwealth by Your  
Cross.**

*Apolytikion for the Feast*