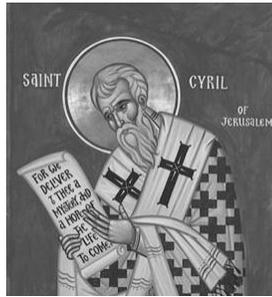


Today we also commemorate **Saint Cyril of Jerusalem**, who was born in 315 and consecrated bishop of Jerusalem in 350. He was



known as a defender of the poor and tried to be a peace maker in the controversies of his day, although he was also firm in his defence of the true faith. He is particularly known for his catechetical lectures that were given to those preparing for baptism. These texts show his rootedness in the Scriptures and in the liturgical life of the Church, and his deep pastoral concern for those he was instructing. He wrote: "Christ was actually crucified, and actually buried, and truly rose again; and all these things have been vouchsafed to us, that we, by imitation communicating in His sufferings, might gain salvation in reality. O surpassing loving-kindness! Christ received the nails in His undefiled hands and feet, and endured anguish; while to me without suffering or toil, by the fellowship of His pain He vouchsafed salvation." St Cyril reposed in peace in 386.

On Sunday, 18 March 2012
we commemorate the Sunday of
the Adoration of the Holy Cross

Matins Gospel: John 20: 1-10
Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6
Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Apolytikion for the Feast:

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

Hail! Life-giving Cross,
unconquerable trophy of the true faith, door to Paradise, succour of the faithful, rampart set about the Church. Through thee the curse is utterly destroyed, the power of death is swallowed up, and we are raised from earth to heaven: invincible weapon, adversary of demons, glory of martyrs, rue ornament of holy monks, haven of salvation bestowing on the world great mercy.

From Vespers for Sunday of the Adoration of the Holy Cross

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Isaiah 14:24-32; Genesis 8:21-9:7; Proverbs 11:19-12:6
Chrysanthus & Darius, Martyrs; Demetrios the New Martyr

Tuesday: Isaiah 25:1-9; Genesis 9:8-17; Proverbs 12:8-22
Holy Fathers of St Savvas Monastery; Cuthbert of Lindisfame

Wednesday: Isaiah 26:21-27:9; Genesis 9:18-10:1; Proverbs 12:23-13:9
James the Confessor; Thomas, Patriarch of Constantinople

Thursday: Isaiah 28:14-22; Genesis 10:32-11:9; Proverbs 13:19-14:6
Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra; Euthimius

Friday: Isaiah 29:13-23; Genesis 12:1-7; Proverbs 14:15-26
Nikon the martyr & companions

Saturday: Hebrews 6:9-12; Mark 7:31-37
Forefeast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos; Artemon of Selefkia



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

18 March 2012

The Adoration of the Holy Cross

Today, on the third Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate and adore the Holy and Life-Giving Cross of Christ. In some ways it is similar to the feasts of the Exaltation and Procession of the Cross that we celebrate on 14 September and 1 August. However, this feast is not connected to any historical event, but is rather given to us to mark an important place on our Lenten pilgrimage. It tells us that we are in the middle of Great Lent.

Like the people of Israel we have been wandering in the desert, cast out of Paradise, aware of our alienation from God, but also of our desire to return to Him. If we have been fasting seriously, we are probably getting to the point where we are beginning to feel it, and we may even be asking ourselves whether it is all worth it.

The Church gives us this feast to encourage us on our pilgrimage to Pascha. It likens the Holy and Life-giving Cross to the spring of Marah which the children of Israel encountered in the wilderness (Ex 15:22-25). Its waters were bitter, but when the Prophet Moses placed a piece of wood in the water they became sweet prefiguring the Cross of Christ which likewise sweetens our Lenten fast.

This day also marks a shift in focus, from our own repentance and Lenten efforts to the events of Holy Week and Pascha. We are called to turn our attention to Christ and His sacrifice and we also receive strength from the knowledge of His Resurrection that we are journeying towards.

Shine, Cross of the Lord, shine with the light of thy grace upon the hearts of those that honour thee. With love inspired by God, we embrace thee, O desire of all the world. Through thee our tears of sorrow have been wiped away; we have been delivered from the snares of death and have passed over to unending joy. Show us the glory of thy beauty and grant to us thy servants the reward of our abstinence, for we entreat with faith thy rich protection and great mercy.

From Vespers for Sunday of the Adoration of the Holy Cross



Thoughts on fasting

We know that Great Lent is a time of increased prayer and fasting and in this series we are looking at some of the reasons **why** we fast.

Fasting as a means of simplifying our lives

It is common to hear people complaining that our modern world has become very complex. There are so many things that we need to attend to that we sometimes fear that we can't keep track of them all as we rush from one thing to another.

In this context, fasting can help us to discern what is really important in life. There are things that are themselves good, but which can come to dominate us and take up too much of our time and attention. The preparation and sharing of food can be a great joy. However, a period in which we simplify our meals leaves us with time to devote to activities like prayer and to give time to the relationships that really matter in our lives.

Of course, there is a danger that trying to prepare tasty and nourishing meals with fasting ingredients can sometimes take more time and become a very complicated endeavour! While there is nothing wrong with tasty food, we should be careful that the fast does not just become about which ingredients we may or may not use, but that it also involves a certain soberness and simplification of our desires.

This does not just apply to food, but it also has implications for our use of television, the internet, social media, and various forms of entertainment. There is nothing wrong with these in themselves, but some people find it helpful to cut down on them during Lent, for this prevents us from being dominated by them and can provide us with time that we didn't know that we had.

However, being freed from these various forces that dominate us can be a rather frightening experience. Indeed, all too often we fill up our lives with peripheral things because we are frightened of confronting our own reality before God. Fasting leads us into the desert in which are called to choose who we really are and Who we serve.

To be continued...



Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him.

If you see a friend being honoured, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye, the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eye fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.

Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from fowl and fishes, but bite and devour one another?

St. John Chrysostom



The one who knows God will follow the Lord's footsteps, bearing the cross of the Saviour. It is said, "The world is crucified to him and he to the world." The Lord says, "He who loses his life will save it." We can "lose our lives" in one of two ways. First, we can risk our lives just as the Lord did for us. Secondly, we can separate our lives from the customary things of this world. Bearing the cross means to separate our souls from the delights and pleasures of this life. If you do this, you will find your life again - resting in the hope of what is to come. Dying to ourselves means being content with the necessities of life. When we want more than these necessities it is easy to sin.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Question Box

If you have a question about the faith and teaching of the Orthodox Church, you can send it to evangelion@goarch.co.za

Should Orthodox Christians practice yoga?

In recent decades various forms of yoga have become popular in the West as a means of exercise and of keeping the body supple. While many people find these helpful, we should bear in mind that these body postures arise out of and are linked to a religious context that is very different to that of Christianity. They are often also linked to various Eastern traditions of meditation, some of which are in direct conflict to a Christian understanding and could open us up to dangerous influences.

In Hinduism, God and the soul are ultimately identified, and salvation involves becoming freed from the material creation that entraps us. For Christians, we are persons made up of body and spirit who are called to be in relationship to a personal God. Moreover, the created world is God's gift to us, which He will ultimately take up and transform into the Kingdom of God.

We should be cautious about borrowing techniques from other religious traditions, and there is ultimately no need for us to do so. The Orthodox Church has her own rich tradition of prayer and spiritual struggle that is rooted in Christian belief and insights and has produced many saints. Let us rather draw deeply from the wellsprings of our own faith.