

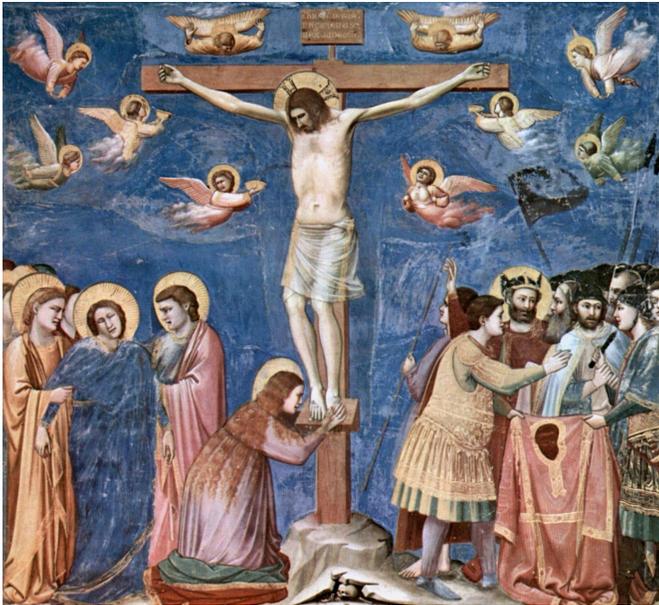


Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

Sun, March 15, 2020 - Sunday of the Cross

3rd Sunday of Great Lent — Tone 7

Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Caves Lavra. Martyr Agapius and those with him.



Hymns for Today

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy, and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that Thou art risen, // granting the world great mercy.

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance! Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Thy Cross, // preserve Thy habitation!

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; it has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for Thou, O my Savior, hast come and cried to those in hell: // “Enter again into Paradise!”

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 Reading - 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.”

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from Holy Trinity Orthodox Church. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting.

THIS WEEK'S LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE

TODAY: 8:45 AM - Hours, Divine Liturgy, **Church Visit with Social Distancing 1PM - 3 PM**

WED @ 6PM - Feast of the ANNUNCIATION Vespers
Divine Liturgy - Livestream begins 10 minutes prior to the start of the service.

FRI @ 6:30PM - Akathist w/ Litya for the Departed - Livestream begins 10 minutes prior to the start of the service.

SAT @ 5PM - Great Vespers - Livestream begins 10 minutes prior to the start of the service.

SUN @ 8:45 AM - Hours, Divine Liturgy, **Church Visit with Social Distancing 1PM - 3 PM**

NOTE: Livestreaming is currently on the Holy Trinity Facebook Page. We hope to expand that so that it will also be on our website.

Attendance & Donations - 3/15/20

Attendance: 74 | Regular: \$890
Improvements: \$328 | Candles: \$146

A NOTE ABOUT SUPPORTING THE CHURCH

DURING THIS TIME: During this time when we are not able to come to church it is critical that the church continue to receive your support! We are working to set up an online giving system for those of you that are computer savvy. Meanwhile, and for those of you who are able, you can mail your donations to the church OR drop it off in the rectory mailbox. We also understand that some of you are being affected financially by this crisis so we understand the need to take that into consideration. Do what you can "as unto the Lord Himself". If you have any questions or concerns please speak with Fr. Innocent.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Living: Cynthia Dulsky, Josie & Daniel Bisset, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Valletta Family, Nadine Breisch, Luke Austin, Susan Goobic Howell, Rosalie Bagenski, Connie Padrezas, Denise Meck, Sonja & Leighann Kay, Stephen & Mary Krill, Anna Hutz Lahr, Madaline, Brian Cawley, Daniel Bissett **Departed:** Thomas Kay, Lexi Marie Tessitore, Joseph Mahan, Stephen Havrilak Sr., Nancy Valletta

++ PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS ++

CONTACT INFO: If you do not receive text alerts to your cell phone or emails from Fr. Innocent PLEASE send him your contact information. These are the primary means by which we are communicating and keeping in touch during this time. Send your info to innocent.neal@gmail.com OR text it to 570-691-9076. Also, if you need to speak with Fr. Innocent you can reach him at this number. Put it in your cell phone.

CONFESSIONS: We are currently working out a way to have confessions during this time. If you have an immediate need for confession please contact Fr. Innocent to arrange a solution.

LENTEN ADULT EDUCATION: "How to live a Christian Life - 55 Maxims of Fr. Thomas Hopko". SubDeacon Greg is currently working on a solution for having this lenten class online. Stay tuned.

LENTEN WEEKDAY BIBLE STUDY: Journey through the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ Thursday Mornings @ 10 AM. This class will be held online this Thursday, God willing and the internet cooperating. Look for an announcement and directions this week.

PARISH MEETINGS: We are working on the means to have our committee meetings using an online platform. We hope to have this in place this week. This being the case we should be able to have our Bazaar meetings and Parish Council meetings. More to come :).

LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE FOR WEEK 5 OF LENT:

SUN: 8:45 AM - Hours, Divine Liturgy, **Church Visit with Social Distancing 1PM - 3 PM**

WED: April 1st @ 6 PM - Great Canon of Saint Andrew

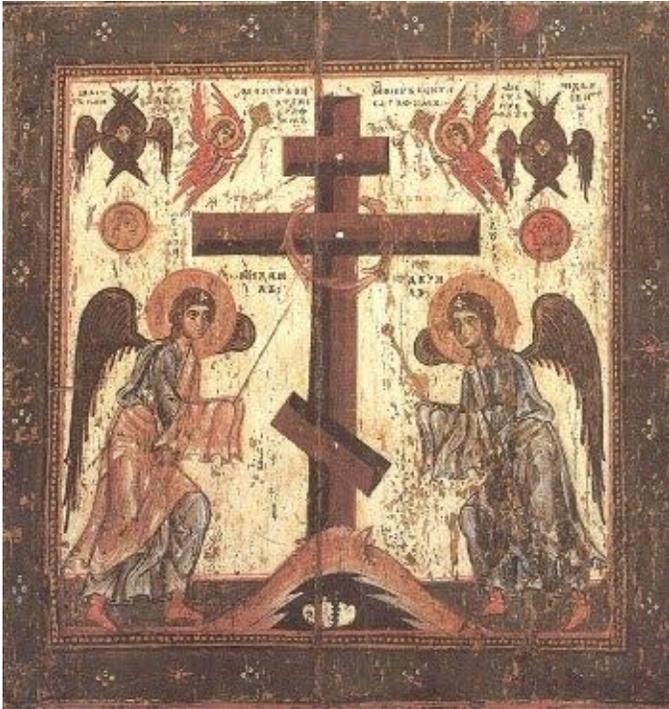
THURS: April 2 @ 6 PM - Presanctified Liturgy

FRI: April 3 @ 6:30PM - Akathist w/ Litya for the Departed

Remember to take the time to touch base with one another throughout the week and especially those who are alone or may have a need. ALSO - IF YOU HAVE A NEED reach out to Fr. Innocent or another parishioner. We are here for one another! Be WELL!

The Word of the Cross

By Fr. Thomas Hopko (this is an excerpt from a 4 part series on Ancient Faith Radio titled "The Word of the Cross")



The Cross is the ultimate act and word of God, and we are made in God's image and likeness. Then the Cross is the ultimate word about us, too. It can't be any other way, and that's even a basic axiom of the Christian worldview. Whatever we say about God, we say about us, because we're made in God's image and likeness. In fact, the Church Fathers even defined human life in this way. They say, "What does it mean to be a human being?" They said, "It means to be by grace—kata charin—by God's goodwill—kata evdokia, God's blagovoleniye—God's energies—kat' energian—[power] of God—kata dynamis—that it's to be, by God's grace, power, energy, goodwill, pleasure, everything—ev'-ry-thing—that God is by nature—kat ousian. So we are really called to be divine.

If we are called to be divine, we can skip over a whole bunch of stuff and end by saying: Therefore, we are called to be crucified, because if God ultimately reveals himself in this world on the Cross, that's where we reveal ourselves, too. If God fulfills himself on the Cross, that's where we fulfill ourselves, too. If God is doing the ultimate act that shows his God-ness, his divinity, what he really is and

what he really does, if that takes place on the Cross in the broken body and the spilled blood of Christ, then that's where it has to take place in our life, too. That's why Jesus said—and it's interesting in the gospels, as you know—Jesus, when he first appeared, he did all the signs of the Messiah: He preached to the poor, he forgave the sins, he cast out the demons, he did all the healings: he made the blind see, the lame walk, deaf hear, dumb talk, and so on.

He did all the miracles that he was supposed to do, and then he says, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And only then in the Gospel did Jesus say for the first time that he had to be betrayed, spit upon, mocked, rejected, killed, and would rise again on the third day. Those of you who know the gospels know that Peter said, "Never! That's not the way God acts. That's not the way the Messiah acts. The Messiah's supposed to come in and not get spit upon, mocked, and beaten, but he's supposed to overcome all of that." Jesus, as you know, even calls Peter "Satan" and says, "Get behind me," and so on. Then he goes on the mountain and transfigures in front of them and shows his glory, and then on the mountain even he talks about the crucifixion, the exodus that he will make in Jerusalem with Moses and Elijah. Then again he tells them that he's going to be crucified. And in between Peter's confession and the Transfiguration, you have the famous line that we heard last Sunday in the Gospel. If you went to church last Sunday, you heard it, from Mark's Gospel, where in Mark's version anyway, where he said, "If you will be my disciple, you will take up your cross, and you will follow me."

There's just no way to be the disciple of Jesus without taking up our cross. If he is crucified, we have to be crucified. St. Paul uses that expression: "co-crucified": "We must be co-crucified together with him." Co-crucified. St. Paul loves that term, "co-." In Greek, the prefix "syn." We co-suffer with him. We co-reject with him. We co-die with him. We are co-crucified with him. Then we are co-rising with him. We are co-glorified with him. We are co-reigning with him. But it's all in and with him.

If this is the central act of his life, then it has to be the central act of our life, and there's no way around it. As sometimes my students say, "That's the bad news of the good news." The good news is that God has revealed himself to us, raised us up, forgiven us, ascended into

heaven, glorified us, given us eternal life, forgave every sin; where sin abounds, grace super-abounds, and no rock, nothing ridiculous, no horrible sin is more than the grace of God. God can forgive everything. That's the good news. The "bad news" is—and I put that in quotes, of course; it's only rhetoric—that the way the good news gets enacted is through the Cross—and no other way.

That's what the temptations of Jesus by the devil were about. The devil wanted to get Jesus not to take the Cross, and those were the real temptations of Jesus, not wanting little domestic happiness with Mary Magdalene or something like the movie said. But those were the powerful temptations of Jesus as the Messiah: not to take the Cross. Because who wants that Cross? Nobody wants it, but it's absolutely essential, because there's no life and therefore no happiness, no joy, no peace, no nothing without it. There's just darkness and death without it, but through the darkness and death of the Cross, that's how the life and the victory [come], and no other way. And that's the Word of the Cross.

What I'd like to do today is to try as specifically as we can to apply that to our life. What does it mean to take up the Cross? What does it mean to be co-crucified with Christ? What does it mean to fulfill oneself as a person made in the image and likeness of God, who is love, who fulfills himself—"It is fulfilled"—by hanging, dead, on the Cross? What does that mean?

First of all, the simple essential point, to kind of reduce it to its bare essence, would be to say this: It is to love. Everything is summed up in that one word: love. God is love. That's the shortest definition of God in the Bible: God is love. And God, as love, God being love, is what is revealed in the Cross. The Cross reveals who God is and why we say God is love, and therefore reveals what love is. Now, that's also very important for us today, because not only does everybody talk about God, and any coincidence to the real God is coincidental... Some of those TV preachers, when they say "God," I don't know what god they're talking about, but it ain't the one we contemplate, hanging on the Cross.

So you can say "God," and it can mean anything. Some people say, "Oh, it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe in God." But what God? How God? What does God do? Those are very important questions, the answer of which for us is given in the Cross, and all theology is about the Cross. The Word of the Cross is the

Word about God; the Logos tou Theou is the Logos tou Stavrou. The Word of God is the Word of the Cross. It tells us who God is, but if we say, "God is love," then the Cross tells us what love is, and that's very important, because everybody's a lover.

Who doesn't want to love? Everybody wants to love. You see it on the stop sign: "Make love, not war," "All you need is love." Everyone will tell you they're for love. Dr. Ruth is for love. I mean, who's not for love? Who would be not for love, at least rhetorically? Who would get up and say, "I'm for hate; I'm for death"? No one. But the problem is: What is love? That's the question. If I'm for love, what is love? If I'm for God who is love, who is that God who is love, and therefore what is love? If I find and fulfill myself as in the image and likeness of God who is love... Thomas Merton who was a famous monk said, "To know that we are made in the image and likeness of God who is love is enough knowledge to last us endless eternities." You don't need any more information. That's enough. If you go on a need-to-know basis, that's all you need to know: that we're made in the image and likeness of God, who is love. But what you also need to know is that the love is realized and manifested and actualized and shown for what it is on the wood of the Cross and nowhere else. Ultimately, definitively, absolutely, that's where it's shown what it is.

So if we say, "I want to find and fulfill myself in the image and likeness of God who is love, I've got, then, to do what God does." Now, you can say, "How can I do what God does? Isn't that like saying too much?" And the answer is: no, it's not. Not if you read the Gospel, because the whole Gospel is saying exactly this: We are made in the image and likeness of God, to be and to do what God does. And that's not a teaching of Greek patristics; that's a teaching of the New Testament.

When Jesus Christ said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you," he was talking about the Cross, because how do we love as he has loved? There's only one way: the Cross. But that's a commandment! The command to love one's God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, to love one's neighbor; that's the old commandment. What that means is shown in Christ, and that's why he says, "The new commandment I give you is not just to love one another, and you figure out what love is. No. The new commandment is to love one another as I have loved you. That's the new commandment.