



Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

March 27th , Tone 7, Mk. 8:27-9:1

Sunday of the Cross

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 7

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!

Troparion of Annunciation, Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

Kontakion for the Honorable Cross Tone 2

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of paradise; 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, didst come and cry to those in hell: Enter again into Paradise.

According to the church hymns: "In the middle of the Fast, the all honorable tree calls in worship" all those who "worthily follow through their passion the passion of Christ", who in the first half of the Holy Forty Day Fast have fervently practiced asceticism in fasting and prayers, in repentance and cleansing from all impurities, in acts of love and good works. For those, the holy cross of Christ really serves with the most comfort and strongest encouragement for the continuation of their Lenten efforts, "easing their Lenten time".

But how and for what will they approach the life-giving cross of Christ in the course of the holy days of "the soul-pleasing Forty Day Fast" when they lead the usual sinful, vain, sensual life which, perhaps, even after holy confession and holy communion remain the same as before, with the same passions and with the same insensitivity and hardness of heart? How will they kiss the holy cross when during the holy days of the fast they strayed to the way of vice and yet have not taken the way to true repentance, the real struggle against their passions? How will they touch the pierced side of Christ, who in their heart and during the days the Lenten tenderness did not cease to be the source only of "evil desire, theft, usury, insult, cunning, temptation, shunning, abuse, arrogance, and foolishness"? How will those touch the holy tree, when their impure mouth opened only for idle talk and malicious gossip, for condemnation and slander, for grumbling and indignation? How will they look on the stretched body of Christ hanging on the cross, who with cowardice yielded to any need of the flesh, satisfied all whims, and were afraid to give up for themselves even the excessively fashionable food and clothes? Will they even worship the Crucified One on the cross? But then will their acts of worship be distinct from those genuflections, with which the warriors of Pilate fearlessly greeted the condemned Jesus on the cross? Will they even kiss the wounds of Christ? But would these kisses be better than the kiss of Judas?

So the negligence of people and the very saving suffering of Christ can turn into condemnation, and the word of comfort cross changes to a word of bitter accusations! So from the one cup of the eternal covenant, the Christian, faithful to his name, vigilant about his salvation, or renewed by true repentance, sings of life eternal; but those uncaring about salvation, insensitive to the voice of the grace of God sings eternal condemnation!

But the Holy Church offers the life-giving Cross of Christ also to the careless in hope that the beneficial power of the cross will also touch their heart and will urge them away from the deep sleep of the sinner. "They will respect my son" said the owner of the vineyard, sending his only son to the tenants who were grumbling against him (Mt. 21:37). "They will respect the wounds of the Son of God", as if thus the Holy Church speaks about her prodigal and disobedient children, offering them the sight of the life-giving cross of Christ. She hopes that the sight of the Divine Sufferer will remind the sinners, that as they were baptized into the death of Christ, they promised to serve the Lord instead of the world and the devil, to please God instead of their flesh, to obey the will of God instead of their lusts and passions.

The Holy Church hopes that souls will be found though guilty, but not fallen into the depths of evil, not going towards the edge of hardness, by which a look at the instrument of the suffering of the Son of God will shakes the conscience, will prick the heart, will make the saving change of thoughts and feelings so that they will return from

Announcements and Activities

Presanctified Liturgy— Wednesday, at 6PM. And Friday at 9AM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their lunchtime meal on Wednesday, and after Midnight on the eve of Friday's service. A light lenten supper will be served after the Liturgy on Wednesday. Luci has a sign-up sheet out and you are invited to prepare a lenten meal for after Presanctified. Thank you.

Saturday Great Vespers— on Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Sunday Divine Liturgy— 10AM.

Church School/Adult Ed.— will next meet on Sunday, April .

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is our monthly potluck. Next week's Coffee Hour will be sponsored by Aaron and the youth of the parish. Remember: No Meat, eggs, dairy or things with dairy in them (sour CREAM, MILK chocolate, etc) may be served at coffee hours until Pascha on April 24th (fish may be served at Coffee Hour on Palm Sunday, April 17th.) A blessed lent to all.

The Feast of the Annunciation— Congratulations! Both the Vigil (with Bishop Daniel) and the Divine Liturgy were well attended and beautiful. Thanks to the Choir and to all who decorated and cleaned. Many Years. His Grace said he TRULY enjoyed being with us.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)— battling cancer. Samir's friend, **Johnny**, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight. **Brian**, Sunday's brother. **George and Alex**, health problems. **All those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the current Pandemic**. **Archimandrite Alexander** — Fr. Lawrence's long-time father confessor, who reposed. **Our Vladyka Benjamin**— battling on-set parkinsons. **Tsige Roman and Abraham** — I know we are always mindful of Tsige, but please continue to pray for the work and for Ethiopia, torn by civil war, with all the problems that go with a regional terror. **Reposed Jonathan T. George and Alesis**, Brother and Daughter of Peter and Irene S. **Matushka Ioanna R. reposed. Matushka Priscilla, ill. Anya J**— a longtime friend of the parish who is ill. **Stephen F.**— battling back pain. **John F.**— battling cancer. **Archpriest Anthony**— battling cancer. **Julie**— sister of Kathy M., battling health problems. **Rhoda's requests for Douglas and Kayana. Reposed Constance**— the mother of Andrew F. **Will**— reposed, Michael T.'s brother-in-law. **Reposed Vadim. Christian**— undergoing some medical testing. **Stacy**— hand surgery. The reposed— **Novice Nonna, Robbie**— cancer. **Raphael**, cancer. Child **Aidan**— seizures. Child **Henry. Robbie** the cousin of Brian R., who reposed after a battle with cancer.

the temple as many returned from Golgotha, - "beating their breasts" (Lk. 23:48), and in their life from now on will go by the way of faith, repentance and Christian piety. (See details in "Full Collection of the Sermons of Demetrius, Archbishop of Chersonese, vol. 4, pages 324-326). They, as Ambrose of Milan teaches, should "grieve and cry, however not pushing to despair, because the One who has enlightened the eyes of the man blind from birth (Jn. 9), can make them both zealous and firm in His service if only they want to return with a pure heart. Therefore, let them recognize they are in their blindness and let them run to the Physician who can enlighten them".

(taken from S.V.Bulgakov's *Church Server's Handbook*)

From the Lives of the Saints... THE HOLY MARTYR MATRONA

An orphan, Matrona was a servant in the home of a Jew in Thessalonica. The wife of the Jew continually mocked Matrona for her faith in Christ. She tried to persuade her to deny Christ and attend the synagogue. But the meek Matrona went about her work conscientiously and said nothing to her mistress. In secret she prayed to Christ the Lord. On one occasion the Jewess discovered that Matrona was attending church unbeknownst to her. In anger, she asked her why she did not attend the synagogue rather than the church. To this Matrona replied: "Because God lives in the Christian churches, and He withdraws from the Jewish synagogues." Furious at this bold reply, the Jewess beat Matrona, locked her up in a dark room, and bound her hands. The next day as Matrona was kneeling in prayer and glorifying God, her ropes fell off by the power of God. On two more occasions she was locked up again. In the end she died of starvation. This evil Jewish woman then took the body of the holy maiden and hurled it to the ground from the roof of her home. Christians took the martyr's body and buried it with honor. Bishop Alexander, learning of the many miraculous works of this holy martyr, erected a church over her grave. The evil Jewess received her just punishment: when standing at the same spot from which she had hurled Matrona's body down, she slipped, fell to the pavement, and was smashed to death.

THE VENERABLE JOHN THE CLAIRVOYANT

John was a carpenter until his twenty-fifth year and then, driven by an insatiable desire for constant prayer, he withdrew into the wilderness. There he lived until his death at age ninety. He was a corporeal man but lived as an incorporeal being. He discerned the heart of every person who came to him and knew his name, his desires, and his thoughts. He prophesied the outcome of his battles to Emperor Theodosius. He prophesied for generals, monastics, and for all who found it necessary to know what was hidden for them in the darkness of future days. A prince once begged John to receive his wife, who especially wanted to meet him. The saint refused to satisfy idle curiosity but appeared to the wife of the prince in a dream, showing her his appearance. When the woman described her vision to her husband, he confirmed that, indeed, this was the likeness of the saint. To every visitor, he taught humility as the basis of the virtues, always citing examples from life of t John answered wisely, "I bow down and worship my King, Jesus Christ, everyday. If that were He, He would not demand me to do so now, especially since I already worship Him." Following these words, the evil powers vanished like smoke. He reposed peacefully, kneeling in prayer, in his ninetieth year.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, Compiled and edited by St. Nikolai Velimirovic)

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)