



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

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## Cross Veneration Sunday

### Gospel Reading Marc 8: 34– 9: 1

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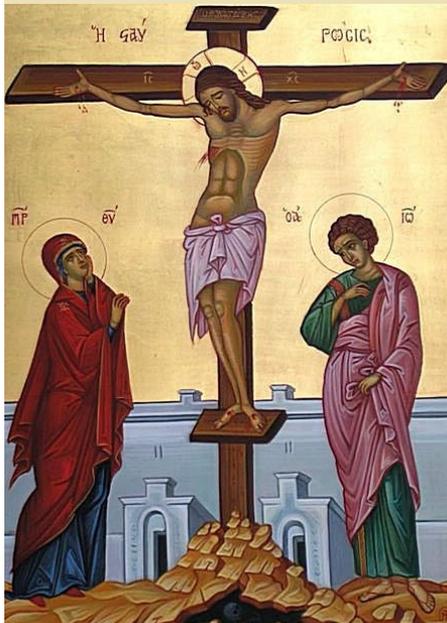
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The Lord called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their

life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'

### Apostle Reading Hebrews 4: 14 – 5: 6

*Brethren,* Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal

gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek.'

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Synaxarion Sunday March 22, 2020 (Cross Veneration Sunday): Holy Martyr Basil, presbyter of Ancyra; Holy Martyr Drosida, daughter of emperor Trajan

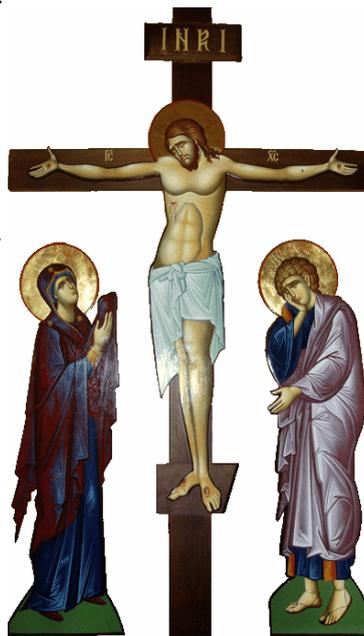
## Homily on Holy Cross Sunday

In today's Gospel the Lord says to us that if we want to be followers of His, disciples, we must take up our crosses and follow Him. And when we think of the Cross of the Lord, we think of His gradual, painful ascent to His Crucifixion, we think of the way of the Cross, of His death. And indeed, the Lord calls us, if we want to be faithful to Him, if we want to be His disciples, to be prepared to walk all the way with Him – all the way.

But on the other hand, we must remember that He does not call us to follow a road which He has not trod Himself. He is a Good Shepherd that walks ahead of His sheep, making sure that all is clear, that dangers have been removed, that they can walk safely in His footsteps. His call to take up our cross and to follow Him is a call, at the same time, to accept to be true disciples of Him, and also to do it in the certainty that He will never ask from us what He has not done or endured Himself. We can follow Him safely; we can follow Him with assurance, but also with a sense of peace in our heart and our mind.

And yet, this following is not devoid of tragedy because to be a disciple of Christ we must, as the reading of the Epistle at our baptism warned us, die with Him in order to be risen with Him. To die means to renounce, in an act of loyalty, of friendship, of solidarity with Him, of respect and veneration for Him, of recognition of the cost to Him for His love of us, to renounce everything which was the cause of His death. We must reflect on everything which is within us which makes us alien to God, unworthy of ourselves, unworthy of His love.

And when we discover, whatever it may be, to set out to reject it out of our lives. It may be things that seem to be easy, or small, it may be things that are very heavy and difficult to reject. But we must not imagine that things which seem to be small things separate us less from God than those things which appear to be great to us. There is a story in the life of one of the ascetics to whom two persons came; the one had committed a grievous sin and the other one recognised only a multitude of little sins. And to make them understand that both matter and could be as destructive of life of the one as the other, he told the first one to go into the field and to find the biggest boulder that was to be found and bring it, and to the other one to collect pebbles, everywhere. The one found easily a boulder and brought it; the other one as



easily found a multitude of little pebbles. And when they came back, he said to them, and now – go, and put them back exactly in the way where you found them. The first that brought the big boulder found it easy to find the place, it was deeply imprinted in the earth, and to place the boulder exactly where it had lain. The other one, after hours, and hours, and hours came back with all the pebbles, because they had been collected at random, and yet, it was impossible to remember where. So is it with our sins: there is nothing which is small, and there is nothing which is great, if – and the 'if' is important – if we do not find a way of putting it aside.

So, let us reflect on this. In the weeks of preparation for Lent, we were confronted in one parable after the other, in one reading after the other with images of sin; the blindness of Bartimeus, the pride of the Pharisee, the rejection of his father – our God! – by the prodigal son; we were confronted with the reading of the judgement in which it was so clearly set out that we are not going to be judged on the faith we professed, but on whether we were human throughout our lives, whether we were simply human, perceptive, cruelly sensitive to the sufferings of other people, and whether we have done for them, our neighbour, all that could be done, whether we have loved our neighbour actively as we wish to be loved actively by our neighbour. And then we were confronted with the days of the end of this period of preparation when week after week it was twilight and darkness that was revealed to us within ourselves by the readings if we only had the honesty to respond to the message of God.

And then we entered into a new period of time; into Lent proper; the period which is called 'the spring' – because this is the meaning of the word 'lent', a time of newness and of renewal, a time when God can, can make old things new if we only allow Him to. And we are confronted with the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the triumph of Orthodoxy when the Church proclaimed that God had become man, that man was so great, so vast, and also so precious to God that He gave His life for Him, a God of sacrificial love, a God who was prepared to live and die for us because He treasures us so much.

And then, the next Sunday, the Sunday of Gregory Palamas – the proclamation of the fact that we are truly called to be partakers of the divine nature according to

the promise and the word of Saint Peter in his Epistle: that God wants to give Himself to us, that divine grace is God Himself pouring Himself into us and giving us a possibility, a chance, if we are only capable of responding to it, of making Him our King, enthrone Him as a Judge and Ruler of our mind, as the One Who rules our heart, the One Whose will is our will, the One Who may cleanse us even in our bodies of all sins spiritual and fleshly.

And now, we are going to see one after the other what the grace of God accepted, heroically received, can make of people: in the person of Saint John of the Ladder, in the person of Saint Mary of Egypt, in the person of every sinner who is been remembered in these weeks, and who by the power, and the grace, and the love of God, but also by his heroic, wholehearted, sincere response proved capable of receiving what God was giving.

And then, we will come to Holy Week; and from the light which has shone as a promise, which had dimly or brightly in the Saints, we will see the blinding light of love Divine incarnate, of what God means when He says that He loves us. And again, it is judgement, because if men, women, children as frail as we are, could respond as the Saints did, what are we going to say to God if we respond in no manner to His own sacrificial, crucified love?

And so, from the twilight of sin revealed to us, to the light which has shone through the Saints and in the Saints, of the Divine grace, we come to the light pure, perfect, revealed in God, and at each stage we are told by God: are you going to respond to this? Is the horror of darkness not sufficient to make you shudder? Is the vision of what can be done not enough to inspire you? Is My Own life and death for your sake not sufficient to move you? We are given one chance after the other to change, to respond: let us do it! Let us make haste to do it! There is a passage in the Great Canon in which it says, Let the hand of Moses covered with leper convince you that God can cleanse your own life which is covered in leper... Yes – if leper could be washed by an act of God, all leprosy which stains us, destroys us in soul, in body, which undermines the purity of our heart, darkens our soul, makes our will unfaithful to our own vocation and to the calling of God, all that can be healed.

And so we can enter into these days with hope, because one sigh of the Publican was enough to make him a child of the Kingdom, to restore him to wholeness. Let us bring at least one sigh from the depth of our heart – and salvation is ours... Glory be to God, Glory be to God in all things... Amen.

**Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

## **HOLY TRINITY'S** Liturgical Schedule from **March 21 to March 29,** **2020**

### **Saturday March 21** **(Soul Saturday):**

9:00 am - Matins

9:30 am - Holy Liturgy

11:00 am - Memorial Service

### **Sunday March 22** **(Cross Sunday, the 3rd** **of the Holy Lent):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

### **Wednesday March 25 -** **Holy Annunciation:**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

### **Friday March 27:**

5:00 pm - Akathist

### **Saturday March 28** **(Soul Saturday):**

9:00 am - Matins

9:30 am - Holy Liturgy

11:00 pm - Memorial Service

### **Sunday March 29** **(St John Climacus Sunday,** **the 4th of the Holy Lent):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

## On The Cross

“The Cross abolished idolatrous adulation, enlightened the whole universe, gathered all the nations into one Church and united them with love. The Cross is the resurrection of the dead. The Cross is the hope of Christians. The Cross is the staff for the lame. The Cross is comfort for the poor. The Cross is the deposing of the proud. The Cross is the hope of those who despair. The Cross is food for the sailors. The Cross is haven for the bestormed. The Cross is the father for orphans. The Cross is comfort for those who mourn. The Cross is the protector of children. The Cross is the glory of men. The Cross is light for those sitting in darkness. The Cross is freedom for slaves, wisdom for the ignorant. The Cross is the preaching of prophets, the fellow-traveler of apostles. The Cross is the chastity of maidens, the joy of priests. The Cross is the foundation of the Church, the establishment of the universe. The Cross is the destruction of idolatrous temples, temptation for Jews. The Cross is the cleansing of the lepers, the rehabilitation of the enfeebled. The Cross is bread for the hungry, a fountain for the thirsty. The Cross is the good hope of monks, clothing for the naked.

“By this holy armor of the Cross Christ the Lord has terminated the omniconsuming bowels of Hades and blocked the many snares in the mouth of the devil. Having seen the Cross, death trembled and released everyone whom she possessed with the first creature. Armed with the Cross, the God-bearing apostles subdued all the power of the enemy and caught all peoples in their dragnets, and gathered them for the worship of the One Crucified.

Clothed in the Cross as in armor, the martyrs of Christ trampled all the plans of torturers and preached with plainness the Divine Cross-bearer. Having taken up the



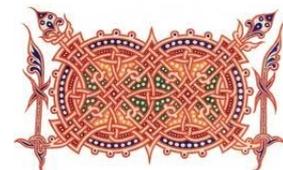
Cross for the sake of Christ, those who renounced everything in the world settled in deserts and on mountains, in caves and became the fasters of the earth.

“But what language is worthy to praise the Cross, this invincible wall of the Orthodox, this victorious armor of the Heavenly King?! By the cross the Almighty One bestowed unspeakable blessings on humanity!”

“Therefore on the forehead, and on the eyes, and on the mouth, and on the breasts let us place the life-giving Cross. Let us arm them with the invincible armor of Christians, with this hope of the faithful, with this gentle light. Let us open paradise with this armor, with this support of the Orthodox faith, with this saving praise of the Church. Nei-

ther in one hour, nor in one instant, let us not forget the Cross, nor let us begin to do anything without it. But let us sleep, let us arise, let us work, let us eat, let us drink, let us go on our way, let us sail on the seas, let us go across the river, let us adorn all our members with the life-giving Cross. And let us not be frightened ‘by the terror of the night, nor by the arrow that flies by day, nor by anything roaming in darkness, nor by any calamity, nor any noonday demon’ (Ps. 90:5, 6). If, O Christian, you will always take up the Cross of Christ on yourself as a help, then ‘evil shall not come towards you, nor any scourge come near your habitation’: for the opposition power seeing it trembles and leaves.”

**Saint Ephraim the Syrian**



## Sermon on the Annunciation

Our present gathering in honor of the Most Holy Virgin inspires me, brethren, to offer her a word of praise, of benefit also for those who have come to this holy celebration. It is a praise of women, a glorification of their gender, which (glory) she brings to it, she who is both Mother and Virgin at the same time.

O desired and wondrous gathering! O nature, celebrate that whereby honor is rendered to woman! Rejoice, O human race, that in which the Virgin is glorified. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" [Romans 5:20]. The Holy Mother of God and Virgin Mary has gathered us here. She is the pure treasure of virginity, the intended paradise of the Second Adam, the place where the union of natures (divine and human) was accomplished, and the Counsel of salvific reconciliation was affirmed.

Who has ever seen, who has ever heard, that the Limitless God would dwell within a womb? He Whom the Heavens cannot circumscribe is not limited by the womb of a Virgin! He Who is born of woman is not just God and He is not just Man. He Who is born has made woman the gateway of salvation. Where evil poured forth its poison, bringing on disobedience, there the Word made a living temple for Himself, bringing obedience there. From the place where the archsinner Cain sprang forth, there Christ the Redeemer of the human race was born without seed. The Lover of Mankind did not disdain to be born of woman, since She gave Him life (in His human nature). He was not subject to impurity by being in the womb which He Himself arrayed free from all harm. If this Mother had not remained a Virgin, then the Child born of her might be a mere



man, and the birth would not be miraculous in any way.

Since she remained a Virgin after giving birth, then how is He Who is born not God? It is an inexplicable mystery, for He Who passed through locked doors without hindrance was born in an inexplicable manner. Thomas cried out, "My Lord, and my God!" [John 20:28], thus confessing the union of two natures in Him.

The Apostle Paul says that Christ is "to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness" [1 Corinthians 1:23]; they did not perceive the power of the

mystery, since it was incomprehensible to their minds, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" [1 Corinthians 2:8]. If the Word had not settled within the womb, then the flesh would not have ascended onto the Divine Throne with Him. If it were disdainful for God to enter the womb which He created, then the angels also would have disdained service to mankind.

He, Who in His (divine) nature was not subject to sufferings, through His love for us subjected Himself to many sufferings. We believe that Christ was not made God by some gradual ascent toward the divine nature, but being God, He was made Man through His mercy. We do not say, "a man was made God," but we confess that God was incarnate and made Man. He Who, in His essence did not have a mother chose His servant as Mother, and He Who appeared on earth in the image of man does not have an earthly father. How is He both without a father and without a mother, according to the words of the Apostle [Hebrews 7:3]? If He is only a man, then He cannot be without a mother, but actually He had a Mother. If He is only God, then

He cannot be without a Father, but He has the Father. Yet as God the Creator, He has no mother, and as Man, He has no father.

We can be persuaded of this by the very name of the Archangel who spoke to Mary: his name is Gabriel. What does this name mean? It means “man of God.” Since He Whom Gabriel announced is God and Man, then his very name points to this miracle beforehand, so that this act of divine dispensation is accepted with faith. It would be impossible for a mere man to save people, for every man has need of the Savior, “for all have sinned,” says Saint Paul, “and come short of the Glory of God” [Romans 3:23]. Since sin subjects the sinner to the power of the devil, and the devil subjects him to death, then our condition became extremely desparate: there was no way to be delivered from death. Physicians were sent—i.e. the prophets—but they could only point out the malady more clearly. What did they do? When they saw that the illness was beyond human skill, they summoned the Physician from Heaven. One of them said, “Lord, bow Thy heavens, and come down” [Psalm 143/144:5]; others cried out, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed” [Jeremiah 17:14]; “Turn us, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be delivered” [Psalm 79/80:3].... Still others said, “But will God truly dwell with man upon the earth?” [3/1 Kings 8:27]; “Let Thy tender mercies go before us, O Lord, for we are greatly impoverished” [Psalm 78/79:8]....

He, Who by nature is Lord, did not disdain human nature enslaved by the sinister power of the devil. The merciful God would not allow it to be under the power of the devil forever, the Ever-Existing One came and gave His Blood in ransom. To redeem the race of man from death He gave up His Body, which He had accepted from the Virgin. He delivered the world from the curse of the law, annihilating death by His death. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,” says Saint Paul [Galatians 3:13].

Know then that our Redeemer is not simply a mere man, since the whole human race was enslaved to sin. But neither is He just God, Who does not partake of human nature. He had a body, for if He had not clothed Himself in me, then neither would He have saved me. But, having settled in the womb of the Virgin, He clothed Himself in my fate, and within this womb He effected a miraculous change: He bestowed the Spirit and received a body.

And so, Who is made manifest to us? The Prophet David shows you by these words: “Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord” [Psalm 117/118:26]. But tell us even more clearly, O prophet, Who is He? The Lord is

the God of Hosts, says the prophet: “God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself unto us” [Psalm 117/118:27]. “The Word was made flesh” [John 1:14]: there the two natures were united, and the union remained without mingling.

He came to save, but had also to suffer. What has the one in common with the other? A mere man cannot save; and God cannot suffer in His nature. By what means was the one and the other done? He, Emmanuel, being God, was made also Man. He saved by that which He was (God), and He suffered as that which He became (Man)....

He alone is both in the bosom of the Father and in the womb of the Virgin; He alone is in the arms of His Mother and rides on the wings of the winds [Psalm 103/104:3]. He, before Whom the angels bow down in worship, also reclined at table with publicans. The Seraphim dared not gaze upon Him, yet Pilate pronounced sentence upon Him. He Who the servant smote is also the One before Whom all creation trembles. He was nailed to the Cross, and ascended to the Throne of Glory. He was placed in the tomb, and He stretched out the heavens like a curtain [Psalm 103/104:2]. He was numbered among the dead, and He emptied Hell. Here on earth, they cursed Him as a transgressor; there in Heaven, they glorified Him as the All-Holy.

What an incomprehensible mystery! I see the miracles, and I confess that He is God. I see the sufferings, and I cannot deny that He is Man. Emmanuel opened the doors of nature as man, and as God He preserved the seal of virginity intact. He emerged from the womb at birth the same way He entered through the Annunciation. Wondrously was He both conceived and born: He entered without passion, and He emerged without impairment. As the Prophet Ezekiel says concerning this, “He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary that looks eastward: and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no one shall pass through it; for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it, and it shall be shut” [Ezekiel 44:1-2]. Here the Holy Virgin and Mother of God is clearly indicated. Let all contention cease, and let the Holy Scripture enlighten our reason, so that we too may receive the Heavenly Kingdom unto all eternity. Amen.

**Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople**  
(AD 434 - 447)