



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



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CHURCH BULLETIN

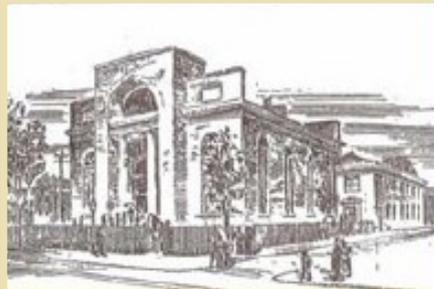
Vol. 14 No. 37 * Sunday September 12, 2021 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

Sunday before the Elevation of the Holy Cross

Gospel Reading John 3: 13 - 17

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have

eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."



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Apostle Reading Galatians 6: 11 - 18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of

our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.



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Synaxarion. Sunday September 12, 2021 (The Sunday before the Elevation of the Holy Cross): Holy Hieromartyrs Autonomus, Macedonius and Theodoulos. Tuesday September 14 – The Elevation of the Holy Cross

Born Again as a New Creation

It is amazing how blind we can all be at times to truths that are staring us in the face. For whatever reason, we sometimes simply do not grasp even the most obvious points.

That is how Nicodemus, a Pharisee and expert in the Old Testament law, responded to Jesus Christ's teaching that we must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Though Nicodemus thought that the Lord spoke of a second physical birth, Christ was speaking of a new life in Him, a spiritual rebirth through water (meaning baptism) and the Holy Spirit whereby we participate personally in the eternal life of God. Nicodemus was shocked because he thought of religion in terms of obeying laws, not in terms of becoming a new creation.

So the Savior gave Nicodemus a practical example from the Old Testament. Moses once lifted up a bronze serpent on a rod to cure the Israelites from poisonous snake bites. Through this act by Moses, the giver of the law, the Jewish people were spared from death on a particular day. But when Jesus Christ is lifted up on the cross, He makes it possible for those who believe in Him to be born into eternal life, to become a new creation in Him. For our Lord is not merely a prophet or the giver of the law, He is the One Who came down from heaven, the only-begotten Son of the Father. Purely out of love for us, He went to the cross, not to condemn us, but to make it possible for us to be born again in the joy and blessing of life eternal.

This was too much for Nicodemus to understand; he had probably never heard such things in his life. But by the end of the gospel of John, we read that Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare the Lord's body for burial after His crucifixion. He became Saint Nicodemus and gave his own life for Christ, following Him in the way of the cross as a martyr.

Why would Nicodemus have done that? He had a respectable position among his own people as a Pharisee. But perhaps he sensed in Jesus Christ something completely new and for which he longed deep in his soul. In this unconventional Messiah, he found an unexpected God Who took the condemnation of the law upon Himself. He found a Father Who would offer His own Son to death out of love for those who are condemned



by the law. He found a Lord Who would be slaughtered as the Passover Lamb and rise in glory for our salvation.

Like Nicodemus, the Apostle Paul was a Pharisee who changed completely, ultimately becoming an unparalleled evangelist and missionary and the author of so much of the New Testament. In Christ Jesus, St. Paul experienced what he called "a new creation." For our Lord is the new Adam in which all that has gone wrong with human beings and the world since the fall of our first parents has been set right. He has taken the condemnation of the old Adam - of sin, death, and corruption - upon Himself with His cross. He has brought us all up from the pit of hades to the heights of heaven in His glorious resurrection and ascension.

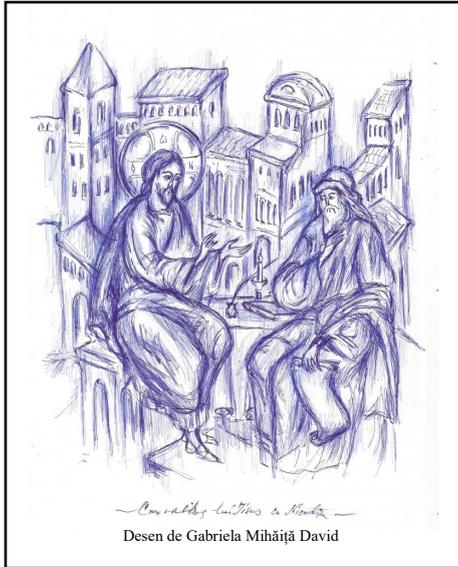
A legal code cannot do that, but the God-Man Jesus Christ can and did. So Paul learned, as had Nicodemus, to boast in nothing except the cross of Christ; in other words, the unfathomable love of the Father Who gave His only-begotten Son, the great Mystery of the Eternal Word of God who became a Passover Lamb, became the basis of a new life for these former Pharisees, a new life that was worth dying for as martyrs.

Even as we speak today of being born again into a new life and becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ, we remember the birth of His Holy Mother the Theotokos to Sts. Joachim and Anna. Think about that for a moment. We cannot tell the story of God's salvation becoming present in the world without mentioning particular people who offered themselves as agents of the new creation, as instruments of His new life. This is not a faith about a book or a set of laws that falls from the sky; instead, our faith is about true personal participation in the life of One Who shares and fulfills our existence in this world as we know it. Yes, to be our Savior as the God-Man, the Son of God had to have a mother and grandparents like the rest of us.

Joachim and Anna were a righteous, childless, and old couple, like Abraham and Sarah. God worked through these particular people and the miraculous conception of their daughter to bring the eternal life of Christ into the world. Perhaps laws and ideas can simply be taught or written down in general, but God's salvation is personal and must be embodied in the lives of unique human beings. The Holy Trinity prepared for the incarnation of the Son through so many generations of the Hebrew people, culminating with a particular couple who in old age miraculously give birth to the one holy, pure, and obedient

young woman who in turn brought Christ into the world through her own maternal love.

This narrative is the unfolding of a new creation that cannot be reduced to a set of rules or abstractions. It is not about general ideas of any kind. It is, instead, a particular and personal story that cannot be told without reference to matters as intimate as marriage, conception, and pregnancy; it involves men, women, the young, and the old; and its fulfillment extends from the Virgin's womb to the Cross and empty tomb. The shocking good news is that Jesus Christ calls each of us as powerfully and personally as Joachim and Anna were called to become the parents of the Theotokos. He calls us all to new life in Him, to share in the new creation of His salvation, as the distinct and unrepeatable people that we are in His image and likeness.



So it is not enough simply to know the words of John 3:16, as spoken to Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life." As participants in the new creation, you and I must actually live out this new life that Christ has brought to the world in our daily challenges with all the quirks, peculiarities, and weaknesses that each of us possesses. Every bit of who we are must become the stuff of the new creation, must be shine with the light of the new birth in our Lord.

The same sacrificial, humble, forgiving love that is our salvation must become evident in our lives, must become characteristic of who we are as real living and breathing people. For to live as one born again through Christ is not merely to have a feeling or experience a one-time event; instead, it is the full-blown personal reality of sharing in His life, of participating in His salvation, of living as His faithful disciples each day in response to whatever challenges come our way. It is the joy of being part of a new creation, the New Adam, the Body of Christ. It is the blessing of life everlasting, of the salvation of God, which the cross of Christ has brought into the world.

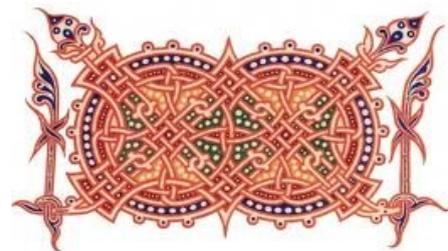
Of course, if this new life were about being perfect in the sense of never falling short, none of us would know anything about it because we all have room to grow in holiness. None of us fully manifests the righteousness of Christ; remember, however, that He came to save and

heal, not to judge and condemn by a legal standard. So whatever progress we make in the Christian life is ultimately a sign of His mercy and blessing. When we hold our tongues when we are tempted to curse and condemn, when we struggle mightily to turn our attention away from unholy thoughts of any kind, when we pray for those who irritate us, and when we feebly turn our attention to God in prayer and at least make it to Liturgy with some regularity, we take small and real steps in opening our lives more fully to a deeper personal relationship with our Savior. We embrace at least a bit His new life and become more fully His new creation by His grace.

Judge you or me by a legal standard alone, and there will be no hope for us because we all fall short. But in the mercy of the God Who worked through Joachim, Anna, Nicodemus, and Paul to bring salvation to the world, we have great hope as those born again in Jesus Christ. He did not come to bring a new set of laws, but to fulfill the old ones as the Person in Whom we are all able to participate in eternal life and to become a new creation. If you have not figured it out, that is what we pray for in every service and hopefully every day of our lives. So just as the Theotokos and Her parents and all the Saints have played their unique roles in the salvation of the world, let us do the same with trust that, in ways that we cannot possibly know, this is all part of bringing the new creation in Jesus Christ to its fulfillment. As hard as it may be to believe, the story of God's salvation of the world continues each day through you and me.

Fr. Philip LeMasters

(Source: <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/>)



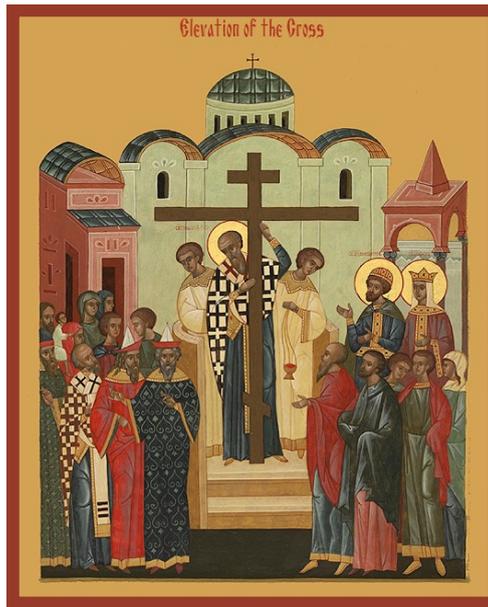
Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Cross

From the very dawn of history, when man was created thousands of years ago, we note man's restlessness in trying to solve the mystery of life and the supreme purpose of living. Accordingly, the search went on throughout all the stages of history, and that probably accounts for the great progress and the scientific discoveries man has achieved. But with all the great and stupendous achievements of men, the search for more knowledge goes on day and night. There is no satisfaction insofar as man's restless spirit is concerned. We feel that there are still great regions to be explored, fields unclaimed, resources untapped. We are surrounded by mysteries and question marks. We are ever asking questions because the desire to know more is unquenchable.

There isn't any harm in asking questions, in trying to explore life's great possibilities, for each of us wishes to better himself, to fulfill his destiny and the purpose of which he is created. Not only is there no harm in searching out for more knowledge, but to do so is commendable and praiseworthy.

The 14th of September is designated by the Church as the day upon which the Elevation of the Cross should be observed. Since the cross of Christ is the central theme of our holy religion, having important redeeming implications, we want to confront the reader with questions having to do with Jesus' atonement in His death for humanity. The first question is, "Was it necessary for Jesus to die for us?" Well, it was urgently necessary because of God's love for humanity to redeem us from the ravishes, the guilt and degradation of sin. It was, as Paul has it, that "God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Sin, yours and mine, and the rest of people have made it necessary for Him to come to our rescue, to cleanse us from the stains of sin, to present us to God as redeemed sons and daughters.

That this is the central message of Christianity and the sum of the Apostles' teachings is discoverable by the casual reader of the New Testament. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," said the Apostle Paul. St. John affirms, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The theme of the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation is, "Christ died for our sins, rose again for our justification." The whole concept of the Mass is to instill and to nourish us with the idea of Christ's sacrifice for humanity. Sunday after Sunday, the priest celebrates



Mass and uses the very words Jesus used on the night that He instituted the Lord's Supper. "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it, this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."

In the Book of Revelation, John tells of a vision he had in heaven about the book of life, sealed with seven seals. "Who is worthy to open the book?" an angel with a strong voice shouted. John says he wept when it appeared that no one in heaven or on earth could loose the seven seals. But he was told not to weep, that Christ could do it. Christ then opens the book, while a chorus of angels sings. "Thou

art worthy to open the seals for thou wast slain." It took pierced hands to break the seals and make known the glad tidings that sin and death need not spell defeat. Pierced hands, sacrificial self-giving it always takes this kind of power to lift man above sin and death.

What is the significance of Jesus' death? The only answer, "He died that we might live, for God so loved the world!" The Christian theology is based upon this stupendous fact. There is a Negro Spiritual which asks a very searching question, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" We all were there, everyone - for He died for humanity as a whole as He died for each person singly.

Let us ask ourselves the question, what does the cross mean to me? When it is mentioned, do we think only of the first Good Friday and the hill outside Jerusalem? Is it no more than a historical fact that happened nineteen centuries ago? Unless we see it as a principle of everyday life, a way of living, of voluntary self-giving, we miss its practical meaning for us. The cross is not laid on my shoulder by another, or by accident. It is not imposed from without, but voluntarily assumed from within. It is going the second mile, doing more than conditions require. That impossible person at your place of work, grimly endured, is not your cross, Only when you meet his insults with, "Father forgive him," do you become a cross-bearer. The monotony of housekeeping is not your cross. You take it upon yourself only when you do your work gladly, as unto God and your family. The Bible, containing the great ideals of Christianity, would be only another book unless we Christian people embody its teachings and interpret it by living lives which conform to the Divine will of God. It does not help any of us to boast of our heritage, the beauty of our services and their primacy.

It does help us to search ourselves, and make an honest endeavor to live worthily, to ride above the temptations which we encounter on the highways and by-ways of life. Christ died unto sin once so that He might live unto God. Life is the opportunity God invested and entrusted us with in order to give Him the primacy, the first place in our hearts. The days, months and years are slipping by fast, bringing us nearer to the time of our departure, our flight from this world, when we take our leave of absence from this world and our spirits migrate to the place prepared for us by the Master. Therefore, we must face facts about the kind of conduct we are manifesting to the world. Our character and conduct result from either sound or phony faith. Professional or ceremonial belief in Christ could not stand the test. Sound living, victorious faith, and appreciation of the Master's death in our behalf will enable us to live above the world, the flesh and the devil.

The early Christians minced no words in telling us that, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Either a day of judgment or a day of joy will be awaiting us when we shall stand before the Judge of all the earth. It will be, according to Jesus, either a resurrection of life or a resurrection of damnation.

What should be our response to Jesus' sacrificial love? Our response would be reflected in our attitude toward life, and toward all human beings as a whole. If our attitude toward people is one of honest sympathy, understanding and love, if we live sacrificially, giving of our time and means toward the elevation of humanity, living lives that have for their purpose putting God first, and the affairs of His Kingdom are given the pre-eminence, then it may be truthfully said that we know whom we have believed, we have a clear vision of the Man upon the cross.

The early Christians went through the Roman world telling people about a man who had been crucified and who rose from the dead. It was an arresting item of news. At first the listener would be shocked, but as the story unfolded and its meaning became clear, new hope and joy lighted up his face, for he found in this old story of the Galilean Peasant nailed to a cross a satisfying view of life. It turned a flood light on the mystery of human existence; it revealed the secret of living triumphantly over the things that get people down; it satisfied the age-old hunger for life beyond the grave.

The striking thing about this good news was that the road to life unending led by way of the cross. By giving your life you find life. By answering evil with good, hate with love, the world's worst with your best, you rise with Christ from the dead! You and He were as One!

Fr. Michael Baroudy
(Source: www.antiochian.org)

HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from September 12 to September 19, 2021

Sunday September 12 (Sunday before the Holy Cross):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Tuesday September 14 – Elevation of the Holy Cross (fasting day):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Sunday September 19 (Sunday after Holy Cross):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

