



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

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Sunday after the Elevation of the Holy Cross

Gospel Reading Mark 8: 34 - 9:1

The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?

For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Apostle Reading Galatians 2: 16 - 20

Brethren, you know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin?

Certainly not! But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.



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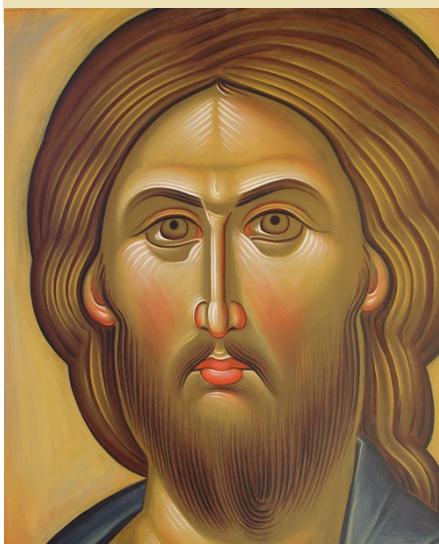
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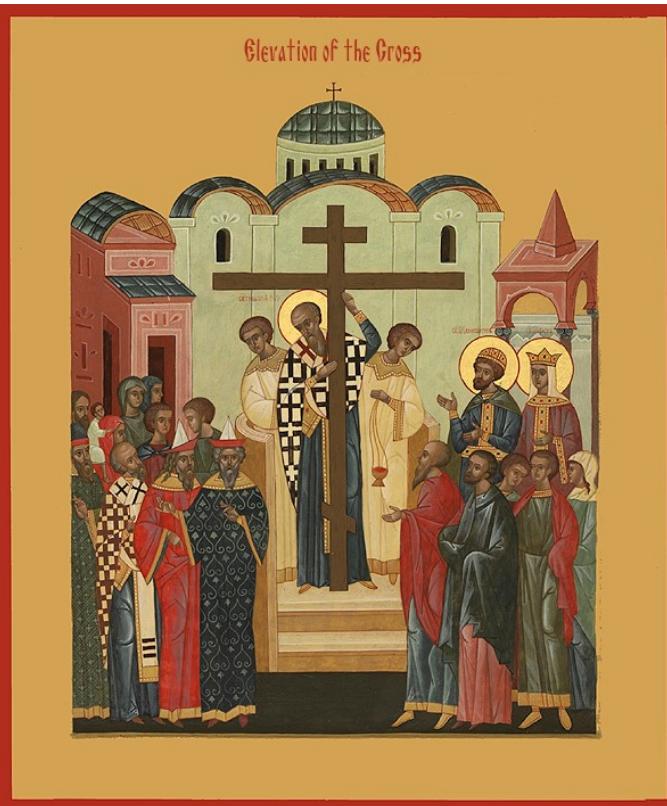
Synaxarion. Sunday September 19, 2021 –
Sunday after the Elevation of the Holy Cross:
Holy Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius an Dorymedon

Orthodox Homily on Denial of Self

Brothers and sisters, as we celebrate today the leave-taking of the Great Feast of the Cross, we're once again confronted with the paradox of our salvation: the instrument of Christ's death has become the means of His victory over sin and death. The cross is, in the theology of the Church, "the trophy invincible, the weapon of peace because by it we gain eternal peace. In this way, the instrument of Roman torture and violence, laid upon Christ, has become the all-powerful symbol and witness of the healing from sin and the downfall of death. But on this Sunday, in particular, we go beyond recognizing what Christ has accomplished for the universe and consider what He has accomplished for us and how we're responding to His call. So, we ask ourselves, "What does the power of the cross mean for me today, personally?"

Sadly, for many in today's humanistic and secular world, the meaning of the cross, both personally and corporately, is lost. The secular and humanistic world-view thinks in temporal and material terms (mankind is able to improve and save himself). Without opening themselves up to God, they cannot experience the love of God, let alone His healing, forgiveness, deification. The secular world-view goes something like this: all that I experience in the here and now is the extent of my existence as a material being, so, "eat, drink, for tomorrow, we die" (I Cor. 15:32). In other words, the core of such nihilistic thinking is a selfish, dying focus on self.

Even we as Christians can be affected by the humanism and secularism around us. We may be tempted to pursue the temporary pursuits, 'comforts,' and entertainment of the world that are always beckoning us to focus anywhere but on Christ. We may buy into the thinking that the answer to our problems is more money, more financial security; that the answer to our busyness and stress is to



focus more on ourselves and our own self-pleasure. Christ God's words today challenge us to the core: He asks, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

While the world urges us to focus on ourselves, the cross is always a reminder of selflessness and of the greatest of love — Christ's willing, voluntary gift of Himself,

His self-sacrifice for the salvation of the world; it's the supreme example of God's love. You and I become truly human, what God has fashioned us to be as God-glorying beings in communion with Him, when we, likewise, come outside ourselves, our own

narrow focus, to prioritize and grow in our life in Christ, to give of ourselves, and love like God loves.

For this reason, Christ speaks to us today, admonishing us that "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." It's in dying to our own selfish wants, ego, and passions that our lives take on real purpose and we are made fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ knows that if we put self, i.e., ego, first we become what we 'eat' — we're swallowed up by our passions, by the world around us. In contrast, the Christian comes outside himself to love and serve God and in learning to live in the light of His truth, he overcomes the passions, step by struggling step, to become the glorified and adopted children of God He's created us to be.

The calling to prioritize the life in Christ, to come outside of ourselves to love and to serve and give, to take up our 'cross' by denying ourselves the pursuit of what the world runs after, may seem like just such nonsense from a worldly perspective; it runs counter to so much of what

the world says we should be about. Indeed, St. Paul reminds us the Sunday prior to the Feast that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, even as it is the power of God to those who are being saved (I Cor. 1:18). In other words, what Christ God is sharing with us today is indeed life-saving, because only by following His way are you and I able to follow Christ, find healing from our passions, and become fellow victors with Christ over sin and death.

To the world, self-denial, even true love itself, is alien because in a humanistic and secular world love is seen as something apart from God, Who is the Author of love, and Who, in turn, teaches us how to love. Without Him we can't truly know love, how to love: "We love Him because He first loved us," St. John declares in his first Epistle (I Jn. 1:9). And this Love directs us to the cross, the ultimate sign of God's love and condescension for us, manifested in the Incarnation and in His saving Passion. True love is then both sacrificial and holy because it further unites us with God and with each other as we learn to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ, not only outwardly in our acts, but inwardly as we're transformed into 'little Christs,' becoming what He is and partaking of the Divine Nature (II Peter 1:4). When Christ stands at the center of our lives, our priorities, He's at the center of our love too because there stands the cross.

In the Festal Matins for the Exaltation we sing: "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons."

The cross then is the power of God because we see in it Christ's victory over the greatest obstacle: sin and death. What Christ has assumed, He's healed, proclaims St. Athanasius. Christ has put on death, but being Life itself, its Creator, He's won the victory and risen again. That same victory He gives to all who are willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. St. John Maximovic writes these meaningful words: "The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world, and it was then filled with life-giving power...The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, for by the Cross the kingdom of hell was destroyed."

The cross is the power of God because signing ourselves with the cross, we come to 'own' Christ's victory

for ourselves: we proclaim Christ's victory inwardly and outwardly, we guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus from the demons and their vices, we learn to "take every thought captive to obey Christ," we witness to those around us the truth that His victory is for all mankind because all are loved by God and called to holiness and new life through communion with Him. As St. John says, "The Cross then will save from eternal perdition all who conquered temptations by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed their Christ."

Hence the paradox: in order to share in Christ's victory, we humble ourselves to become not just Christ-like but what Christ is. In order to gain the victory, we die to ego and the world, and to all secular demands that we keep the cross hidden to ourselves. If we put on the cross outwardly and inwardly, we're equipped to take hold of, to 'own,' the new life, the new identity we gain in Christ, growing in courageous humility, with the knowledge of the truth of who we are in Christ. May we proudly, yet humbly proclaim Christ's victory on the cross and never be ashamed of Christ even as the world around us sees us as fools for not pursuing the same temporal passions.

So, we come back to Christ's question: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" This world and everything in it is passing away, but those who actively deny themselves, taking up their cross and following Christ will gain the victory, they will transcend this world and become fellow heirs of Christ's eternal Kingdom. Today, with St. Paul, we're empowered to reprioritize our lives, to say and live out these words: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Rev. Fr. Robert Miclean



Who I Am & What I Own

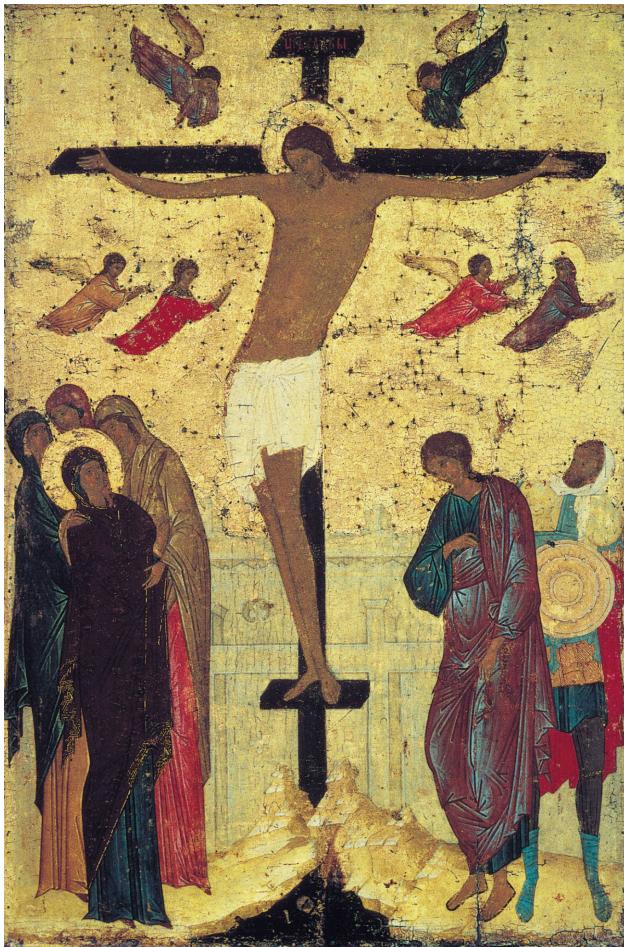
In this Gospel passage the word soul is repeated many times. At one moment, we hear Jesus asking us to lose our soul, and another time to save it. We need to be careful to discern two meanings that the word "soul" carries in this passage. In order to clarify the meanings and His intentions, the Lord Jesus speaks about the same meaning in different places explaining his words and commands. It is clear that in every place, the Lord speaks about the two opposing meanings of the soul.

First, the soul that we need to deny and lose, the one that is ashamed of Him. Second, the soul that we need to save by carrying the Cross, and is more precious than the whole world, and cannot be ransomed, and the one that witnesses and is remembered in His Father's glory.

The first meaning of the soul, in which Jesus asks us to lose it, deals with caring for ourselves, amassing wealth and fulfilling the passions of the soul, and the like, that we look to care for ourselves, forgetting about Jesus and others. It is clear that the soul which Jesus asks us to save is our self and true life, of which the whole world will not be worthy. So we have to discern between that which is for our soul and that which is our soul.

Many philosophies give a different interpretation of existence. One says, "I think therefore I am..." And the philosophy of our age , the consumer philosophy says I own therefore I am. I have good health, therefore I am, because sickness is something from nonexistence. Do I have money? Then I am powerful and I exist, because poverty is forgetfulness and nonexistence.

Do I have children? Then I can continue my existence. Do I have a social position? Than I exist.



To win the world, I have to run after supplying myself with these essentials for life. Today's man fights nonexistence by owning. He feels secure by having health, glory and great storage rooms. Existence is life, and securing the soul means assuring its existence. This consumer philosophy was mentioned in the Gospel, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years" (Luke 12:19). The Lord named this philosophy as a foolish one.

The Gospel is clear in saying that the soul is not fulfilled by fulfilling its desires, and that our self is different from our belongings. "I am" is different from "I have."

"I have" is an assurance for man's life who seeks to care for and save his soul even if this was at the expense of "who I am." In this way, he runs to win

the world thinking that by owning the world, he will secure his life. He sells his soul as a ransom and becomes ashamed of the Lord's words and the faith to gain a position or money or to own more.

"Who am I" is the philosophy of the man who loves Jesus and knows that He is the "Son" and not a merchant. He is the inheritor and not the worker. "Who Am I" is the philosophy and the faith of the Christian who denies any position, selfish interest or the whole world to win his soul and not lose his identity.

The father who sends his son to work at an early age has sold his sons and gained much money, but he lost himself as "being a father."

The mother who sells her daughter to gain something from the world, has lost herself "being a mother." There is the politician who buys and sells on the expense of his principles. Such a person gains things for himself but loses himself. The Ambassador who goes to a foreign land to buy and sell as if he was one of those foreigners,

and builds houses on a land which he will forsake has gained for himself only to find he has lost his true self.

Man is who he is and not what he has.

The second meaning of the soul: "Who Am I." This is the philosophy of the Christian who believes in the wisdom of the serpents, as St. John Chrysostom explains. This wisdom is not that the serpent is always careful and tries to defend itself very vigorously. The wisdom of the serpent is that it knows where its life is exactly. When it is attacked, it gives all its body, but hides its head.

The Christian is like a wise merchant sailing on troubled waters. Whenever the storm is hard, he needs to throw out all his cargo in order to survive with the ship.

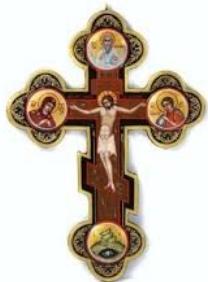
What benefits man if he carries all the goods of the world and loses his life. What does it benefit a man if he secures everything for his life and loses his soul?

The Gospel clarifies exactly that I exist not when I own or when I think, but when I carry the Cross and deny what is mine. I deny even a material gain if the latter makes me ashamed of Christ. I exist when I follow Christ.

"I am who follows Jesus." This is the only life assurance I have when I am a witness of and faithful to Him, when I am His Ambassador. For me the world is a place for preaching and not for commercializing. The assurance of my life is the Cross and not the deviousways of the world. And my identity and soul cannot be ransomed by anything earthly.

Whoever wants to save his life "through what he has" shall lose it, and whoever loses what he has for Christ and the Gospel shall save it. Amen.

Metropolitan Paul Yazigi



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from **September 19 to September 26, 2021**

Sunday September 19 - Sunday after the Elevation of the Holy Cross:

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
1:00 pm - Fall Festival

Sunday September 26 (18th Sunday after Pente- cost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:30 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour



How Much Is Your Life Worth?

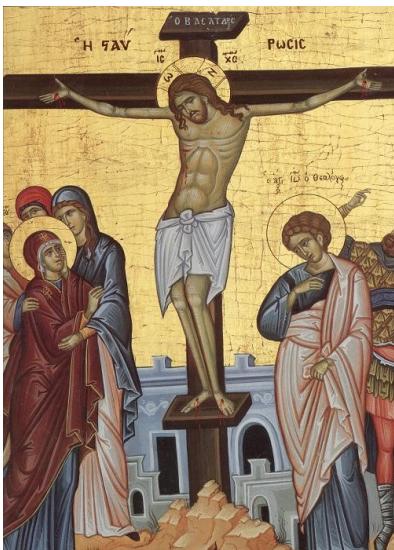
The Gospel lesson for the Sunday following the Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Cross adds the personal dimension to our understanding of what it means to call ourselves Christians. The Gospel lesson for the Sunday *before* the Feast of the Cross (taken from St. John, 3:13-17) spoke of what God, in the person of Jesus Christ, was doing for us through His sacrifice on the Cross. This Sunday's Gospel lesson found in St. Mark (8:34-9:1) speaks to how we should respond to God's great act of love.

The passage opens with an invitation. The Lord says: "If any want to become my followers ..." (v. 34). Even when we hear what it will mean to "become a follower," we shouldn't lose sight of this first important point: the Lord is *inviting* us. He doesn't command. He doesn't threaten. He asks. He says, "if."

The rest of the verse is where we find out what it means to follow Christ. It is a real challenge and often difficult to hear. The Lord tells us that if a person decides to accept His invitation, "... let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Usually we run through the verse quickly, treating it all as a single statement, but it actually contains three separate actions. Let's take a look each, one at a time.

What does it mean to "deny" oneself? The Lord does not mean to simply refrain from doing something that we would like to do — although this is certainly part of it. Jesus is talking about looking at ourselves in the same way we would look at another person who we do not know at all. He is asking us to give ourselves the same sort of critique and spiritual scrutiny that we might give a perfect stranger as we look at them from a distance. The original Greek word that we translate as "deny" is actually much stronger. It has a meaning closer to "renounce" oneself than "deny."

We need to develop a certain distance from ourselves if we want to grow spiritually. For example, often we can clearly discern the issue or problem that another person is facing, while it remains unapparent to them. This is true on both the physical and spiritual planes. When a parent wants to help their child get the best education



possible, they will select the tutor who will push the child to his or her limits. We know that a physical therapist can push someone with an injury beyond what they thought they were capable of. Only someone with distance and spiritual insight can push you to recognize and confront such things. We need to regulate and train ourselves like a drill sergeant would. This is what the Lord means when he says we must deny ourselves.

The second is to take up our cross. We commonly describe some genuine difficulty or tragedy as our "cross," and properly so, because it is certainly a burden that we carry. However, here the Lord is talking about the cross that leads to death. In the passage just before this Jesus was talking to His disciples about His impending.

Crucifixion, but they didn't understand him. They wanted Him to save His own life. By speaking of the cross here He is explaining to His followers what the price of discipleship is. We must be prepared to die for the Gospel. We must be prepared to die to ourselves — to our passions, our self-interest, and our will. Sometimes this will also mean our very life itself.

Finally, we are told to follow him. Even if we deny ourselves to the point of death, this alone will not "save our lives" if we do not follow Christ. Many misguided and perhaps evil people have lost themselves to a cause, even to the point of death. The self-denial and acceptance of one's cross, without following the ultimate truth can lead to destruction. In our own day we have been afflicted with countless "suicide" terrorists who cause pain, suffering and death to innocent people, all the while considering themselves "martyrs." It is by following Christ, by learning from His example, that self-denial and the burden of the Cross find true meaning, become life-giving.

The Lord tells us to put our lives in proper and true perspective, and then to choose correctly. "What will it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their life [soul]? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" (v. 36-37) Our Lord invites us to walk the path of life; but ultimately, it remains our choice.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola