



Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church
THE WEEKLY CHURCH BULLETIN

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SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

Κυριακή 22η Μαρτίου 2020

Γ' ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΝΗΣΤΕΙΩΝ - ΣΤΑΥΡΟΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΗΣΕΩΣ

Αποστ: Εβραίουσ 4:14-16; 5:1-6

Ευαγγ: Μαρκουσ 8:34-38; 9:1

3rd Sunday of Lent – Veneration of the Cross

Today's Readings

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

3rd Sunday of Great Lent - Veneration of the Holy Cross

On the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent, the Holy Orthodox Church commemorates the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the Divine Services we include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares us for the Crucifixion during Holy Week. In addition, we are also reminded that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ.

As we have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24), and will have struggled during these days of the Fast, the precious and life-giving Cross is now placed before us to refresh our souls and to continue to encourage us on the remainder of the journey. The Cross reminds us of the Passion of our Lord, and by presenting to us His example, it encourages us to follow Him in struggle and sacrifice, being refreshed, assured, and comforted. In other words, we must experience what the Lord experienced during His Passion - being humiliated in a shameful manner. The Cross teaches us that through pain and suffering we will see the fulfillment of our hopes: the heavenly inheritance and eternal glory.

In these days that we walk on what seems like long and hard days and we may be bowed down by fatigue, we find great relief and strengthening under the cool shade of a leafy tree, so do we find comfort, refreshment, and rejuvenation under the Life-giving Cross, which the Holy Church Fathers "planted" on this Sunday. This Sunday is to fortify our efforts and enable us to continue our Lenten journey with a light step, rested and encouraged.

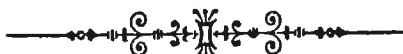
This special commemoration also, as in the case before the arrival of the king, his royal standards, trophies, and emblems of victory come in procession and then the king himself appears in a triumphant parade, jubilant and rejoicing in his victory and filling those under him with joy, so does the Feast of the Cross precede the coming of our King, Jesus Christ. It announces to us that He is about to proclaim His victory over death and appear to us in the glory

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of the Resurrection. His Life-Giving Cross is His royal scepter, and by venerating it we are filled with joy, rendering Him glory. Therefore, we become ready to welcome our King, who shall manifestly triumph over the powers of darkness.

Moreover, as the Holy Cross is called the Tree of Life, it is placed in the middle of the Fast, as the ancient tree of life was placed in the middle of the garden of Eden. By this, our Holy Church Fathers wished to remind us that through this Tree has condemnation been abolished. Therefore, if we bind ourselves to the Holy Cross, we shall never encounter death, but shall inherit life eternal.



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Γ΄ ΝΗΣΤΕΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΠΡΟΣΚΗΝΗΣΕΩΣ

«Ὅστις θέλει οπίσω μου ακολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω εαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι» (Μάρκου, κεφ. η' στίχος 34).

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας προσκαλεῖ σήμερα νὰ προσκυνήσουμε τὸν Τίμιον καὶ ζωοποιὸ Σταυρὸ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὁ Σταυρὸς μας θυμίζει τὸ πάθος τοῦ Κυρίου, ἀπ' ὅπου παίρνουμε θάρρος καὶ δύναμη νὰ συνεχίσουμε τὸν αγώνα, ὥστε μέσα μας νὰ ζωντανέψει ἡ ἐλπίδα τῆς Ἀναστάσεως. Ὅπως ὁ Κύριος, ἔτσι καὶ εμεῖς, ἀπὸ τὸν πόνο καὶ τὴ θλίψη τοῦ Σταυροῦ φτάνουμε στὴ χαρὰ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως. Τὸ σημερινὸ Ευαγγέλιο εἶναι τὸ ἴδιο ποῦ διαβάσαμε καὶ τὴν Κυριακὴ μετὰ ἀπὸ τὴ γιορτὴ τῆς Ὑψώσεως τοῦ Τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ.

Ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς καλεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους νὰ τὸν ἀκολουθήσουν, λέγει: «ὅστις θέλει...». Δηλαδή δε βιάζει καὶ δὲν ἐξαναγκάζει κανένα. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος δημιουργήθηκε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ ἐλεύθερος. Αὐτὸ ὅμως θὰ πει ὅτι πρέπει με τὴ θέληση τοῦ νὰ ἀκολουθήσει τὸν ὀρθὸ δρόμο γιὰ νὰ πραγματοποιήσει τὸ θεῖο προορισμὸ τοῦ πάνω στὴ γῆ. Ὁ Χριστὸς καλεῖ τὸν καθένα μας ἀπὸ τὴν πιο μικρὴ τοῦ ηλικία νὰ σηκώσει τὸ σταυρὸ τοῦ. Τί θὰ πει ὅμως σταυρὸς; Ὁ σταυρὸς εἶναι τὸ μοναδικὸ ὑπόδειγμα τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς θυσίας τοῦ Κυρίου γιὰ μας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Ὁ παντοκράτορας Κύριος μας προσφέρει πάντα τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ στον κόσμον καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Τέτοια ἀγάπη πρέπει νὰ προσφέρουμε καὶ εμεῖς στους ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους. Πολλές φορές ἴσως χρειαστεῖ νὰ δώσουμε καὶ αὐτὴ τὴ ζωὴ μας γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὸ καλὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων. Εἰδὼ ἡ ἀγάπη συνδέεται με τὴ θυσία. Εἶναι αὐτὸ ποῦ βλέπουμε στὴν ἀγάπη τῆς μητέρας γιὰ τὸ παιδί. Ἡ μητέρα προσφέρει ὀλόκληρη τὴ ζωὴ τῆς γιὰ τὸ καλὸ καὶ τὴν προκοπὴ τοῦ παιδιοῦ. Δὲν υπολογίζει καμιὰ θυσία καὶ κανένα κίνδυνον. Ἡ μητέρα εἶναι τὸ ὑπόδειγμα τῆς θυσίας γιὰ τὸ παιδί τῆς. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς μας καλεῖ με τὴν πέμπτη ἐντολὴ νὰ σεβόμαστε καὶ νὰ ἀγαπάμε τοὺς γονεῖς μας, ποῦ με τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὴ στοργὴ μας φανερώνουν τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Γιὰ νὰ ἀγαπάς ὅμως τοὺς ἄλλους, πρέπει νὰ παραμερίζεις τὸν ἐγωισμὸ σου. Ἡ ἀμαρτία αὐτὸ τὸ κακὸ μας κάνει. Σπάζει τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ στὴ θέση τῆς βάζει τὸν ἐγωισμὸ. Ὁ ἐγωιστὴς προσπαθεῖ με κάθε τρόπο νὰ ἐνδιαφέρεται καὶ νὰ φροντίζει μόνο τὸν εαυτὸ τοῦ. Αὐτὸν τὸν ἐγωισμὸ πρέπει ὁποσδήποτε νὰ τὸν ἀπαρνηθούμε. Μας τὸ λέγει ὁ Κύριος στὸ σημερινὸ Ευαγγέλιο. Ἡ ἀπάρνηση τοῦ ἐγωισμοῦ εἶναι ὁ μεγαλύτερος σταυρὸς, ποῦ ἔχουμε νὰ σηκώσουμε στὴ ζωὴ μας.

Ἡ θυσία τοῦ ἐγωισμοῦ εἶναι ἀρκετὰ δύσκολη. Ὅμως εἶναι ὁ μοναδικὸς δρόμος γιὰ νὰ βρούμε τὴν ἀληθινὴ καὶ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Αὐτὸ μας βεβαιώνει ὁ Κύριος στὴν συνέχεια τῆς σημερινῆς περικοπῆς μας. Γιὰ νὰ κερδίσουμε, λέγει, τὴν ἀληθινὴ ζωὴ, πρέπει νὰ θυσιάσουμε πολλὰ πράγματα ἀπὸ τὸν εαυτὸ μας καὶ νὰ δίνουμε συνεχῶς τὴν ἀγάπη μας στὸ Θεὸ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους. Ἀν ὅμως ἀρνηθούμε κάτι τέτοιο, τότε δε θὰ ωφεληθούμε σε τίποτε. Μπορεῖ νὰ κερδίσουμε ὀλόκληρον τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλά θὰ ἔχουμε ἀρνηθεῖ τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὴ θυσία. Δηλαδή τὸν ἴδιο τὸ Θεὸ, ποῦ μας χαρίζει τὴν ἀληθινὴ ζωὴ καὶ τὰ πάντα.