

THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT – THE CROSS

In today's gospel lection, taken from Mark 8:34, Jesus says: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." According to accepted English dictionaries, "deny" means to refuse, reject, repudiate and/or to declare something untrue. If we limit ourselves to these definitions, we do an injustice to the deeper meaning of Christian self-denial. For a clearer picture of what Jesus means, we must return to the original Greek text. The Greek is "aparnisastho" and it has the meaning of renunciation and absolute rejection of whatever is incongruous with Jesus' planned salvation for us.

There are those of us who have a narrow and limited understanding of self-denial. We pick and choose at random what we will give up and what we will do in the name of Christianity. We proceed to label them "Our little crosses we must bear." "I'll give up movies and/or TV during lent." Thus we conclude with a list of trivialities that have no bearing on the "self-denial" Jesus speaks about in our gospel lesson for today. Christ-like self-denial goes much deeper. It penetrates the facade which hides our hidden sins, our shortcomings and our faults.

Utter denial does not mean depriving ourselves of the necessities of life, nor does it mean we must become paupers and live in rags. Neither does it mean we must lose our individuality, personality and identity. When Jesus speaks of total and utter denial of self, He means we must subordinate our clamoring ego that prohibits us from being the Children of God we were intended to be. Good intentions are not enough. This is why Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Take up your cross and follow me" means to get started on our journey to salvation. If the road we are on does not have God's Eternal Kingdom as its destination, then we had better make a U-turn and find the right one!

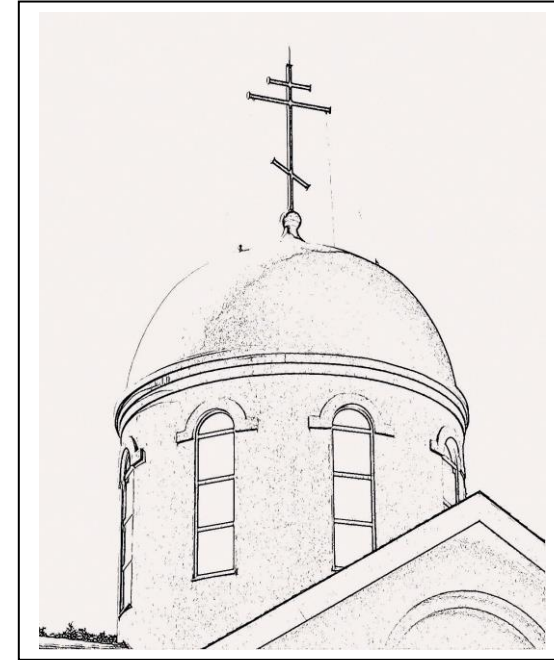
"Taking up our cross and following Jesus" means trying harder when those moments of calamity, tragedy, sorrow and loss and grief beset us. It means bringing under control our uncontrollable anger, our undue insensitivity, our impatience and impetuosity. It means subduing our temperament and disposition so that we can master them rather than their mastering us.

St. John Chrysostom, a fourth century Patriarch of Constantinople describes the Cross this way: "The Cross is the proof of the love of God. The Cross is the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the Kingdom of virtue. The Cross has torn asunder our mortgage and rendered useless the prison of death. The Cross has opened Paradise, it has admitted the thief and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God."

Jesus extends His invitation to us once again to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him." Our Church gives us this Third Sunday of Lent--Mid-point to Golgotha--to pause with Jesus, to refresh ourselves spiritually, to assess our Lenten journey and to continue with greater determination. But the initiative is still ours. There is no way into spring but that we endure the rigors of winter. There is no way we can arrive to Easter Sunday if we do not live the agonies of all our Good Fridays. There is no way we can achieve eternal life with God unless we deny ourselves utterly and totally in Christ. This we do when we endure and sustain our own personal crosses and follow Him.

Rev. George Nicozisin

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

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!

Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America

360 Van Zile Road, Brick, New Jersey 08724

Phone: (732) 458-9032

Email: gjbretton@gmail.com

Fax: (732) 295-0007

Website: www.occa-brick.org

Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Sergius Kuharsky, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Alexander Smida, *Attached Priest*

Tara Paxton, *Senior Warden*

Matthew Hascha, *Choir Director*

March 31, 2019
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
Veneration of the Cross

Tone 3. Repose of St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to the Americas (1879). St. Hypatius the Wonderworker, Bishop of Gangra (ca. 336). Repose of St. Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia (1461). Ven. Hypatius the Healer, of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—14th c.). Ven. Apollonius, Ascetic, of Egypt (4th c.). Hieromartyr Abdas, Bishop of Persia, and Martyr Benjamin the Deacon (418-424). Ven. Hypatius, Abbot of Rufinus in Chalcedon (ca. 446). Appearance of the “IVERON” (IBERIAN) Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos.

Today’s Readings:

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today @ 9:00am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Today @ 4:00pm Deanery Mission Vespers @ South River

Wednesday @ 7:00pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Friday @ 7:00pm Akathist to the Most-precious Cross

Saturday @ 7:00pm Great Vespers & General Confession

Sunday @ 9:00am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Sunday @ 4:00pm Deanery Mission Vespers @ Perth Amboy

Next Sunday’s Readings:

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 and Ephesians 5:9-19

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31 and Matthew 4:25-5:12



*The Holy Precious
and Life-giving
Cross*

Special Prayers

We pray for **all** our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted. Among them are: **Betty James, Olga Kornafel, Deryl Tczap, Reader John Economou, Paul Hanas, Meni Mari, Tom Collins, Tom Kopec, Alan Diaz, Cathy Diaz, Brian Price, Ann Marie Gahr, Dennis Gahr, Ron Madensky, Dorothy Studier, Helen Ciurczak, Pauline Barnowsky, Elba Cinciarelli, and Catherine Ratushnuk.**

We are happy that you have joined us for worship today and hope that you will join us for coffee hour after the service. Please note that **reception of the Holy Eucharist** is only for baptized members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared with prayer, fasting, and periodic confession. You are encouraged to receive the blessed bread that is **offered at the end of the service and which may also be offered to you by one of your neighbors during Communion.**

Annunciations

TODAY – **Church School** will be held today after the Divine Liturgy. Please allow the church school children, their teachers and parents to venerate the Cross first (after the clergy) after the Divine Liturgy.

TODAY – We will continue with an **Adult Education session** in the parish hall. This will take place immediately after Coffee Hour, so everyone is invited to attend. The topic of the current sessions is: **Psalms – the Prayers of the Church.**

TODAY - Plant Sale order forms are available in the narthex for this year’s sale to benefit the parish Church School. Larisa and Reanna Paxton will collect any remaining orders today. The **deadline** for ordering has been **extended to next Sunday.**

THIS WEDNESDAY – We celebrate the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** at 7:00pm. If you plan to **receive the Eucharist** at this service, please prepare by **fasting to the best of your ability.** If possible, eat and drink nothing from midnight. At the very least, try to abstain from eating and drinking after lunchtime. As it is whenever we receive the Eucharist, we should contemplate that it is **the very Body and Blood of Christ** that we are receiving. Please prepare with this firmly in mind.

THIS WEDNESDAY – After the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, a **pot-luck agape meal** will be held in the parish hall. All are invited to attend and bring along a dish to share.

Many thanks to all who helped out last week with the festal celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation.

Dessert Rolls of several varieties are available now for purchase (not consumption, since they are not Lenten.) Each roll is priced at \$14. Please see Cathy Berger or Olga Pasick to make your purchases.

We continue the **Lenten discipline of fasting** from meat and dairy until the Great Feast of Holy Pascha. If you have questions about the Lenten discipline, please contact Father Gary during the week.

Save the Date – Easter Bazaar
Saturday, April 13
Ss. Peter & Paul Church, South River, NJ

MANY YEARS

Birthdays this week:

Wednesday – Alexander Hascha

Coffee Hour Teams:

Today – TEAM E (Bass, Petrides)

Next Sunday – TEAM A (Pasick, Stavrou)

OUTREACH

- **Food Pantry donations** are *always* accepted. Place non-perishable food items in blue bin in the narthex
- **Clothing donations** are accepted on the last Sunday of each month. Place donations next to the food pantry bin.