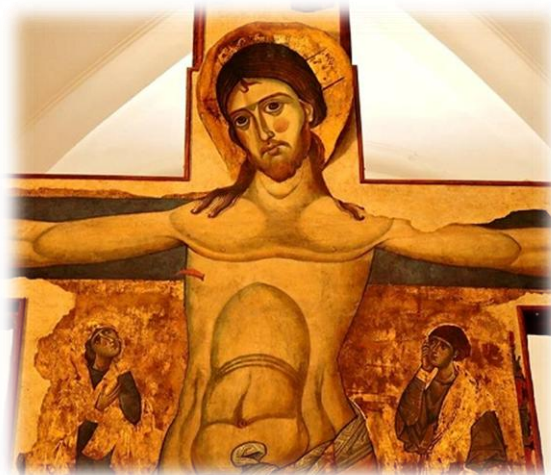


Sunday of the Cross - Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

The cross is the place where the suffering of the innocents changes in holiness. It is the place where no power has access. It is the shut door to the abuser. It is the verticality of love, the place where the clean consciousness of the innocents remains unharmed. It is the place where any loss mirrors its own resurrection.

The place of forgiveness and the place where love hurts. The place where the fear of God is revealed to all. The place that is resistant to the sinners, the place where sinners are repenting.



At times, at the mission, the beauty of the cross is all that we can rely on. It is the love which is harmed, and which can heal even the unbelievers. It is magnified in the life of the people we know, it is witnessed in the church for them as the gate of heaven. We do not hide by the cross of Christ, but we face it even though it burns us. The cross is not the promise of the kingdom to come but the reality of love that can touch and embrace today. It is the place where heaven and earth kiss each other. It is the honesty of the church when it welcomes the poor. It is the place where no human sorrow is left untouched, where the silence becomes unbearable, where the prayer becomes the voice of the human heart. It is the place where we are no longer resistant to love where the sorrow of One Man becomes the joy of the many.

There is no God as our God, the God who is doing wonders.

We follow Christ today and His cross because we want to see and touch the holiness of the innocents, because we have seen and touched their suffering. We want to behold the love that heals any impurity and the touch that restores the forgiveness within our soul.

We are all touched by the verticality of love. We all see the love that sees through us and embraces any human being. This is what gives us hope to walk with Christ because we know He does not reject from the cross even the worst sinner.

And yet, if love is patient and kind, why are those who received it angered and restless? If love endures all, why then can it not be accepted by the heart that gives nothing in return? If love is kind, why then does it receive in return despise, rejection and betrayal? If love bears all things, why then can it not be nurtured by the heart who lacks tears? If love is the only part of our existence that lasts forever, why then is it taken captive in the tomb by the heart that dies?

“...you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property .” (Sat epistle: Heb 10-32-28)

Love associates the human heart with the lowly; that is why it is despised by those who do not learn humility. Love can be met with rejection, betrayal and go into the tomb because it breaks through every human particularity of sin. It calls the sinners to repentance. But as it touches every sinner's heart, so it brings together those who love Christ with their own heart and with their own soul. The solitude of the cross does not leave the innocent alone but welcomed them within the communion of the saints.

Today we walk with Christ to the cross because we want to see and touch the holiness of those who are dying today without a cause. The cross is beautiful to us and the only place where the community can gather. The doubt is within the poverty of our own cross. Being stripped on the cross, we'll find no innocence in us but rather the same shame that afflicted us when we left paradise in the first place. Even so, we trust that Christ will cover our nakedness with His love. We know that even on the cross we might not find love for our brother or sister. But we trust in the Son of Man that He will cover us all with His mercy and with His pain, with the love that never dies.

Once in a blue moon versus regular confession.

During Great Lent we are given the opportunity to go to confession every week.

The more we go to confession the more we feel the need to confess, with this growing sense of our sin and the need for mercy.

To really see our real sins that we need to confess, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The fathers say that to be able to see our sins is greater grace than to be able to raise the dead. On our own we are blind to our sins. Regular reception of the sacrament of Confession opens our hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit draws us closer to Christ by helping us repent of our sins.

Sin is always personal; it is part of our personal history. In the sacrament of confession, we receive the grace to repent in the unique way in which we have turned away from God. The two children in the parable of the Merciful Father had two different paths of repentance.

The best way to learn to confess is by beginning to go to confession, God will do the rest in our hearts.

pRoberto

*“I do not force, I do not compel, but I make each one lord of his own choice ...**For to good things do I call you, not to things evil or burdensome; not to punishment or vengeance, that I should have to compel.**” (St John Chrysostom)*

March 20 - 26

Tuesday	8:30 am	Morning Prayer	Wednesday	4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Vespers Presanctified Liturgy
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 6:30 pm	Orthros Presanctified Liturgy
Saturday	7:00 am 8:00am	Orthros Divine Liturgy	Sunday	7:00 am 8:30 am	Orthros Divine Liturgy



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, March 19, 2023

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