

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

Today we see the Precious Cross of Christ placed before us; let us venerate it in joy as we bow before it; and let us beseech the Lord who was crucified on it, that He may grant us the grace to contemplate his holy and Glorious Resurrection.

Matins, Hymn of Light

REFLECTION ON THE THIRD SUNDAY

Today, as I gaze upon the Cross, I see it first of all as an instrument of Christ's humiliation; of his rejection, even by his closest friends; of pain and suffering caused by these as well as the physical suffering He endured; and of his eventual death.

My thoughts race back to those times in my life when I, too, felt humiliated and rejected. I know I did not always accept these crosses and often asked that they be removed. I am aware more and more of the pain and suffering in my own life and in the lives of people around me. Am I more ready to accept these crosses as a part of sharing in the mystery of the Passion of Christ?

But wait, there is more. This is only half of the Paschal mystery. I am called to venerate the Cross in joy, to go beyond the mystery of Christ's passion to the mystery of the Resurrection. Through the Cross, Jesus became a forgiving victim revealing a God who is self-giving. Compassionate and loving. Jesus died on the Cross to transform all humankind and me.

After his death on the Cross, Jesus arose, not only alive, but also changed. He revealed a different way of living, a way of transformation. What then does this mean for me?

People feel unhappy and they don't know why. They feel that something is wrong, but they can't put their finger on what. They feel uneasy in the world, confused and frustrated, alienated and estranged, and they can't explain it. They have everything and yet they want more. And when they get it, they are still left empty and dissatisfied. They want happiness and peace, and nothing seems to bring it. They want fulfillment, and it never seems to come. Everything is fine, and yet everything is wrong. In America this is almost a national disease. It is covered over by frantic activity and endless running around. It is buried in activities and events. It is drowned out by television programs and games. But when the movement stops and the dial is turned off and everything is quiet ... then the dread sets in, and the meaninglessness of it all, and the boredom, and the fear. Why is this so? Because, the Church tells us, we are really not at home. We are in exile. We are alienated and estranged from our true country. We are not with God our Father in the land of the living. We are spiritually sick. And some of us are already dead.

Our hearts are made for God, St. Augustine has said, and we will be forever restless until we rest in Him. Our lives are made for God, and we will be unfulfilled and dissatisfied and frustrated until we go to Him. All of God's creatures, as Francis Thompson said in his poem *The Hound of Heaven*, are His "loyal betrayers." They do not satisfy His children and cannot bring them peace. He alone can do that, because **He alone is our home**. And we are His.

The lenten season is the time for our conscious return to our true home. It is the time set aside for us to come to ourselves and to get up and go to the divine reality to which we truly belong.

Everywhere I turn, I see a world where war and violence lurk around every corner; where so many people no longer respect life, especially that of the unborn and the elderly; where there is less and less concern about the environment and preserving it for future generations. I see a society that is more interested in personal gain and winning regardless of the cost and youth too often ready

To give up or give in to what they perceive as hopeless situations.

The mystery of the Cross redefines the human element. It is about being the victory instead of just winning. It is refusing to hate or humiliate others. It is the way to nonviolence.

I cannot transform the world or even a small segment of society. However, I can begin to transform myself, or rather to allow Christ to work his transformation through me. Jesus asks that we follow Him on the journey to transformation. Not just to preach Jesus, but to become Jesus. I am not sure how this can be done. All I can do is get out of the way and let the mystery of the Cross transform me.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON THE THIRD SUNDAY

*How do I look upon the Cross- as a mystery of the Passion or of the Resurrection?

*Am I ready to let Jesus transform me?

*What can I do to bring about change in my own life?

~ Fr. Thomas Hopko ~

THE FOURTH MONDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

On this day let us bow before the Cross and all say joyfully: Rejoice, new tree of life. Rejoice, scepter of Christ our King. Rejoice, heavenly glory of humankind. Rejoice, strength of our faith. Rejoice, invincible trophy. Rejoice, vanquisher of the enemy. Rejoice, radiance of brightness. Rejoice, glory of martyrs. Rejoice, strength of the just and holy ones. Rejoice, splendor of angels. Rejoice, holy Cross of the Lord.

Vespers at Psalm 140

REFLECTION ON THE FOURTH MONDAY

This week our Liturgy places the Holy Cross of our Lord in the center of our churches to bring focus and dominate, as it were, our movement through this Holy Season of the Great Fast. Without this focal point, our Lenten journey may become disoriented; we may find ourselves straying from our spiritual goal. This week gives us an opportunity to set our sights on the distinguishing symbol of our salvation—assuredly our ultimate eternal goal.

The Cross is the means of our redemption and the unfathomable mystery of God’s unique love. On the Cross, man and God meet. Sinfulness and holiness are brought together. Life and death are fastened to it. Hope and despair hang in the balance. Sorrow and joy, suffering and happiness, love and hate—each meet at the Cross.

Christ’s salvific death on the Cross that gives us everlasting life remains one of the impenetrable mysteries of faith. We will never completely grasp God’s plan involving us in this very mystery. Our eternal destiny depends upon the Cross.

All of us have contributed to the tragedy of the crucifixion

ion, to the suffering and death of Jesus by our own personal sinfulness. Yet, through the Cross, Christ has gained for us new life without pain, sorrow or sadness.

In the Cross, we are also given partnership with Him as we carry our own burden of trail, need or personal anguish. When St Paul wrote to the Galatians, he told them (and us): “I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ in me!” (Galatians 2:20) The Cross keeps the value of suffering in focus for us; the Cross gives meaning to the place of penance in today’s sophisticated and dissipated world.

To stand under Jesus’ Cross is a soul-shaking experience because we are vividly reminded of our own responsibility for moral failure and offences against the holiness of God. We cannot skirt around the Cross casually because the Person on it has brought us forgiveness and hope. Behind its agony shines a promise: a victory won and a future assured. There is peace at the Cross which nobody will be able to disturb or remove from us. Through the Cross, heaven has been opened again to us. The Cross lifts us up into the arms of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*When I place myself at the feet of Christ crucified, am I awestruck by His sacrifice? Overwhelmed by a sense of personal sin?

*Am I grateful for this act of merciful love? Am I amazed at how He turned a seeming act full of despair into eternal victory over sin and death, the source of all our hope?

PRE-ORDER PASCHAL BREADS

Deadline to order: March 23

Paschal Breads:

Golden Raisin- \$12

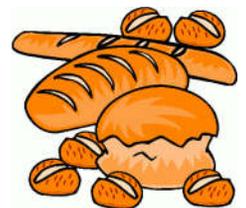
Plain - \$11

How to order? Order sheet in Church basement OR Call or by text Greg Mazur @ 419-341-1200/.

Lenten Breads: (\$7 each)

Black Russian Rye

Potato Garlic



MARCH CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAY		NAME DAY
3- Tony Monastra	27- Hermenigil	3-1: Bishop David of Alaska
7- Tamera Blackford	30- Bobbie Royhab	3-4: Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa
8- Rachel Adamcio	30- Fred Cassell	3-17: Archbishop Alejo of Mexico
11- Jason Monschein	31- Greg Mazur	3-23: Archbishop Nikon of New England
23- Mason Monschein	31- Ruthe Flewelling	

If there are those names to be added or removed, please contact Fr. Andrew. He would like to list all members of your family Orthodox and non-Orthodox.