

Adult Religious Studies—A walk through Holy Week— Following Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, in the Presidents Room; ending Wednesday, April 5th with “The Passion of the Christ” movie. These classes are looking to understand the scriptures that are read on the days of Holy Week and to understand the meaning of each day. Bring your bibles, questions and also, bring a friend.

Mommy and Me will be meeting **Friday, March 31st at 10:30 a.m.** Pascha Lesson and Craft. For questions, please contact Stephane Collopy at sacollopy@gmail.com

St. Andrews has Graves for Sale @ Elmwood Cemetery, Section 3B and @ Memorial Park at the Cypress Gardens. Please call the church for additional information, if you are interested (773) 334-4515.

Note to Parents: Please do not allow your children to color with crayons on the pews. Thank you!

Please join us for our **Saturday of Lazarus retreat on April 8th, 2017!** Parents with Children of all ages are welcome to attend and will learn about Holy Week while making Lazarakis, Palm Crosses, for Palm Sunday, and a special Holy Week craft. The fun will begin immediately following Divine Liturgy and will wrap up around 2:30pm. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Eleni426@aol.com or cynthiapearl@msn.com.

Holy Friday, April 14th, we are doing our annual **Feed My Starving Children** outreach program. If you would like to donate, please contact Father Athanasios at: frathanasios@standreworthodox.org



Philoptochos will be passing the 2nd tray for Holy Cross / Hellenic College; please be generous supporting this important institution which teaches and guides our ministry on this third Sunday of Lent, Tou Stavrou, Sunday of Holy Cross. Thank you very much.

Sunday, April 9th, Palm Sunday Bake Sale: Please plan to bake a few more sweets when you're baking for Easter Bring to church to support our annual Bake Sale so everyone can enjoy! Tsoureki bread orders will be taken at the Philoptochos table. Please sign up if you are able to bake: koulouri, moustakoulouria, Lenten melomoukarno, galaktoboureko, diples, or kourambeithes. Once again, Mrs. Alexopoulos will have her quince for sale . Please bring your baked goods (please, a use pastry cups) to church on Saturday, April 8th, so we can begin packaging!

Upcoming Philoptochos Meetings:

Tuesday, March 21st, 6:30 pm President's Room

Tuesday, April 25th, 6:30 pm President's Room

Thursday, May 18th, 6:30 pm, President's Room: Elections for new board members and officers.

Only members in good standing, who have attended 4 meetings and have paid their dues are eligible to vote!

Welcome to Saint Andrew's Greek Orthodox Church
"Proclaiming Orthodoxy Since 1926"



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Fr. John N. Kalomas – Proistamenos
Fr. John Kutulas – In Loving Memory
Fr. Athanasios Minetos

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2017 (Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross)

STEWARDSHIP QUOTE— As A Good Steward Of God's Church, What Does It Mean For One To "Take Up One's Cross And Follow Me?" It Means The Willing Acceptance, At The Hand Of Providence, Of Every Means Of Healing, Better Though It May Be, That Is Offered. Sometimes We Just Give Until It Hurts, And Then We Give Even More. Our Lord Did This. Why Should We Be Any Different.

Altar Steward— Alexandra White in memory of Christopher Saathoff.

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***FOR NON-ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS:** We welcome those Christians not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions of Christianity that we cannot extend to you a general invitation to receive Holy Communion. Orthodox Christians believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist and for which we must all pray. We do however invite you to receive the blessed bread that is given out to all at the end of service.*
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Veneration Of The Precious And Life-Giving Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today brings us to the third Sunday of the Great and Holy Fast, or, as the Church refers to this Sunday, the Sunday of the Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.

The Church gives us the cross at this point, the halfway point, of the fast to inspire us. The cross is given to show us the direction in which we are headed; that we are headed to the crucifixion of our Lord and His Holy Resurrection. This should be where we are headed with our own lives; the crucifixion of our self-will that allows us to perform God's will, which allows our lives to be resurrected to the life that God intended for us.

The cross is also provided to sweeten the fast because by this time in the fast we start to feel the bitterness of fasting. This bitterness is experienced through our denial of the body through food and the denial of our will by not doing what we want to do. The cross is like the wood that Moses plunged into the bitter waters of Marah to sweeten them to make them drinkable (Exodus 15:23-25). Through seeing the cross, we are comforted that there is the joy of Pascha ahead of us, and the fast becomes a little easier.

In today's Gospel, we hear our Lord say: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This verse from the Gospel starts with a decision that each of us must make with the words, "Whosoever will come after me." This decision is an action of our free will. Saint John Chrysostom illustrates the words of the Lord with the following: "I do not force, I do not compel, but each one I make lord of his own choice."

The question we have to ask ourselves when we look at this verse is, "What type of choice is the Lord asking us to make?" Saint John Chrysostom states that this must be a choice for good things, otherwise the Lord would compel us to make this choice. Saint John goes on to say that this choice does not eliminate hardship from our lives with the following: "To hinder you from having any trial at all those hardships, yet such is not for My will for your sake, that you may yourself contribute something, and be more approved." In other words, the hardships that we endure in this life as followers of Christ are the work that we must perform of our own free will for the building up of the Gospel and the Church in order to receive the blessings of God.

The next phrase of this verse is, "Let him deny himself." What is this denial of self? There are two types of denial of self. The first type of denial is the denial of self that Adam experienced. For the sake of sin, Adam denied that God created him to live in harmony with Him. Not only did Adam use his will contrary to the will of God, but he clung to a lie.

The lie was that he was not responsible for his actions (Genesis 3:12).

When we examine our lives for confession, we should find the same denial of what God created us to be. We should see how we have exerted our will over God's will, as well as the lies that we have told ourselves. What are these lies? Some examples are: I am better than I really am financially, morally etc., or if I am addicted to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or some other passion that I can't stop at any time. These lies that we tell ourselves are an illusion of our true way of living. The denial of this illusion of self is the second type of denial of self that Christ is speaking of in this portion of the verse.

This denial of the illusion of self is the restoration of the harmony between God's will and our own will. Through this denial of the lies about ourselves, we will deny those things that bind us to the earth and replace them with spirituality, that passions will be replaced by virtues. Most of all, the fear we have of God, that He is punishing us in this life, and our grumbling against Him, will be replaced with obedience to Him and love for Him. We will realize that the difficulties we experience are self-inflicted as a result of our misuse of our free will.

The next phrase of this verse is, "Take up his cross." What does it mean to take up one's cross? Saint Nikolaj Velimirovic answers this question in the following manner: "It means the willing acceptance, at the hand of Providence, of every means of healing, bitter though it may be, that is offered. Do great catastrophes fall on you? Be obedient to God's will, as Noah was. Is sacrifice demanded of you? Give yourself into God's hands with the same faith as Abram had when he went to sacrifice his son. Is your property ruined? Do your children die suddenly? Suffer it all with patience, cleaving to God in your heart, as Job did. Do your friends forsake you, and you find yourself surrounded by enemies? Bear it all without grumbling and with faith in hand, as the apostles did. Are you condemned to death for Christ? Be thankful to God for such an honor, like thousands of Christian martyrs."

This verse completes with the words, "Follow me." These words are probably the most difficult for us. What does it mean for us to follow or accompany Christ to the cross? It means to go against all that this world holds as important, as Saint Paul reminds us in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:22-27).

So, my prayer for you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is that you will be willing to pick up and embrace the way of the cross, that you may follow the ways of Christ, which are foolishness to this world, but which will sweeten your life in immeasurable ways.

Amen.

Given by Fr. Milan Medakovic and taken from The Saint Gregory Palamas Outreach

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 4:14-16; 2:1-3

BRETHREN, since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"; as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

GOSPEL READING: Mark 8:34-38; 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."

UPCOMING SERVICES

Wednesday, March 22nd

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
6:00 p.m. Catechism following

Friday, March 24th

4th Salutations to the Virgin Mary
7:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 26th

Feast of the Annunciation
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.