

The Third Sunday of Great Lent
Veneration of the Holy Cross

Mark 8:34-38, 9:1

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (KJV)

The third Sunday of Great Lent has arrived. The intensity of the journey to Pascha is increasing. The focus this week is on the Cross of Christ. Serious believers draw strength and purpose from Jesus Christ's Cross.

Passions, temptations and personal sinfulness are crushed with the Lord's help. Serious believers confront personal sinfulness with honesty, repent, confess and begin anew in Jesus Christ.

The journey to Pascha intends the salvation of the soul. The soul is most valuable. Believers are to protect, honor and nourish the soul at all costs. The Church provides Great Lent for believers to clearly address care of the soul.

The Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross embodies His love for each person. Renewal in Jesus Christ comes through repentance, confession and restored unity with Christ.

Daily honoring Great Lent as intended by the Church enables believers to address the hunger of the soul for peace with Christ. Increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving facilitate repentance and renewal.

Lenten services in the church offer instruction and nourishment beneficial to the soul. Serious believers benefit from Lenten services and are transformed by their personal participation.

Attendant joy characterizes the journey to Pascha for the active believer. Believers adhering to the Church's teachings firmly reject sinful ways and embrace the life in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ grows in the believer and the believer grows in Christ to the degree the believer honors Great Lent and the journey to Pascha. Believers giving themselves completely to Christ benefit beyond measure.

St. Mark's Gospel speaks of the Kingdom of God coming with power. The Gospel reading for today states those losing their lives for Christ and the Gospel save their lives.

Refraining from the sinful ways offered by worldly temptations is essential in the Lenten journey. Evil thrives in the world and at times can deceptively appear to be appealing. Unity with the Lord involves following the narrow path.

St Matthew's Gospel states: "... wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Mt. 7:13-14)

The Christian life requires personal discipline. Believers desiring peace and eternal life say "no" to temptations that put the soul in peril. Loving Christ involves taking up personal crosses in daily life as Christ took up His Cross.

Active and attentive prayer keeps the mind centered in Christ. The images a person lets into the home, the mind, the heart and the soul affect personal disposition and actions.

The home, heart, mind and soul are to be vigilantly guarded to ensure Christ is ever-present and welcome. Evil has very cunning ways of getting into the home, the mind, heart and soul.

Images on the television, phones and computers can assault the mind, heart and soul. Families can unwittingly allow images into their homes which threaten peace and harmony of the mind, heart and soul.

Believers need to be alert as to what enters the mind, the heart, and the soul. Bodily senses and energy are intended for blessed purposes. Use of speech and hearing have no place in the judgment of others.

Love, peace and joy are epitomized in the Crucified and Risen Christ. Serious believers seeking to grow in Christ use Great Lent and the journey to Pascha to learn more about the Crucified and Resurrected Christ.

When Holy Week arrives and Pascha is eventually celebrated, the believers actively honoring Great Lent and the journey to Pascha will realize personal changes in their selves.

Jesus Christ grows in the person to the degree the person loves Christ and is united with Christ. Constant repentance and communion make the full life in Christ possible.

God's Holy Church provides Great Lent and the journey to Pascha for the benefit of all. Wise individuals seeking complete unity with Jesus Christ take up their crosses and follow Christ.

The Third Sunday of Great Lent. Veneration of the Cross. Holy Hieromartyr Basil, Presb. of Ancyra. March 22/April 4, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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