



**The Third Sunday of the Fast:
The Worship of the Precious and Life-giving Cross**

With the help of God, we have almost reached the middle of the course of the Fast, where our strength has been worn down through abstinence, and the full difficulty of the labour set before us becomes apparent. Therefore our holy Mother, the Church of Christ, now brings to our help the all-holy Cross, the joy of the world, the strength of the faithful, the staff of the just, and the hope of sinners, so that by venerating it reverently, we might receive strength and grace to complete the divine struggle of the Fast.

The Resurrection Dismissal Hymn and Kontakion of the Tone of the Week

THIRD TONE
Dismissal Hymn

LET the Heavens rejoice; let earthly things be glad; for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm, He hath trampled upon death by death. The first-born of the dead hath He become. From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us, and hath granted great mercy to the world.

Kontakion

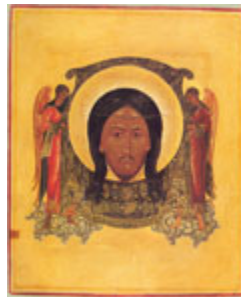
THOU didst rise from the tomb today, O Merciful One, and didst lead us out of the gates of death. On this day Adam doth dance for joy and Eve rejoiceth; and with them, both the Patriarchs and Prophets without ceasing chant in praise of the divine might of Thine authority.

Dismissal Hymn First Tone

SAVE, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance; grant Thou unto the faithful victory over adversaries. And by the power of Thy Cross do Thou preserve Thy commonwealth.

Kontakion. Grave Tone

NO longer doth the flaming sword guard the gate of Eden, for a marvelous quenching is come upon it, even the Tree of the Cross. The sting hath been taken from death, and the victory from Hades. And Thou, my Saviour, hast appeared unto those in Hades, saying: Enter ye again into Paradise.



"Not Made by Hands"

An Instruction on the Gospel of Saint Mark
for the Sunday following the Exaltation of
the Precious Cross

from the commentaries of Blessed Theophylact and Saint John Chrysostom

from *The Explanation of St Mark's Gospel* by Blessed Theophylact, p.69

And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever desireth to follow after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever desireth to 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?

Since Peter had rebuked Him for wanting to be crucified, the Lord called the people unto Him, and said, in the hearing of all, but directing His words mostly toward Peter, "Do you find fault with Me, Peter, because I take up the cross? I say to you, that neither you, nor anyone else, will be saved unless you die for the sake of goodness and truth." See that Christ does not compel a man to die on a cross against his own will. Instead He said, "Whosoever desireth," For the Lord is saying: I force no one. I invite him for something good, not for something bad to which I must force him. Whoever does not want these things is not worthy of them. We can learn what it means to deny oneself if we understand what it means to deny another.

from NF/PNF: St John Chrysostom Homily 55 on St Matthew, p.339

What then is it to deny another? He that is denying another,—for example, either brother, or servant, or whom you will,— should he see him either beaten, or bound, or led to execution, or whatever he may suffer, stands not by him, doth not help him, is not moved, feels nothing for him, as being once for all alienated from him. Thus then He will have us disregard our own body, so that whether men scourge, or banish, or burn, or whatever they do, we may not spare it. For this is to spare it. Since fathers too then spare their offspring, when committing them to teachers, they command not to spare them.

So also Christ; He said not, "Let him not spare himself," but very strictly, "Let him deny himself;" that is, let him have nothing to do with himself, but give himself up to all dangers and conflicts; and let him so feel, as though another were suffering it all.

Slight deletion here. . .

"And take up his cross." This arises out of the other. For to hinder thy supposing that words, and insults, and reproaches are to be the limits of our self-renunciation, He saith also how far one ought to renounce one's self; that is, unto death, and that a reproachful death. Therefore He said not, "Let him deny himself unto death," but, "Let him take up his cross;" setting forth the reproachful death; and that not once, nor twice, but throughout all life one ought so to do. "Yea," saith He, "bear about this death continually, and day by day be ready for slaughter." For since many have indeed contemned riches, and pleasure, and glory, but death they despised not, but feared dangers; "I," saith He, "will that my champion should wrestle even unto blood, and that the limits of his course should reach unto slaughter;" so that one must undergo death, death with reproach, the accursed death; and that upon evil surmise, we are to bear all things nobly, and rather to rejoice in being suspected."

"And let him follow Me." That is, it being possible for one to suffer, yet not to follow Him, when one doth not suffer for Him (for so robbers often suffer grievously, and violators of tombs, and sorcerers); to hinder thy supposing that the mere nature of thy calamities is sufficient, He adds the occasion of these calamities.

And what is it? In order that, so doing and suffering, thou mayest follow Him; that for Him thou mayest undergo all things; that thou mayest possess the other virtues also. For this too is expressed by "Let him follow Me;" so as to show forth not fortitude only, such as is exercised in our calamities, but temperance also, and moderation, and all self-restraint. This being properly "to follow," the giving heed also to the other virtues, and for His sake suffering all.

For there are those who follow the devil even to the endurance of all this, and for his sake give up their own lives; but we for Christ, or rather for our own sakes: they indeed to harm themselves both here and there; but we, that we may gain both lives.

How then is it not extreme dullness, not to show forth even the same fortitude with them that perish; and this, when we are to reap from it so many

crowns? Yet with us surely Christ Himself is present to be our help, but with them, no one.

Now He had indeed already spoken this very injunction, when He sent them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" (for, saith He, "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves," and, "ye shall be brought before kings and governors") but now with more intensity and severity. For then He spake of death only, but here He hath mentioned a cross also, and a continual cross. For "let him take up," saith He, "his cross;" that is, "let him carry it continually and bear it." And this He is wont to do in everything; not in the first instance, nor from the beginning, but quietly and gradually, bringing in the greater commandments, that the hearers may not count it strange.

Then, because the saying seemed to be vehement, see how He softens it by what follows, and sets down rewards surpassing our toils; and not rewards only, but also the penalties of vice: nay, on these last He dwells more than on those, since not so much His bestowing blessings, as His threat of severities, is wont to bring ordinary men to their senses. See at least how He both begins here from this, and ends in this.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it," saith He, "but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now what He saith is like this: "not as unsparing toward you, but rather as exceedingly sparing you, I enjoin these things. For he who spares his child, ruins it; but he who spares it not, preserves." To which effect also a certain wise man said, "If thou beat thy son with a rod, he shall not die, but thou shalt deliver his soul from death." And again, "He that refresheth his son, shall bind up his wounds."

This takes place in the camp also. For if the general, sparing the soldiers, commands them to remain within the place always, he will destroy with them the inhabitants too.

"In order then that this may not happen in your case also," saith He, "ye must be arrayed against continual death. For now too a grievous war is about to be kindled. Sit not therefore within, but go forth and fight; and shouldest thou fall in thy post, then hast thou obtained life." For if in the visible wars he that in his post meets slaughter, is both more distinguished than the rest, and more invincible, and more formidable to the enemy; although we know that after death the king, in behalf of whom he takes his station, is not able to raise him up again: much more in these wars, when there are such hopes of resurrection besides, will he who exposes his own life unto death, find it; in one sense, because he will

not be quickly taken; in a second, because even though he fall, God will lead his life on to a higher life.

Then, because he had said, "He who will save shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose shall save it," and on that side had set salvation and destruction, and on this salvation and destruction; to prevent any one's imagining the one destruction and salvation to be all the same with the other, and to teach thee plainly that the difference between this salvation and that is as great as between destruction and salvation; from the contraries also He makes an inference once for all to establish these points. "For what is a man profited," saith He, "if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Seest thou how the wrongful preservation of it is destruction, and worse than all destruction, as being even past remedy, from the want of anything more to redeem it?

For "tell me not this," saith He, "that he that hath escaped such dangers hath saved his life; but together with his life put also the whole world, yet what profit hath he thereby, if the soul perish?" For tell me, shouldest thou see thy servants in luxury, and thyself in extreme calamity, wilt thou indeed profit aught by being master? By no means. Make this reckoning then with regard to thy soul also, when the flesh is in luxury and wealth, and she awaiting the destruction to come.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Again, He dwells upon the same point. What? hast thou another soul to give for this soul? saith He. Why, shouldest thou lose money, thou wilt be able to give money; or be it house, or slaves, or any other kind of possession, but for thy soul, if thou lose it, thou wilt have no other soul to give: yea, though thou hadst the world, though thou wast king of the whole earth, thou wouldest not be able, by paying down all earthly goods, with the earth itself, to redeem but one soul.

And what marvel, if it be so with the soul? Since even in the body one may see that so it turns out. Though thou wear ten thousand diadems, but have a body sickly by nature, and incurable, thou wilt not be able, not by giving all thy kingdom, to recover this body, not though thou add innumerable persons, and cities, and goods.

Now thus I bid thee reason with regard to thy soul also; or rather even much more with regard to the soul; and do thou, forsaking all besides, spend all thy care upon it. Do not then while taking thought about the things of others, neglect thyself and thine own things; which now all men do, resembling them that work in the mines. For neither do these receive any profit from this labor, nor from

the wealth; but rather great harm, both because they incur fruitless peril, and incur it for other men, reaping no benefit from such their toils and deaths. These even now are objects of imitation to many, who are digging up wealth for others; or rather we are more wretched even than this, inasmuch as hell itself awaits us after these our labors. For they indeed are stayed from those toils by death, but to us death proves a beginning of innumerable evils.

But if thou say, thou hast in thy wealth the fruit of thy toils: show me thy soul gladdened, and then I am persuaded. For of all things in us the soul is chief. And if the body be fattened, while she is pining away, this prosperity is nothing to thee (even as when the handmaiden is glad, the happiness of the maidservant is nothing to her mistress perishing, nor is the fair robe anything compared with the weak flesh); but Christ will say unto thee again, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" on every hand commanding thee to be busied about that, and to take account of it only.

from Blessed Theophylact

Although His command that one give oneself over to death seemed hard and cruel, the Lord straightway shows this commandment is given out of love for mankind. For "whosoever shall lose his life for My sake" shall find life. (But the death of a condemned man, or of one who hangs himself, is not for Christ's sake and brings no such reward.) And, on the contrary, he who appears to have saved his life, far from finding life, shall lose it by not remaining steadfast during his time of martyrdom. Do not say to Me, "But he has saved his life"—it means nothing; and even if you say that he has gained the whole world as well, it is of no benefit. For no one can exchange money for his salvation, for if that were so, a man who had gained the world but lost his soul, could, while burning in the flames of gehenna, use his money to buy innocence. But at that time and in that place no such trade can be made. And here let us shut the mouths also of those, following Origen, say that all the souls in hell will be restored [and reunited with those in heaven] after they have been punished in accordance with their sins. Let them hear that there is no exchange that can be made there for one's soul. No one is kept in hell as a punishment. Rather, it is the weight of his own sins which holds him there.

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.

Intellectual faith does not suffice, but confession of faith with one's mouth is required as well. Since man himself is two-fold, let his sanctification be two-fold as well. For the soul is sanctified by faith, but the body is sanctified by confessing.

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed to confess that the Crucified One is his God; of him also shall the Crucified One be ashamed. For the Lord shall judge that man to be an unworthy servant, when He comes with glory, escorted by the angels, no longer in lowly form. At the second coming He will not appear, as He did before, to be of base origin and circumstance, an object of scorn. Since He speaks of His own glory, wishing to show that He is not vainly boasting, He says, "There be some of them that stand here," namely, Peter, James, and John, who shall not die until I have shown them at the Transfiguration the glory with which I shall appear at the second coming. For the Transfiguration was nothing else than a foreshadowing of the second coming, and as He appeared shining then, so will He shine at the second coming, as will also all the righteous.

Conclusion from St John Chrysostom

These then let us also imitate, and continually offer thanksgiving to God, continually chanting hymns to Him; let us give heed to temperance, and to all other virtues, and the self denial that is practiced in the deserts, let us bring into our cities; that we may appear both well-pleasing before God, and approved before men, and attain unto the good things to come, by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom be unto the Father, glory, honor, and dominion, together with the Holy and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. AMEN.