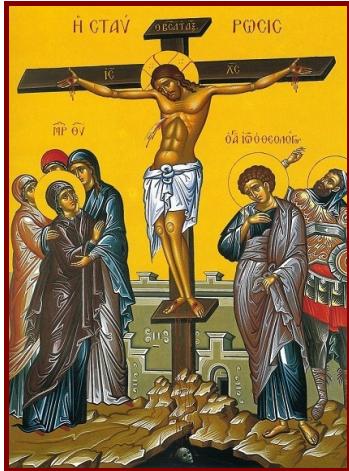


UNDERSTANDING THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST: **MEDITATIONS ON ST. MARK 18:34-9:1**

(Gospel for the Sunday after the Elevation of the Holy Cross, 20 September 2015)
By Subdeacon Dr. Joshua Genig

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



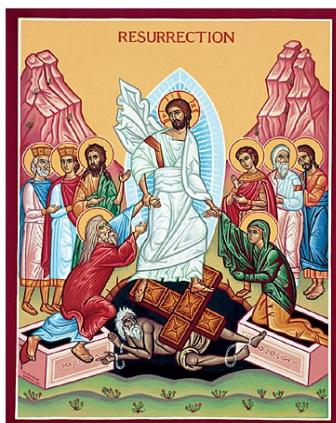
The cross of Jesus Christ is one of the most *misunderstood* things in the world today. There are some who see His death as meaningless, or, as St. Paul says, as “folly.” Not only do these folks think Jesus’ death could have been avoided, but some don’t even believe it occurred in the first place.

On the other hand there are some very well-meaning folks, good folks, Christian folks, folks who sit in churches around the world every Sunday who, nevertheless, have a radically strange understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ and its meaning. They see His death as the means by which an angry Father — angry with us, his creatures — is made happy again.

We were really, really bad, they say — so bad, in fact, that the Father, who created us, actually *hated* us. But, as a means to overcoming His hatred, He took His Son, His only Son whom He loved, and He delivered Him to Pilate and ensured that He would be crucified. What this means, of course, is that the cross of Jesus Christ becomes an act of child abuse, where the God who made us, but hated us, now hates His Son in our place, so that He can love us again.

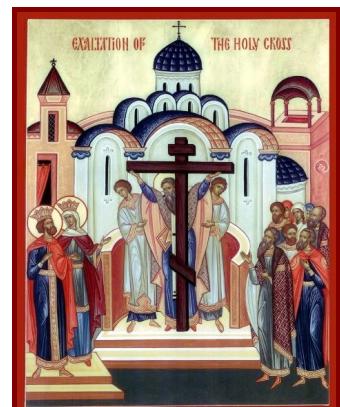
But if you read the Scriptures, beginning in Genesis 1, you will soon discover that neither of these perspectives conveys the reality of what the cross of Jesus Christ is really all about. For that, we need *this* Feast — **the Elevation/Exaltation of the Holy Cross** — which, as with all big Feasts in the Church, is celebrated for more than a single day.

And when you ponder this Feast, when you listen to the hymns and verses and readings and prayers, you will soon discover the true meaning of the cross, the very purpose of the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ.



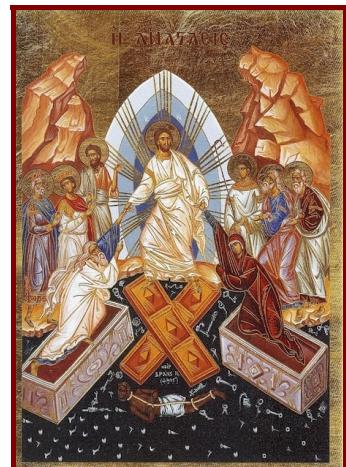
“By means of the Cross,” we hear at Vespers for the Feast, “by means of the cross, He killed him that killed us; and He made the dead to live again, making them beautiful.”

The point of it all, the reason for the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, was for no other reason than to deliver us from the power of the enemy and to join us tangibly, concretely, physically, and sacramentally, to the very life and love of Jesus Christ whose will it is that all be saved.



Yes, of course, you and I need to be saved. And we can't save ourselves. But, most importantly, the one from whom we need to be saved is *not* an angry God, but a deceiving Satan. And the cross does this, as the Fathers of the Church were so excited to say, by tricking, trapping, and deceiving the deceiver himself. It is, as some have said, the hook that catches the great fish, Satan. And when Satan took the bait, when he thought he'd won the day, he soon discovered one more surprise: that our God is a God who lives, who tramples down death, who buries it forever in His own tomb, and who raises life and immortality for all to see and to embrace.

Yes, death is dead. And life lives. And all of it, every last bit of it, is because of the cross of Jesus Christ, whose elevation we celebrate today.



But we celebrate it best, not just by venerating it (though it is indeed worthy of veneration), but we celebrate it best by making it our own — by taking up *our* cross and following Him, as we hear in the Gospel for today. And we take up our own cross when we put to death, when we crucify those things that hurt us, those things that hurt our relationship with God and with others: maybe it's a friendship that isn't healthy; maybe it's a job that causes us to become angry or bitter; maybe it's an addiction that leads us into greater darkness; or maybe it's as simple as a thought, an idea, or an impulse that leads us into temptation and causes us to sin. But when we take an account of our lives, and when we actually put these things to death, and when we bury them with Christ in the tomb, what emerges — what is *resurrected* — is the very person that God created us to be: made in His holy image, striving for His holy likeness, unafraid of death, hopeful for the life to come, and intent upon bringing that life — that divine life — to our world today, a world that is literally dying to live.

And all of that happens right here, in this little temple in Redford, Michigan — the most important place in all the world. Because *this* is the place where the crucified Christ, now raised in His Body and Blood, comes to us again with those sacred and life-creating gifts. This place — the most important place in all the world — is where Christ calls us, not only to honor the cross, elevated for our joy and our life and our hope, but to also lift up our own hearts to the heavens, and receive the “**Medicine of Immortality**,” the very Body and Blood of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.



- ✚ This is how we follow Him.
- ✚ This is where we lose our life for Him.
- ✚ This is where we are saved.

To this same Jesus Christ, belongs all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.