



Third Sunday of the Great Fast

Veneration of the Holy Cross

This Sunday is the halfway point in Lent. Midway on our journey to Holy Week and Pascha, many of us are tiring of our spiritual disciplines. What we approached with joy the first week has now turned into a chore. We have become aware how little love we have in our hearts, which can be very discouraging. For this reason, the Church uses this Sunday to direct our attention to the Cross. The Cross is our strength and our salvation. We look to it and pray to Christ to give us strength to complete this journey.

THEMES OF THE SUNDAY

1. Joy and gladness in the crucified Christ and his saving cross.
2. The cross is presented to us for refreshment and support.
3. At mid-lent we look ahead to our goal: the glory of the cross which leads to the resurrection, to Pascha.

MID-LENT: THE HOLY CROSS

The entire Christian mystery is found in this total reversal of values:

- . The defeat on the Cross becomes the victory over death
- . The humiliation of the crucified Christ becomes the glory of God
- . The Man who is condemned to death and crowned with thorns is consecrated King of the universe
- . His throne, the footstool under his feet, is the Cross which destroys the demon
- . The instrument of death becomes source of Life

“A scandal for the Jews, folly for the Greeks who seek wisdom,” exclaims St. Paul (1 Cor. 1: 22)

The GOSPEL reading: Mark 8:34-9:1

- . What three things are required of anyone who wants to walk with Jesus?
- . Give some examples of “losing” (in the world’s eyes) one’s life for Christ and the Gospel. How is the “loss” a “gain”?
- . How has the cross been a gift in your life?
- . How has the cross been a task in your life?

WHY DECORATE THE CROSS WITH FLOWERS?

Christ’s death will bring us new life making us the aroma of Christ to God.

Flowers are a vision of the resurrection.

Death and resurrection are always together. By death He conquered death and gave us life.

Flowers remind us that:

- . Human life began in the garden
- . Jesus suffered in the garden
- . Jesus was buried in the garden
- . Mary sees the risen Lord in the garden
- . Rev. 2:7 says that paradise will be in a new garden
- . Through sin we have cut ourselves away from the garden of life, and through death and resurrection Jesus is restoring the garden to us (Rev. 22:2)

“To Your Cross O Master, we bow in veneration and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection”.