



## **“Word of Consolation for the Pandemic”**

Many people are in confusion and others panic because of the threat of the Coronavirus epidemic that spread in the whole world. I think, however, that this should not happen, for whatever God does with us, He does it out of love. The God of Christians is a good God, a God of mercy and lovingkindness, ‘Who loveth mankind’. God created us out of His goodness in order to share His life and even His glory with us. When we fell into sin, He allowed death to enter our life again out of goodness, so that we may not become immortal in our wickedness, but to seek for a way of salvation. Although we have fallen, God has never stopped to provide for us, not only material goods in order to sustain our race, but He also sent prophets and righteous, preparing His way so that He might come and solve our tragedy, and bring eternal salvation through the Cross and Resurrection of His inconceivable love. He came and took upon Himself the curse of sin, and He showed His love to the end: ‘Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end’ (John 13:1). All the things that God did when He created us, when He provided goods in order to sustain the world, when He prepared His way for Him to come on earth, when He came Himself in person and wrought our salvation in such an awesome way, all these things He did out of goodness. His goodness is boundless.

*[See back cover of bulletin to continue reading]*



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

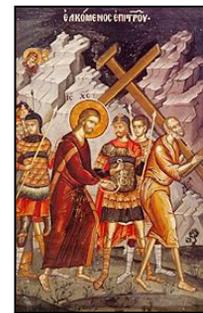
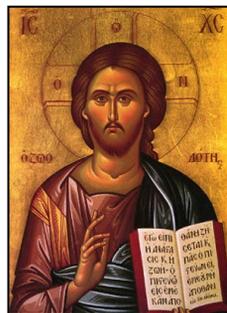
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: [www.patriarchate.org](http://www.patriarchate.org)

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Website: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

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## St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church



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### Liturgical Guide for Sunday, March 22, 2020

ON THIS DAY, THE *THIRD* SUNDAY OF GREAT AND HOLY LENT, WE CALL TO MIND THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY, PRECIOUS, AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS. ON THIS DAY WE ALSO COMMEMORATE Basil the Holy Martyr of Ancyra; Kalliniki and Vassilisa the Martyrs; and Euthemios the New Martyr. *Through their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

### Welcome, Visitors and Newcomers, to our Parish!

We invite you to enter your name, mail/email addresses in our Guest Register (near the entrance) if you are interested in joining and assisting with our mission's development. We want to keep you informed of our schedule and location of

services. *You and your family are welcome; we look forward to knowing you. We invite you and your family to join and assist us often!*

*Please consider that only baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians in canonical good standing may approach for Holy Communion. All are invited to partake of the Antidoron ("instead of the gifts") distributed at the conclusion of today's Divine Liturgy.*

## **TODAY'S Spiritual Theme From the Triodion:**

At this mid-point in Lent, the Church turns to the Holy Cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Like a Rod of Moses in the midst of the Camp, it helps us find health, strength, and courage to pursue the remainder of our Lenten journey. *"For the Cross is called the Tree of Life, it is the tree that was planted in Paradise, and for this reason our fathers have planted it in the midst of Holy Lent, remembering both Adam's bliss and how he was deprived of it, remembering also that partaking of this tree we no longer die but are kept alive..."* (Synaxarion of the Sunday of the Cross)

The *Service of the Veneration of the Cross* is traditionally offered during the singing of *The Great Doxology* concluding the *Sunday Orthros Service* on the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent. However, in recent years, pastoral considerations *conceding* the absence of most of the faithful at the end of the Orthros Service (and at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy) has caused this service often to be transposed to the *end* of the Divine Liturgy, where its meaning has less impact to the faithful who are preparing to depart from the church.

So that we can be reminded *throughout all* of today's Divine Liturgy of our *Lord's Precious and Holy Cross that brings us new life and renewal*, we will once again this year return to the more traditional practice of beginning this service *after* the Choir has almost completed singing the Great Doxology. After it has sung the verse, *"Extend O Lord, Your mercy unto those who know You,"* the Choir begins to chant the Asmatic *"Holy God, Holy Mighty..."* of the Great Doxology, slowly and melodiously. *Please be prepared to sing Hymns #1 and #7 below as Fr. George directs following the Procession of the Holy Cross.*

## **SPECIAL HYMNS SUNG BEFORE/AFTER SMALL ENTRANCE**

### **1./2./4./10. Hymn for Feast of the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-pp.180-181):**

This hymn, "Save, O Lord" – is sung *after* the Doxology (in Service of the Veneration of the Holy Cross) and *before* and *after* the Small Entrance, and at the end of the service instead of "We have seen the light". *It is sung during today's Veneration of the Holy Cross on the Third Sunday of Great Lent and also on September 14<sup>th</sup> – the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross.* Save, O Lord Your people and bless Your inheritance. Give victory to those who battle evil and protect us all by Your Holy Cross.

### **3. Resurrectional Hymn (Grave Tone) – (Hymnal-pp.122-125):**

It is sung *before* and *after* the Small Entrance: By Your Cross, O Lord, You destroyed death; to the thief You opened paradise. The myrrhbearers' sorrow You transformed into joy, and You sent Your apostles forth to proclaim that You had risen from the dead, Christ our God, bestowing on all the world Your great mercy.

### **5. Hymn Commemorating St. Christopher – (see music distributed):**

*It is sung after the Small Entrance:* Made comely with garments woven from your venerable blood, you stand before the Lord, the King of Heaven and earth, O famed Martyr Christopher. With the choirs of Angels and the Martyrs you chant, singing the thrice-holy hymn and most awesome praises. Thus, by your intercessions with God, save us, your servants.

### **6. Kontakion sung for Lenten Sundays – (Hymnal-pp. 268-271):**

*It is sung after the Small Entrance:* Victorious Lady, mighty champion, defending us, we your servants now inscribe to you this hymn of thanks, for you rescued us from suffering and tribulation. Theotokos, with your power that can never fail, keep us safe from every danger our whole life long that we may cry to you: Rejoice, O Bride unwedded.

### **7. Trisagion Hymn for Feast of the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-pp.290-291):**

*Instead of singing the Trisagion Hymn on pgs.38-41, we sing this hymn.* *It is also sung during today's Veneration of the Holy Cross on the Third Sunday of Great Lent as well as on September 14<sup>th</sup> – the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross.* Before Your Cross we bow down, O

Master, and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection. Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**8. Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos) – (Hymnal-pp. 298-301)::**

*On the first five Sundays of Great Lent when we use the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, a different hymn is sung instead of “Axion Estin” or “Truly it is proper to call you blessed...”:* In you, O woman full of grace, all creation rejoices, the orders of angels and the race of mankind. O hallowed temple and spiritual paradise, glory of virginal souls, from you our God was incarnate and became a child, He who is God from all ages. By making your womb His throne He made you more spacious than all the heavens. In you, O woman full of grace all creation rejoices. Glory to you.

**9. Communion Hymn – (Hymnal-p.325):**

*For today’s Feast of the Holy Cross, we sing the following:* Let the light of Your face shine on us, O Lord. Alleluia. [Psalm 4]

**SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES FROM TODAY'S ORTHROS & DIVINE LITURGY**

The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts. – St. John Chrysostom

**Gospel Reading During Orthros Service (John 20:1-10)**

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and*

*believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.*

**Epistle Reading (Hebrews 4:14-5:6):**

*Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten You" as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."*

**Gospel Reading (Mark 8:34-9:1):**

*He called the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for My sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His father with the holy angels." And He said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."*

## **“Word of Consolation for the Pandemic”**

*[Reflection continued from back cover of bulletin]*

The Lord Who prayed in the garden of Gethsemane with a sweat of blood for the salvation of the whole world, says that when we see the terrible things that precede His Second Coming, we should lift up our heads with inspiration, for our redemption draws nigh (cf. Luke 21:28). Some tell me, ‘May God extend His helping hand.’ But this is precisely the hand of God. He desires and works our salvation ‘at sundry times and in diverse manners’ (Heb. 1:1): ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work’ (John 5:17). This virus may be a means that God uses in order to bring many to themselves and to repentance, and to harvest many ready souls for His eternal Kingdom. Therefore, for those who surrender and entrust themselves to the Providence of God all will contribute for their good: ‘All things work together for good to them that love God’ (Rom. 8:28).

Thus, there is no room for morbid dismay. Neither should we resist the measures that the government is taking in order to diminish the spreading of the afflictions we see in the lives of so many people. It is wrong to go against the authorities. We should do whatever the Government says, because they are not asking for us to deny our faith, they are only asking us to take a few measures for the common welfare of all people, so that this trial may pass, and this is not at all unreasonable. Some people take it too confessionally, they raise flags and play the martyrs and the confessors. For us there is no doubt: we shall show pure submission to the orders of the Government. It is unfair to disobey the Government since, when we fall ill, it is to their hospitals that we run and they are the ones who undertake all the expenses and our care. Why not listen to them?

This is the ethos of Christ that God showed in His life on earth and this is the apostolic commandment that we have received: ‘...be subject to principalities and powers, obey magistrates, be ready to every good work, speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men’ (cf. Tit. 3: 1-2); and ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme...’ (see 1 Pet. 2:13-17). If we do not obey our governors who are not asking much, how will we obey God, Who gives us a divine law, which is far more sublime than any human law? If we keep the law of God we are above human laws, as the apologists of the 2nd century said during the Roman Empire which was persecuting the Christians. It is surprising to see in the country where we live, in the United Kingdom, that the footballers show such understanding and discernment so as to be the first to withdraw from their activities with docility towards the indications of the Government to take prophylactic measures. It would be sad for us, people of faith, to fail reaching the measure of the footballers and showing the same docility towards the authorities for which our Church prays.

If they ask us to stop our Church services, let us simply surrender and bless the Providence of God. Besides, this reminds us of an old tradition that the Fathers had in Palestine: in Great Lent, on the Sunday of Cheese fare, after the mutual forgiveness, they would go out in the desert for forty days without Liturgy; they would only continue in fasting and prayer so as to prepare and return on Palm

Sunday to celebrate in a godly way the Passion and the Resurrection of the Lord. And so, our present circumstances force us to live again that which existed of old in the bosom of the Church. That is to say, they force us to live a more hesychastic life, with more prayer, which will however make up for the lack of the Divine Liturgy and will prepare us to celebrate with greater desire and inspiration the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thus, we will turn this plague into a triumph of hesychasm. In any case, whatever God allows in our life is out of His goodness for the well-being of man, for He never wants His creature to be harmed in any way.

Certainly, if we will be deprived of the Divine Liturgy for a longer period of time, we can endure it. What do we receive in the Liturgy? We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are filled with His grace. This is a great honor and benefit for us, but we also receive the grace of God in many other ways. When we practice hesychastic prayer, we abide in the Presence of God with the mind in the heart calling upon the holy Name of Christ. The Divine Name brings us the grace of Christ because it is inseparable from His Person and leads us into His Presence. This Presence of Christ which is purifying, cleanses us from our transgressions and sins, it renews and illumines our heart so that the image of God our Savior, Christ, may be formed therein.

If we shall not have Easter in the Church, let us remember that every contact with Christ is Easter. We receive grace in the Divine Liturgy because the Lord Jesus is present in it, He performs the sacrament and He is the One imparted to the faithful. However, when we invoke His Name, we enter the same Presence of Christ and receive the same grace. Therefore, if we are deprived of the Liturgy, we always have His Name, we are not deprived of the Lord. Moreover, we also have His word, especially His Gospel. If His word dwells continually in our heart, if we study it and pray it, if it becomes our language with which we speak to God as He spoke to us, then we shall have again the grace of the Lord. For His words are words of eternal life (John 6:68), and the same mystery is performed, we receive His grace and are sanctified.

Furthermore, each time we show kindness to our brethren the Lord is well-pleased, He considers that we did it in His Name and He rewards us. We show kindness to our brethren and the Lord rewards us with His grace. This is another way in which we can live in the Presence of the Lord. We can have the grace of the Lord through fasting, alms giving and every good deed. So, if we are forced to avoid gathering in Church, we can also be united in spirit in these holy virtues which are known within the Body of Christ, the holy Church, and which preserve the unity of the faithful with Christ and with the other members of His Body. All the things we do for God is a Liturgy, for they minister unto our salvation. The Liturgy is the great event of the life of the Church, wherein the faithful have the possibility to exchange their little life with the boundless life of God. However, the power of this event depends on the preparation we perform before, through all the things we have mentioned, through prayer, good deeds, fasting, love for neighbor, repentance.

Therefore, my dear brethren, it is not necessary to make heroic confessions against the Government for the prophylactic measures that it takes for the good of all people. Neither should we despair, but only wisely machinate ways so as not to lose our living communication with the Person of Christ.

Nothing can harm us, we must simply be patient for a certain period of time and God will see our patience, take away every obstacle, every temptation and we shall again see the dawn of joyful days, and we shall celebrate our common hope and love that we have in Christ Jesus.

*Reprinted from Pemptousia.com and written by  
Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou, 3/19/20*

**THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE (TRY TO COMMIT TO MEMORY):**

“May I never boast of anything except the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” *(Galatians 6:14)*

**PASTORAL REFLECTION FROM FR. GEORGE:**

Many years ago, *The Los Angeles Times* carried a touching story about an 80-year-old man who entered into an agreement with three young couples who were renting apartments in his building. He agreed to allow them to buy their apartments at a very low rate.

Please do not misunderstand. This was *not* your typical condominium conversion. He was selling them their apartments at a much lower rate than they could obtain them on the open market. This was *his gift* to these six young people *who had been there when he needed them*.

The elderly man's wife of fifty years had been dying of cancer. For much of that time she was beyond help and pain relievers. Nights were the worst. When her cries of pain tore him apart, all her husband could do was to bang on the apartment wall for support. One of the young couples would be at his door instantly to help her in any way they could, and to ease her husband's burden.

*They entered into the older couple's agony. "Two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning, they were there in a minute," recalled the elderly man. "You don't find that in a human being anymore." Fortunately for him, he found it in these six young people.*

It is a beautiful thing when one human being is willing to enter into another human being's agony. But there is something more special still – that is when the Lord of all creation comes into the world to share in His children's agony. This Sunday, when we offer special veneration to the Precious Cross of our Lord, may we recall St. Paul's words: *"May I never boast of anything, except the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ."* (Gal. 6:14)

 ["Follow" & "Like" our Facebook page.](#) *Check for updates and photos.*

On this *the 798<sup>th</sup> Sunday of our St. Christopher's parish community*, we continue to thank each of you for your presence and support. Although it may seem like we are just a handful of men, women and children, if we commit ourselves to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will experience the miracle of growth as the Holy Spirit brings others into His service to help us build His new church in the Peachtree City, Georgia area for the glory of God!

## **COMMUNITY SCHEDULE** *(CHECK WEB CALENDAR FOR MORE...)*

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Great & Holy Lent.

**Sunday, March 22 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of the Holy Cross):**

**7:45 a.m. Orthros Service**

**9:00 a.m. Service of the Veneration of the Holy Cross & Divine Liturgy**

*[Note: All activities, ministries, programs and social gatherings have been suspended until further notice (including religious education classes on Sundays, Lenten dinner and study on Wednesdays, Choir Practice, and Sunday Coffee Fellowship to comply with CDC, civil, and religious guidelines to ensure our safety. While our parish is not open as usual, we are blessed to have no more than ten parishioners present to assist in the services (clergy, up to two altar servers, chantors, and choir members respectively, one Parish Council member, and one greeter. They are praying today's liturgy and Feast of the Cross in behalf of our parish family as an offering of God's love to us and our neighbors.)]*



*May God grant you a blessed lenten journey!  
Your continued support and mutual encouragement  
are essential and appreciated!*

Fr. George & Presbyteria Marinda Tsahakis offered the yellow jonquils used in today's special Veneration of the Holy Cross in blessed and loving memory of their parents, *John & Charlotte Catherine Tsahakis & Robert & Mina Philips* and in loving memory of Fr. George's brother, Nicholas. *May their memory be eternal.*



# Sunday, March 22, 2020 – Veneration of the Holy Cross

+Fr. George Tsahakis

*[Reflection continued from front cover of bulletin]*

He saves us and is so longsuffering towards us, waiting until we 'come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4) and bring true repentance, so that we may be with Him for all eternity. Thus, at every stage of His relationship with man, our God shows only His goodness and mercy, 'which is better than life' (Ps. 63:3); goodness is His Nature and He does all things for the benefit and salvation of man.

Consequently, when He shall come again to judge the world, will a different God judge it? Will it not be the same good God, the God of mercy and lovingkindness, Who loves mankind? Let us be certain that we shall not appear before any other God than Him Who created us and saved us. And so, it is again with the same mercy and love that He will judge us. For this reason, we should neither panic nor waver, for it will be the same God that will receive us in the other life and will judge us with the same kindness and compassion. Some fear that the hour of their end has come. This plague of Coronavirus has also a positive aspect, because we have a few weeks from the moment it will assail us until our end. Therefore, we can dedicate this time to prepare ourselves for our meeting with God, so that our departure may not occur unexpectedly and without preparation, but after we have run through our whole life each time we stand in prayer before God, at times with thanksgiving unto the end for all the things God has done for us and at other times with repentance, seeking the forgiveness of our transgressions. Nothing can harm us with such a God, Who allows all things out of His goodness. We must simply keep thanksgiving unto the end and the humble prayer of repentance for the forgiveness of our sins.

As for myself, this plague is helping me. I longed to find again the prayer I had before, with which I can run through my whole life from my birth until now, thanking God for all His benefits 'whereof I know and whereof I know not'; and also, with which I can run through my whole life repenting for all my sins and transgressions. It is wonderful to be able to run through your life praying, bringing all things before God with persistence in prayer. Then you feel that your life is redeemed. This is why this situation is truly helping me. I am not panicking but 'I will be sorry for my sin' (Ps. 38:18).

We must see the goodness of God in all the things that are happening now. The Holy Fathers did see His lovingkindness. A similar epidemic occurred in the 4th century in the Egyptian desert, which harvested more than a third of the monks, and the Fathers were saying with great inspiration that, 'God is harvesting souls of saints for His Kingdom,' and they did not waver. The Lord Himself speaks in the Gospel about the last days, about the trials and afflictions which the world will go through before His Second Coming. However, we discern neither morbid sadness nor despair in His words.

*[Reflection continued inside bulletin]*