



## **Fr. Joseph Samaan's Outline for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Great Lent- Adoration of the Holy Cross**

Mark 8:34-9:1 - Sunday 03/22/2009

**“Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.” (Mark 9:1)**

### **The Third Sunday of Lent**

- This Sunday falls at the midpoint of the Great Fast period. It marked the deadline for enlisting those who were to receive the holy Baptism on Pascha.
  - The service of the Presanctified Liturgy reflects this traditional practice, as special petitions and special prayers are added in the weeks following this Sunday for the sake of those “who are preparing for Illumination”.
  - This is a likely reason to explain the development of a lengthy Pascha service- to accommodate the simultaneous Baptism service.
  - The newly baptized were received into the church in their white dress partway through the Divine Liturgy and before the Scripture readings.
  - That explains why, rather than the usual hymn, “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us,” another hymn is sung instead: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia.”

### **What is the connection between Baptism and the Cross?**

- The sacrament of Baptism is the connecting mystery, through which the salvation of Jesus performed on the Cross is poured out into the hearts of the believers.
- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ...For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Romans 6:3-5)

### **Why was the Cross the only way to salvation?**

- Why did Jesus have to die on the Cross? Couldn't there have been another way to salvation that would have avoided the Cross?
  - The Apostle Peter had the same thought on his mind and expressed that to Jesus: “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer... be killed, and after three days rise again...and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him” (Mark 8:31-32).
- Jesus' answer to Peter was harsh and startling: “He rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's’” (Mark 8:33).

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- Destroying the power of the devil necessarily required a stronger person than him to enter into his own “castle” or dominion and “tie him up” or conquer him, to free all those he held hostage there.
- The dominion of Satan was in the land of death, where he held all souls hostage. The devil can claim full sovereignty over the soul only after their death and separation from the body.
- Satan thought that, by inflicting the death of Jesus on the Cross, he would be able to hold His soul hostage as he did with the rest of the human beings. But he was in for a big surprise!
- “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.” (Matthew 12:29)

### **What does it mean to carry one’s own cross?**

- “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” (Mark 8:34)
- The Lord’s teaching about carrying one’s cross refers to different types of struggles against Satan and the temptation of sin to obtain eternal life.
- The struggle of Jesus required His own death to destroy the tyranny of Satan and the power of death.
- The struggle of those who want to join Christ to obtain eternal life definitely requires some type of struggle. Martyrdom is one of the possibilities, but it is not the only one.
- Carrying one’s cross means enduring and fighting against various difficulties that aim to drive us away from Jesus’ salvation.
- As part of Christ’s saved flock, through faith and Baptism a Christian obtains forgiveness of sins and the token of eternal life: “Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession- to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- In this instance, carrying the cross means guarding the purity of the soul granted to us at Baptism against all the attempts of Satan, who tries to pollute it in order to claim it.

### **Conclusions**

Through His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus brought salvation to all human beings. Satan tries to strip that away from us by stealing it while we are distracted. Caught up in the net of various distractions, people lose focus and forget about the treasure they are guarding; Satan seizes this moment and snatches that away from us. When he succeeds, we come under the tyranny of death once again.

“Since the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven has been advancing with force. And forceful people are taking hold of it.” “Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασταὶ ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν.” (Matthew 11:12)

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### **Prayer**

O Lord Jesus Christ, by being nailed to the tree of the Cross, You brought healing from death to all those who suffered death because they had tasted from the forbidden tree. My Lord Jesus Christ, You know what is in my heart; You know that I desire only the life that comes from You. I know that I am entangled and trapped in the net of sins that is cast on me by the devil. Save me, O Lord. Save me as I am crying out to You with a contrite and repentant heart. Do not let me lose Your salvation that You won on the Cross through Your precious blood for my own sake and for the sake of all those who believe You and love You. Amen.

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