

September 14

Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross (1st Class)

Before Vespers, the Holy Cross is brought forth to the Holy Place, and a lamp burns before it.

GREAT VESPERS

On Saturday or Sunday evening, the First Kathisma of the Psalter; "Blessed the man." On other days there is no reading from the Psalter.

Stichera for the Feast (Tone 6)

6. By its elevation, the Cross is like an appeal to the whole creation to adore the blessed Passion of Christ our God who was suspended on it, for Christ destroyed by this Cross the one who had destroyed us. In His great goodness, He brought us back to life after we had been dead, and He beatified us and made us worthy of heaven, for He is merciful. Wherefore, we exalt His name with great rejoicing and glorify His infinite condescension.
5. By its elevation... *(Repeat)*
4. O precious Cross of the Lord, Moses prefigured you when he stretched out his arms to heaven and thus defeated the haughty Amalek. You are the pride of the faithful, the strength of those who struggle. You are the beauty of the apostles, the courage of the just and salvation of all the saints. Wherefore, at the sight of your elevation, the whole creation rejoices and exults and glorifies Christ whose goodness tied all things into one.
3. O precious Cross... *(Repeat)*
2. O most venerable Cross of the Lord, the angels surround you with joy. By your elevation today, you raise those

who had been cast down and delivered to death for having eaten of the forbidden tree. Wherefore we honor you in the faith of our hearts and praise you with our lips, begging for sanctification and saying, "Exalt the supreme goodness of Christ our God, O you nations, and adore His divine footstool forever!"

1. O most venerable... *(Repeat)*
- v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Stavrotheotokion (Tone 2)

Come, all you nations, let us bow in worship to the blessed Cross of the Lord through which eternal justice came to us. He who deceived Adam, the first man, was conquered by a tree; and the same who fettered the royal creation by his guile has been cast down into nothingness. The serpent's venom has been washed away by the divine blood of Christ, and the curse of sin has been lifted by a rightful sentence when the just Christ was condemned unjustly. By God's plan, death that had come from a tree would be conquered by a tree, and suffering would be healed by the suffering of the Lord. Glory be to the active presence of Your providence in our lives, O Christ our king: Through it, You have brought about salvation for all, O You who are gracious and the Lover of mankind!

Entrance. "O Joyful Light..." Prokimenon of the day. On Friday evening, however, we sing the Great Prokimenon before the Readings:

GREAT PROKIMENON *(Tone 7)*

Our God is in Heaven and on earth. Whatever the Lord wills, He does.

- v. When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a foreign nation.

- v. The sea looked and ran away; Jordan turned back.
- v. Sea, what makes you run away? Jordan, why did you turn back?

READINGS

1) *Exodus 15: 22-27*

At that time Moses led Israel forward from the Red Sea, and they marched out to the desert of Shur. After traveling for three days through the desert without finding water, they arrived at Marah, where they could not drink the water, because it was too bitter. Hence this place was called Marah. As the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" he appealed to the Lord, who pointed out to him a certain piece of wood. When he threw this into the water, the water became fresh.

It was here that the Lord, in making rules and regulations for them, put them to the test. "If you really listen to the voice of the Lord, your God," He told them, "and do what is right in His eyes: if you heed His commandments and keep all His precepts, I will not afflict you with any of the diseases with which I afflicted the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer." Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

2) *Proverbs 3: 11-18*

Thus says the Lord: The discipline of the Lord, my son, disdain not; spurn not His reproof; for whom the Lord loves He reproves, and He chastises the son He favors.

Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding! For her profit is better than profit in silver, and better than gold is her revenue; she is more precious than corals, and none of your choice possessions can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand, in her left are riches and honor; her ways are pleasant ways, and all her

paths are peace; she is a tree of life to those who grasp her, and he is happy who holds her fast.

3) *Isaiah 60: 11-16*

Thus says the Lord: Your gates shall stand open constantly; day and night they shall not be closed but shall admit to you the wealth of nations, and their kings, in the vanguard. For the people or kingdom shall perish that does not serve you; those nations shall be utterly destroyed. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you: the cypress, the plane and the pine, to bring beauty to my sanctuary, and Glory to the place where I set my feet. The children of your oppressors shall come, bowing low before you; all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at your feet. They shall call you "City of the Lord," "Sion of the Holy One of Israel."

Once you were forsaken, hated and unvisited, now I will make you the pride of the ages, a joy to generation after generation. You shall suck the milk of nations, and be nursed at royal breasts; you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

LETE (*Tone 1*)

Today the holy words of David have truly received their fulfillment; for in the sight of all the world we venerate the footstool of Your undefiled feet. And putting our hope in the shadow of Your wings, we cry aloud to You, all-compassionate Lord: Mark us with the light of Your countenance, and lift up the horn of Your Orthodox people, by the Exaltation of Your precious Cross, O Christ of many mercies.

The Tree of true life was planted in the Place of the Skull; and upon it, You, the eternal King, worked salvation in the midst of the earth. Exalted today, it sanctifies the ends of the earth, and the Church is renewed in the Resurrection. Angels in heaven greatly rejoice and men upon earth make glad, crying aloud with David and saying, "Exalt the Lord our

God and worship at His footstool, for He is holy, granting the world great mercy!"

Prefiguring Your Cross, O Christ, Jacob the Patriarch, when he gave his blessing to his descendants, laid his hands crosswise on their heads. And today as we exalt Your Cross, O Savior, we cry out, "Give victory to Your Orthodox people as You once gave it to Constantine!"

(Tone 2)

Divine treasure hidden in the earth, the Cross of the Giver of Life appeared in the heavens to the pious King; and its inscription spiritually signified his victory over the enemy. Rejoicing with faith and love, inspired by God, he made haste to raise on high the Cross which he had seen in his vision and with great zeal he brought it forth from the bosom of the earth, for the deliverance of the world and the salvation of our souls.

The crossing of his hands by the Patriarch Jacob at his blessing of his children foreshadowed the mighty token of Your Cross. Having it as our safeguard that cannot be overthrown, we drive out with invincible strength the hosts of demons; and casting down the arrogance of Belial, we put to flight the all-destroying power of hateful Amalek. And now that it is lifted on high, we the faithful offer it in piety to Your goodness for the cleansing of our sins, crying aloud in all the fulness of our voices: "Have mercy, O Lord, made flesh of the Virgin! O You who are good, take pity on the works that You fashioned in Your wisdom!"

O three-branched Cross of Christ, you are my strong protection. Sanctify me by your might, that I may venerate and glorify you in faith and love.

(Tone 4)

Let us make glad today and sing in honor of the feast, and with joyful face and tongue openly cry aloud: "O Christ, for

us You accepted condemnation, being spat upon and scourged. You were wrapped in a purple robe and went up on the Cross. Seeing You, the sun and moon hid their light; the earth quaked in fear, and the veil of the temple was torn in half. Grant us now Your precious Cross as guardian and protector and driver away of demons, that embracing it, we may all cry aloud, "Save us, O Cross, by your might. Make us holy by your splendor, O precious Cross, and strengthen us through your Exaltation; for you have been given to us the light and salvation of our souls."

O Cross, sign radiant with light among the stars, you have in prophecy revealed a trophy of victory to the pious King; and when his mother Helen found you, she displayed you in the sight of all the world. And today the choirs of the faithful shout aloud as they raise you up on high: "Enlighten us by your radiance, O life-giving and all-venerable Cross: make us holy by your might; and lifted on high before the battle-line, strengthen us through your Exaltation.

v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

O Christ our God, Moses prefigured the salutary effects of Your precious Cross when he defeated the haughty Amalek in the desert of Sinai, for while he extended his arms crosswise, the people were victorious. All these symbols have now attained their perfection before our eyes: today, as the Cross is lifted up, evil spirits are cast away; today the whole creation is delivered from corruption, for all blessings have been bestowed upon us by the Cross. Wherefore we joyfully kneel to You and say: "How great are Your works, O Lord! Glory to You!"

APOSTICHA (*Tone 5*)

1. Hail, life-bearing Cross of the Lord, invincible triumph of Orthodoxy! You are the gate to Paradise, the strength of the faithful, the stronghold of the Church. Because of

you, corruption no longer has any meaning nor any power: we have been lifted up by you from earth to heaven. You are an invincible weapon against evil, a glory indeed for saints and martyrs and a haven of salvation; you are a source of mercy to the world.

- v. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool, for He is holy.
- 2. Hail, most honorable Cross of the Lord! Through you mankind has been relieved of the curse. You are a sign of joy, indeed, and terror to our spiritual enemies. You are the help of Christians, the glory of Kings, the strength of the just, the splendor of priests, a staff of power to your people and a source of peace. Around you the angels gather in awe. You are the glory of Christ who grants great mercy to the world.
- v. The Lord is King from of old, and He has brought about salvation in the midst of the earth.
- 3. Hail, precious Cross of the Lord, guide to the blind, physician to the sick and resurrection to all the dead. You lifted us out of corruption and removed the curse; through you, we have been made godly, and the power of Hades has been destroyed in full. Wherefore, seeing you today lifted up by our priests, we exalt Christ who was suspended on you, and we bow deeply before you, seeking forgiveness and great mercy.
- v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 8)

O Christ God, we poor sinners bow deeply today before Your precious Cross. Moses had prefigured it in himself when he defeated Amalek, and David the Psalmist, when he told us to "worship at His footstool". Wherefore, with unworthy lips we sing a hymn of praise

to You who condescended to be nailed on this Cross and with the thief, we cry out to You: "O Lord, make us worthy of Your Kingdom!"

TROPARION OF THE CROSS (*Tone 1*) [Three times]

O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Grant victory to our country over its enemies; and preserve Your community by the power of Your Cross!