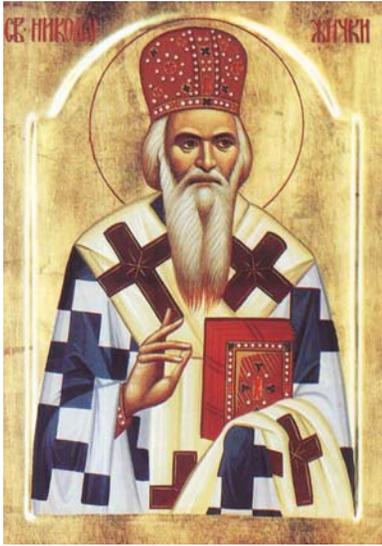


## Saint Nikolai Velimirovich of Zhicha, Serbia



On March 18, we also commemorate St. Nikolai (Nicholas) Velimirovich. He was a saint of the twentieth century. During World War Two he was imprisoned by the Nazis in a concentration camp. There he kept a diary which he called “Through a Prison Window.”

In his diary, he never mentioned his own sufferings but instead he forgave the people who hurt him and he prayed for all the people, both friends and enemies, to come to Christ.

Saint Nikolai was born in Serbia, studied in Russia, and came to America where he was a teacher and leader at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

Saint Nikolai also wrote a book of 100 prayers called “Prayers by the Lake.” Many people read these prayers. One of Saint Nikolai’s most loved prayers is a prayer he said for those persons who considered themselves his enemies.

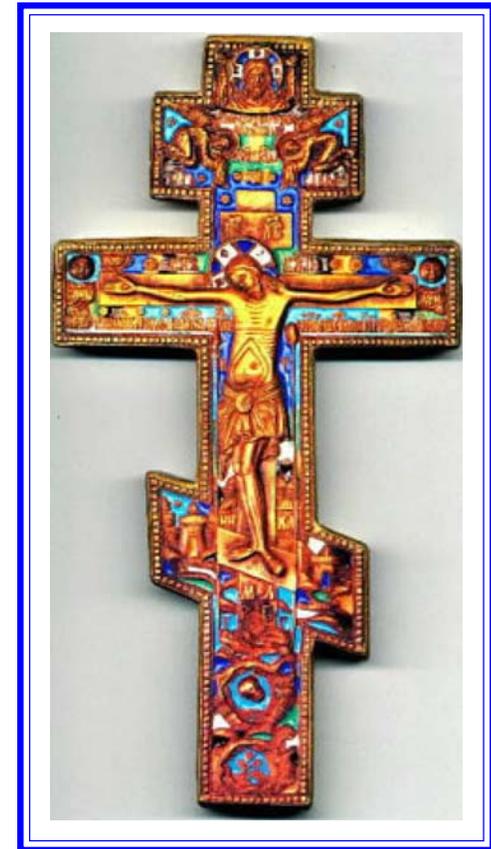
“Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. ...

Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies in the world except himself. ...

One hates his enemies only when he fails to realize that they are not enemies, but cruel friends. ...

Therefore bless, O Lord, both my friends and enemies.”

## Sunday of the Cross



“If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” (The Gospel of Mark 8:34 – 9:1)

Services today include a special Veneration of the Cross, which helps Orthodox Christians to prepare for Holy Week. This is the Sunday that is half-way through Lent.

The Cross is called the Tree of Life. It is placed for us to venerate during the middle of Great Lent, just as the ancient tree of life was placed in the middle of the garden of Eden.

The Cross is placed before us in church today to refresh our souls and encourage us if we are feeling tired or discouraged during Great Lent. The Cross encourages us to follow what Christ teaches us to do and to feel refreshed and comforted.

We will see the Cross decorated with flowers. On Pascha, we will also see the church decorated with flowers. Flowers are a symbol of new life and are one of the symbols of the Resurrection. In the Orthodox Church, flowers remind us of the beauty of the life we can have in Heaven because of God's love for us.

### **Gospel Reading for the Sunday of the Cross**

At the Divine Liturgy, we will hear the words of Christ in the Gospel reading from Saint Mark 8:34 to 9:1

**“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it.**

**For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and lose his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this immoral and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”**

**And Jesus said to them, “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.”**

## **OUR ORTHODOX FAITH IS A WAY OF LIFE**

**“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”** To “deny” means to give something up. Do you think a person has to give up something in order to follow Christ? Why or why not?

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What is Christ asking people to give up?

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It is hard work to give up bad habits, such as selfishness, greed, anger, envy, gossip, or criticizing others. What did Christ compare it to?

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What do you think is gained by giving up those things?

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**“For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and lose his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?”**  
What did Christ say was more important -- things we can buy or our soul?

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**We must never be ashamed of being Orthodox Christians. Wearing a cross, saying a blessing before eating (you don't have to say it out loud if you are in a public place such as school), trying our best to never hurt or criticize others, forgiving people who hurt or insult us, helping less fortunate persons when we can, and always working on overcoming bad habits -- these are all things which set us Orthodox Christians apart in a world in which we see many events and people who are confused about what is right and what is wrong.**

**It is hard work to always do the right thing, but if we pray, Christ will always help us.**