

Learn the Troparion to the Cross

**O Lord, save Thy people,
and bless Thine inheritance!
Grant victory to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries,
and by virtue of Thy cross,
preserve Thy habitation.**

What is a “troparion”? – A troparion is a short hymn (song) of praise or prayer.

What is the meaning of this troparion?

The Lord is Jesus Christ, our God. We ask Him in this troparion to protect us from physical and spiritual harm (evil).

What do the words “Thy” and “Thine” mean? – They mean “your” and are old formal words that show respect when talking to God.

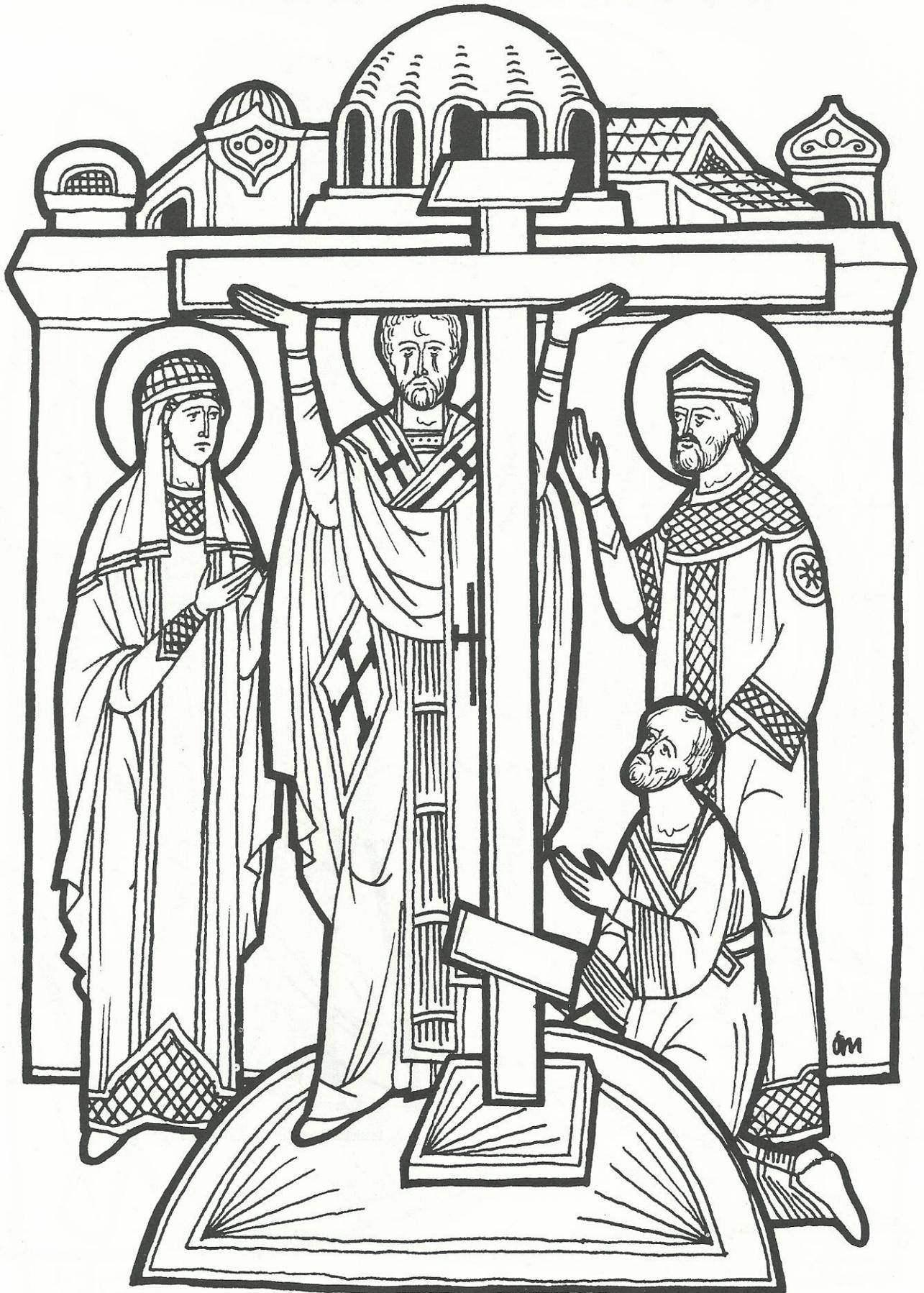
What is “inheritance”? – An inheritance is something that is passed forward from generation to generation, from great-grandparents to grandparents to parents to children: YOU. The inheritance of God includes all the teachings and traditions of the Orthodox Church.

What is meant when we ask God to us grant victory over our adversaries? Who or what are our adversaries? – An adversary is someone or something that opposes us or can hurt us. An adversary “can be” an army but the meaning here is also the struggle that every person has to fight against his or her bad habits and sins. For example, if a person is overweight, then in order to lose weight he would fight against his habit of eating too many sweets.

What do the words “by virtue of Thy Cross” mean? – This refers to the power of the Cross of Christ to protect us from harm. When we pray, we cross ourselves. Every time we cross ourselves we are asking God to be with us and to protect us or grant us something that we ask of Him. We wear a cross at our neck for the same reason.

What is “preserve Thy habitation”? As we said above, the word “Thy” refers to God, so “Thy habitation” refers to God’s habitation. A habitation is a place where someone lives. God’s habitation is in both the Church and *in your heart*. Just as when we say the prayer to the Holy Spirit (“come and abide in us”), when we ask God to “preserve Thy habitation” we are asking Him to preserve the Church and also to keep our hearts free from sin so God is welcome there.

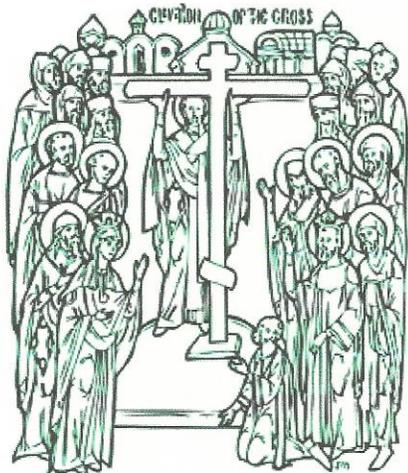
• ELEVATION OF THE CROSS •



The Greatest Conqueror is Conquered



This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



September 14th is the Feast of the Exaltation (or Elevation) of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.

There are two events in history to which this feast takes us, as Eugen J. Pentiuic writes in his book "The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition" (Oxford University Press 2014). The first took place in the year 335, when the church built by Constantine over the traditional site of Christ's tomb was consecrated in Jerusalem. It was named the Church of the Resurrection; it is now known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The second event occurred in 629, fifteen years after the Persians had sacked and looted the church, taking as part of their spoils a relic of the True Cross. In 629 the Byzantine emperor Heraclius was able to recover the relic, and to bring it to Constantinople. There he carried it into the great church of Hagia Sophia, and elevated it as a sign of victory.

Father Pentiuic notes that one of the readings for the Great Vespers of the feast is Exodus 15: 22-16: 1. This is the account of Moses leading the people of Israel on from the Red Sea, after the exodus from Egypt, into the wilderness of Shur. They come, thirsty and tired, to the waters of Marah, only to find that the water is too bitter to drink. As so often, the people complain and "murmur against" poor Moses.

He, in turn, cries out to God. The Lord shows him a tree, which he flings into the water. At once the water becomes sweet enough to drink. Soon the people come to Elim where they encamp under seventy palm trees, surrounded by twelve springs and buoyed by God's promise that if they will keep His statutes, He will spare them the diseases He has used to chastise the arrogant, heedless Egyptians.

Reading this passage reminds us that the Old Testament often prepares us for what happened to Jesus Christ. The tree at Marah is like the wood of the Cross, which sweetens everything bitter because it gives us eternal life. The crucified Christ rises from the dead, "upon those in the tomb bestowing life."

One of the stikhera for the festal Great Vespers speaks about another tree: "Come, all you nations, let us worship the blessed Tree through which was wrought the everlasting righteousness. For he who by a tree beguiled our forefather Adam is himself ensnared by the Cross." Here the blessed Tree is the cross, but the tree with which Satan beguiled Adam is the tree in the Garden.

Saint John Chrysostom also makes reference to Satan, as the one who conquered Adam by tempting him to eat of the forbidden tree in Paradise. But the conqueror is conquered by the Resurrection, which robs Satan of his fatal power over humankind.

The tree in the Garden, the tree at Marah, and in fact the whole Old Testament, lead us to the Tree by which Jesus Christ will conquer death once and for all.

Kontakion - Tone 4

As You were voluntarily raised upon the cross for our sake,
Grant mercy to those who are called by Your Name, O Christ God;
Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Your power,
Granting them victories over their adversaries,
By bestowing on them the Invincible trophy, Your weapon of Peace.