

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Today, He Who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross. He Who is the King of Angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He Who wraps the heaven in clouds is wrapped in the purple of mockery. The Bridegroom of the Church is fixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. Behold, this is our God, and there is none other. He who rests upon the Cherubim and in the Bosom of God the Father, rests also now upon the Tomb. The Son and Eternal Word of God empties Himself, takes the form of a servant, and is found in the likeness of man, being obedient to the point of death upon the Cross and yet He never ceases to be God from all eternity with the Father and the Spirit. Behold, this is our God: The Lord, our God, is One Lord: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

He Who deigned, in His Pre-eternal counsel with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in St. Peter's words, to be sacrificed before the foundation of the world as the "Lamb without blemish or spot." The Crucifixion was no mistake or tragedy but rather was deliberate and total restoration of the fabric of humanity which

was foretold by countless prophets (who foretold beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow.)

Christ gave Himself as a Ransom to death, in which we were held captive, and descending through the Cross into Hell, that He might fill all things with Himself, He loosed the pangs of death and He arose on the third day, having made for all flesh a path to the Resurrection from the dead (from *St. Basil's Liturgy*.)

For it was by sin that death entered into this world (which the Scriptures tell us that God did not create but rather came by the will of man [see *the Book of Sirach*]) and now it is through death that sin is destroyed. It was in a garden and through a Tree that mankind fell away from God and it is now in a garden and through the Tree of the Cross that mankind is restored to life. Point by point, from the Incarnation to the Cross and Resurrection, Christ restores the integrity to our nature, healing us in His own Person and making us whole, and by His Passion, healing our passions. Now, it is now our job to appropriate this healing and wholeness to ourselves, to enter deeply into it and make this salvation our own through the crucifixion of our will to

sin and selfishness and by our conscious effort to choose God's will and make it our own. We must mercilessly persecute our own selfishness to the point of its death, a death to the passions which corrupt this world.

What then is the glory of the Cross which we seek? Is not the Cross incomprehensible to our minds because the glory that shines through it is blinding bright, to the point of becoming Divine Darkness? Therefore, in order to understand, we must crucify our mind and our reason, choosing rather to accept the folly of the Cross and the commandments of the Lord: His Way and our faith in His unfailing concern for us as the rule of our life. For unless we renounce our fallen human understanding concerning the things of God and accept this foolishness of the Cross, we will not be able to descend with our humble Lord into the hell of our own passions to discover there, through imitating His humility, the power of His Resurrection...for it is only in our poverty that we can discover God's strength.

Christ calls to all: if any man would follow me, let him take up his Cross and follow me. Our commitment and love for Christ

must increase as our passions and self-centeredness decrease. The way that leads to life in this fallen world is through the pain of the Cross which will lead us to true and lasting joy. Let us courageously choose, with God as our helper, to endure this momentary unpleasantness that leads to our own Resurrection. For according to St. Ephraim, the Tree of the Cross on this side of Paradise looks to be a death and destruction. But on the other side (the side of Paradise,) he says, it is the very Tree of Life which Adam was not able to partake of. Let us hasten to that Tree and taste the fruit that buds forth from it, the Eucharist, and by partaking thereof with faith and love, let us be united to Life Eternal, which is Christ Himself. Offering our own life, let us receive His life which He pours out today for the salvation of the world. We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ; we venerate Thy Passion, O Christ; We venerate Thy passion, O Christ: Show us also, Thy Holy Resurrection. Amen.