

Orthodox Mission

Our First Weekly Newsletter – Sunday, Apr. 3, 2005

Pascha is May 1, 2005. Orthodox Easter, called *Pascha* from the Greek and the Hebrew, is May 1 (civil date) this year. Today is the 3rd Sun. in Lent, and thus tomorrow begins the fourth week of Great Lent. **Lenten Fast.** During Great Lent each day is a fasting day like a Wednesday or Friday, except on Saturday and Sunday oil and wine are allowed. On Annunciation and on Palm Sunday, fish is also allowed.

Calendar for this Week

Apr. 3 / Mar. 21	3rd Sunday in Lent	<i>Fast, OW*</i>	St. Theodore, abp, new-m. Hours & Typika 10 am.
Apr. 4 / Mar. 22	Monday in Lent	<i>Fast</i>	Sts. Basil, b, Sophia, abs, & Dmitri, priest, new-martyrs.
Apr. 5 / Mar. 23	Tuesday in Lent	<i>Fast</i>	Sts. Sergius & Macarius (priests) & Alexis, new-martyrs.
Apr. 6 / Mar. 24	Wednesday in Lent	<i>Fast</i>	St. Vladimir, priest, new-martyr.
Apr. 7 / Mar. 25	Thurs.-Annunciation	<i>Fast, FOW*</i>	St. Dismas the Good Thief. Bd. Justin Popovich of Serbia.
Apr. 8 / Mar. 26	Friday in Lent	<i>Fast</i>	St. Gabriel the Archangel
Apr. 9 / Mar. 27	Saturday in Lent	<i>Fast, OW*</i>	Icons of Theotokos called "Sweet-Kissing" & "The Akathist"

* *OW means that oil and wine are allowed on this day. FOW means fish is allowed too.*

Explanation of the Russian (3-bar) Cross



The **top bar** is the title-board which Pilate ordered to be hung in mockery over Christ's head on the Cross. On this board was inscribed: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (abbreviated to the Greek initials 'INBI' or the Latin initials 'INRI' in the Western tradition). This is replaced with the Christian inscription: "King of Glory" – below the knees of the angels. On the title-board is inscribed the initials 'IC XC', being the first and last letters of Christ's name in Greek. In addition, just above Christ's arms we see the inscription: 'NIKA', which in Greek means: "He conquers" or "He is victorious." Frequently, we see these last two inscriptions together: 'IC XC NIKA', meaning: "Jesus Christ is victorious" (over death and sin).



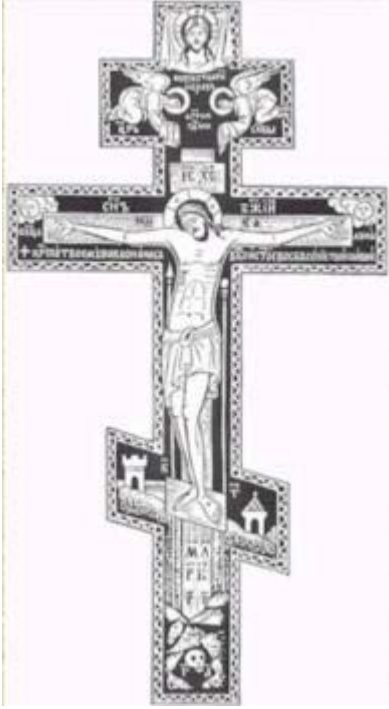
The **middle bar** is that on which the Lord's hands were nailed. On either top corner we see the depiction of the sun (left) and the moon (right), for "The sun hid its light, and the moon turned to blood." (Joel 2:31) The inscription: "Son of God" is placed on both sides of Christ's head, and below His arms we read the inscription: "Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify". The halo of Christ is inscribed with three Greek letters meaning "The Being" or "He Who Is", to remind us that Christ is the same God Who identified Himself with those words to Moses in the Old Law.



The slanted **bottom bar** is the foot-rest. There is some question of whether it was actually on the Cross of Christ, but it is acknowledged to be a necessary attribute of the Cross, worthy of veneration and prophetically alluded to in the words [Let us] worship the footstool of His feet... (Ps. 98:5). In prayers for the Ninth Hour, the Church likens the Cross to a type of balance of righteousness:

"Between two thieves Thy Cross did prove to be a balance of righteousness: wherefore one of them was dragged down to Hades by the weight of his blasphemy whereas the other was lightened of his transgressions unto the comprehension of theology. O Christ God, glory to Thee."

The meaning of this prayer is as follows: the Cross of Christ stood for a scale of justice between the two thieves: for one of them sank in to hell, dragged down by his blasphemous words; and the other, the wise thief, ascended into heaven, because of his repentance. The church fathers attempted to render tangible the thought of the unfaithful thief going to hell for his blasphemy through the just judgment of God (*the lower end of the bar*), and of the wise thief going to heaven for his repentance and his praise of God (*the upper end*)



On the Cross is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Note that He does not wear a crown of thorns, and that His feet are nailed with two nails. Behind the body of Christ, on either side, are a lance (which pierced Him) and a sponge (which was soaked with gall and offered to Christ to drink) on a pole made of reed or cane. On the body of Christ is depicted blood and water flowing forth from His side. Below the feet of Christ are four Slavonic letters meaning: "The place of the skull became Paradise". Hidden in a cave under the earth is 'the skull of Adam'. We are thus reminded that Adam our forefather lost Paradise through the tree from which he wrongly partook; Christ is the new Adam, bringing us Salvation and Paradise through the tree of the Cross. The city of Jerusalem is depicted in the background, for He was crucified outside the city walls.

(from a document by Fr. Theodore Jurewicz, and an article in Living Orthodoxy magazine of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia)

Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian for Lent

O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, ambition, and idle talking give me not. *Prostration.*

But rather a spirit of chastity, humble-mindedness, patience, and love bestow on me Thy servant. *Prostration.*

Yea, O Lord King, grant me to see my own faults and not condemn my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. *Prostration.*

Of Interest

Our community is preparing for the first visit of its archpastor, Bishop Peter of Cleveland (acting hierarch for the Diocese of Chicago). Vladika will arrive in Austin at the end of April for a three-day visit to (1) the Russian-language Parish of the Holy Protection (here in Austin; their chapel is off Burnet Road), (2) our community's chapel, and (3) the Mercury, Texas parish which lost its priest Fr. Patrick when he passed away several years ago. He will bring with him the miracle-working "Kursk Root" Icon of the Mother of God. Vladika wishes to do an akathist before the Kursk Root Icon in our chapel probably on the 2nd day of his visit. This represents for our community a very great blessing and a spiritual foundation for our future life together in Christ, through the prayers of Her Who is Most Holy. We need to carefully plan a proper reception for His Grace.

Bible Readings for This Week

Sun. Hebrews 4:14-5:6; Mark 8:34-9:1

Mon. Genesis 8:21-9:7; Proverbs 11:19-12:6

Tue. Genesis 9:8-17; Proverbs 12:8-22

Wed. Genesis 9:18-10:1; Proverbs 12:23-13:9

Thu. Genesis 10:32-11:9; Proverbs 13:20-14:6

Fri. Genesis 12:1-7; Proverbs 14:15-26

Sat. Hebrews 6:9-12; Mark 7:31-37