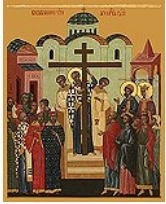


✠Bulletin✠

Week of September 14th to September 20th



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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14th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 5

The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross
St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (407)

Monastic Martyr Macarius of Dionysiou (Mt. Athos—1507). Monastic Martyr Joseph of Dionysiou (Mt. Athos—1819).

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Sunday September 14th, 2025 Feast of the Elevation of the Cross

9:10 am – Hours

9:30 am – Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Bishop Gerasim

Weekly Schedule

Sunday September 14, 2025

- Lunch with Bishop Gerasim following Divine Liturgy
- Inquirers & Catechism classes following Divine Liturgy.
- Bishop Gerasim will be instructing this class

Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

Saint John Chrysostom

Let us consider of what great blessings for us Christ's Cross has become the cause. For though the Lord's Cross sounds sad and bitter, it is in reality full of joy and radiance. For the Cross is the salvation of the Church; the Cross is the boast of those who hope in it; the Cross is reconciliation of enemies to God and conversion of sinners to Christ. For through the Cross we have been delivered from enmity, and through the Cross we have been joined in friendship to God. Through the Cross we have been freed from the tyranny of the devil, and through the Cross we have been delivered from death and destruction. 'When the Cross was not proclaimed, we were held fast by death; now the Cross is proclaimed, and we have come to despise death, as though it did not exist, while we have come to long for everlasting life. 'When the Cross was not proclaimed, we were strangers to paradise; but when the Cross appeared, at once a thief was found worthy of paradise. From such darkness the human race has crossed over to infinite light; from death it has been called to everlasting life, from corruption it has been renewed for incorruption. For the eyes of the heart are no longer covered by the darkness that comes through ignorance, but through the Cross they are flooded with the light of knowledge. The ears of the deaf are no longer shut by unbelief, for the deaf have heard the word of the Lord, and the blind have recovered their sight to see the glory of God. These are the gifts we are given through the Cross. What blessing has not been achieved for us through the Cross?

The Cross is proclaimed, and faith in God is confessed and truth prevails in the whole inhabited world. The Cross is proclaimed, and martyrs are revealed and confession of Christ prevails. The Cross is proclaimed, and the resurrection is revealed, life is made manifest, the kingdom of heaven is assured. The Cross has become the cause of all these things, and through the Cross we have been taught to sing. What then is more precious than the Cross? What more profitable for our souls? So let us not be ashamed to name the Cross, but let us confess it with total confidence.

Let us cling to the Cross, placing all our hopes on the Cross, so that taught through the Cross, fixing our thought on heaven, being brought close to Christ our Savior, we may be found worthy to be near God in the kingdom of heaven, in Christ our Lord himself, to whom be glory and might to the ages of ages. Amen

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us! Amen!

Prayer Requests

Carolyn – Robert & Debra's Forster's daughter
Anne and Scott Peatross
Robert (John) Forster
Robert Kozera
Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos' daughter
Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,
Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,
Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,
Roman, Mykola
Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

Please let us know of anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.

tithe.ly.com

Another way to "donate". This app can be downloaded to your phone and Holy Cross can be accessed via this app. Also, tithe.ly can be accessed through the church website www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org

Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding Orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Variable Hymns and Readings

The First Antiphon

God, my God, attend to me! Why hast Thou forsaken me? *(Ps. 21:1a)*

***Refrain:* Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

Why art Thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

(Ps. 21:1b) (Refrain)

O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer; and by night but find no rest. *(Ps. 21:2) (Refrain)*

Thou dwellest in the sanctuary, the praise of Israel. *(Ps. 21:3) (Refrain)*
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. *(Refrain)*

The Second Antiphon

O God, why dost Thou cast us off forever? *(Ps. 73:1a)*

Refrain: O Son of God, crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast gotten of old! *(Ps. 73:2) (Refrain)*

Remember Mount Zion, where Thou hast dwelt! *(Ps. 73:3b) (Refrain)*
God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the midst of the earth. *(Ps. 73:13) (Refrain)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.
("Only-begotten Son and immortal Word of God...")

The Third Antiphon

The Lord reigns, let the people tremble! *(Ps. 98:1a)*

***Refrain:* Tone 1 Troparion of the Feast**

O Lord, save Thy people,
and bless Thine inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries;
and by virtue of Thy Cross,//
preserve Thy habitation!

The Lord reigns, let the people tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! *(Ps. 98:1)*

Troparion of the Feast

The Lord is great in Zion; He is exalted over all the people. *(Ps. 98:2)*

Troparion of the Feast

Bow down in worship to the Lord in His holy court! *(Ps. 98:10)*

Troparion of the Feast

Entrance Verse

Extol the Lord our God: worship at His footstool for He is holy! *(Ps. 98:5)*

Troparion of the Feast

Tone 1 Troparion

O Lord, save Thy people,
and bless Thine inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries;
and by virtue of Thy Cross,//
preserve Thy habitation!

Tone 4 Kontakion

As Thou wast voluntarily raised upon the Cross for our sake,
grant mercy to those who are called by Thy Name, O Christ God;
make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power,
granting them victories over their adversaries//
by bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace!

(Instead of the Trisagion [Holy God...], we sing:)

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master,
and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify.

Tone 7 Prokeimenon

Extol the Lord our God: / worship at His footstool for He is holy! (Ps. 98:5)

V. The Lord reigns, let the people tremble! (Ps. 98:1a)

1 Corinthians 1:18-24 (Epistle)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*V. Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast gotten of old!
(Ps. 73:2)*

*V. God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the
midst of the earth! (Ps. 73:12)*

John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30-35 (Gospel)

Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And

bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading

By Blessed Theophylact

Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

6-7. Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Pilate is intimidated by the Jews and not eager to offend them. He takes Jesus out to them, making another attempt to calm them. But they are unmoved and shout, *Crucify, crucify Him!* Seeing all his efforts come to nothing, Pilate announces, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." He is desperate to set Jesus free, so he proposes that the Jews do exactly what they are not permitted to do. "I have the authority to crucify Him," he tells them, "but *I find no fault in Him*. You have no such authority but insist that He is guilty. So, you *take ... Him, and crucify Him*. Ah, you don't have the power to do this, you say? Then let Him go." Thus spoke Pilate, for he was a reasonable man, although one unwilling to put himself at risk for the truth. But the Jews, stung by his words, retort, *By our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God*. Behold, evil at odds with itself! Earlier Pilate had told them, *Take Him, and judge Him according to your law*; but they refused. Now they insist, *By our law He ought to die*. First they accuse Jesus of making Himself a king. That was shown to be a lie, so now they denounce Him for claiming to be the Son of God. But how is that a crime? If Christ does the works of God, what prevents Him from being the Son of God? Behold God's wondrous providence! In order to smear His reputation, the Jews hauled the Lord from one court to another, but they only succeed in shaming themselves. Careful investigation only makes Christ's innocence more obvious. How many times did Pilate declare he could find nothing to warrant Jesus' death!

8-11. Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Pilate was afraid, merely hearing the words "*He is the Son of God* [v. 7.]" But the Jews had witnessed Christ's divine deeds; yet they sought to destroy Him when they should have bowed down in worship. Pilate questions Jesus again, "Where are You from? Who are You?" To this, Jesus makes no response. For He had already told Pilate, *To this end was I born* [John. 18:37], and, *My kingdom is not from hence* [John: 18:36]; but Pilate did not open his heart and mind to understand. The Lord remains silent, ignoring these questions as pointless, since Pilate is unwilling to resist the crowd and defend the truth. Thus, he proves himself to be utterly weak-willed and easily shaken by threats. If he feared the Jews, how much more ought he to have been terrified of Jesus, the Son of God! Behold, he is condemned by his own words: *I have power to crucify You, and power to release You*. If everything is in your power, Pilate, why then did you not release the man you found to be innocent? The Lord then curbs his arrogance: "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above*. My death is not meaningless; rather, it is preordained in heaven to accomplish a secret, mystical purpose - the salvation of the world." The words *except it were given you from above* by no means relieve Pilate of responsibility before God. For the Lord adds, *the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin*. This shows that Pilate is also guilty, but to a lesser degree than the Jews.

14-18. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. We have commented several times that Pilate was more weak and timid than evil. Outwardly he appears to examine and judge but goes about it feebly. *Behold your king!* he declares, neither condemning Jesus nor openly rebuking the Jews. Indirectly he does reproach them as slanderers, saying in effect, "Behold the man you claim is attempting to become your king: a lowly, simple person who in fact has no aspirations to such a rank. Your accusation is

patently false. He has no wealth, no army, no nobles at His side. *Behold your king!* What are you hoping to gain by killing this powerless and harmless man?" This is what Pilate implied; but he did not act decisively as would a man fighting to defend the truth. The Jews cry, *Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!* pressing hard and demanding the cross, because they want to smear Christ's reputation forever by having Him executed in the most humiliating, accursed way possible. As it is written, *Everyone that is hung on a tree is cursed of God* [Dt. 21:23]. But they did not realize that, just as man's fall came about by a tree, so too by a tree would his lifting up and restoration be accomplished. Behold, the Jews recognize *no king but Caesar!* By voluntarily submitting to Roman power, they disavow God as their king; having removed themselves from God's care and protection, God abandons them to the cruelties of the very men they take as kings [with the result that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed by the Romans forty years later]. *Then Pilate delivered Him therefore unto them to be crucified.* O foolish man! Timid and cowardly, he failed to exercise his authority as judge. *And He bearing His cross went forth.* It was considered a defilement - and therefore was forbidden - even to touch the wood of a cross used for execution, so they compelled the man they had condemned and cursed to carry on His back the accursed wood. The soldiers crucified Christ between two robbers, intending to make Him guilty by association, again with a view to ruining His good reputation. Doing so, they unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy, *He was numbered among the transgressors* [Is. 53:12]; and thus, by God's wisdom their intended insult only increased His glory. While hanging on the cross, the Lord brought salvation to a robber - a miracle as great as any He performed and one that shows that He is God. And so, He alone was glorified, although three were executed. It could not have happened like this unless He were innocent. He is the true Judge of the lawless and transcends every law.

19-20. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The *title* which Pilate wrote and fixed to the cross identified the man being executed and declared his crime. Pilate wrote this partly to retaliate against the Jews for disobeying him, partly to show that they were wicked rebels against their own king, and partly to defend Christ's reputation. Because the Jews deliberately crucified the Lord with robbers in order to besmirch His name, Pilate declares that Jesus is a king, not a thief. Earlier, the Evangelist mentioned certain Greeks who came to see Jesus [see Jn. 12:20]. Now Pilate writes the inscription in Greek as well as Hebrew and Latin, for the sake of the many Greeks present in the crowd

on account of the feast. He broadcasts the madness of the Jews in all three languages, making it plain to everyone. But even with Jesus hanging upon the cross, the Jews' hatred of Him is unquenchable. *"Write that He said, I am king of the Jews,"* they demanded. As written, the title was a condemnation of the Jews: but if the words **He said** had been added, then its meaning would have changed, and it would have accused Christ of impudence and arrogance. But Pilate held to his decision: *What I have written, I have written.* This inscription would later play a significant part in the unfolding of God's providence. After the crucifixion, the three crosses were buried together in the same place. Only the Lord's cross had an inscription and therefore could be distinguished from the other two. The fact that the inscription was written in three languages also has spiritual meaning, testifying that the Lord is sovereign over moral, natural, and divine philosophy. The Latin letters symbolize moral virtue; for Roman rule was based on courage and vigor, qualities the Romans preeminently displayed in their conduct of war. The Greek letters symbolize the natural world, to which the Greeks devoted much study. The Hebrew letters denote theology; for the revelation of divine knowledge was entrusted to the Hebrews.

25-27. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

The Lord provides for His mother's welfare. Note that several women disciples were present at the cross, but the Lord makes provision only for His mother. Since He would soon depart from this life, and His mother would be grief-stricken and need protection, Jesus entrusts her to *the disciple*. Out of humility, the Evangelist omits his own name. Had he wanted to boast, he could have taken advantage of the opportunity to mention why he was loved so much by the Lord. Surely, the reason must have been compelling and wondrous, for the Lord honored John by making him His own brother. In fact, this was John's reward for keeping vigil by the suffering Christ. It is marvelous how calmly the Lord went about His work while hanging on the cross - caring for His mother, fulfilling prophecies, opening paradise to the thief. Again, this demonstrates His divine power. Before the crucifixion He agonized and sweated, revealing His human nature.

28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" *Jesus knowing,* the Evangelist writes, *that all things were now accomplished.* This means, "When every

aspect of God's *economia* had been fulfilled." Such a different kind of death was His! Death could not come near His body until He Himself so willed. And only after *all things were ... accomplished* did He will it, confirming what He had earlier declared: "*I have power to lay My life down* [John. 10:18]." Then He says, *I thirst*, fulfilling yet another prophecy. The soldiers display their foul malice by offering Him vinegar to drink, which is what condemned criminals were given. Hyssop was added because it was poisonous.

30. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. When He had received the drink, He said, *It is finished*. This means: "Every prophecy is now fulfilled; nothing has been omitted; all is accomplished." At every moment, until the very end, the Lord acts calmly and with authority. Having completed everything, *He bowed His head, and gave up His Spirit*, meaning, He breathed His last. When we die, it is the opposite: first we breathe our last breath, then our head drops. By His every action, Christ confirms that He is Lord of death and has accomplished everything by His own power.

31-34. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. The Lord committed His soul to God the Father, showing us that the souls of the saints are not confined in the tombs. Rather, they fly into the arms of the Father of all; but the souls of sinners are cast down into hades, the place of punishment. Meanwhile, the Jews committed a heinous crime and then scrupulously observed their holy day. The Evangelist explains: *In order that the bodies should not remain upon the cross, the Jews besought Pilate ... that they might be taken away.* And why might they have wanted the legs broken? There are several possible explanations: First, so that if the robbers did survive crucifixion, they would be unable ever to resume their lawless ways. Second, the Jews did not want to appear to be vengeful murderers on the high day of the feast. And third, so that there would be no violation of the law commanding that a man's punishment end before sunset [see Dt. 21:22-23; Eph. 4:26]. Behold how the schemes of the Jews fulfill the prophecies - here, two at one stroke: The soldiers did not break Jesus' legs, but to please the Jews they pierced His side, and blood and water came forth. Their aim was to insult even His corpse, but the affront resulted in a miracle.

It is highly unusual that blood should gush from a corpse. That water also came forth is an indisputable miracle. It did not occur by chance. Within the Church, spiritual life is created and sustained by these two substances. By water we are born anew; by Christ's Body and Blood we are nourished. Therefore, when you approach the chalice of Communion containing the Blood of Christ, prepare yourself to drink as from His very side. The soldier's weapon is a type of *the fiery sword that turns about* [Gen. 3:25], barring us from paradise. A weapon thrust through the air continues on the path of its trajectory until it meets another object. When it buried itself in the Lord's side, the lance's movement stopped; so too will the swirling of the flaming sword cease, and it will no longer prevent us from entering paradise. Now the blood gushing out symbolizes the humanity of the Crucified One, and the water, His divinity. Let the Armenians be put to shame, for their priests do not add water to the wine when they prepare the Mysteries. Do they not understand the meaning of this miracle? Or do they imagine that blood alone gushed from the Lord's side!

35. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. "I did not hear this from others," the Evangelist John is saying. "I was there and witnessed it, and so my *record is true*." Indeed, John recounts all the humiliating insults that Jesus endured: he does not gloss over them or in any way minimize the Lord's abasement. In effect, he makes this argument: "My narrative is precise, accurate in every detail, and entirely free of bias. From this, know that it is true."

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)

Tone 8

Magnify, O my soul, the most precious Cross of the Lord!

You are a mystical Paradise, O Theotokos,
who, though untitled, has brought forth Christ;

through Him the life-bearing wood of the Cross was planted on earth.

Now at its Exaltation,

as we bow in worship before it, we magnify you.

Communion Hymn

The light of Thy countenance has been signed upon us, O Lord. *(Ps. 4:7)*

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!