

Third Sunday of Great Lent

*Embracing the Cross: A
Lesson for Young Orthodox
Christians*



Introduction

Today, we gather to learn about a special day in our Orthodox Christian calendar—the Third Sunday of Great Lent, also known as the Veneration of the Holy Cross. We celebrate the Cross as a symbol of victory and joy rather than suffering.



Sign of the Cross

To Cross oneself properly, we start with the right hand by pressing together our thumb, index finger, and center finger together.

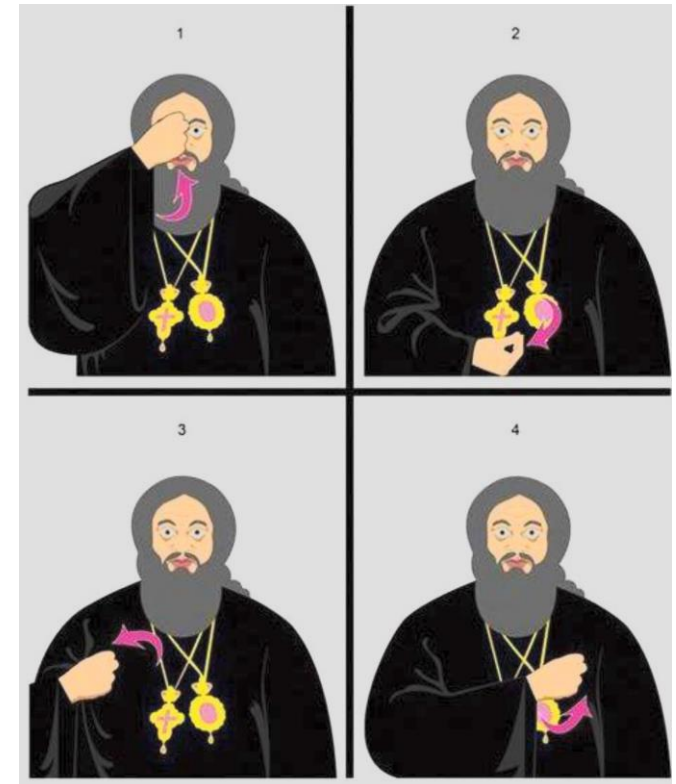
- These fingers together represent the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The last two fingers are pressed into the palm.

- These two fingers represent Jesus Christ's Dual Natures of being fully both God & Human.

We then touch our forehead, then down to our chest, then to our right shoulder, then to our left shoulder, while praying "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen".

When we cross ourselves, we both affirm our faith in God and ask for a blessing from Him.



When Do We Cross Ourselves?

At the beginning and end of prayers

Upon entering and leaving the church

Whenever the priest, deacon or choir name of the Holy Trinity:
“In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.

Whenever you pass in front of the Holy Altar

When venerating holy icons, relics, the cross, or the Gospel



3rd Sunday of Great Lent - The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNGXgbJoc08>

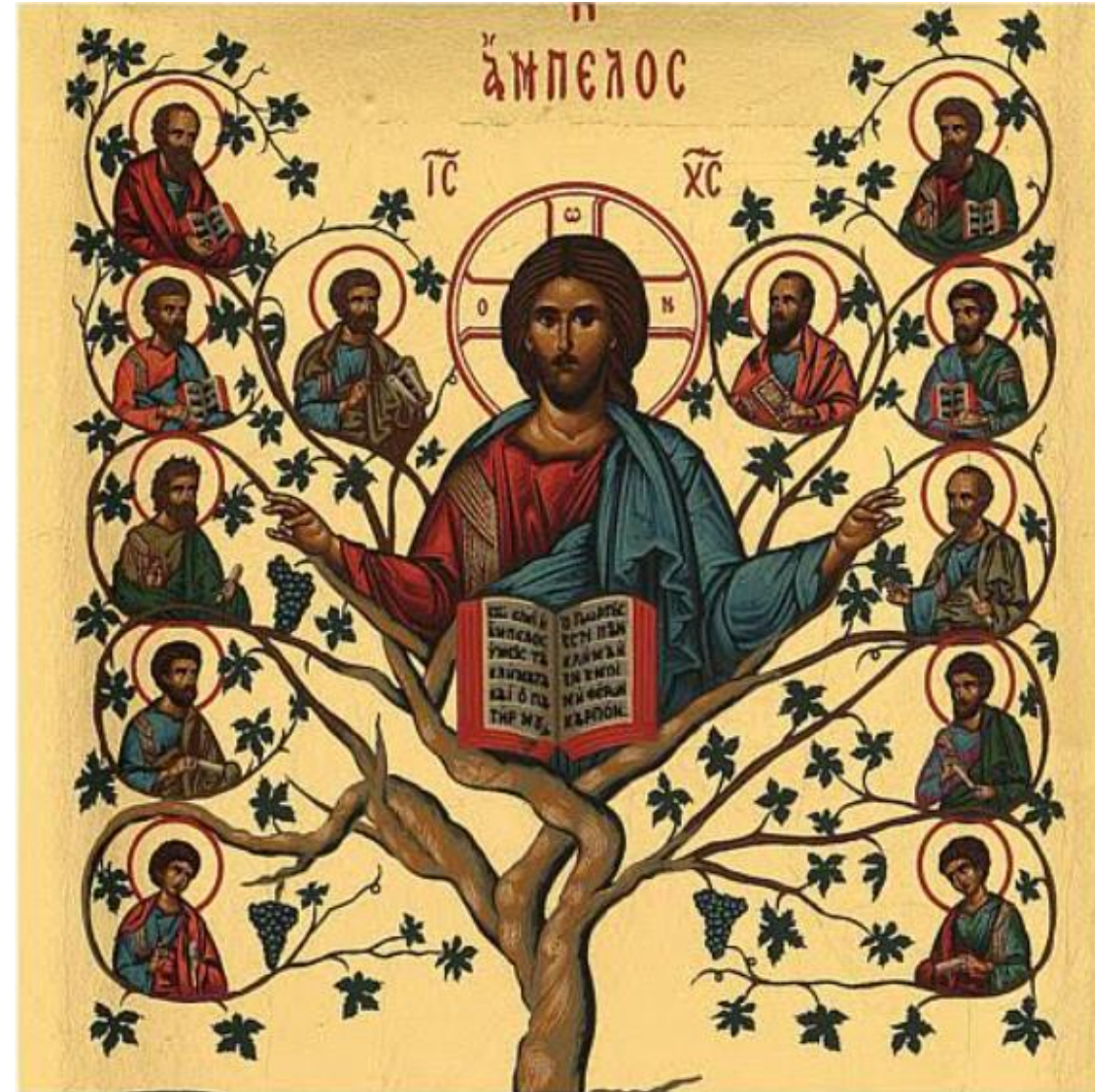


THE CROSS AS A TREE OF LIFE

The Bible mentions a particular tree called the "tree of life" in the book of Genesis. God planted the tree in the center of Paradise, where Adam and Eve lived. It symbolized eternal life and closeness to God.

Just as the Tree of Life offered eternal life to Adam and Eve, the Cross provides us eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Embracing the Cross draws us closer to God and allows us to experience His love and grace. The Cross symbolizes our journey back to God and our hope for eternal life with Him.



THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Historically crucifixion on a cross was a cruel form of execution used by the Romans

Jesus Christ, out of love for humanity, willingly endured the agony of crucifixion on the Cross. Through His sacrifice, the Cross transformed from a symbol of death into a source of life and salvation.

Reflect on how the Cross, once an instrument of suffering now symbolizes hope and redemption for Christians worldwide. Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross offers forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life.

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE CROSS

The true significance of the Cross lies in Jesus Christ Himself. Without Jesus, the Cross is just a piece of wood.

Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross demonstrates His immense love for humanity. By willingly accepting the Cross, Jesus showed us the way to God and each other.

Contemplate embodying Christ's love and sacrifice in your lives, following His example of selflessness and compassion.

THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION

The Cross and the Resurrection are inseparable. Just as the daffodils, the first flowers of spring, symbolize new life and renewal, the Cross reminds us of Christ's victory over death.

There was a glorious Resurrection after Jesus' crucifixion on the Cross. Through His Resurrection, Jesus conquered sin and death, offering us the gift of eternal life.

Understand that the Cross is not a symbol of despair but of hope and joy. It is a constant reminder of God's love and promise of salvation for all who believe in Him.

Conclusion and Closing Prayer

Whenever we see a Cross, we should remember that it represents victory, hope, and the love of Jesus Christ. Just as we venerate the Cross on this Sunday, let us carry its message of hope and joy daily

Closing Prayer

*Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, o Master, and
Thy Resurrection we glorify!
Amen*

After Church

Take the students inside the church after class and teach them how to properly prostrate and venerate the Cross in the middle of the church. Emphasize to the students that while the Cross represents Christ's suffering, it symbolizes His victory over death and His promise of eternal life.

Encourage them to approach the Cross with reverence and gratitude, knowing that it unites us with God's love and grace.