15/09/2020

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco – Reflection for the Feast of the Holy Cross 2020



Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On the fourteenth of September, we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. We remember this historic day when Saint Helen, mother of Emperor Saint Constantine the Great, located and identified the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Savior. The cross was held aloft for all to see and venerate.

In the Orthros of the Feast, we sing the majestic katavasies, which open with Σταυρὸν χαράξας Μωσῆς…. Moses prefigured the Cross. That first stanza recalls the great miracle of Moses when he parted the waters of the Red Sea by holding his staff up in the air and lifting his arms in the sign of the Cross. After the Israelites safely crossed, he raised his arms again and the waters came crashing down upon the chariots of Pharaoh as they pursued the people of Israel. As this verse says, "The Cross was thus portrayed as our invincible armor." Throughout the entire Orthros we hear of the power of God being revealed in the sign and symbol of the Cross.

In that spirit, throughout the centuries, the Christian people have turned to the Cross and the Sign of the Cross as a protection against enemies, just as we sing in the Apolytikion of the day, "O Lord save Your people … by the power of Your Cross."

Today, as we face this enemy of the coronavirus and the catastrophic fires, we must turn to the Cross as our invincible trophy. We cannot or should not wield a cross as a weapon of destruction, but a symbol of salvation and of God's inexhaustible love for humanity. As we contemplate the Cross, we should focus our attention on Christ's loving words as He was being crucified, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

When we reflect on our lives and our need for forgiveness, Christ's words can become our supplication. In the Resurrection, the Cross becomes the powerful sign of our forgiveness and our new life in Christ. Because of this power, we kneel before the Cross, placed amidst branches of sweet basil, likewise being a sign of Our Lord and King and Savior Jesus Christ.

September 14 is the Feast of our beloved Σχολή, Hellenic College-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. It fulfills its ministry under the protection of the Holy Cross. The students are given the school cross to wear, a combination of a cross and the eagle of Saint John the Theologian. That cross is their protection but also their reminder that they are continually called to ponder the mystery of the Cross as they prepare to serve the people of God as workers and clergy in the Church. Hellenic College-Holy Cross, like so many other institutions of higher learning, faces many challenges as it begins its school year in a virtual manner on September 15. I ask that you pray for our School, its students, faculty and staff and offer it your support as generously as you are able.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, we sing in the Exaposteilarion of the Feast, "the Cross is the height of the Church's beauty. The Cross strengthens the

faithful.” In these still very difficult days, let us turn to the Cross as our source of strength.

May the power of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross protect you, your families, and your loved ones always. God bless you!

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