2023-09-29: The Cross in Our Lives

Objective

1. Learn the history of the Holy Cross
2. Learn the importance of the Cross in our lives

Key Verse

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Body

What is the Cross to you?

- Some might say the Cross is a symbol (of Christianity, or salvation, of my identity)
- Some might say the Cross is a weapon or protection (i.e. it plays an active role in my life)
- Before the Crucifixion of the Lord, the Cross was a torture and execution device that was used to execute criminals in a way that was very painful, public, and degrading.
- The Lord took that which was bad - and used it for good.

The Power of the Cross: Good Friday

- The day that the Lord gave the Cross its power
- Imagine if a man is sitting at a table, and a dog comes by to eat food off the table, so the man takes his rod and strikes the dog with it and the dog backs away. Now, when the dog wants to come back, if the man puts his rod in view of the dog - what will the dog do? The dog will not want to approach and try to eat food off the table. The man gave power to the rod. The same with the Lord and Satan.
- When we do the sign of the Cross, the devil remembers how he was defeated on Good Friday at Golgotha, and fears it.
- Through the Cross, the Lord gave us authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy.

The Cross is our Weapon of Victory

- The Cross is a Weapon of Victory over our enemies
  - In the 4th Century, in the time of Emperor Constantine, Emperor Constantine saw the symbol of the Cross in a vision before him and was told to put it on his military gear and by this sign he would conquer

    - What he saw is called the Chi-Ro ☧
    - Indeed, he put it on all of their shields and weapons and they conquered. Emperor Constantine went on to legalize Christianity throughout the Roman Empire
- The Cross is a Weapon of Victory over death
    - After Good Friday, the Jews wanted to bury the Cross so it wouldn't be found. So they started to pile dirt and all their garbage all over it
    - Constantine's mother, Queen Helen, wanted to find the original Cross of the Lord... so she started to ask around and listen to clues and stories from the local traditions until she found out where it was buried in Jerusalem under much garbage. So she had it excavated and they found three crosses. She did not have a way to know which one was the Cross of Christ (versus the crosses of the thieves). They also found the nails that pierced the Lord.
    - The Lord arranged that a funeral procession was passing by - so they took the dead man and placed him on each of the three crosses, and on on the Cross of Christ, the man rose from the dead.
    - She took the Cross and placed it on the mountain of Golgotha and built the Church of the Resurrection that is there until today, from where the Holy Light appears every year on Easter.
- We celebrate these events on the 10th of Paremhotep (the finding of the Cross by Queen Helen) and the 17th-19th of Thout (the vision of the Cross to Emperor Constantine and the consecration of the Church of the Resurrection by St Athanasius and the other patriarchs)

The Cross as a Declaration of Faith

- When we wear a cross, we declare to others that our faith is in Christ and we allow our good works and holiness to point to Christ
- When we do the sign of the cross, we express our faith and the doctrines of our faith
    - E.g. the doctrine of the Holy Trinity
    - The doctrine of the Incarnation
    - The doctrine of Salvation
- The Cross is humility
    - Because He who was crucified on the Cross is humble
    - To the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness

The Cross in the Church

- The Cross is seen in the building of a church (sometimes in the shape of the church)
- The Cross is held by Abouna
- The Cross is placed on the altar
- The Cross is seen in the iconography and woodwork of the Church
- The Cross is used for blessing
- The Cross is used for absolution
- Every sacrament, liturgical service and action involves the Cross

The Cross was not Random

- The Lord foreshadowed the Cross throughout the Old Testament

- What are some of the Old Testament symbols of the Cross?
  - Tree of Life
  - The Slaughter of Isaac
  - Jacob Blessing Joseph's Sons
  - Passover
  - Aaron's Rod
  - Moses stretching his arms
  - Bronze Serpent
    - St Athanasius discusses this in his Tractates on John 12.11 - we'll read that passage together in the lesson

Conclusion

The Cross is special. It is foreshadowed and typologized and pointed to from the beginning of time, it is an integral part of the economy of Salvation, and the life of the Church, and my personal life as a Christian. I can use the Cross practically in my life by holding it in my hand, by invoking its name, by signing myself, others, food, places, etc. with it.

Application

Contemplation

Resources

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