

“YOU ARE OUR PROTECTION, O PRECIOUS CROSS”

By the grace of God, we have arrived at the Third Sunday of Lent, which is often looked upon as the middle of the Great Fast. We have already endured three weeks of adhering to the severe discipline our Holy Orthodox Church places upon us during this time. In all honesty, many of us may be experiencing feelings of spiritual fatigue and discouragement as we struggle to keep Lent in a proper and fruitful fashion. Indeed, *“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

It is significant, then, that the church places the precious and life-giving Cross before us today. Lest we become overcome by the burdens of Lent, the church reveals to us on this day the Cross of Christ as a source of inspiration. We are urged to take hope, and to allow the recollection of the suffering and death of our Lord upon the Cross to strengthen us for the remainder of these 40 days of penitence. It has been written that *“The cross is planted in the midst of Lent like the tree of life in the midst of paradise, like the rod of Moses in the midst of the camp of the Israelites, in order that anyone looking upon it may find health, strength, and courage to pursue his course.”*

On CROSS-VENERATION SUNDAY, Orthodox Christians are reminded that we have this all-powerful weapon in our constant battle against the forces of darkness. Today, the Cross is raised before us as a symbol of VICTORY and SALVATION. Yes, beyond the suffering that it represents, we are able to see the glory of the Resurrection and the joy of everlasting life when we gaze upon the Cross!