

3rd Sunday in Lent – Adoration of the Holy Cross

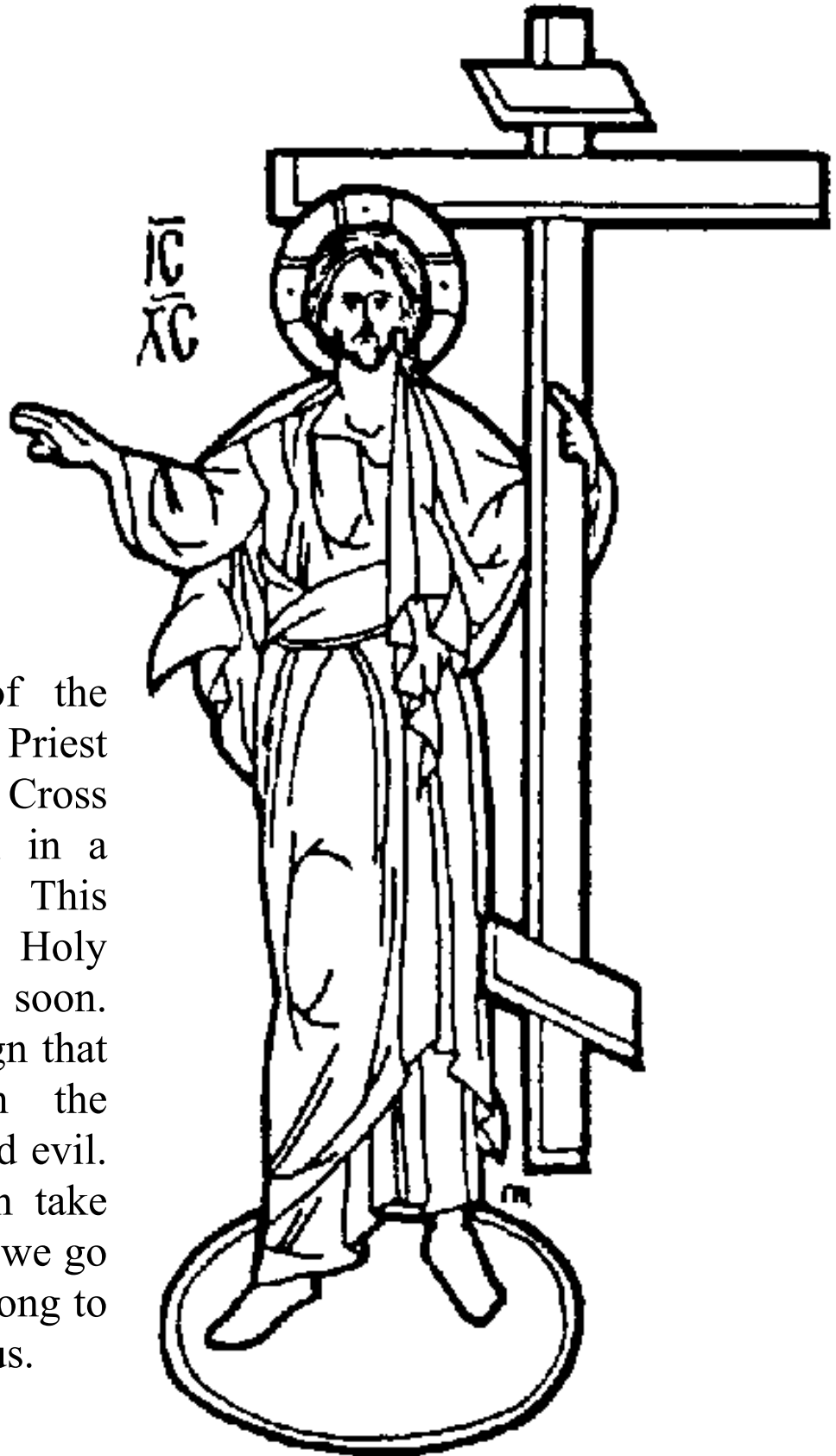
The third Sunday of Lent marks the middle of the Lenten Season. During the early days of the Christian Church, this forty-day Lenten period was the most solemn period of the church year. All Christians kept a strict fast. Meat, oil and dairy products were strictly forbidden. It was a period of fasting and prayer. People read the Bible more and every Orthodox Christian performed good works of Christian charity. Many attended “religious retreats” at nearby monasteries and monastic communities. This forty-day period soon became known as a period of self-denial, self-sacrifice and repentance. Christians prepared themselves to suffer the agony undergone by our Savior as he was tempted by the devil in the desert and as he suffered and died upon the Cross of salvation. Since this very same Cross has been the symbol of victory of good over evil, life over death and eternal life over extinction, the Fathers of the Church decided to observe the third Sunday of Lent (the half-way mark in Lent) as “adoration Sunday of the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ.” By pausing during this Holy period of fasting, we receive courage and reassurance of God’s continued grace by viewing the Cross of Christ. The service is similar to the feast day celebration of the “Elevation of the Cross” which is held every September 14th in the Orthodox Church. During today’s service, the Cross is carried by the Priest and flowers are distributed after the procession. This is symbolical of the beauty of the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord which we await to celebrate with great anticipation. The Church, during the Service of the Adoration of the Holy Cross, has brought forward the Cross of Jesus Christ to remind us of the coming victory of Jesus Christ over death and evil. We are given reassurance of the greatest battle and the most significant victory in all human history – the victory of Jesus Christ over death and evil. The Cross of Jesus Christ has been our symbol of victory for 2000 years, and it the symbol of victory each one of us can carry into the world every day as we go to our schools and workplaces.



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On the Sunday of the Holy Cross, our Priest carries the Holy Cross around the Church in a special procession. This reminds us that Holy Pascha is coming soon. The Cross is our sign that Jesus Christ won the battle over death and evil. It is a sign we can take with us everywhere we go to remind us we belong to Jesus and He loves us.