

Sunday, April 7, 2013

Crucifixion

The journey of Christ on earth is a journey of salvation; therefore the most distinct part of it is Crucifixion.

There are many important events throughout Christ's journey which we celebrate as Master Feasts, that is to say they are the feasts of the Lord Jesus Christ "the Master", such as Nativity, Epiphany, Entering Jerusalem, Resurrection, Ascension, etc. Nonetheless, the greatest event of all which captivated the hearts of Jesus' followers is when He offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of the world.

First, it is important to realize that no one can benefit from this salvation except those who accept the Lord Jesus as the Living God, trust in the power of His salvation, and accept to be buried with Him in baptism. Thus we live with Him a new life modeled after His resurrection.

The event of Crucifixion has been prevalent in the faith of the Church since the first century and throughout her history. For instance, we find that St. Peter the Apostle says about himself that he is a "*Witness of the sufferings of Christ* (Eyewitness)" (1 Peter 5:1). He also spoke several times about the cross in his writings, for instance "*Who, when He (Christ) was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*" (1 Peter 2:23), "*By whose stripes you were healed*" (1 Peter 2:24), "*Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:17-19).

Furthermore, crucifixion was engraved in the heart of St. Paul and he enchanted it in many occasions as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in his great epistles, "*The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" (Galatians 2:20), "*Who gave Himself for our sins*" (Galatians 1:4), "*Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*" (Ephesians 5:2), "*Who gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 Timothy 2:6), "*who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*" (Titus 2:14), "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law... having become a curse for us for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*" (Galatians 3:13), "*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*" (Galatians 6:14), "*We preach Christ crucified*" (1 Corinthians 1:23), "*For I determined not to know anything... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The crucifixion of Christ was a turning point in the history of mankind. Through it the prophecy of Isaiah, nearly 700 BC, was fulfilled: "*He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities... The chastisement for our peace was upon Him* (He bore the chastisement which leads to our peace with God in order to grant us this peace), *and by His stripes we are healed... All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, he bore the sin of many... He poured out His soul unto death... And made intercession for the transgressors.*" (Isaiah 53).

Through the cross, mankind achieved unimaginable victory, freedom, joy, and peace. When Jesus conquered death and liberated us from its dominion, He granted this victory and freedom to whoever enters into a covenant with Him through baptism, carries the cross of His commandment, and follows Him for the rest of his/her life.

Therefore, it is not considered exaggeration when the church commemorates the events of the cross in her daily prayers. The church arranges for us special prayers in the Sixth hour (Noon) and the Ninth hour (3 PM). The church also dedicates every Friday, the crucifixion day, as a fasting day. She also dedicates a whole week to follow the journey of our Lord Jesus, the true lamb, to the cross. This journey starts from entering Jerusalem as a spiritual king and ends in being hung on the wood of the cross on the hill of Golgotha opening His arms to gather in all humanity in his bosom and reconcile them with the Father through the cross.

Therefore, Holy Week, the most revered and adorned with the cross, deserves to be the most important and precious time of the year for us. We ought to completely empty ourselves from everything but worship, praise, spiritual readings, and meditations. Thus we deepen our feelings towards the cross and engrave its events in our hearts so we become filled with the love of Christ and able to carry the cross and follow Him throughout our lives on the path of eternal life

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