# Cross-Veneration Monday

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*"Purified by the grace of fasting and with a pure mind entirely cleansed, let us raise our voices in thanksgiving to the only sinless Lord: 'O Word, for our salvation, You have given Your precious Blood, and You have sanctified us by Your Cross.' "*

Matins for the Fourth Greatfast Monday: Canon, Ode One

During World War II, an army officer was leading a company of soldiers through the Carpathian Mountains of Eastern Europe back to the battlefront after several days of rest behind the front lines. The road was bumpy and potted with shell holes filled with mud. The countryside was barren.

The spirits of the troops were equally desolate. They had tasted a few days of peace, warmth, and comfort. Now they were going back to mud and shells, noise and wounds—perhaps even death. Their shoulders drooped. Their eyes were cast down. Their feet dragged. There was no singing and very little talking.

As they trekked past one of the mountain ranges, they suddenly encountered a ruined church which had been built in the wooden Ruthenian style so prevelant throughout Carpathia. The officer peered through the open door, and he beheld a large Byzantine three-barred cross, intricately-carved in the manner of the local mountain artisans of Ruthenia. The cross, somewhat damaged, stood at the front of the church to the side of the iconostasis. The eyes of the officer were riveted to the cross for several minutes, and it gave him a feeling of assurance and a spurt of renewed courage. Finally, with a tear in his eyes, he turned to his company with the command: "Eyes right!"

As the soldiers looked to the right, they saw what the officer had beheld. The sight of the cross gave those depressed and discouraged men new strength. They lifted their heads, squared their shoulders, and picked up their feet. The sight of the cross gave purpose and value to their march.

In a similar way, our Byzantine Catholic Church brings into focus the Precious Cross of Christ now at the mid-point of the Great Fast because the Church realizes that the sight and thought of our Lord suffering and dying will give us renewed strength, courage, and determination. The Church knows that focusing on the life-creating Cross produces wholesome results in our spiritual life because such a vision teaches us perseverance in the face of trials. The emphatic presence of the Holy Cross before us reminds us of the value God has placed on each of us and the awesome example of unqualified love that He extends to us in order that we might have peace in this life with happiness unending in the next.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 14:24-32**
**Genesis 8:21 - 9:7**
**Proverbs 11:19 - 12:6**