Cross-Veneration Thursday

Sister Jean Marie Cihota

"Seeing Your Holy Cross exposed on this day, O Lord, we come forward faithfully kissing it in fear and in joy to the sound of our songs and hymns. Sanctify Your servants, and give peace to the world by the power of Your Precious Cross, O God of tenderness."

Matins for Cross-Veneration Thursday: Sessional Hymn

How often have we gazed upon the life-giving Cross and have given thanks to the Lord Jesus for all that He has suffered, patiently endured, and offered for each of us? How often do we praise Him for all the blessings we have received; for life, health, strength; for home, love, and friendship; for the happiness of our success and for prosperity? The majority of us would most probably respond in the affirmative, for how could we not appreciate the gifts of salvation He has so generously bestowed upon us!

But how often do we render thanks for the crosses that beset us daily—for the discipline of trials and temptations? When wrongs and injustices sadden our hearts, do "we come forward faithfully kissing it," not only in fear, but in joy and with love? During the times when we become overly burdened and deeply conscious of our own shortcomings, is our tendency to despair and discouragement? Or do we come before the redeeming Cross of Jesus, acknowledging our failings, praying for His forgiveness and for the forgiveness of those whom we have wronged or offended?

Each of us has suffered severe trials, either from others, or as a result of our own limitations and sinfulness. We could chose to let these daily crosses embitter our spirits and shatter our trust in the Lord. These crosses could be viewed and experienced as "punishments" from God, as burdens too heavy to bear, and weights that bend and break our spirit. Or we can chose to accept them as opportunities leading to the New Life. We should meditate upon the holy icon of the crucifixion, firmly believing that everything Jesus does is for our own best interests. We can turn to the life-giving Cross and find strength to meet adversity with quiet courage and unshaken trust. We can come to believe that although weeping may indeed tarry for the night, joy shall return in the morning.

Especially during this sacred season of the Holy Forty-Days Fast, may we truly believe that He is our Protector and our Savior in every trial and peril and that His mercy is extended to us with loving kindness which will never fail. May we accept and embrace each cross as a mini-death of our old self and as a stepping stone to the New Life—the Life in Christ Jesus achieved through His Radiant Resurrection.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 65:8-16
Genesis 46:1-7
Proverbs 23:15 - 24:5