



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday of Great Lent, Sunday of the Holy Cross, is for us, the Orthodox, a time of sanctuary. Focusing on the Cross helps us to take strength by looking toward the ending of our Lenten Journey: as we observe our Lord's Passion, we worship also His Resurrection.

There is much to reflect upon the Sunday of the Holy Cross: how the Cross provides us shade, halfway through Great Lent; and how we are strengthened by Christ's reminder that, "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" (Mark 8:34)

All these things are good and true. However, I was moved by something I read from this week's Epistle, in which the Apostle Paul demonstrates to the Hebrews, how Christ represents the perfect type of

High Priest. For, in Christ "...we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens..." (Hebrews 4:14) and because He was "...in every respect... tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

In the passage which moved me, St. Paul states, "*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" (Hebrews 4:16) Surely, it is a sign from our Creator that in such uncertain times, our Church reminds us of what we gain from our lives as Christians: mercy and grace in times of need.

In spite of the necessary measures our government officials have asked us all to undertake to protect ourselves and our communities, I must state firmly, that even when separated from the physical Sanctuary itself, we may always approach the Throne of God through sincere prayer, reading of scripture—and of course, by participating in the Divine Services "virtually", in many different communities throughout our nation (Visit the complete list here: <https://atlmetropolis.org/news/list-of-metropolis-and-archdiocese-live-streams>).

As we continue to honor the health and life of our families and communities, let us remember the words of the Apolytikion of the Sunday of the Holy Cross: "*Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance, granting our rulers to prevail over adversaries, and protecting Your commonwealth by Your Cross.*" I pray that now and forever, we continue to turn to our Lord and His Precious Cross as we seek His mercy and Grace.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta