



**Sunday, September 14, 2025**

“The Orthodox Celebration of the Power of the Cross” appearing on the back cover is reprinted from [www.johnsanidopoulos.com](http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com). +Fr. George Tsahakis



# SAINT CHRISTOPHER HELLENIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

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*Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople:* [www.patriarchate.org](http://www.patriarchate.org)

*Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Website:* [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

*Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta Website:* [www.atlmetropolis.org](http://www.atlmetropolis.org)

*St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church Website:* [www.saintchristopherhoc.org](http://www.saintchristopherhoc.org)

## **St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church**



313 Dividend Drive, Suite 210  
Peachtree City, Georgia 30269

**Very Rev. Fr. George J. Tsahakis, *Chancellor***

## **Liturgical Guide for Sunday, September 14, 2025**

**ON THIS DAY WE COMMEMORATE THE UNIVERSAL CELEBRATION OF THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY, PRECIOUS, AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.** We also commemorate the Holy Fathers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council in Trullo (+680). *Through their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.*

## **Welcome, Visitors and Newcomers, to our Parish!**

We invite you to enter your name, mail/email addresses, in our Guest Register (near the entrance) if you are interested in joining and assisting with our mission's development. We want to keep you informed of our schedule and location of services. *You and your family are welcome; we look forward to knowing you. We invite you and your family to join and assist us often!*

*Please consider that only baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians in canonical good standing may approach for Holy Communion. All are invited to partake of the Antidoron ("instead of the gifts") distributed at the conclusion of today's Divine Liturgy.*

## **SPECIAL HYMNS SUNG BEFORE/AFTER SMALL ENTRANCE**

### **1./3./5./10. Hymn for Feast of the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-pp.180-181):**

This hymn, "Save, O Lord" – is sung at the end of Orthros, before and after the Small Entrance, and at the end of the service instead of "We have seen the light". *It is sung during today's Elevation of the Holy Cross and also on the occasion of the Veneration of the Holy Cross on the Third Sunday of Great Lent.* Save, O Lord Your people and bless Your inheritance. Give victory to those who battle evil and protect us all by Your Holy Cross.

### **2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Antiphon Hymn Commemorating the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-p. 28):**

*This hymn replaces hymn on pgs. 28-29.* Save us, O Son of God, Who was crucified in the flesh, as we sing to you, Alleluia.

### **4. Small Entrance Exclamation of the Priest:**

*On the occasion of today's feast, the Priest intones the following at the Small Entrance:* Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool, for He is holy. Save us, O Son of God, Who was crucified in the flesh, as we sing to You, Alleluia.

### **6. Kontakion for the Feast of the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-pp.232-235):**

*It is sung after the Small Entrance.* Bestow Your mercies on the people called by Your Name, Christ God, Who freely let Yourself be raised on the Cross. To all who battle evil give joy in Your power, by gracing them with victory

over every foe, for having You as their ally they possess a weapon of peace, an invincible trophy of victory.

**7. Trisagion Hymn for Feast of the Holy Cross – (Hymnal-pp.290-291):**

*Instead of singing the Trisagion Hymn on pgs.38-41, we sing: Before Your Cross we bow down, O Master, and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection. Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

**8. Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos) – (not in Hymnal):**

*Instead of “Axion Estin” or “Truly it is proper to call you blessed...”: Theotokos, you are mystical Paradise, for without husbandry you have blossomed Christ, by whom on earth the Cross, as a life-bearing tree, has been planted and watered. As it is now exalted, we adore Him and worship Him and magnify you.*

**9. Communion Hymn – (Hymnal-p.325):**

*For today’s Feast of the Holy Cross, we sing the following: Let the light of Your face shine on us, O Lord. Alleluia. [Psalm 4]*

**SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES FROM TODAY’S ORTHROS/DIVINE LITURGY**

<i>The Scriptures were not given us for this only, that we might have them in books, but that we might engrave them on our hearts.</i>	<i>– St. John Chrysostom</i>
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**Gospel Reading During Orthros Service (John 12:28-36)**

*The Lord said, “Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show by what death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the*

*Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”*

### **Epistle Reading During Divine Liturgy (1 Cor. 1:18-24)**

*For the message about the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

### **Gospel Reading During Divine Liturgy (John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30)**

*When the chief priests and the police saw Him, they shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; I find no case against Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die because He has claimed to be the Son of God.” Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to Him, “Do You refuse to speak to me? Do You not know that I have power to release You, and power to crucify You?” Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over Me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus*

*outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the Cross by Himself, He went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the Cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the Cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing beside her, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, He said (in order to fulfill the Scripture), "I am thirsty." When Jesus had received the wine, He said, "It is finished." Then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

**THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE:**

**"He called the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me.'"**

**(Mark 8:34)**

## PASTORAL REFLECTION FROM FR. GEORGE:

*Fr. George shares the following reflection from His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros on today's commemoration of the Holy Cross.*



***"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Mark 8:34***

One of the most remarkable things about this verse is that Jesus says it before ascending His Cross, and at the same time, He understands what that sacrifice will mean. We look at the Lord's amazing sacrifice for the life of the world on the Holy Cross, and we bow before it in deep

reverence and gratitude. But we often ignore the crosses that He asks us to bear. It's really a very simple question: What is your cross? But what is the answer? Is it the rigor of a religious lifestyle in which you deny yourselves all the pleasures of this world? Clearly, we are not all called to be monks!

The denial that the Lord speaks of may not be the mere negation of the enjoyments of this world. Certainly, we should not exploit them and live for them, but the negation that the Lord speaks of is not negative - meaning it is not about what we choose not to do, as much as it is what we choose to do. When the Lord calls us to deny ourselves, He is calling us to exceed our egocentric desires for the sake of someone other than ourselves. Ultimately, He is asking us to choose to love over hate, generosity over selfishness, and compassion over indifference.

When that is our mindset and the intention of our hearts, then and only then, are we ready and able we pick up our crosses and follow Him. For our crosses are the choices that we make; not what has been forced upon us. And even when circumstances do force unpleasant realities upon us, it is for us to decide how we respond, rather than merely react. Then we are truly carrying our crosses; then we are plowing the same path He did on the way to Golgotha."

On this *the 1069<sup>th</sup>* Sunday of our St. Christopher's parish community, we continue to thank each of you for your presence and support. Although it may seem like we are just a handful of men, women, and children, if we commit ourselves to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will experience the miracle of growth as the Holy Spirit brings others into His service to help us build His new church in the Peachtree City, Georgia, area for the glory of God! On behalf of our parish, we thank you. ***Your continued support and mutual encouragement are essential and appreciated!***

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## ***“The Orthodox Celebration of the Power of the Cross”***

*(continued from back cover)*

### **The Service**

The Vigil for the Feast, one of the most moving and impressive services of the year, contains several distinguishing features. After Vespers the Cross, decorated with flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, is placed upon the altar. Following the Gospel reading in Matins, the faithful sing “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...” usually sung only during Saturday night vigils. At the end of the Great Doxology, to the slow singing of the Trisagion – “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us” – the Priest, carrying the Cross on his head, brings it out from the altar and places it on an analogion in the center of the church. He censes the Cross on all four sides, and everyone prostrates before it to the singing of the hymn: “Before Thy Cross, we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify.” Then the faithful, following the celebrants, venerate the Cross in turn, making three full prostrations, and receive anointing. The Cross remains in the center of the church until the Apodosis or “leave-taking” of the Feast on September 21.

In cathedrals and monasteries, the adoration is preceded by the ceremony of exalting the Cross. After the Cross is brought out from the altar, the bishop or archimandrite takes it up in his hands and raises it on high. Then, as the people chant “Lord have mercy” a hundred times, he slowly lowers the Cross nearly to the ground and just as slowly raises it. This is done five times as the celebrant faces first east, then west,

south, north and east again, signifying that “the Cross is the guardian of the whole world” and through it “the world is sanctified.” In some churches the Cross has rose water poured over it during these exaltations. The rose water is caught in a basin of flowers held by the acolytes, and the flowers are distributed to the faithful at the end of the service.

Although it is one of the major Church Feasts, the Exaltation is always kept as a fast day, because together with the joy of the finding of the Cross, this great “weapon of peace and sign of victory,” we are also reminded of the sufferings which our Lord endured in being crucified.

### **On the Sign of the Cross**

The Orthodox Christian ends his evening prayers with a prayer to the Venerable Cross:

"As wax melts from the presence of fire, so let the demons perish from the presence of those who love God and who sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross...."

When properly applied, the sign of the Cross is a most formidable weapon in a Christian's armor.

The power of the Cross in the unseen warfare with the demons is illustrated in countless lives of Saints. One of the most striking examples is found in the life of the holy martyrs, Sts. Cyprian and Justina (Oct. 2). An expert sorcerer before his conversion, St. Cyprian was asked by a pagan youth to use his magic in order to seduce the Christian maid

Justina. But even with the help of the prince of demons, the sorcerer was powerless before the maiden who “fled to the defense of the Cross of the Lord and placed its honorable sign on her forehead,” causing the demons to depart in shame. This brought Cyprian to his senses, and he railed at the evil one whom he had served for so long: “O destroyer and deceiver of all.... Now I have discovered your infirmity. For if you fear even the shadow of the Cross and tremble at the name of Christ, then what will you do when Christ Himself comes to you?” Furious at Cyprian’s rebuke, the devil began to beat and strangle him. Already scarcely alive, Cyprian “remembered the sign of the Cross, by the power of which Justina had opposed all the demons’ power, and he cried out: “O God of Justina, help me!” Then, raising his hand, he made the sign of the Cross, and the devil immediately leaped away from him like an arrow shot from a bow.

The power of the Cross is given to each and every Christian. But just as a soldier must learn to properly wield his weapons in battle, so a warrior of Christ must learn how correctly to make the sign of the Cross. A shield has no effect if carelessly waved about in the air. Likewise, there are many who receive no benefit from the sign of the Cross because they make it mechanically or haphazardly.

Some time ago we were justly taken to task by one of our readers for an all too common inaccuracy in describing the making of the sign of the Cross: “We touch the forehead, the breast...” Our reader pointed out that the first edition of the widely used Orthodox catechism, Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy’s *Law of God*, contained the same error which was

corrected in the second edition with the following explanation: in making the sign of the Cross from forehead to breast and then shoulder to shoulder, “the lower end of the Cross turns out to be shorter than the upper one; i.e., the Cross comes out upside-down.” Man thereby inverts the Cross of Christ “to which only the demons rejoice.” The Holy Fathers taught that the sign of the Cross should be made by touching first the brow (the forehead), marking the upper part of the cross, secondly the womb (the stomach), marking the lower part of the cross, thirdly the right frame (shoulder) and fourthly the left frame, representing from end to end the horizontal bar of the cross.

This is not to say that the correct external formation of the sign of the Cross of itself carries the power to wound demons, it must be made with faith. St. John of Kronstadt cautions: “In order that the unbelieving heart should not think that the sign of the Cross and the name of Christ act miraculously by themselves, apart from, and independently of Christ Himself, this same Cross and name perform no miracles until I see Jesus Christ with the eyes of my heart...and believe with my whole heart all that it has accomplished for our salvation.”

The Cross, once a tool of death, has become a means to life, an instrument of our salvation; it gives strength to resist temptation, to refrain from gossip or harsh words; it dispels fear. If we learn to use the Cross effectively, we shall come through experience to understand the Apostle’s words:

"But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## Join Us Often with Your Family

### **Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> – The Elevation of the Venerable & Life-Giving Cross**

*(Wine & oil are allowed. Refrain from meat, fish, dairy, & eggs)*

8:15 Orthros (note starting time)

9:00 Service of the Elevation of the Holy Cross & Divine Liturgy

11:00 Religious Education Classes

12:00 Parish Council Meeting

### **Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> – St. Sophia & her three daughters: Faith, Hope, & Love**

9:00 Divine Liturgy

### **Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday After Holy Cross**

8:00 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

10:45 Religious Education Classes

12:15 Philoptochos Board Meeting

### **Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>**

11:00 20<sup>th</sup> Children's Medical Luncheon (Philoptochos)



A sure sign of the  
deadening of the soul  
is the avoidance  
of church services.

-St John Climacus

***The Exaltation of the Cross celebrated today is one of the twelve great feasts in the yearly Church cycle. It commemorates two historical events: first, the finding of the Life-giving Cross in the year 326, and second, its recovery from Persia in 628.***

### **History of the Feast**

In the first centuries of Christianity, during the years of persecution, the pagans wished to destroy all evidence of the life of Jesus Christ, and the Cross on which He was crucified disappeared. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine the Great, Christians were at liberty to worship openly and build churches. The emperor's mother, St. Helen, longed to find the True Cross of Christ. She traveled to Jerusalem and was told by a very old Jew that the Cross was buried beneath the temple of the pagan goddess Venus, built in 119 AD by the Roman Emperor Hadrian.

The temple was torn down, and digging in the earth below uncovered three wooden crosses. The small board which had hung over Christ with the inscription "Jesus King of the Jews," had long since fallen off, and there was no way of telling which was the True Cross and which were the crosses of the two thieves crucified on either side of Christ. A sick woman was brought and likewise a dead man who was being carried to burial. The three crosses were laid in turn one by one upon the sick woman and upon the dead man. Two of the crosses had no effect, but through contact with the third cross, the sick woman was healed of her infirmity and the dead man came to life. These miracles clearly indicated which of the three was Christ's Cross.

Hearing of this discovery, all the faithful desired to see the Cross of the Lord and to venerate it. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Makarios, took the Cross onto a raised platform and lifted it on high, "exalting" it, for all to see. The people fell to their knees, bowing down before the Cross and crying out repeatedly: "Lord, have mercy!"

To house the relic of the True Cross, St. Helen had a church built over the Holy Sepulchre. The church was consecrated on Sept. 13, 335, an event also commemorated in the service hymns of the Feast. The finding and exaltation of the Cross was appointed to be celebrated annually on the following day.

The Life-giving Cross was kept in Jerusalem until the year 614 when the Holy City fell to the Persians who looted the Church of the Resurrection and took the True Cross back with them to Persia. Fourteen years later Emperor Heraclius concluded a peace with the Persians, and the Holy Cross was brought to the imperial capital of Constantinople. The Emperor, taking off his shoes and his imperial robes, carried the Cross into the Church of Holy Wisdom (Agia Sophia) where it was once again triumphantly exalted. It was then resolved that the Feast be celebrated by the Church in all parts of the world, for which reason it is called the Universal Exaltation.     ***- continued inside Liturgical Guide***