

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark (10:32-45; Heb. 9:11-14)

+ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit +

Christ is going up to Jerusalem. He is on His way to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem with palms and shouts of “Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!” But His real triumph is when He enters into His glory; the glory of the Cross.

And so He begins to tell the Disciples, and us, what will happen to Him. He will be betrayed, He will be condemned to death, He will be mocked and scourged, and He will be spit upon and killed. But on the third day He will rise again. But seems the Disciples don’t get it. After Christ tells them about all that He is about to endure, James and John ask to sit at His right hand and at His left when He comes into His glory. Comes into His glory! They don’t yet realize that His glory is the Cross.

The glory of the Cross. That is the glory of God. Not worldly glory, not worldly fame, not worldly victory, but the true glory of God. Do not the famous people of the world, do not our rulers lord it over us? Do not our “great ones” exercise authority over us? But we are called to a service, a slavery of humility, sacrifices, crucifixion and death. We are called to the glory of God.

Are we able to drink the cup that Christ drinks? Are we able to be baptized with the baptism that He is baptized with? Are we able to die? The whole Christian life is to prepare us for the hour of our death: A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defense before the fearful judgment seat of Christ.

When Christ hangs on the Cross, just before He gives up His spirit, He says, “it is finished.” Salvation, creation, humanity is finished; it is perfected and completed in His death. We have to die. Not only because of sin, but because in death our humanity is perfected and completed. We need to prepare ourselves for a Christian death, which means we have to live a Christian life.

My junior or senior year of high school one of our soccer games was against a school called Bishop Kearney. Bishop Kearney was a weaker team and normally an easy win for us. But before the game our team, myself included, was goofing around. We were lackadaisical; thought it’d be a walk in the park. We underestimated our opponent and were over confident; cocky. And

so right off the bat Bishop Kearney got a goal. Well, we tightened up our game and got serious, but they were encouraged, emboldened. They had the upper hand and it was all over. We lost 1-0 because we were not prepared. We had the skill, we had the training, but mentally we had checked out.

Now we have the skill, we have the training. We can pray, go to confession, read the Bible, attend the services of the Church. But that skill and training can't help us if we are goofy and careless in our approach. If our lives are overconfident and if we underestimate the devil, if we underestimate death, they'll get the upper hand, and instead of our death being wondrous in the sight of God it will be our reproach.

Today we commemorate St. Mary of Egypt, and she is such a good example for us. She was careless with her life. She was a woman who enjoyed company men and who blasphemed God by joining a pilgrimage to Jerusalem not for salvation, but to entice men. And she blasphemed God by trying to enter the Holy Sepulcher with such a careless life.

This is very important. The Holy Sepulcher is the site of the crucifixion and burial. It is the place where the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ were prepared and offered for the eternal tabernacle. And Mary was not allowed in. The power of God, something like a force field, prevented her from entering those hallowed grounds. Only after she humbly repented was she allowed to enter in and reverence the relic of the Holy Cross.

From that time on she refused to let sin and death have the upper hand. She lived a pious and ascetic life of repentance in the desert. She is an example of what can happen if we are careless with our lives, and she is an example of how repentance can transform us, and save us, no matter how careless we have become. In the Orthodox Church we have different classes of saints: martyrs, confessors, wonderworkers, and so on. Mary of Egypt is accounted as a virgin. This is the power of God and repentance. In these final days of the Great Fast, let her example of repentance, and struggle, guide us to partake of the gift of Christ offered on the altar of the Cross, the seat of Glory, the perfection of our lives.

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