

Українська Католицька Церква Св.Родини

Парох: о. Микола Олвіян Попович

225 N. 4th St.

Lindenhurst, NY 11757

Phone: (631) 225-1168 / Fax: (631) 225-1177

E-mail: popovici1@aol.com

Web Page: www.holyfamilyucc.com

Facebook: *Saturday School:*

<https://www.facebook.com/HFUkrainianSchool>



Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church

225 N. 4th St., Lindenhurst, NY 11757

Pastor: Fr. Olvian Nicolae Popovici

Phone : 631) 225-1168/ Fax:(631) 225-1177

Parish Center: (631) 225 - 1203

E-mail: olvianpopovici@yahoo.com

Trustees: Silvia Smith (516) 712 - 5526

Nadiya Moskalyuk (631) 579-1519

Choir Director: Iryna Popovych (631) 943-3348

Nataliya Popovici – English cantor

Web Page: www.holyfamilyucc.com

Sunday Divine Liturgies: 9:00 am - English / 10:15 am - Ukrainian

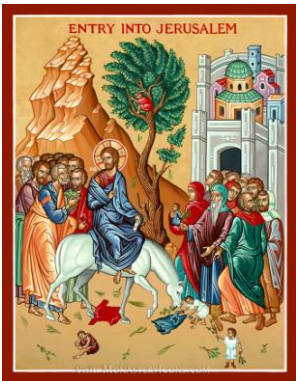
Weekday Divine Liturgies: 8:00 am or 9:00 am or 7:00 pm - Holy Days Liturgy: 9:00 am or Previous Day at 7:00 pm

March Bulletin - No. 9 A/26

CHURCH BULLETIN – ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК

March 1, 2026 / Березень 1, 2026

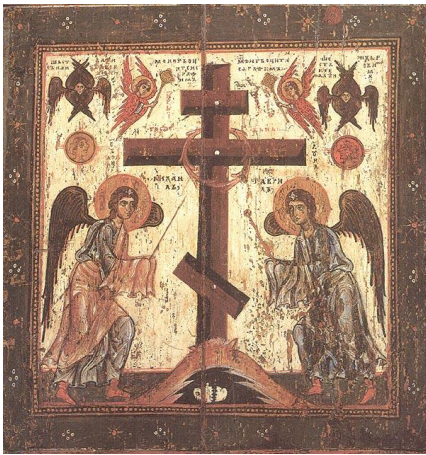
Palm Sunday (March 29th)



The feast of Christ's triumphal **Entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday**, is one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. The services of this Sunday follow directly from those of Lazarus Saturday. The church building continues to be adorned in resurrectional splendor, filled with hymns which continually repeat the **Hosanna** offered to Christ as the Messiah-King who comes in the name of God the Father for the salvation of the world. Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together. Let us all take up Thy cross and say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (First Verse of Vespers). When we were buried with Thee in baptism, O Christ God, we were made worthy of eternal life by Thy resurrection. Now we praise Thee and sing: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! (Second Troparion). Sitting on Thy throne in heaven, and carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: Blessed is he who comes to recall Adam! (Kontakion). At the vigil of the feast of Palm Sunday the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah-King are read together with the Gospel accounts of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem. At Matins branches are blessed which the people carry throughout the celebration as the sign of their own glorification of Jesus as Saviour and King. These branches are usually palms, or, in the Slavic churches, pussy willows which came to be customary because of their availability and their early blossoming in the springtime. As the people carry their branches and sing their songs to the Lord on Palm Sunday, they are judged together with the Jerusalem crowd. For it was the very same voices which cried Hosanna to Christ, which, a few days later, cried Crucify him! Thus in the liturgy of the Church the lives of men continue to be judged as they hail Christ with the "branches of victory" and enter together with him into the days of his "voluntary passion. Palm Sunday begins our journey in Holy Week, our journey to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we enter this holiest of weeks, we are not just remembering what happened around

2,000 years ago but we are living it today with Christ. As Christ is processing on Palm Sunday, we are there with the palms that symbolize our victory in Christ. As the Jewish people threw down their cloaks for Jesus, we lay down our whole lives. As they cry out "Hosanna" or "Save us," we, too, cry out the same. But do we abandon Him when He comes not as a king with worldly prosperity but as a suffering servant, suffering for our sakes and calling us to be at His side? "Today He returns from Bethany and proceeds of His own free will toward His holy and blessed passion, to consummate the mystery of salvation...He comes without pomp or ostentation... Let us run to accompany Him as He hastens toward His passion, and imitate those who met Him then, not by covering His path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before Him by being humble and trying to live as He would wish...So let us spread before His feet, not garments or olive branches, which delight the eyes for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in His grace, or rather, clothed completely in Him. We who have been baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that we spread before Him. - St. Andrew, Bishop of Gortyna, Crete. The Origin of Palm Sunday: The event commemorated on this holy day is recorded in all four gospels: John 12, Luke 19, Mark 11, and Matthew 21. According to them, Jesus sent two of his disciples to gather a donkey and her colt for him to ride on. His saddle was formed of their cloaks, and as he rode into Jerusalem other believers spread their cloaks or palms on the ground before him. The notion came from a tradition in the East, where it was customary to cover the ground in front of a person of great renown. Since then, the day has taken its name from these palms, with regular observance beginning in the third or fourth century. For us willows replace palms because the willow tree blossoms before other trees. The tradition to use palms on this feast is based on the circumstances of the event of the Entry of our Lord into Jerusalem. Praying as though we will invisibly meet the Lord and greet Him as the Victor over Hades and death, we hold in our hands the "signs of victory": the willows and lighted candles. The palms are solemnly blessed by the priest, and each worshipper holds the blessed palm during the service. These solemnly blessed palms are sacramentals, or signs of Christ's grace which help Christians in the practice of the faith, and, as they are associated with Christ's triumph, the palms symbolize victory over spiritual danger and death. As the blessed palms are sacramentals, then, we Catholics keeping them in our homes, customarily placing them behind a crucifix. An I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.: (Matthew 16:18-19).

Third Sunday of Lent – Veneration of the Holy Cross



Third Sunday of Lent:

On the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent, the Church commemorates the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Services include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week. The commemoration and ceremonies of the Third Sunday of Lent are closely parallel to the feasts of the Veneration of the Cross (September 14) and the Procession of the Cross (August 1). Not only does the Sunday of the Holy Cross prepare us for commemoration of the Crucifixion, but it also reminds us that the whole of Lent is a period when we are crucified with Christ. As we have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24), and will have mortified ourselves during these forty days of the Fast, the precious and life-giving Cross is now placed before us to refresh our souls and encourage us who may be filled with a sense of bitterness, resentment, and depression. The Cross reminds us of the Passion of our Lord, and by presenting to us His example, it encourages us to follow Him in struggle and sacrifice, being refreshed, assured, and comforted. In other words, we must experience what the Lord experienced during His Passion - being humiliated in a shameful manner. *The Cross teaches us that through pain and suffering we shall see the fulfillment of our hopes: the heavenly inheritance and eternal glory.* As they who walk on a long and hard way and are bowed down by fatigue find great relief and strengthening under the cool shade of a leafy tree, so do we find comfort, refreshment, and rejuvenation under the Life-giving Cross, which our Fathers “planted” on this Sunday. Thus, we are fortified and enabled to continue our Lenten journey with a light step, rested and encouraged. Or, as before the arrival of the king, his royal standards, trophies, and emblems of victory come in procession and then the king himself appears in a triumphant parade, jubilant and rejoicing in his victory and filling those under him with joy, so does the Feast of the Cross precede the coming of our King, Jesus Christ. It warns us that He is about to proclaim His victory over death and appear to us in the glory of the Resurrection. His Life-Giving Cross is His royal scepter, and by venerating it we are filled with joy, rendering Him glory. Therefore, we become ready to welcome our King, who shall manifestly triumph over the powers of darkness. The present feast has been placed in the middle of Great Lent for another reason. The Fast can be likened to the spring of Marah whose waters the children of Israel encountered in the wilderness. This water was undrinkable due to its bitterness but became sweet when the Holy Prophet Moses dipped the wood into its depth. Likewise, the wood of the Cross sweetens the days of the Fast,

which are bitter and often grievous because of our tears. Yet Christ comforts us during our course through the desert of the Fast, guiding and leading us by His hand to the spiritual Jerusalem on high by the power of His Resurrection. Moreover, as the Holy Cross is called the Tree of Life, it is placed in the middle of the Fast, as the ancient tree of life was placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden. By this, our Holy Fathers wished to remind us of Adam’s gluttony as well as the fact that through this Tree has condemnation been abolished. Therefore, if we bind ourselves to the Holy Cross, we shall never encounter death but shall inherit life eternal Icons Of The Commemoration. The most common icon associated with the Veneration of the Cross is the same icon used on the Feast of the Veneration of the Cross on September 14. In the icon, Patriarch Macarius is standing in the pulpit elevating the Cross for all to see and venerate. On each side of the Patriarch are deacons holding candles. The elevated Cross is surrounded and venerated by many clergy and lay people, including Saint Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. With what feeling do we present ourselves before the Lord’s Cross today? This veneration takes place half-way between the beginning of great Lent and the Passion Week. What does this Cross tell us? All this period of time tells us how God’s grace, God’s love, God’s power can change each of us, sanctify each of us, give each of us new life, the eternal life as it happened with millions of people before us. The Cross tells us how amazing is God’s love, that God became a man, died on the Cross because of love for each of us, so that through His death we would be saved from despair of sin and death. The Cross has been given to each of us now as a hope, as confidence that we are dear to God, that all is possible with God’s grace. But the Cross also tells us that to live this new life, one should revise everything. In the Gospel there are words addressed to us by Christ “If anybody wants to follow me, one should deny himself, take up his cross and follow me”. And to follow Christ means to begin a new life, a life in which nothing comes before God. Charity obliges us to love God above all things because He is infinitely good, and to love our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Catholic charity also requires that we pray for our neighbors that they come to know and come to love Jesus and the cross. Let us venerate the cross today not with anxiety but with bright hope for all that Jesus Christ has promised to those who love and obey Him.

Christ is the only sacrifice worthy to praise God

“Our life sacrificed is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ”. **Saint Anthony the Great**

Why do we use flowers to decorate crosses in the Church?

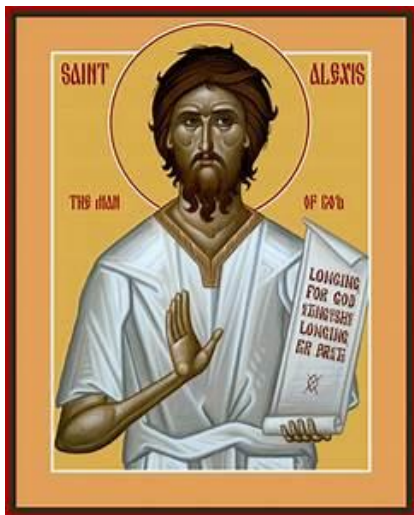
Christ’s death will bring us new life and flowers give the aroma of new life.

- Flowers are a vision of the resurrection.
- Death and resurrection are always together.

By death He conquered death and gave us life.

Flowers remind us that: Human life began in the garden;

- Jesus suffered in the garden
- Jesus was buried in the garden
- Mary sees the risen Lord in the garden
- Rev. 2:7 says that paradise will be in a new garden
- Through sin we have cut ourselves away from the garden of life, and through death and resurrection Jesus is restoring the garden to us (Rev. 22:2). *“To Your Cross, O Master, we bow in veneration, and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection!”*

St. Alexis the Man of God - March 17th

In the fourth century, there lived in Rome the wealthy spouses, Euthymianus and Aglaia, who were known for their kindheartedness and compassion. They received the poor, orphans, widows and strangers in their home daily and fed them. If, on any day, few paupers would come to the table, Euthymianus would say with sadness: "I am unworthy to walk on the earth of my God." Everyone loved Euthymianus and his wife, but they had no children. Euthymianus and Aglaia regretted this and daily begged the Lord that for comfort in old age He would send to them a son. Finally, God heard their prayer, and a son was born to them, whom they called Alexis at baptism. The parents exerted every effort so that their son would grow up good and pious. Directed by his pious parents, Alexis loved the Lord from his early years. He fasted strictly, dressed modestly, and prayed often. When Alexis attained maturity, his parents found a bride for him and married him. [Translator's note: Literally, "crowned him" - a reference to the placing of crowns on the heads of the bride and groom during the Orthodox wedding service. On the first day of their marriage, when the young spouses were left alone, Alexis came up to his virgin-wife, gave her a gold ring and a precious belt and said: "Preserve this, and may God be between thee and me until the time that His grace will arrange something new for us." Having said this, Alexis withdrew. Having taken off from himself the rich wedding garments, he put on the garments of a village dweller, took a little money and left his parents' home. Alexis was drawn by Christ's words: *"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life"* (Mt. 19:29). One may suppose that before leaving his father's home, St. Alexis agreed to marry, in order to assure a future for his bride. Wandering from land to land, Alexis finally reached the city of Edessa. Here he found the ancient Image of the Saviour Not-Made-by-Hands. In Edessa, Alexis distributed his last money to the poor and began to live as a pauper near a church in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos, living on alms. Alexis passed day and night in prayer, while on Sundays he would commune of the Holy Mysteries. Thus, he passed seventeen years in poverty and spiritual struggles. Gradually, many of the inhabitants of Edessa became acquainted with the pauper who sat by the church, and they valued his high spiritual qualities. One of the ministers of the church saw in a dream the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who said to him: "Bring into my church the man of God: for his prayer reaches unto God, and as a crown upon a king's head, so is the Holy Spirit upon him." The church minister wondered to whom these words applied, but the vision was repeated, and the Mother of God pointed to the pauper who was sitting at the doors of the church. From that time, esteem for Alexis grew still more, and they began to praise him and openly set him

forth as an example. Then Alexis, fleeing vainglory, left Edessa. Having reached the Mediterranean Sea, he boarded a ship in order to get to some other land. While sailing on the sea, a terrible storm arose, and after several days threw the damaged ship onto the shores of Italy - not far from Rome, where Alexis had lived formerly. Alighting on the shore, Alexis made for his home, and on the road met his father, who was returning from church. Bowing before him, Alexis said: "Have mercy on me a sinner and give me a corner in thy house. May the Lord bless thee for this and grant thee the Kingdom of Heaven, and if thou hast any of thy near ones wandering, may He return him safely. These words reminded Euthymianus of his lost son; he shed tears and commanded that the pauper be given a small little house on his property. Thus, Alexis began to live on his father's property, unrecognized by anyone, because, having lived so many years in deprivations, Alexis had changed greatly in his outward appearance. At home, Alexis also led the same manner of life as he had earlier in Edessa: he constantly prayed to God, communed each Sunday, endured poverty, being satisfied with the very least. It was difficult for Alexis, living near his father, mother and wife, to see their sorrow over their lost son and husband. Thus, seventeen more years passed. When Alexis felt the approach of his death, he described his life on a parchment, beginning from the day of his parting from his kin, and began to prepare for death. On the following Sunday, Bishop Innocent of Rome was serving the Liturgy in church, in the presence of the Emperor Honorius. There were many people praying. During the divine service, a voice rang out in the church: "Seek the man of God in the house of Euthymianus." The Emperor, having turned to Euthymianus, asked: "Why hast thou not informed us that the man of God is living with thee?" Euthymianus replied: "God sees that I know not of whom thou speakest." Then the Emperor Honorius and Pope Innocent decided personally to visit Euthymianus' home and to become acquainted with the man of God. Coming to his property, they learned from the servants that in the small little house lived a pauper who passed all his time in prayers and strict fasting. Entering into the hut, they saw an emaciated man lying without breath on the floor. His face shone, and his body was fragrant. The Emperor, having seen the parchment in Alexis' hand, took it and read it aloud. Then, at last, Euthymianus and all those present learned that the pauper, who had lived there for many years, was also the lost son of Euthymianus. The parents sorrowed greatly that they had learned about their beloved son so late, but at the same time they were also comforted by the fact that he had attained such great holiness. The saint's body, which performed many miracles, was placed in the middle of the square. Hither all Rome gathered. The Emperor and the Pope themselves bore the body of the saint into the church, where it remained for a whole week, and then was placed in a marble sepulchre. From the holy relics a fragrant myrrh-oil began to flow forth which granted healing to the sick.

Fourth Sunday of Lent – John Climacus



Fourth Sunday of Lent:

Saint John of the Ladder is honored by Holy Church as a great ascetic and author of the renowned spiritual book called THE LADDER, from which he is also called "of the Ladder" (Climacus). There is almost no information about Saint John's origins. One tradition suggests that he was born in Constantinople around the year 570, and was the son of Saints Xenophon and Maria (January 26). John went to Sinai when he was sixteen, submitting to Abba Martyrius as his instructor and guide. After four years, Saint John was tonsured as a monk. Abba Strategios, who was present at Saint John's tonsure, predicted that he would become a great luminary in the Church of Christ. For nineteen years Saint John progressed in monasticism in obedience to his spiritual Father. After the death of Abba Martyrius, Saint John embarked on a solitary life, settling in a wild place called Thola, where he spent forty years laboring in silence, fasting, prayer, and tears of penitence. It is not by chance that in THE LADDER Saint John speaks about tears of repentance: "Just as fire burns and destroys the wood, so pure tears wash away every impurity, both external and internal." His holy prayer was strong and efficacious, as may be seen from an example from the life of the God-pleasing saint. Saint John had a disciple named Moses. Once, the saint ordered his disciple to bring dung to fertilize the vegetable garden. When he had fulfilled the obedience, Moses lay down to rest under the shade of a large rock, because of the scorching heat of summer. Saint John was in his cell in a light sleep. Suddenly, a man of remarkable appearance appeared to him and awakened the holy ascetic, reproaching him, "John, why do you sleep so heedlessly, when Moses is in danger?" Saint John immediately woke up and began to pray for his disciple. When Moses returned in the evening, Saint John asked whether any sort of misfortune had befallen him. The monk replied, "A large rock would have fallen on me as I slept beneath it at noon, but I left that place because I thought I heard you calling me." Saint John did not tell his disciple of his vision, but gave thanks to God. Saint John ate the food which is permitted by the monastic rule, but only in moderation. He did not sleep very much, only enough to keep up his strength, so that he would not ruin his mind by unceasing vigil. "I do not fast excessively," he said of himself, "nor do I give myself over to intense all-night vigil, nor lay upon the ground, but I restrain myself...., and the Lord soon saved me." The following example of Saint John's humility is noteworthy. Gifted with discernment, and attaining wisdom through spiritual experience, he lovingly received all who came to him and guided them to salvation. One day some envious monks reproached him for being too talkative, and so Saint John kept silence for a whole year. The monks realized their error, and they went to the ascetic and begged him not to deprive them of the spiritual profit of his conversation. Concealing his ascetic deeds from others, Saint John sometimes withdrew into a cave, but reports of his holiness spread far beyond the vicinity. Visitors from all walks of life came to him, desiring to hear his words of edification and salvation. After forty years of solitary asceticism, he was chosen as igumen of Sinai when he was seventy-five. Saint John governed the holy monastery for four years. Toward the end of his life, the Lord granted him the gifts of clairvoyance and wonderworking. At the request of Saint John, igumen of the Raithu monastery (Commemorated on Cheesefare Saturday), he wrote the incomparable LADDER, a book of instruction for monks who wished to attain spiritual perfection. Knowing of the wisdom and spiritual gifts of Saint John of Sinai, the igumen of Raithu requested him to write down whatever was necessary for the salvation of those in the monastic life. Such a book would be "a ladder fixed on the earth"

(Gen. 28:12), leading people to the gates of Heaven. Saint John felt that such a task was beyond his ability, yet out of obedience he fulfilled the request. The saint called his work THE LADDER, for the book is "a fixed ladder leading from earthly things to the Holy of Holies...." The thirty steps of spiritual perfection correspond to the thirty years of the Lord's age. When we have completed these thirty steps, we will find ourselves with the righteous and will not stumble. THE LADDER begins with renunciation of the world, and ends with God, Who is love (1 John 4:8). Although the book was written for monks, any Christian living in the world will find it an unerring guide for ascending to God, and a support in the spiritual life. Saints Theodore the Studite (November 11 and January 26), Sergius of Radonezh (September 25 and July 5), Joseph of Volokolamsk (September 9 and October 18), and others relied on THE LADDER as an important guide to salvation. The twenty-second step of THE LADDER deals with various forms of vainglory. Saint John writes: "When I fast, I am vainglorious; and when I permit myself food in order to conceal my fasting from others I am again vainglorious about my prudence. When I dress in fine clothing, I am vanquished by vanity, and if I put on drab clothing, again I am overcome by vanity. If I speak, vainglory defeats me. If I wish to keep silence, I am again given over to it. Wherever this thorn comes up, it stands with its points upright. A vain person seems to honor God, but strives to please men rather than God. People of lofty spirit bear insult placidly and willingly, but only the holy and righteous may hear praise without harm. When you hear that your neighbor or friend has slandered you behind your back, or even to your face, praise and love him. It is not the one who reproaches himself who shows humility, for who will not put up with himself? It is the one who is slandered by another, yet continues to show love for him. Whoever is proud of his natural gifts, intelligence, learning, skill in reading, clear enunciation, and other similar qualities, which are acquired without much labor, will never obtain supernatural gifts. Whoever is not faithful in small things (Luke 16:10), is also unfaithful in large things, and is vainglorious. It often happens that God humbles the vainglorious, sending a sudden misfortune. If prayer does not destroy a proud thought, we bring to mind the departure of the soul from this life. And if this does not help, let us fear the shame which follows dishonor. "For whoever humbles himself shall be exalted, and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled" (Luke 14:11). When those who praise us, or rather seduce us, start to praise us, let us recall our many sins, then we shall find that we are not worthy of what they say or do to honor us." In THE LADDER Saint John describes the ascent toward spiritual perfection, which is essential for anyone who wishes to save his soul. It is a written account of his thoughts, based on the collected wisdom of many wise ascetics, and on his own spiritual experience. The book is a great help on the path to truth and virtue. The steps of THE LADDER proceed gradually from strength to strength on the path of perfection. The summit is not reached suddenly, but gradually, as the Savior says: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Mt.11:12). Saint John is also commemorated on the fourth Sunday of Great Lent.

From orthodoxy.com.

Please Note:

HOW SAINT CHARBEL HEALED A PARALYZED MOTHER

On a cold winter night in 1993, a fifty-nine-year-old mother named Nohad El-Chami lay helpless in her bed. She had suffered a massive stroke that left her with severe hemiplegia, paralyzing the left side of her body. Her doctors offered no hope for recovery and explained that her carotid arteries were irreparably blocked. Nohad was unable to walk or care for herself, yet in her suffering, she did not lose her Catholic faith. She

turned her heart toward the Divine Physician and accepted the Holy Will of God with patience. As the Holy Scriptures remind us in the Book of Jeremiah 30:17, "For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the Lord." Nohad possessed a simple and trusting heart. She prayed for the intercession of the humble hermit of Lebanon, Saint Charbel Makhlof, whose reputation for miracles has spread to the four corners of the earth. She fell asleep in pain but held onto the hem of Christ's garment through prayer. On the night of January 22, 1993, a blinding, heavenly light filled her room. In a dream that was more vivid than reality, Nohad saw two monks standing by her bedside. She recognized one as Saint Charbel and the other as Saint Maron. Saint Charbel approached her gently and spoke words that would change her life forever. He told her that he had come to perform surgery on her neck to restore her health. Although she felt fear, the presence of the Saints brought a wave of supernatural peace. During this mystical vision, Saint Charbel operated on her neck while Saint Maron assisted him. When Nohad awoke from her sleep, she realized instantly that the heavy chains of paralysis had been broken! She stood up, walked to the bathroom, and looked in the mirror. To her absolute shock, she found two fresh surgical wounds on her neck, sealed with stitches that no earthly doctor had placed there. This miraculous event is a powerful testament to the teaching of the Holy Catholic Church regarding the Communion of Saints. As the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* teaches, the Saints in Heaven "do not cease to intercede with the Father for us" and "by their brotherly concern is our weakness greatly helped." Saint Charbel was not distant or asleep in death, for he is alive in the Glory of God and continues to work for the salvation and comfort of souls on earth. The Saint appeared to Nohad again later and told her to leave the stitches as a sign for others. He asked her to visit the Hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul in Annaya on the 22nd of every month to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Saint Charbel said, "I cut you by the power of God so that others might see and believe." Since that day, thousands of pilgrims have gathered on the 22nd of each month to process and pray, witnessing that God is truly wonderful in His Saints.

Let this true story fill you with hope today! No matter what physical, emotional, or spiritual paralysis you are facing, do not despair. The arm of God has not shortened, and His Saints are ready to carry your petitions to the Throne of Grace. As Saint Pio of Pietrelcina famously said, "Pray, hope, and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer." **Saint Charbel Makhlof, wonder-worker of the East, pray for us!**

THE FAIRY TALE. A CROSS AROUND THE NECK. IS THIS THE SIGN OF A CHRISTIAN?

Two were walking in the street and talking. One asked with confidence:
- To be a faithful Christian, especially Orthodox, you must carry a cross. Who is a true believer - everyone carries crosses. Without him, what kind of believer are you? The other calmly responded:

- Is it necessary to have a cross on the chest to be a Christian?
— Of course! This is the main sign that you are with Christ. All Orthodox are doing this. While they walked, a widow with a small child in her arms sat by the road. She quietly stretched out her hand and asked for charity. The one who had a cross looked and said: - Sorry, never at all. I'm late for church, the service is about to start, I have to light a candle. And moved on. Second stop. Have a seat near me. Bought food, warmed the child, helped as much as I could. When the first was returning from the service, he saw the second again and said: - Still, a cross is important. Why haven't you put it on yet? Without him you're not a believer! And then the second replied calmly: - A cross can be a sign of belonging to the Church. But that does not make a person a Christian by itself. A Christian is not recognized by the metal on the chest. but by the works done in God. The Scripture says: "You shall not take on the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Originally it means do not

bear His name in vain. If I bear the mark of Christ, but I live without mercy and love - I carry His name in iron. Jesus Himself said: "By their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:16). He commanded to care for widows and orphans. And all that was done to one of the little ones, was done to Him. That day, one man wore a cross around his neck and considered himself a believer. And the other carried the name of Christ in his heart and in his hands, bearing good fruit. And the Lord saw, which of them was truly His. Because faith is not proven by jewelry, and life in Christ.

Faith without works is dead. This incredible Portuguese mystic, often called a "Victim Soul," lived a life of extraordinary suffering united to Christ. At just 14, she jumped from a window to protect her purity from lustful attackers, resulting in irreversible paralysis that left her bedridden for over 30 years. From 1938–1942, she mystically relived Christ's Passion every Thursday night into Friday, enduring the agony of the Crucifixion in her body for the conversion of sinners. Then came her greatest miracle: Starting in 1942, she survived 13 years and 7 months on nothing but daily Holy Communion—no food, no water—while weighing as little as 73 lbs. Doctors were baffled, but she smiled through it all, saying Jesus wanted her heart full of suffering yet her lips smiling. She offered everything for souls, echoing Fatima's call to reparation. Her tombstone bears her own words: "Sinners, if the dust of my body can be of help to save you, come close, walk over it, kick it around until it disappears. But never sin again: do not offend Jesus anymore! ... Love Jesus, love him!" She died on October 13, 1955 (anniversary of Fatima's Miracle of the Sun), whispering, "I am happy, because I am going to Heaven." **Beatified by St. John Paul II in 2004. What an example of love through suffering! If this witness has touched your heart, consider offering a small prayer today for the conversion of sinners, in union with the sufferings of Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa.** May her example help us love Jesus more deeply and live our faith more sincerely.

Quotations to Stir the Soul to Repentance: *If we review the various ages of history, we will see that in every generation the Lord has offered the opportunity of repentance to anyone willing to turn to him.*
CLEMENT, 1c, *A Letter to the Corinthians*.

The Friendship of God: *Our Lord, the Word of God, first drew men to God as servants, but later he freed those made subjected to him; He himself testified to this: I do not call us servants any longer, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead I call you friends, since I have made known to you everything that I have learned from my Father. Friendship with God brings the gift of immortality to those who accept it.*
IRENÆUS, 2c, *Against heresies*.

But Deliver Us From Evil: When we say: 'Deliver us from evil' there is nothing else left for us to ask. Invoking the protection of God against evil means asking for everything we need.
CYPRIAN, 3c, *On the Lord's Prayer*.

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Abraham was tempted and Joseph was tempted. But neither yielded to the temptation, because neither said 'yes' to the Tempter. Praying the Lord's Prayer means asking God to "give us the strength to overcome the temptations you permit us to encounter." (1 Corinthians 10:13). CASSIAN, 4c, *On the Lord's Prayer*.

Prayer: **"O Divine Master, grant that I may Seek not so much to be consoled as to Console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in Giving that we receive; it is pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in Dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen."** - *St. Francis of Assisi*
