

## ***Third Sunday of the Holy Cross – Christ Hidden Within Us***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
October 1, 2017  
Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:30-36*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross of Varak, one of the four feasts dedicated to the Holy Cross, and the only feast which is unique to the Armenian Church. This feast is particular to the Armenian Church. In the 7th century (660 AD) a solitary monk by the name of Totig who lived on Mount Varak in Western Armenia, had a vision that upon the summit of that mountain was a cathedral with twelve pillars, in the midst of which was a brilliant cross. A little later the cross in the apparition moved slowly down the mountain and rested upon the holy altar of the Monastery of Varak. Totig and his student Hovel rushed to the church and prostrated themselves before a holy relic there, which the vision revealed to be truly a piece of the Holy Cross.

St. Hripsimeh and her companions had brought a relic of the Holy Cross with them to Mount Varak when they sought refuge there during the persecutions in the Roman Empire and fled to Armenia for safety. There, at Mount Varak, St. Hripsimeh left it to the keeping of pious priests, when they fled the area. After the death of the priests, the relic remained hidden in the secret place where it was buried. Many, like Totig and Hovel, for love of the Holy Relic, passed their lives as monks in seclusion in those mountains, praying for its revelation.

With great jubilation Totig took the good news of the revelation of the sacred relic to the Catholicos at Vaspouragan. The Catholicos, St. Nerses III, the Builder, rushed to Varak with General Vart Rushdouni, son of King Theotoros, whereupon he certified the authenticity of the Holy Relic. He then ordered that each year on the third Sunday after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross be dedicated to the Holy Cross of Varak.

The cross represents our Lord Jesus Christ throughout our faith. We see this in iconography with a cross in Christ's halo. The cross represents Christ at Christmas with the blessing of water, when we submerge the cross in water, symbolizing Christ's baptism and then on Good Friday when we place a cross in the tomb, showing Christ being buried. We use the cross as a symbol of Christ because it teaches us sacrifice, love, and resurrection.

Each of us has Christ, the cross, written upon us during our baptisms with Holy Myron, but we also have Christ in us, because we are all made in His image and likeness of God. The

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image of God is planted in us at a very young age, in fact, it is buried within us while we are still in our mother's womb. Our mission is to show Christ in us to others through the way we live, speak, think, and act. When we finally realize that Christ is in us, we will want to show it to everyone we meet, for Christ says, "No one lights a lamp and places it under a bushel, but rather he puts it on a stand, so it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15).

Knowing that Christ is within us is one thing, but it is something else to recognize and see Christ in others. A father gave his little boy \$1 and told him he could use it any way he wanted. Later when Dad asked about it, the boy told him that he had lent it to someone. "Whom did you lend it to?" the father asked. The boy answered, "I gave it to a poor man on the street because he looked hungry."

"Oh, that was foolish. You'll never get it back," replied the father. "But Daddy, I learned in church that people who give to the poor lend to Christ." The father was so pleased with the son's reply that he gave the boy another dollar. "See," said the son. "I told you I would get it back—only I didn't think it would be so soon!"

We see in this cute story how the boy saw the poor man. He looked deeper than most of look and saw Christ within him. If we do not already do this, we need to. We need to look at each other not as individuals who have hurt us, who have ignored us, who have prejudices against us or who have issues with us, but rather, we need to look at each other and see Jesus Christ.

Let us find Christ in each person we come in contact with. Just as God showed Totig and Hovel the Holy Cross on Mount Varak, so too will God show Himself to us in others. We only need to look with our heart and not with our eyes.

Amen.