

Discovery of the Holy Cross – Take Up Your Cross

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church, Carrollton, TX
October 29, 2017
Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:27-36*

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

Today is the Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross, which is the fourth and final feast which is dedicated to the Holy Cross. The first three were the feasts of Apparition of the Holy Cross, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and the Holy Cross of Varak. Throughout these feasts, we have learned about the cross's power, importance, and how we have the cross written upon us through baptism and when we make the sign of the cross. Yet, there is still one thing we have to learn... finding and carrying our own cross.

Many of us have heard the phrase, "We all have our crosses to bear" or "This is my cross", but what is that cross? Christ says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and let him follow me" (Matthew 16:24), but what exactly does this mean?

When we hear that we must deny ourselves, we think that we have to give something up. It sounds very restrictive, but in really means that we must say no to ourselves and yes to God. In a nutshell, it means putting God first in our lives.

So what is the cross that we must take up and bear? The cross is NOT a thankless job, a physical illness, an abusive relationship, or a broken marriage. These are not crosses, but things that must be changed. Our cross is not a punishment from God, which we sometimes tend to think it is. The cross we are called to carry, if we wish to follow Christ, is the burden of sacrifice, namely, sacrificial service. When we carry this cross and truly follow Christ, we must remember that there will be no reward and no prestige.

There was once a man who was upset and believed that his cross was too heavy to carry. He complained to God and one night God came to him and said that He had heard this man's complaints. God took this man to His warehouse where He kept all His extra crosses and told the man to pick out a new cross. The man put his cross to the side and began trying out the different crosses. For hours he tried all the crosses and felt how heavy and large they were until he found one that was nice and light, situated near the door. He picked it up and felt how light it was and exclaimed to God that this was the one he wanted.

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
October 29, 2017*

God smiled at him and said, “My child, that is the very cross you brought in when you entered”.

Our crosses can seem heavy or in other words, our call to service can seem demanding because of life’s situations and we sometimes think that others have it easier, but that is not the case. We do not know what another’s cross feels like unless we carry it. The sacrificial service which we are called to undertake means we visit a lonely grandmother instead of going to the movies. We serve the poor on Thanksgiving or Christmas instead of spending it with our families. Volunteering at our church instead of shopping on a Sunday morning.

It is easy, because it is simple. All it is is helping others. However, it is difficult because it means putting others before us and putting our wants, desires, and even egos, in the backseat.

So this week, let us all think about our crosses (service).

Have we left our cross behind?

Have we thought our cross was something else?

Have we been carrying it?

If we have left it, thought it was something else, or do not carry it anymore, let us, like Saint Helen, discover our cross in our life, take it up and follow Christ.

Amen.