

2 M A R C H 0



Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego



...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

(MATTHEW 6:12).



T H E

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Shepherd

Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego

From the desk of

F A T H E R A N D R E W

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ by the time you receive your March Monthly Newsletter we will be close to the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent. On the Third Sunday during Lent we celebrate the Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross. The first hymn from the Great Vespers on Saturday evening reads as follows: *Rejoice! to the life-giving Cross, the fair Paradise of the Church, Tree of incorruption that brings us the joy of eternal glory: through thee, the host of demons have been driven back; and the hierarchies of angels rejoice with one accord, as the congregations of the faithful keep the fast. Thou art an invincible weapon, an unbroken stronghold; thou art the victory of kings and the glory of priests. Grant us now to draw near to the Passion of Christ and to His Resurrection.*

From this beautiful hymn of the Church two truths shine through: 1) that through the Cross of Christ, through the *Tree of incorruption Christ conquers corruption and death, and that eternal joy is attainable. The cross of Christ is not folly but power unassailable.* 2) That the Cross, for Orthodox Christians, is an invincible weapon. It is a sign of protection. It is also a sign of blessing, and honor and glory. Signing ourselves is part of our body language that inwardly reminds us and outwardly expresses to others, and most importantly, to God that we believe in Cross of Christ and share in His death (through an earnest effort to control our passions) and more importantly His resurrection.

Tracing the Sign of the Cross over our bodies reminds us, those around us and God that we want and need Him in our lives. Throughout the day we express ourselves, through our body language, in many different ways. Sometimes that body language is less than becoming an Orthodox Christian. How then do we show God that He is important in our lives? How do we express to God that we need and want Him in our daily lives? Saint Cyril of Jerusalem reminds us that one way we do so is by constantly tracing the sign of the Cross over our bodies.

Saint Cyril instructs that as soon as we arise from sleep we begin again to sign ourselves and to rejoice for being given another day. As we prepare our "breakfast" we are to sign ourselves in thanksgiving. As we depart from the safety of our homes we are to sign ourselves for protection and discernment as we meet and engage the world. Saint Cyril continues in this manner as he takes us throughout the day. The idea is that by signing ourselves we show God in a real way that we need and want Him in our lives. We show Him that we are conscious of the fact that He voluntarily went to the Cross and truly has the power and authority to conquer corruption and death. For those who believe, we outwardly express that reality through the signing of the cross. Because of our faith, expressed through this signing, we give God the glory, honor and worship that is due to Him; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through that expression of faith we are preparing ourselves to receive God's blessings, like protection, comfort, wisdom, patience, love, forgiveness, etc.

May our Great God, the God of mercy and compassion, find us constantly signing ourselves. Whether we are walking, sitting, standing or lying down, working or resting, traveling or at home, may we always express to God and to those around us that we need and want Him in our lives. ✝