

# AMBASSADORS OF THE FAITH: *Sharing the Light and the Love of Christ*

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## SHARING IN THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

A Sermon by Father Nicholas C. Triantafilou

For a period of time, longer for some of us than others, Mel Gibson's film *The Passion* will prompt particular emotions each time we reflect upon the Timon Stavron, The Holy Cross, of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dominant, however, among our thoughts and feelings prevails the joy of infallible love. Continuing briefly a reference to The Passion, it is abundantly clear in the countenance of the ever-faithful mother of Jesus, so aptly portrayed in the movie, that compassionate love emanated from her to her Son as He carried the Cross and endured the strikings. Our Lord's love for His mother, for all of mankind including His persecutors flowed from His entire being.

In our own lives, the Cross of our Savior evokes profound feelings of love. Do we not see innocent love in the eyes of young children when they enter a House of Worship or when they sit at the table to dine, as they reverently make the sign of the Cross – sometimes even with the wrong hand. These pure pilgrim children have understood the teachings of their parents and grandparents that the making of the sign of the Cross is something very special, something holy, and something that evokes love. Without ignoring the faithfulness of young adults and middle-aged people, I call our attention to the senior citizens who reverently approach icons in our churches and in their homes piously making the sign of the Cross. I call our attention to their participation in our Orthodox services which bring forward the Holy Cross in litany and in exaltation. They indeed imbue the warmth of love in the hearts of all of us with the quietness and strength of their faith. One of the hymns of the Great Vespers of the Feast of the Exaltation of the precious and life giving Cross reads as follows:

*“O precious Cross of the Lord, Moses prefigured when he stretched out his arms to heaven and thus defeated the haughty Amalek. You are the pride of the faithful, the strength of those who struggle. You are the beauty of the apostles, the courage of the just and salvation of all the saints. Wherefore, at the sight of your elevation, the whole creation rejoices and exults and glorifies Christ whose goodness tied all things into one.”*

This hymn, without using the particular word, speaks of the victory of The Cross, and our faithful pilgrims of all ages share in the joy of this victory. They share in the love, also, which results from this victory.

Returning to the movie industry, it is tragic to see the numbers of productions that encompass the evils of society and the themes that lead to degradation of people across all the lands. The same is true of much of the music industry. How important it now is



for all Christians to share the victory of The Cross as we commence this new ecclesiastical year and as we are again privileged to share the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross. The late Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos in his text *Orthodoxy: Faith and Life, Christ in the Gospels* in referring to each individual's understanding of God's personal revelation uses the phrase "For us there is only patience and prayer."

May we exercise patience and prayer throughout this new ecclesiastical year, and may we allow the eternal love of Christ to abide with us, always remembering the words of St. John in his Epistle "*We love Him because He first loved us.*" I John 4:19

Rev. Nicholas C. Triantafilou  
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Rev. Nicholas C. Triantafilou has served as President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts since August 1, 2000. A native of Woburn, Massachusetts, Fr. Nicholas received a Bachelor of Arts from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in 1963 and a Master of Arts in 1970 from St. Thomas University in Houston, Texas. Ordained to the priesthood in 1964, Fr. Nicholas has served for a short time as assistant priest at St. Vasilios Church in Peabody, Massachusetts. In 1965 he began a twenty-two year ministry at Annunciation Cathedral in Houston, Texas during which time he oversaw tremendous parish growth in both membership and programs, as well as the establishment of mission parishes in Austin and El Paso.

Fr. Nicholas has also served the Archdiocese in a variety of capacities. In 1987 Archbishop Iakovos appointed Fr. Nicholas as Archdiocesan Vicar General. In 1992 Fr. Nicholas became the Director of the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment Fund, and in 1994 he took on the additional role of Chancellor of the Archdiocese. In 1996, he returned to parish life as Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1999, Fr. Nicholas was appointed Director of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Boston Camp and Retreat Center, and in 2001 he assumed his current position as President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Fr. Nicholas is married to Diane Xenakis Triantafilou. They are the parents of Nicole Postolos, Constantine Triantafilou (Director of IOCC) and Presvytera Melanie Villis.

By Your Cross, O Christ our God, You destroyed death. You opened paradise to the thief.  
You transformed the lament of the Myrrh-bearing women, and You commanded the  
Apostles to proclaim You are risen, granting the world Your great mercy.

Resurrection Apolitikion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tone