



The Greatest Commandment

Glory to Jesus Christ!

God is love. And we are called to be like God. It's that simple.

Or is it?

From a young age, we learn there are **a lot of things we do** as Orthodox Christians:

- Pray to God and the saints
- Read the bible
- Go to Liturgy, receive the Eucharist
- Fast from certain foods and actions
- Learn about God's teachings and commandments
- Read the lives of the saints
- Help others through charitable acts and donations
- Repent when we do something wrong and forgive others when they do

But doesn't God understand we have chores and responsibilities like homework and tests, activities and sports? Plus, we have friends we like to hang out with!

How are we supposed to do all of these and also **the things of God**?

✦ Making Choices

It's about **priorities**, and **deciding how we're going to live our lives** as Orthodox Christians. God understands we enjoy life and doing things with friends and family. And, that we have responsibilities and hobbies. But as our God, **He therefore deserves first place** in our lives.

That's why Christ teaches us to **love God above all**, echoing the Ten Commandments: love God with your heart, mind, and strength **and your neighbor as yourself**.

The Right Choices

When we place God at the **center of our lives**, those two commandments guide our behavior, and our choices, giving our lives new meaning and a **clearer perspective**.

We are able to understand and **appreciate how God sees the world**, and why He loves us enough to have His Son, Jesus Christ, die on a cross for us.

We **can** balance reading the bible with doing our homework, going to church and still being involved with sports and activities, spending time with friends and following the teachings of the Church, and especially **being merciful and loving like God**.

Yes, it *is* that simple.

✦ Hymns of the Week for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Troparion — Tone 6 (Plagal 2)

The angelic powers were at Your tomb; the guards became as dead men.

Mary stood by Your grave, seeking Your most pure body.

You captured Hell, not being tempted by it.

You came to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You.

Kontakion — Tone 6 (Plagal 2)

When Christ God the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race.

He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.



✦ Scripture Readings for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Epistle: **2 Corinthians 4:6-15**

Gospel: **Matthew 22:35-46**

Parents, Church School Teachers & Youth Directors:
Watch for the ✦ to indicate topics/questions you can use to inspire conversations with youth. Or use the corresponding study guide for this resource.



Venerable Anatolé Missionary to America

1863 On _____ 3, Alexei Kamensky was born in the Samara province, Russia (650 miles southeast of Moscow).

1886 Alexei graduated from seminary in _____.

1887 Alexei got married.

1888 Alexei was ordained a _____, and on August 6, he was ordained a priest.

1889 Father Alexei's wife died.

1891 He traveled 1,100 miles to _____, Russia, enrolling in the Theological Academy there for advanced studies.

1895 Earned a PhD in _____, and was tonsured a monastic with the name of Anatolé. He was sent to the American Missionary Diocese based in Sitka, Alaska, 5,971 miles away.



Theological Academy, St. Petersburg

Use the map and the word clues on page 4 to learn and share the life of Saint Anatolé, Missionary to America and Hieromartyr of Irkutsk.



Bishop Anatolé



Theological Academy, Odessa

1906 After three years of service as rector of the Seminary in Odessa, on December 10, Father Anatolé was consecrated bishop for the nearby Kherson _____.

1914 Bishop Anatolé was appointed for the see of Tomsk, 2,834 miles away, where he cared for the people of his diocese and created _____ programs for children.

1918 After the October Revolution of 1917, and the rise of _____, Bishop Anatolé led efforts to peacefully protect the church.

1920 Bishop Anatolé was transferred 1,014 miles away to _____ in Siberia, where he would be the ruling hierarch.

Icons are often called windows to Heaven, because they show and teach us how historic events and the saints are to be understood in the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Icons do not portray people like we see them in person or in photos, but instead transfiguring them with the light of Christ, emanating from within, by their encounter with God. Likewise, each element of an icon has a purpose or meaning.

Let's take a closer look at the icon for the feast of The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross.

Can you use the word list below to identify who's who, and what's what?

Who's Who in the Icon

Today's Feast celebrates a historic event which took place in Jerusalem, in the year 335. Soon after the _____ Constantine became the sole ruler of the _____ Empire in 323, he made great efforts to establish _____ within the Empire. His mother, Helen was a devout Christian, who faithfully led an entourage to _____ to reclaim the holy sites which had been built over or were destroyed by the pagan emperors before Constantine.

When she arrived in Jerusalem, Helen proclaimed that all _____ temples and statues in the city were to be destroyed, while a search was initiated for the Tomb of Christ. The search did not bring any results, until an elderly _____ named Jude was found who had been told the Tomb was located under the _____ of Venus.

After much excavation, the _____ was found, and nearby, three crosses, and various items from the _____ of our Lord.

Saint Helen had made contact with _____ Macarius of Jerusalem, who was present when the crosses were found. However it wasn't clear which might be the cross of our Lord.

So the Patriarch instructed workers to bring the body of someone who had recently died, placing the _____ on each of the crosses, and it was determined which was the sacred cross, when the dead man was raised to _____!

All rejoiced, and a large crowd of people gathered in the place, rejoicing in God's _____.

The festal _____ portrays this event, and in those churches where a _____ celebrates the feast, he will raise the cross in the same manner, blessing the gathered faithful.

Saint Helen

The mother of Saint _____ is standing near Patriarch Macarius, with hands outstretched in _____, giving thanks to God for finding the precious Cross of Jesus Christ, and raising the dead man to life.

She is followed by women Christian _____ who accompanied her from the Byzantine capitol, including _____ (in dark robes with head coverings).



Church of the Resurrection

Once the temple of Venus was destroyed, a _____ was built over the tomb of our Lord, with a separate chapel established where the crosses were found.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the place of the tomb) was built after the Cross was found, being formally _____ in 335 AD. It exists today, and is a holy site of pilgrimage, especially for Pascha.

The Cross

Placed in the center of the icon, the Cross reminds us of Jesus Christ who was crucified and died on it.

As the _____ of God, His death brought life to humanity. In the festal hymns we hear how the Cross is the enemy of _____ and the joy of the faithful.

Patriarch Macarius

Saint Macarius was a contemporary of St. Athanasius of _____, and a defender of the Christian Faith against the _____ of Arius. In the icon, he is shown holding the cross high for all to see.

The Clergy and Faithful

When news that the _____ of our Lord was found, people from across the city of Jerusalem came to see it. Over the years, it became a _____ to visit holy sites of Christianity (around the world).


When the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was _____ in 335, the cross was again lifted high by the patriarch for all to see, becoming an annual feast day remembered by the universal Church every _____ since.

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|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Alexandria | Church | Dedicated | Jerusalem | Patriarch | Son |
| Bishop | Consecrated | Emperor | Life | Pilgrims | Temple |
| Body | Constantine | Hebrew | Mercy | Prayer | Tomb |
| Byzantine | Cross | Heresies | Monastics | Roman | Tradition |
| Christianity | Crucifixion | Icon | Pagan | Satan | Year |

Puzzle within a Puzzle

Below are clues to 14 important words for today's feast of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. Can you fill in the blanks? Then, use the letters within the squares with circles, unscrambling them to identify the text of a hymn we sing during Vespers for today's great feast of the Cross.

1. The city where Jesus was crucified.
2. Also known as the Place of the Skull.
3. A liturgical celebration.
4. The mother of St. Constantine the Great.
5. The first Christian ruler of the East.
6. We celebrate this event on Pascha.
7. The event we remember on Holy Friday.
8. Church built over the place of Christ's tomb.
9. Our Lord and Savior
10. The feast we celebrate on September 14.
11. Another name for the feast.
12. This means we don't eat meat or dairy today.
13. The bishop who raised the cross for all to see.
14. When the dead man was placed on the cross, he was restored to life, this is a :



14 crossword puzzle grids with circles in some squares. The circles contain letters that will be used to identify a hymn.

We sing this at vespers for the feast:

_____ ,
 _____ - **B** _____ !