

On the Victory of the Cross On Wednesday of Mid-Lent,
a crucifixion kontakion,
bearing the following acrostic: by the humble Romanos.
Grave mode, Idiomelon

Prelude 1

A fiery sword no longer guards the gate of Eden,¹
for a strange bond came upon it: the wood of the Cross.
The sting of Death and the victory of Hades were nailed to it.
But you appeared, my Savior, crying to those in hell:
"Be brought back *again to paradise*."

Prelude 2

Having been nailed to the form of the Cross
as truly a ransom for many,²
you redeemed us, Christ our God,
for by your precious blood in love for humankind
you snatched our souls from death,
you brought us back with you *again to paradise*.

Prelude 3

Heavenly and earthly things rightly rejoice with Adam,
for he has been called *again to paradise*.

1

Pilate fixed three crosses on Golgotha,
two for the robbers and one for the giver of life,
whom Hades saw, and he said to those below,
"O my ministers and powers,
who has fixed a nail in my heart?
A wooden lance has suddenly pierced me and I am being torn apart.
My insides are in pain, my belly in agony,
my senses make my spirit tremble,³
and I am compelled to disgorge Adam and Adam's race.
Given me by a tree,
a tree is bringing them back *again to paradise*."

¹ Genesis 3.24. NETS

And he [God] drove Adam out and caused him to dwell opposite the orchard of delight, and he stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword that turns, to guard the way to the tree of life.

² Matthew 20.28. ESV

...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

³ Jeremiah 4.19. NETS

My belly, I feel pain in my belly and in the faculties of my heart.

My soul quivers with excitement!

My heart is beating wildly;

I cannot keep silent,

because my soul heard a trumpet sound,
a cry of war.

2

When he heard this, the cunning serpent
ran crawling and cried, "What is it, Hades?
Why do you groan for no reason? What words do you offer?
This tree, at which you tremble,
I carpentered up there for Mary's child.
I intimated it to the Jews for our advantage,
for it is a cross, to which I have nailed Christ,
wishing by a tree to do away with the second Adam.
Therefore, do not upset yourself. It will not plunder you.
Keep hold of those you have. Of those whom we rule,
not one escapes *again to paradise*."

3

"Away with you, come to your senses, Beliar," cried Hades.
"Run, open your eyes,
and see the root of the tree inside my soul.
It has gone down to my depths,
to draw up Adam like iron.
Elisha of old painted its image in prophecy
when he drew the axe head from the river.⁴
With a light object the prophet dragged a heavy,
warning you, and teaching you
that, by a tree, Adam is to be brought up
from wretchedness *again to paradise*."

4

"Who gave you such an idea then, Hades? From where
now this cowardly fear, where once there was no fear,⁵
of a worthless tree, dry and barren,
ready for the removal of malefactors
and those who welcome bloodshed?
For Pilate discovered it, persuaded by my counsels,
and do you fear it, and reckon it powerful?
With you, the universal executioner, will it prove salvation?
Who has misled you?
Who has persuaded you that he who fell by a tree
is being raised by a tree, and, so that he may dwell there,
is being called *again to paradise*?"

⁴ 4 Reigns (2 Kings) 6.5–7. NETS

And behold, the one was felling the beam, and the iron fell into the water, and he cried out, "O master! And it was borrowed!" And the man of God [Elisha] said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. And he cut off a stick and threw it there, and the iron floated. And he said, "Raise it for yourself." And he reached out his hand and took it.

⁵ Psalm 13.5. NETS

There they [the lawless] dreaded with fear,
where there was no fear
because God is with a righteous generation.

5

"You have suddenly lost your senses, you of old the cunning serpent.⁶
All your wisdom has been swallowed up through the Cross,⁷
and you have been caught in your own snare.
Lift up your eyes and see
that you have fallen
into the pit that you created.
Behold that tree, which you call dry and barren,
bears fruit; a robber tasted it
and has become heir to the good things of Eden.
For it has outdone the rod
that led the people out of Egypt,⁸
for it is bringing Adam back *again to paradise*."

6

"Wretched Hades, cease this cowardly talk;
these words of yours reveal your thoughts.
Were you afraid of a cross and of the crucified one?
Not one of your words has shaken me,
for these deeds are part of my plan;
I would again both open a tomb and entomb Christ,
so you may enjoy your cowardice double,
from his tomb as well as from his Cross.
But when I see you, I shall mock you.
For, when Christ is buried I shall come to you and say,
'Who now is bringing Adam back *again to paradise*?'"

7

Suddenly Hades began to call out to the devil,
the eyeless to the sightless, the blind to the blind:
"Look, you are walking in darkness, feel around, lest you fall.
Consider what I tell you, slow of heart,
because what you are doing has quenched the sun.⁹
The tree that you boast of has shaken the universe,
has convulsed the earth, hidden the sky,
rent the rocks together with the veil,
and raised up those in the tombs.¹⁰
And the dead are shouting, 'Hades, understand,
for Adam is hurrying back *again to paradise*.'"

⁶ Genesis 3.1. NETS

And the two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Now the snake was the most sagacious of all the wild animals that were upon the earth, which the Lord God had made. And the snake said to the woman, "Why is it that God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree that is in the orchard'?"

⁷ Psalm 106.27. NETS

..they were troubled; they staggered like the drunkard,
and all their wisdom was gulped down.

⁸ Exodus 14.16. NETS

And you, raise your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and break it apart, and let the sons of Israel enter into the midst of the sea on what was dry.

⁹ Matthew 27.45. ESV

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

¹⁰ Matthew 27.51–53. ESV

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

"Has the Nazarene's tree been strong enough to scare you?"
 said the devil to Hades the destroyer,
 "Have you been slain by a cross, you who slay all?
 Truly if a tree has scared you,
 the crucifixion of Haman should have frightened you,¹¹
 and that stake with which Jael did away with Sisara,¹²
 and the five crosses to which Jesus of Navi
 once fixed those who tyrannized him.¹³
 More than all, let the plant in Eden
 scare you, because it led out Adam,
 yet does not lead him back *again to paradise*."

"Now is the moment for you to open your ears, Beliar.
 Now the hour will show you the power of the Cross
 and the great authority of the Crucified.
 For you, the Cross is folly,¹⁴
 but for all creation, it is seen as a throne,
 on which, as though seated, Jesus is nailed,
 and hears the robber crying to him,
 'Lord, remember me in your kingdom,'
 and answers as from a tribune,
 'Today, poor beggar, you will reign with me.
 For, with me, you will go in *again to paradise*.'"¹⁵

When he heard this, the resourceful¹⁶ dragon
 began to wilt, and what he heard he saw,
 a robber witnessing to Christ crucified.
 And so, astounded at this,
 he strikes his breast and argues,
 "He speaks to a robber, yet does not answer his accusers?
 To Pilate he never deigned so much as a word;
 now he addresses a murderer, saying, 'Come, live in pleasure.'
 What is this? Who has seen,
 where the robber on the Cross is concerned, words or deeds
 by means of which he is taking *this man to paradise*?"

¹¹ Esther 7.9–10. NETS

Then Bougathan [Hebrew: Harbona], one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "Look! Haman has even prepared a pole for Mordecai, who spoke up on behalf of the king, and a pole fifty cubits tall has been erected at Haman's." And the king said, "Let him be crucified upon it." So they hanged Haman on the pole that had been prepared for Mordecai. Then the king got over his anger.

¹² Judges 4.21–22. NETS Vatican Codex

And Jael, wife of Heber, took the tent peg and placed the hammer in her hand and secretly went in towards him and drove the peg in his [Sisera's] temple, and it went through in the ground. And as for him, he was terrified and stupified and he died.

¹³ Joshua 10.26. NETS

And Joshua killed them [five kings], and he hung them on five trees. And they hung upon the trees until evening.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1.18. ESV

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁵ Luke 23.42–43. ESV

And he [the repentant thief] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

¹⁶ The Greek word πολυμήχανος was an epithet of Odysseus, a protagonist of many devices.

11

A second time the demon raised the same cry,
 calling out, "Receive me, Hades. My recourse is to you;
 I submit to your views, I who did not believe them.
I saw the tree at which you shuddered,
 crimsoned with blood and water.¹⁷
And I shuddered, not, I tell you, at the blood, but at the water.
 For the former shows the slaughter of Jesus,
 but the latter, his life, because life has gushed from his side.
For it was not the first
 but the second Adam who carried Eve,
 the mother of all the living,¹⁸ *again to paradise.*"

12

With such words the wholly wicked one
 barely admitted that he had fallen together with Hades.
 And so together they bewail their fall:
"To what," says the devil, "have we brought ourselves?
 How have we fallen by this tree?
For our destruction its planting was rooted in the earth.
 We grafted to it bitter shoots.
 We did not transform the sweetness in it."
"Alas, my comrade." "Alas, my companion."
 "As we have fallen together, so let us grieve,
 for Adam is going back *again to paradise.*"

13

"O how did we not remember the types of this tree!
 For of old they were shown forth in many and varied ways
 in the saved and in the lost.¹⁹
By a tree, Noah was saved,
 but the whole world, unbelieving, was destroyed.
Moses was glorified through one when he took a staff as a scepter,
 but Egypt, with the plagues that came from it,
 was drowned as though fallen into deep wells.
What it has now done, the Cross showed forth of old in image.
 Why then are we weeping?
 For Adam is going *again to paradise.*"

¹⁷ John 19.34. ESV

But one of the soldiers pierced his [Jesus'] side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

¹⁸ Genesis 3.20. NETS

And Adam called the name of his wife Life, because she is the mother of all the living.

¹⁹ Hebrews 1.1. ESV

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

1 Corinthians 1.18. ESV

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

14

"Wait, wretched Hades," said the demon with a groan,
 "Quiet, be patient, lay hand on mouth,
 for I hear a voice revealing joy.
A sound has reached me bringing good tidings,
 a rustle of words like the leaves of the Cross.
For Christ at the point of death cried out, 'Father, forgive them.'
 But he grieved me when he then said
 that the lawless know not what they do.'²⁰
But we know that it is the Lord of glory²¹
 who is suffering and that he wishes
 to bring Adam back *again to paradise*."

15

"Did the Master, by the tree he showed to Moses,
 the very one that once sweetened the water at Mara,²²
 teach what it was and what was its root?
Then, he did not say, for it was not his will.
 But now he has made it clear to all.
For behold, all things have been made pleasant,
 but we have been embittered.²³
From our root, a Cross has blossomed,
 which was cast into the earth, which became sweet.
The root, which formerly bred thorns,
 now like a Sorech vine²⁴ has spread branches,
 which are transplanted *again to paradise*."

²⁰ Luke 23.34. ESV

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 2.8. ESV

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

²² Exodus 15.23-25 NETS

And they came to Mara and could not drink water from Mara, for it was bitter. Therefore the name of that place was called Bitterness. And the people were complaining against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Then Moses cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him wood, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There he set for him statutes and judgments, and there he tested him.

²³ Isaiah 14.9. NETS

Hades beneath was embittered on meeting you;
all the mighty ones [or giants] who have ruled the earth
 rose up together against you—
those who have roused from their thrones
 all the kings of the nations.

²⁴ Isaiah 5.2. NETS

And I put a hedge around it and fenced it in
 and planted a Sorech [Hebrew: choice] vine,
and I built a tower in the midst of it
 and dug out a wine vat in it,
and I waited for it to produce a cluster of grapes,
 but it produced thorns.

16

"Now therefore, Hades, groan and I will harmonize with your wails.
Let us lament as we see the tree that we planted
transformed into a holy trunk,
beneath which have sheltered
and will nest in its branches²⁵
thieves, murderers, and publicans and harlots,
that they may reap sweet fruit from the supposedly arid.
For they cling to the Cross as to a plant of life,
pressed against it and swimming,
through it they escape and are brought for anchorage
as to a fair haven *again to paradise.*"

17

"Swear then, tyrant, finally to crucify no one.
And you, Tartarus, make a firm decision to slay no one.
We have had our experience, let us draw in our hand.
May what we have undergone become for us knowledge for the future.
Let neither of us ever again tyrannize the race of Adam;
for it has been sealed by the Cross, like a treasure
containing an unravished pearl in a corruptible vessel,
which a robber, well-suited to his trade,
ravished on the Cross. For stealing he was nailed up,
and having thieved he was called *again to paradise.*"

²⁵ Psalm 79.9-12. NETS

A vine you transferred from Egypt;
you threw out nations and planted it.
You cleared the way for it,
and you planted its roots and it filled the land.
Its shade covered mountains,
and its tendrils the cedars of God;
it sent out its branches as far as the sea,
and as far as the river its shoots.

O most high and glorious, God of fathers and of youths,
 your willing outrage has become our honor.
 For, in your Cross, we may all boast.
 To it we have nailed our hearts,
 that on it we may hang our instruments
 and sing to you, the Lord of all, from the odes of Zion.²⁶
 The ship from Tarshish once upon a time
 brought gold to Solomon, as it is written.²⁷
 To us your tree gives back,
 every day and moment, wealth beyond price,
 for it brings us all *again to paradise*.

Mellas, Andrew. *Hymns of Repentance: Saint Romanos The Melodist* (Popular Patristic Series Book 61) (pp. 87-89). Saint Vladimirs Seminary Press. Kindle Edition.

²⁶ Psalm 136.1–3. NETS

By the rivers of Babylon—
 there we sat down, also wept
 when we remembered Zion.
 On the willows in its midst
 we hung up our instruments,
 because there our captors
 asked us for words of odes,
 and those who led us away
 for a hymn,
 “Sing us some of the odes of Zion!”

²⁷ 3 Reigns (1 Kings) 10.21–22. NETS

And all Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and gold washbasins, all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon, were of overlaid with gold; there was no silver, for it was not reckoned in the days of Solomon. For the king had a ship of Tarshish at sea with the ships of Hiram, one ship used to come to the king from Tarshish every three years with gold and silver and carved and hewn stones .