



A weekly reflection by members  
of the Precious Blood Community

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“The Precious Blood of Christ is the symbol of God’s justice and loving kindness toward us. It is the symbol and basis of our hope, the source of our life, and cause of our joy.” St. Cyril



## **Ashes, Golden Egg, Divine Red Cross**

So, you might know where I am coming from. For over forty years, I have followed the Great and Holy Fast of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. It begins on Sunday evening with a profound service called Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday. Therefore, the first full day of the Great and Holy Fast is the Monday before Ash Wednesday. The roots of my reflection lay in this. Even as a kid, I never liked the idea of ashes being put on my forehead!

That dreaded day, ASH WEDNESDAY! I despised that day! Couldn't wait until it was over! Not because it was a day of strict fast and abstinence from meat and dairy products. But because of the large black cross the priest traced on our foreheads at the school Mass, the "cat calls" it provoked, which I had to endure, especially on Ash Wednesday, as I had to walk past the public school to get to town for lunch every day. Even if Sister promised us, we would get a *real* golden egg if we kept our ashes on until Easter!

What really upset me were the words from the Gospel: "When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad face. They disfigure their faces so as to appear to others as fasting..." I thought, only Jesus needs to know what I am doing. Not everyone in the world!

After school, I had a long walk to my aunt's. I kept thinking about this. Upon my arrival, I was greeted with: ***Your Favorite Day!*** I poured out my heart to her. The stupidity about the golden egg and all the other boloney. After good-naturedly hearing me out, she shared with me her rendition of St. Mary of Egypt's conversion.

It is powerful. Mary was a "revert". Her all-inclusive story is entirely read during the service of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. Mary's conversion was transformative and persistent. Not the result of a black cross of ashes or the promise of a "golden or silver egg" but stained with the Precious Blood. A Divine Red Cross! This is the Cross the world ***must*** see. For "...when Moses struck the rock with his staff, he mystically typified Your life-giving Side, O Savior. From which we draw the Blood of Life." (Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Ode 6 num 9). Let us persistently give the gift of Life.

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