Years from now, we will look back on this year in a different light. And I hope this light is the Light that shines in darkness, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We can look at the pandemic from many different viewpoints. It is certainly a God given moment to re-evaluate our priorities in life. What is truly important? From a scientific and medical viewpoint, covid19 is the challenge of our times to cure and to treat. It will teach us to be better prepared for such event no doubt. From a personal viewpoint, the pandemic is something to avoid with all diligence and to overcome should we be infected by the virus. From our Orthodox Christian viewpoint, the trials of life are meant to refine us. What does this mean? In simple terms, we are called to become the true servant leaders Jesus taught us to be. The reading from St. Mark for the 5th Sunday of Great Lent, Mark 10:32-45, teaches us our proper relationship to each other while in service to God. Please read below. Mark 10:32-45 At that time, Jesus took his twelve disciples, and he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise.” And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant of James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus for the third time in the gospel of Mark reveals in detail what He is about to suffer. He also tells of His third resurrection from the dead. Instead of shocking the disciples, James and John ask Jesus to grant them to sit at His right and left in His glory. The other disciples became indignant toward James and John. Then the most wonderful teaching of Jesus is given, the teaching of the servant leader! Jesus first relates how those not of the faith rule, they lord it over them. That is the leaders think of themselves in exalted terms, taking their position from a despotic viewpoint. They think of themselves as masters, lording over the servants, demanding obedience and respect. Then Jesus teaches the disciples and us the good news of servant leadership! First, we are not to be like the Gentiles. Greatness among the followers of Jesus is defined in how we serve each other while serving God. The one considered to be first among us is the slave of all. How does Jesus teach us? Not only in word but indeed: “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many.” Jesus is about to make the ultimate sacrifice for all mankind! Jesus gives His life to save us from sin and death. What is our response to His love for us? Clearly, we are called as Orthodox Christians to be servant leaders in imitation of Christ. One day we may be called to give our life for our brethren, for no greater love can we have than to lay down our lives for one another. Yet, this teaching in our time of the pandemic is most likely fulfilled in very practical ways. Let us consider some things we can do as Orthodox Christian servant leaders today: Pray at our icon corners for family, spiritual family, friends, those sick from the virus, the medical professionals treating the sick, and those who support their efforts. Stay in touch with those we know, especially those who may be isolated/lonely. Gather as family around our icon corners for prayer and our dinner tables to read the daily readings as we journey toward holy week. Go to Facebook Live so we can worship as the body of Christ in spirit. Use social media to give words of faith and encouragement to others Serve others in need through bringing groceries and or medicine to them. These are just a few of many creative ways to serve God and each other in this time of crisis. My prayer is this year will be remembered as the year we became the true and loving servants of God in our Holy Trinity community in a new and marvelous light!