

Homily September 13/14, 2025 The Exultation of the Holy Cross

Someone asked me once; If you had to pick only one verse in the bible that would give me the best description of God, which one would it be? I immediately said "John 3.16". We just heard it. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life". He gave us his Son so that the world might be saved through him, through his death on the cross and his Resurrection. Today we honour Christ's Cross, an instrument made sacred by the Lord's offering of Himself upon it for our salvation.

Seeing the cross invokes gratitude, because it shows us the love with which God loves His children, in His Son. It is the Mercy of God that we see everyday and this allows us to continue on our journey. We exult the cross because we see there, the Love that God manifested to humanity by accepting death on the Cross: "Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." This is the glory of the Cross of Jesus!

In the Cross we see forgiveness. Jesus forgave those who crucified Him. We also see there how much God is willing to forgive us, no matter what we have done. The Cross also gives us hope. Even though it was a tool of suffering and death, Jesus turned it into a sign of victory. His resurrection shows that death is not the end.

By carrying our own crosses, we are united with Jesus and can share in His victory. In the Cross we learn that no matter how hard our struggles are, there is always hope in Christ.

The Cross of Christ helps transform us and makes us new. This happens when we open ourselves to the infinite mercy of God. It also occurs when we allow every one of our sufferings, the injustices we endure, the crosses, hardships, and most undesirable aspects of our lives to share in the redemptive power of Christ. We do this when we embrace Jesus' commands to share in His sufferings, unite them with His own, and allow Him to bear an abundance of good fruit through us.

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." By carrying our own crosses, we are united with Jesus and can share in His victory.

In following Christ today, the cross may take many forms especially: labouring daily, and perseveringly, in the service of the poor; sharing the helplessness and pain of the marginalized; standing with the abandoned and suffering in solidarity with them for justice's sake. Other forms include witnessing to gospel values in a non-supportive context; accepting events that displease us, but that we can do nothing about; sharing some of the experiences of the poor; bearing sickness, our own and that of others. It means coming to grips with aging; enduring the death of friends and even experiencing one's own dying. When we endure suffering, rejection, or humiliation, Jesus draws near to us, and God's love is poured out in our human weakness.

The Cross of Christ must permeate each one of us, transforming us and making us new. We do this when we embrace Jesus' commands to share in His sufferings, unite them with His own, and allow Him to bear an abundance of good fruit through us. As today's gospel says "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"

As we commemorate the triumph of Christ's Cross, call to mind the crosses you bear each day. More often than not, when faced with crosses, we seek a way out, succumb to self-pity, and are often tempted by anger and despair. Instead, try to allow Jesus to enter those crosses, transform them, and use them for His glory, your good, and the good of others. Crosses in life should not be avoided; they must be transformed. Although the suffering may remain, it must become redeemed suffering, thus bearing an abundance of good fruit in ways that only God can accomplish.

Contemplation of the crucified Lord cannot remain merely a pious exercise; nor can it be simply meditation on a past event. The Lord lives on in his members. He is crucified in individual persons and in suffering peoples. The call is to see him and serve him there. We must recognize Christ in the face of the suffering and to mobilize the energies of others in their service.

Finally, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross reminds us that the Cross is a path to conversion. It is about transformation. By embracing the Cross, we are changed and made new in Christ. Each day, we are called to follow Jesus, carry our own crosses, and trust in the victory He won through His death and resurrection. This will take us to heaven.