

## SERMON – TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

My friends today's Feast of the Triumph or exaltation of the cross is only celebrated on a Sunday, when the 14th September falls on a Sunday. This would normally be the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year

The origins of the feast lay in the finding of the remains of the cross by Helena, The Roman Emperor Constantine's mother, St. Helena, a convert to Christianity, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to locate where the important events in the life of Jesus Christ occurred, and to preserve the relics of the Christian faith that remained there. One of her goals was to find the place of Jesus' crucifixion and the very Cross on which he was hung. Through interviewing many locals, and with the assistance of the Bishop of Jerusalem, St. Macarius, she [discovered the spot](#) and found the True Cross which had been previously hidden by the Jews. According to the historian Rufinus, the identity of the True Cross was confirmed by a miraculous healing after St. Macarius recited this prayer:

"O Lord, who by the Passion of Thine only Son on the cross, didst deign to restore salvation to mankind, and who even now hast inspired thy handmaid Helena to seek for the blessed wood to which the author of our salvation was nailed, show clearly which it was, among the three crosses, that was raised for Thy glory. Distinguish it from those which only served for a common execution. Let this woman who is now expiring return from death's door as soon as she is touched by the wood of salvation."

The date of this discovery and miracle, according to tradition, was May 3rd, 326 A.D. St. Helena had a church built on the original site of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, known as the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#). Her son Constantine dedicated this church on September 13-14 in the year 335 A.D. Even today, the [Stations of the Cross](#) in Jerusalem, or the Via Dolorosa, end at this very spot.

My thoughts go back to my pilgrimage to the Holy Land 3 years ago and visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which contains within the sight of the crucifixion and of our Lord's burial, his sepulchre, I was able to celebrate Holy Mass in the chapel of the crucifixion itself. Many churches of course claim to have relics of the true cross, including Belmont Abbey, the monastery that serves this parish, which will be venerated today as part of Holy Mass.

But today isn't just about history or pilgrimages or relics, it's a reminder of the importance of the cross in our Catholic faith, its so central to all that we do, how often do we make the sign of the cross, that most basic of prayers, behind me is large image of the cross, and many others in our church, in your own homes will be similar crosses and crucifixes. It's something we take for granted, perhaps not giving it much thought, but it is a terrible image, that of a man suffering a cruel, horrible, painful death, an image of torture and humiliation, and yet it is present in every church and home. Why in earth do we honour such a terrible thing, Jesus, condemned as a criminal being executed in the worst possible of ways.

Why, because it is the means of our salvation, of the burdens God's son took on for us, accepting the cross for our benefit. The cross was prophesied in that 1<sup>st</sup> reading today, once of the events of the Exodus, with the fiery serpents sent among the people by God, as punishment for their sins, but Moses making an image of a serpent and raising it high, and anyone who looked at it would be saved. Words reference by Jesus in the Gospel, with one of his many predictions of his coming

suffering and death, saying how he would also be lifted up high, and whoever looked at him in faith would be saved.

Today's feast is called the Triumph or the Exaltation of the Cross, reminding us that the cross is not the same of Jesus or his failure but his glory, when out of obedience to his father and out of love for us, he accepted such a passion and death for us, so that we who look upon him in faith can be saved. The cross is the glory of our faith of our religion of our church. To others it can seem madness, or a terrible failure, but to us it is our salvation. St. Paul talked of this today in his words from the letter to the Philippians, of how Jesus our saviour humbled himself to become like us, humbled himself to accept mortality out of obedience to his father's will, an obedience that stretched even to the cross, and before this we can but bow and be thankful, even speechless, as we look upon the image of the Godman suffering and dying for us.

Paul also said, that despite all his work and achievements, that he had nothing to boast about, nothing of himself, all he could boast about was the cross of Christ, his saviour who had died for him, he had nothing to boast about himself only in what Christ had done.

Finally on such days it's always good to seek inspiration from one of the prayers of the mass, from the preface, this is the prayer that follows the offertory and leads into the Holy, Holy Holy prayer, the Sanctus. There are many different prefaces used for different days and feasts, today's is apt, it says,

"For you placed the salvation of the human race on the wood of the cross, so that, where death arose, life might spring forth."

The cross a terrible image, is though from where life springs forth, our salvation and our hope.