

**Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
**Do not forget the works of the Lord!**

Numbers 21:4b-9; Psalm 78:1bc-2,34,36-37,38; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

"Do not forget the works of the Lord!" (Ps. 78:7b). We are called to remember!

The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is an event to remember. Remembering means being part of the story of God's saving works through Jesus, which culminate in His passion, death, and resurrection. The Cross is a reminder of this profound mystery – the mystery of God's saving acts that go beyond time and space. It is a compass of Jesus' sacrificial love that continues to heal and surprise us when we come to Him, surrender ourselves, and accept His offer of love. Our response to His love should be evident in our witness to others.

St. Francis of Assisi, whenever he saw a Catholic church in the distance, often knelt and said this prayer: "We adore you, O Lord Jesus Christ, in this church and all the churches of the world, and we bless you because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world." Amen.

We pray this prayer at the beginning of each Station of the Cross. In its present form, we say: "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world."

Every time we celebrate the Holy Mass, we recall, celebrate, and make present the once-for-all saving action of Jesus on the Cross. Indeed, we begin and end our prayers through the sign of the Cross with the name of the Holy Trinity. This simple action is a prayer in itself. Since we invoke the name of the Triune God, let us not be stingy in doing this simple action, but let us be generous and make it special.

The Holy Cross is special to us! We honor the Holy Cross because what was once a symbol of death and suffering has become a symbol of life and victory. It has been transformed into a means of redemption for all humanity.

Second, Christianity is not an abstract religion; it originates from God's direct intervention in the world, stemming from actual historical events involving real people. Ultimately, it culminates in a significant event: the execution of Jesus on a cross. Without this historical context, all our claims about Jesus would be meaningless.

Third, we exalt the Cross because it symbolizes Jesus Christ's forgiving and healing love, the fruit of his union and obedience to the Father (cf. Phi. 2:6-8). This profound love is what led Jesus to embrace his Cross. Even while on the Cross, his merciful love remained strong, as he forgave his executioners by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34). Furthermore, the love demonstrated through the Cross conquers the power of sin. It offers forgiveness and reassures us of God's abundant mercy. The criminal crucified next to Jesus, who, with a contrite heart, simply asked our Lord to remember him, received the promise of being with Jesus in paradise (cf. Lk. 23:39-43).

Our readings help us discern this truth. We hear the proclamation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:16-17).

This gift of love culminates in Jesus' passion and death on a cross. Our Lord spoke and hinted to Nicodemus about how he would be lifted up for the salvation of humanity (Jn. 3:14-15). This idea is foreshadowed in the bronze serpent that God commanded Moses to make. The people were bitten by snakes as a form of punishment. Moses pleaded with God to take away the snakes. However, God did not remove them; instead, He instructed Moses to create a bronze serpent so that anyone who looked upon it would be healed from their snakebites (cf. Num. 21:4-9). The creation of a bronze serpent may seem like an unusual solution. However, it was not intended to be worshipped. It served as a reminder of their covenant with God, encouraging them to depend solely on and trust Him. As a result, those who looked at the serpent were healed!

Like the people in the Old Testament, gazing upon the Cross is to take a step toward recovery. We remind ourselves of Jesus' love that saves us and conquers all evil. It is an amazing grace we received, but it calls us to live in His love by challenging or transforming our way of loving.

As we continue to honor the Holy Cross, let us ask for the grace to move from merely remembering it to actively living it out. May we cultivate a heart like Jesus—one that loves even when it is difficult and forgives first, instead of harboring hate. Eyes of faith—that see people as God sees them, viewing them not as enemies but as brothers and sisters. Ears of mercy—that pay attention to the whole story and seek to listen to the truth rather than indulging in gossip. And hands of generosity—ready to give, ready to serve, and ready to help and bless others.

Our remembering of the works of the Lord becomes an expression of gratitude when we actively live it out.

"Do not forget the works of the Lord!"

Fr. Manny Hewe  
Pastor