

2025_09_14 Homily

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091425.cfm>

Many Christians understand the sacrifice of Jesus as a way for Him to make a retribution for our offenses and a pleasing offering to a cold, brutal and vengeful God, a figure who demands acts of violence to forgive sinners. All the prophets in the Old Testament were against this wrong idea of God. Jesus also came to teach us that His God does not require punishment for wrongdoing or pious practices without justice. God loves us, and Jesus came to show us a way that leads us all to restore, heal, reconcile and transform our hearts, our communities and our societies, based on this truth: "Each human being is a God's beloved daughter or son." NO EXCEPTIONS.

Jesus on the cross didn't pay a price: He offered Himself out of love for us. During his ministry, He challenged people, but always for the sake of insight, healing, and for the restoration of people and situations to their divine origin and source.

Currently, many Christians still believe that the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross was being paid not to God, but to the devil. The devil was then, more powerful than God, and became the scapegoat for Jesus' death. This notion in authoritarian and patriarchal cultures leads many faithful to believe that God gets angry at us, and sometimes reacts with violence, and people have to spill blood to be forgiven and redeemed. What we need to understand now is that the crucifixion was a dramatic demonstration of God's outpouring love for us, meant to change people's hearts and minds, so that they can love back their Creator and Savior. God offers his love and forgiveness, not because we deserve them, but because through them, He wants to heal and restore us and transform us into Holy people, righteous people.

Brothers and sisters: The Cross cannot be understood as an arbitrary and bloody sacrifice motivated by our sins. A spirituality based on required sacrifices is not hopeful enough for a broken world. On the Cross, Jesus transforms all human suffering by identifying Himself completely with the human nature and standing in full solidarity with it. The Cross was a symbol of absurdity, scandal, pain and death. And, through the sacrifice of Jesus, it became life to every Christian. When Jesus chose to die on the cross, He put an end to death and let eternal life enter. The cross is a statement from God, that reality has a cruciform pattern. Jesus was killed in a collision of conflicting interests, caught between the demands of an empire and the religious establishment of his day. The cross is a symbol of a mixed reality, human and divine, simultaneously broken and whole. He was crucified between a good thief and a bad thief, between heaven and earth, inside of both humanity and divinity, in an integral human body, totally disfigured, holding together all the primary opposites of life. And by giving up his life on the cross, Jesus demonstrated that reality is not meaningless and absurd when it becomes illogical, unfair, or inconsistent. Reality is actually filled with contradictions and absurdity. And this is why we all resist and oppose much of our life.

Jesus agreed to carry the mystery of universal suffering. He allowed this mystery to lead Him through death, and to transform Him into the Risen Christ. And the Resurrection frees Him and us, from the endless cycle of projecting our pain elsewhere or remaining trapped inside of it. If we hold the contradictions of life and resolve them in ourselves, we will become vehicles of salvation, transformation, reconciliation and the newness of life. We are truly called to embrace the imperfection and even the injustices of our world, allowing those situations to change us from the inside out, which is the only way things are truly changed anyway. The Cross is against the universal human need to transfer our guilt onto something or someone else, to blame the other for our problems.

Now that immigrants are falsely accused as criminals, we have a great example of how to avoid what the cross uses to transform us within. We

tend to hate or blame almost anything else, rather than recognize our own weaknesses and negativity, so we say things like, "He made me do it." "She is guilty." "He deserves it." "They are the problem." "They are the evil." "They are the criminals." And we avoid the Cross and crucify the other very unconsciously while Jesus proclaims over and over, "They do not know what they are doing." The Scriptures call such ignorant hatred and killing, "Sin." And Jesus came to "take away" our capacity to commit it by exposing the lie for all to see it. Jesus stood as the fully innocent one who was condemned by the highest authorities of both religion and state. And this injustice discloses the reality of how wrong even the highest powers can be.

Much of Christianity shames individuals for private sins while praising public figures in spite of their pride, greed, gluttony, lying, killing, or narcissism. This is what Jesus exposes and defeats on the cross. He did not come to change God's mind about us. Jesus came to change our minds about God, —and about ourselves— and about where goodness and evil really lie. This is the mystery of the cross. This is why we exalt the Holy Cross, because in it, Jesus revealed the real power of love so needed in our current world. The cross is an invitation to embrace reality as it is without blaming one another or hating one another or eliminating one another. Not matter how cruel, difficult, painful or unjust, with Jesus we can let that reality help us to bring forth the best in us. (All adapted from a reflection of Richard Knorrh, <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/an-alternative-story-2019-02-0>)

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 14th September 2025
Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Celebrant:

My sisters and brothers, as we honor the Holy Cross of Jesus and his sacrifice, we pray for all who carry their cross through the difficulties of life.

1. That Pope Leo, celebrating his 70th birthday today will be sustained in his ministry, and by word and example witness to Jesus Christ.

We pray to the Lord.

2. That the Jubilee Year Ecumenical Commemoration of The Christian Martyrs of this 21st century, held this Sunday in Rome, will bring hope to the many Christians who are enduring persecution for their faith in Jesus.

We pray to the Lord.

3. That children and teenagers who live in the midst of great danger across the Holy Land, in Ukraine and Russia and all those who are victims of kidnapping in many places, will come to that peace which will ensure their safety and reunion with families and carers.

We pray to the Lord.

4. That help will quickly come to the people of Afghanistan and Myanmar, traumatized by the recent earthquakes, and those suffering in the droughts of Zimbabwe and Sudan.

We pray to the Lord.

5. That the Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe, experience an increase in vocations to religious life.

We pray to the Lord.

6. That children and young people who have died as a result of school and neighborhood shootings and stabbings experience the glory and peace of Jesus.

We pray to the Lord.

7. We also remember the soul of Fr. James Buchholz, former pastor of St. Peter's.

We pray to the Lord

8. For an end to all forms of political violence and for the victims of political violence.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Lord, in your kindness, have mercy on us, and in your compassion forgive us our sins, rescue all who live in danger and bring them to safety and peace. Through Christ our Lord.

