

## **Exultation of the Cross, Sunday, September 14, 2025**

For hundreds of years now the body of scientific knowledge has been expanding, and expanding, and expanding and the modern mind likes to tell itself that it knows a lot. And we like to tell ourselves that we have a good idea of what to expect in a lot of cases. We understand laws of physics and so forth and we develop expectations, sometimes rightly, about what is going to happen. For example, if you are driving along the highway and you see a car coming in the opposite direction you have quite a bit of confidence that car is going to stay in its lane and not come over. Or if you do drop a stone, you don't expect it halfway to the ground to change directions. There are a lot of things that we expect; that we predict. There are a lot of things that we don't know. Well, people make predictions, but we don't necessarily put much stock in them. Speaking of stocks, maybe the stock market would be an example. It goes up and down and we sort of know not how. Or the weather. Even when we have predictions of what the weather will be like, no one really bets all their money on the weather forecast. So, we acknowledge that there are things we cannot predict but all the same we tend to make predictions or have expectations about how things are going to go.

This is the Vigil Mass for the feast of Exultation of the Cross. When you look at the Cross of Christ, I think you have to admit that things don't always go as predicted or as expected and the Cross is perhaps a prime example of the way that the Lord brings about these reversals of the way we expect things to go. I mean the cross was not like the stock market or weather. The cross had a very definite expected outcome: Death through a horrible process of torture and agony. No one, no one was waiting outside of Jesus' tomb expecting that the stone would be rolled back. There were

guards that were posted there but they were not expecting this stone to be rolled back. None of Jesus' disciples were waiting there anticipating Resurrection. No one, no one expected it. They thought 'we know how this goes. This is the end of it.' But it wasn't because God's logic is different. God brings about these reversals in situations like this. The most glorious is the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

But see then we gather not just to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and that glorious reversal of what was expected but we also acknowledge that we are incorporated into Christ; we are joined to Him. We are 'marked' with His Cross. Probably just about everyone here marked themselves with the cross as they came in or at least at the beginning of Mass when we started - the sign of the cross. We mark ourselves with that - not only as a reminder of our baptism – you are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit - but we are saying we want that same dynamic to mark our lives. We want to experience the reversal of the Cross in our life in a real way, and everyone experiences the Cross in different ways.

I have heard it said this way: "Can you think about something in your life, some aspect of your life, that if you could, you would change it right now. You would get rid of it right now or you would change it; reverse it; put it away, whatever." Everyone has something in their life that they look at with that kind of attitude. "If I could be free of that in a second, I would." That is the Cross. That is the Cross. That is the thing in your life that in some way relates to this and when you cross yourself maybe we don't think of it as much as we should but when we cross ourselves we should be reminding ourselves that God knows about that cross in our life and He is using it for a grand reversal. It doesn't mean He is going to take it away. He didn't take

the Cross away from Jesus. Jesus prayed. The Father did not take it away. That is not the kind of reversal that God always has in mind.

But instead, the Father sees a way through the Cross. He sees a path that leads through the Cross to the Resurrection and not just the Cross of Jesus, but He sees that cross that you are carrying and He knows how you feel about it. That you don't always want to carry it, and He hears, He knows that longing to just be freed of it; to be rid of it. And maybe for some He will lift that cross off the shoulder, but I suspect that for most, His intention is to lead us forward on the path that leads through that cross to the Resurrection.

This is a wonderful feast day in the Church. The Cross of Jesus Christ is so very present in our life as Catholics whether we're making the sign of the cross or you probably have a crucifix in your home or you have a crucifix on your rosary that is in your pocket. There is a crucifix at church all around us and Catholics we are met with the Cross. We exalt the Holy Cross. We celebrate that it is the means by which we were set free from sin, but today it is also a good opportunity for us to look at the cross and how it is manifest in our own life. What is our attitude toward it? And do we expect that it is always going to be that way? Sometimes that is our prediction - nothing is going to change. It has been like this for such a long time what are the chances that God is going to do something different with this?' But today's feast day announces to us loud and clear that the Father is in the business of reversing the shame of the Cross, the agony of the Cross, and transforming it into glory. Not only for Jesus but also for you and for me.