

Exaltation of the Cross

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Once again, we see in the scriptures how God reveals his plan of salvation. The Gospel clearly shows us that when Moses raised the serpent on a pole to save the people from their sins, this foretold that Christ would be lifted high on the cross to save us from our sins.

The people of Moses' time saw the results of their sin nailed to a pole and raised above them. If they looked at it in faith, they would be saved. We see the results of our sin in Christ nailed to the cross and raised. Jesus Christ took the price of all our sins upon himself and was raised. For us, it is promised that if we look to him in faith, we will be saved as well. This is the importance of the crucifix in the Christian Tradition. We do not have empty crosses because an empty cross didn't save us. Christ crucified is the sign of our salvation.

But what does it mean to look to Christ in faith? You have heard that faith does not mean simply believing in Christ. The true faith must be lived; otherwise, it is dead. This is why Christ told us to take up our cross and follow him. We see a clear example when we contrast the people in our first reading with Christ in our second. They were unwilling to suffer. They once again grumbled and complained against God. Though they had betrayed God twice, they still expected that God owed them a comfortable living, and when they didn't get it, they complained against Him.

Look to Christ. He emptied himself and took the form of a slave. To him was due all the Glory and Honor, and yet he refused it for our sake. He was willing even to suffer, not for himself but for us, to the point of death, and at that time, it was the most humiliating death one could undergo. Christ accepted it all because the Gospel tells us that God willed the entire world to be saved.

This is our contrast. The Israelites were not willing to suffer for themselves even when they deserved more suffering. Christ was willing to suffer for others even when he did not deserve it. In doing this, Jesus teaches us that suffering does have meaning. It is not pointless. If we are willing to accept it and offer it to others, it becomes an act of true love. If we are not, then suffering certainly seems pointless; however, it is most likely what we deserve. We choose whether our suffering has meaning or not by choosing to empty ourselves and offer it for others as Christ did for us. This is why Christ is our high priest. The book of Hebrews tells us that a priest is one who offers sacrifice for others. And to some sense, we are all priests, prophets, and kings by virtue of our baptisms.

By virtue of your baptism, you are part of the common priesthood. By virtue of my ordination, I am part of the ministerial priesthood. We all offer sacrifices on the altar on Sundays. For you, it means to bring all the sufferings, trials, and tribulations you experience during the week and lay them on the altar. When the gifts of bread and wine are presented and put on the altar, then you spiritually lay your sufferings on the altar and pour

them into the Chalice. Then I call upon the Holy Spirit, and they are transformed into the Eucharist. What were our sufferings becoming now our means of salvation, and that of the entire world. This is how our suffering becomes meaningful, when we empty ourselves and offer it on behalf of others.

You and I have a free choice. We can choose our suffering to have meaning by offering it for others, or we can choose our suffering to be pointless by grumbling and complaining about it.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My suggestion for us is to look to Christ crucified on the cross. Exalt the cross in your life. Live out your baptismal priesthood. We choose between freedom for meaning and freedom from meaning. We suffer for someone, or you suffer from afflictions. The happiness and peace we seek are found in the way of the Cross, the way of Christ. **“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.”** I Choose Life. How about you? **Amen.**