



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

## Exaltation of The Holy Cross September 15<sup>th</sup> 2024

---

**Theme: "17 For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."**

### **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son should undergo the Cross to save the human race, grant, we pray, that we, who have known his mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Exploring the Word**

#### **Gospel Reading: John 3:13-17**

Jesus said to Nicodemus: <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

#### **Gospel Focus**

The human tendency is to flee that which brings pain, suffering, and death. The mystery of the Cross challenges us to enter these as the means to life. This mystery doesn't make it any easier to accept pain, suffering, and death; it does give these natural human experiences meaning and depth.

No one would choose suffering and death as positive elements in their lives. Yet we Christians regularly deny ourselves for the good of others. We do so because we have grasped the glory of the cross. This glory makes our everyday denials of self means of growth and holiness.

#### **Gospel Reflection**

The cross is remembered less as an instrument of torture and death; than as an instrument of glory, salvation, and life. In both the first reading and gospel for this Sunday, the instruments that bring death (serpent, cross) also bring life. For this reason, the cross is exalted rather than being despised.

Clearly, the cross is both an instrument of death and of life. However, to pass over from death to risen life, Jesus emptied and humbled himself, and became obedient to his Father (see second reading). All of this brings exaltation to Jesus (every knee bends at his name,

every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord; second reading) and brings us exaltation when we respond to God's great love for the world by believing and embracing the cross of obedient self-emptying. In this way are we exalted, sharing now in Jesus' glory and receiving the promise of "eternal life."

The depth of God's love for the world becomes fully revealed in the death of Jesus on the cross. Through the self-emptying obedience of Jesus, the cross, a sign of ignominy, becomes a sign of exaltation not only of Jesus himself whom God lifts up in glory (see second reading) but also of all of us who gaze on the cross in faith and are lifted up to eternal life (gospel). The challenge of this feast and its proper readings is to see through the cross to the eternal life that it promises. The way to this eternal life is through humble obedience (second reading) and through believing in God's "only Son" (gospel). Obedience and belief are two sides of the same coin.

Both obedience and belief draw their efficacy by being in relationship with another. In terms of the cross, that "other" is Jesus himself. He is the model for our embracing the cross as both dying to self and rising to glory. Herein is the mystery: in dying to self, in self-emptying, we are more perfectly conformed to Christ. Moreover, this is the whole goal of our Christian life: conformity to Christ. Thus we can rightly say, in the very dying is the rising; in the self-emptying is the new life; in the suffering is the glory. This is why this day is rightly named the *Exaltation* of the Holy Cross.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Numbers 21:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup> And the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD, that he takes away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

### **Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11**

<sup>6</sup> Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**219.** God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and

will extend to his most precious gift: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."(Jn 3:16; cf. Hos 11:1; Is 49:14-15; 62 :4-5; Ezek 16; Hos 11)

**440.** Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man.(Cf. Mt 16:16-23) He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."(Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Is 53:10-12) Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross.(Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43) Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."(Acts 2:36)

**458.** The Word became flesh so *that thus we might know God's love*: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."(I Jn 4:9) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."(Jn 3:16)

**679.** Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgment to the Son".(Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1) Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself.(Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20) By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love.(Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26. 588 Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; I Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. How does 2<sup>nd</sup> reading describe Jesus' attitude toward His divine nature? How does this challenge our own attitudes toward humility and service?
2. How does believing in Jesus lead to eternal life? How does this promise of eternal life shape your perspective on life and death?
3. In light of God's immense love shown in the gospel passage, how can we respond in our daily lives? What practical steps can you take to reflect this love to others?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Almighty God, our Father, as we celebrate this feast day of Exaltation of The Holy Cross, grant us the grace of realizing the true significance of The Holy Cross as an instrument of glory, salvation, and life. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen.

**Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom  
Every Wednesday  
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwYTY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>**

**Meeting ID: 276 007 3734  
Passcode: 1WordOfGod**

**All are welcome!**

For more information contact:

**Mary Bay**- 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

**George Chee**- 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

**References:**

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
- (2) Gospel Reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sundays and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota  
Reprinted with permission.
- (3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of The Catholic Church