



LIVING THE GOSPEL

Exaltation of The Holy Cross 13th September, 2026

Theme: "God gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: 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 lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 3:13-17

¹³ No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man; ¹⁴ as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

¹⁶ For this is how God loved the world so much: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.

Gospel Reflection

The cross upon which Christ hung was dead wood cut down from what was once a life-giving tree. From this dead wood rises a new Tree of Life—the risen Jesus who accepted death so that Life may burst forth. God's great love brings Life for us, not death. Yet, this festival might be confusing, for the wood of the cross conveys death—but also Life. For this did Jesus "come down from heaven": so that we might have Life. This festival celebrates Life, not death. Jesus came down from heaven and was raised up, and in this down and up we find new Life.

"Up" and "down" are words that capture seeming contradictions in this gospel and on this feast. The space between up and down, heaven and earth, divinity and humanity is closed by the obedience, self-emptying, and fidelity of the Son. This feast day celebrates that on the cross the Son overcomes these contradictions. We ourselves are drawn into the mystery of the cross as exaltation by our belief in the Son. Our believing bridges the space between God and us, between Life and death, between being saved or perishing. However, the cost to us is the same as that for the "Son of Man": obedience, death. Yet the eternal Life that is given is worth this and any cost.

The depth of God's love for the world becomes fully revealed in the death of Jesus on the cross. The Father did not give over the Son to die, but he did give him to *us* so that we might share in his risen Life. 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 upon the cross in faith and are lifted up to eternal Life (gospel). Jesus being lifted up on the cross means we can share in the Son's eternal glory. The challenge of this feast and its 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). The question the gospel leaves with us is, How much do we believe?

Living the Paschal Mystery

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. But, like Jesus, we don't empty ourselves for the sake of pain and suffering; we accept these for the sake of new Life. Like Jesus, the cross calls us to obedience and belief.

Both obedience and belief draw their efficacy by being in relationship with another. Jesus 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. And 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

⁴ They left Mount Hor by the road to the Sea of Suph, to skirt the land of Edom. On the way the people lost patience. ⁵ They spoke against God and against Moses, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in this wilderness? For there is neither bread nor water here; we are sick of this unsatisfying food."

⁶ At this God sent fiery serpents among the people; their bite brought death to many in Israel. ⁷ The people came and said to Moses, "We have sinned by speaking against Yahweh and against you. Intercede for us with Yahweh to save us from these serpents." Moses interceded for the people, ⁸ and Yahweh answered him, "Make a fiery serpent and put it on a standard. If anyone is bitten and looks at it, he shall live." ⁹ So Moses fashioned a bronze serpent which he put on a standard, and if anyone was bitten by a serpent, he looked at the bronze serpent and lived.

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 78:1-2, 34-35, 36-37. 38

R: Never forget the deeds of the Lord

¹ My people, listen to my teaching, pay attention to what I say. ² I will speak to you in poetry unfold the mysteries of our past. **(R)**

³⁴ Whenever he slaughtered them, they began to seek him, they turned back and looked eagerly for him, ³⁵ recalling that God was their rock, God the Most High, their redeemer. **(R)**

³⁶ They tried to hoodwink him with their mouths, their tongues were deceitful towards him, their hearts were not loyal to him, and they were not faithful to his covenant. **(R)**

³⁸ But in his compassionate he forgave their guilt instead of killing them, time and again repressing his anger instead of rousing his full wrath. **(R)**

Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11

⁶ His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God ⁷ but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, ⁸ he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. ⁹ But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names ¹⁰ so that *all beings* in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, *should bend the knee* at the name of Jesus ¹¹ and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

444. The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son".(Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5) Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence.(Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36) He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God".(Jn 3:18) In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God", (Mk 15:39) that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

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."(1 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)

661. This final stage stays closely linked to the first, that is, to his descent from heaven in the Incarnation. Only the one who "came from the Father" can return to the Father: Christ Jesus.(Cf. Jn 16:28) "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."(Jn 3:13; cf. Eph 4:8-10) Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the "Father's house", to God's life and happiness.(Jn 14:2) Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us.(*Roman Missal*, Preface of the Ascension: "*sed ut illuc confideremus, sua membra, nos subsequi quo ipse, caput nostrum principiumque, praecessit.*")

2795. The symbol of the heavens refers us back to the mystery of the covenant we are living when we pray to our Father. He is in heaven, his dwelling place; the Father's house is our homeland. Sin has exiled us from the land of the covenant,(Cf. Gen 3) but conversion of heart enables us to return to the Father, to heaven.(Jer 3:19-4:1a; Lk 15:18, 21) In Christ, then, heaven and earth are reconciled,(Cf. Isa 45:8; Ps 85:12) for the Son alone "descended from heaven" and causes us to ascend there with him, by his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension.(Jn 3:13; 12:32; 14 2-3; 16:28; 20:17; Eph 4:9-10; Heb 1:3; 2:13)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What strikes you when you read that Jesus came to save rather than condemn? Have you historically felt a sense of divine judgment, and how does this verse challenge or comfort that?
2. What does the phrase "whoever believes" mean to you personally? Does it feel inclusive, challenging, or demanding in your current season of life? Why?
3. John 3:16 describes God as a generous giver rather than a strict taskmaster. Since we are called to image that same love, how does this challenge you to move away from a transactional 'give-and-take' mindset and become more of a generous giver in your own relationships and daily life?"

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, your Son was lifted up on the cross for our salvation: increase our belief in him that we may embrace the cross and come to fullness of Life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

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

All: Amen

Looking to deepen your faith and connect with fellow parishioners? Join us for our "Living the Gospel" Bible study and sharing session at the parish. Together, we will reflect on God's Word, grow in faith, and journey together in fellowship.

Every Saturday

Time: 9.30 – 11.00 am

Venue: Level 3, Rm 03-06

All are welcome! For more information, please contact;

Mary Chua - 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

George Chee – 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

Reflection material available on Parish Website under – (Weekly Bible Sharing - Living the Gospel)

References for the Living the Gospel Reflection:

- 1) Gospel notes taken from the Navarre Bible
- 2) Gospel reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sunday and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.
- 3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of the Catholic Church