

## **REFLECTION ON THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS**

This year, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which is celebrated every year on 14 September, coincides with Sunday. As it is a Feast of the Lord, it takes precedence over Sunday, so the liturgy for today is that of this feast.

To look at the cross of Christ is to look at the symbol of God's love for humanity, a love so great that it led Him to give His Son for us, for our salvation, even to the point of death on the cross. And so the cross, which was a symbol of death, ignominy, and condemnation, became an instrument of salvation when it was taken up by Jesus Christ as an expression of God's love for us. The cross thus became a path to glory, an affirmation of the victory of love, an instrument of salvation. That is why we have this feast on this day, to exalt Jesus Christ, to praise his love for us, to embrace the cross as an affirmation of God's extreme love for us.

The readings help us to explain the meaning of this feast.

In the first reading, the author of the Book of Leviticus recounts yet another episode of the People of Israel murmuring against God and Moses. God had freed the people from slavery in Egypt and led them into the desert on their way to the Promised Land. All liberation requires sacrifice, purification, and trust in the liberator. But the People of Israel, faced with difficulties, easily forgot what God had done for them and rebelled against God and Moses. In the reading we heard, it is said that this led to the appearance of snakes that bit people, causing many deaths. Faced with this, Moses prayed to God for the People, and God told him to raise a bronze snake on a pole. Whoever looked at it would be healed.

This episode is referred to in the Gospel as a symbol of what would happen to Jesus Christ. Jesus too would be lifted up from the earth on the cross so that whoever embraces this cross of Christ, looks at Him condemned for us, giving His life for us, may be saved. The cross thus becomes, in Christ, a symbol of God's saving love for us. We too, condemned to death because of sin, were saved by the cross of Christ, by his death, the consequence of his love for us, a love to the end, even to death and death on the cross. For “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him”.

That is why St Paul tells us in the second reading, writing to the Christians of Philippi, "Christ Jesus, who was in the form of God, took the form of a servant, becoming like men. Appearing as a man, He humbled Himself even further, obeying even unto death, death on a cross. Every tongue should proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The cross, as we have already said, has thus become an instrument of salvation, an affirmation of God's love for us. Through it, Jesus Christ opened the way to Heaven for us, to eternal salvation. Praise be to the Lord who, out of love, came to us and gave His life for us, so that we might have Life in us; and, walking in the love of Christ, we will attain eternity, living in God's love forever and ever.

AMEN