

Pastor's Column

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Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (or Triumph of the Cross) we honor the Holy Cross by which Christ redeemed the world. The public veneration of the Cross of Christ originated in the fourth century, according to early accounts, beginning with the miraculous discovery of the cross on September 14, 326, by Saint Helen, mother of Constantine, while she was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—the same day that two churches built at the site of Calvary by Constantine were dedicated.

The observance of the Feast of the Exaltation (probably from a Greek word meaning “bringing to light”) of the Holy Cross has been celebrated by Christians on September 14 ever since. In the Western Church, the feast came into prominence in the seventh century, apparently inspired by the recovery of a portion of the Cross, said to have been taken from Jerusalem by the Persians, by the Roman emperor Heraclius in 629.

Christians “exalt” the Cross of Christ as the instrument of our salvation. Adoration of the Cross is, thus, adoration of Jesus Christ, the God “The Word Made Flesh,” who suffered and died on this Roman instrument of torture for our redemption from sin and death. The cross represents the One Sacrifice by which Jesus, obedient even unto death, accomplished our salvation. The cross is a symbolic summary of the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ—all in one image.

The Cross—because of what it represents—is the most potent and universal symbol of the Christian faith. It has inspired both liturgical and private devotions: for example, the Sign of the Cross, which is an invocation of the Holy Trinity; the “little” Sign of the Cross on head, lips and heart at the reading of the Gospel; praying the Stations (or Way) of the Cross; and the Veneration of the Cross by the faithful on Good Friday by kissing the feet of the image of Our Savior crucified.

Placing a crucifix (the cross with an image of Christ’s body upon it) in churches and homes, in classrooms of Catholic schools and in other Catholic institutions, or wearing this image on our person, is a constant reminder—and witness—of Christ’s ultimate triumph, His victory over sin and death through His suffering and dying on the Cross.

We remember Our Lord’s words, “He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it.” (Mt 10:38, 39). Meditating on these words we unite ourselves—our souls and bodies—with His obedience and His sacrifice; and we rejoice in this inestimable gift through which we have the hope of salvation and the glory.

**Dying, you destroyed our death; rising you restored our life.
Save us by your cross, Christ our Redeemer!**

—Women for Faith and Family – www.wf-f.org

F. Mike