



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 14th September 2025

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Year C — John 3:13-17

Relax

Make the Sign of the Cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. Then read the Gospel — preferably aloud and slowly — paying attention to any words that stand out to you.



Read

This Sunday's Gospel : THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP



Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.'

Did any words or phrases stand out to you in the Gospel? If so, take a few moments to meditate on them.

Reflect

Now read the Gospel again and consider what the Lord might be saying to you, or asking of you, through it. Then continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection...



In this gospel-reading we are listening-in to a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus by night (presumably because he did not want his colleagues to know. Do you mind your colleagues knowing that you are a Christian?). Jesus is talking about an incident during the Exodus journey described in our first reading today, when the Israelites were struck by a plague of snakes. Moses hoisted a bronze snake on a pole as a recovery-totem. It sounds superstitious, but presumably to depend on this "totem" was an expression of trust in God. Jesus now says that this snake is to be seen as a promise of the salvation to be won by trusting in his Cross. The Cross remains our sign of victory. To wear it and welcome it is, in our increasingly material world, a statement of where our heart and our confidence lies. However, the Cross is not complete in itself. Some people find it 'morbid' or 'morose', but to Christians it contains also the victory and reassurance of the Resurrection. The Cross makes sense not by the crumpled figure on the wood, but by God's acceptance of that obedience. The triumph of the resurrection is too glorious to be represented by anything visible.

What place do representations of Christ raised on the cross have in your own life and home?

Rest

Now call to mind the Lord's love for you, remembering that through this scripture the Lord is truly present. Then silently and prayerfully listen for God's voice and rest in God's love.



Respond & Request

Thank God for any insight you may have received, and respond by asking the Holy Spirit to bless you with a spiritual gift or help you to grow in a particular fruit of the Spirit. You might pray for wisdom, courage, faithfulness, self-control, patience, generosity, joy, kindness, love, peace, faith, chastity - or another grace - to help you live out your faith this week.



Remember

This Wednesday's word for our families is **SELF-GIVING!**
(To see the Family Version, please visit: wednesdayword.org)



As you pray for your loved ones, please remember to pray for the Church and for the families connected to our schools.

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



First Reading: *A Sign of Healing*



Numbers 21:4-9

On the way through the wilderness, the Israelites lost patience. 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.' At this God sent fiery serpents among the people; their bite brought death to many in Israel. The people came and said to Moses, 'We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Intercede for us with the Lord to save us from these serpents.' Moses interceded for the people, and the Lord answered him, 'Make a fiery serpent and put it on a standard. If anyone is bitten and looks at it, he shall live.' 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.

This story about a bronze snake may well explain a bronze snake which was long kept in the Temple at Jerusalem as a reminder of God's healing power, which lasts from age to age. Eventually, in a purge of dubious objects of veneration, the reforming king Hezekiah decided that the snake was idolatrous, and destroyed it. One still sometimes sees a snake curled round a stake as a medical sign, a promise of healing. The Church sees that healing sign as a preparation for the great healing sign of the Cross. During Lent and Passiontide we remember the Cross chiefly for the suffering of Christ. Now, months later, we can celebrate the triumph of its healing power and the triumph of Christ's victory. Today's Feast originates in the victory of the Christian emperor Heraclius, when he won back from the pagan Persians a great relic of the Cross which they had taken from Jerusalem. The crucifixes which hang in our homes must be seen as symbols not only of Christ's suffering, but above all of his triumph over death.

How should Jesus be represented on the Cross, in triumph or in suffering?



Second Reading: *God Raised him High*



Philippians 2:6-11

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

This lovely reading seems to be a very early Christian hymn which Paul had heard and incorporated into his letter. It contrasts the first Adam with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The first Adam, the representative of the whole human race, tried to be like God;

he wanted to escape death but he was disobedient and was humiliated. The second Adam, the founder of the new humanity and first-fruits from the dead, was in the form of God, but did not capitalize on his divinity. In full obedience to the Father he accepted death, a humiliating death, and was raised up by the Father. The last lines give one of the fullest pictures of Christ's divinity in Paul's writings: Christ receives the divine name, the Lord, which belongs to God alone. To Christ every knee must bend, as it must bend only to God. And yet, this does not take away from God's glory, since – on the contrary – it is 'to the glory of God the Father'. Paul never actually calls Christ 'God', but here he shows Christ's divinity, by attributing to him the reverence and adoration which is due only to God.

Do you find this poem an attractive prayer for devotion? Why?

“ Christ receives the divine name, ”
the Lord, which belongs to God alone.