



14. September 2023

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
The Triumph of Love

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which we celebrate today, has its origins in an event that took place in the year 335. On 13 September of that year, after many years of construction, a large church in Jerusalem was solemnly consecrated. It is known as the "Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre" or "Church of the Resurrection". It was Emperor Constantine who had it built, after his mother, St. Helena, had found the Cross of Christ on September 13, 320.

One day after the consecration of the Church - that is, on 14 September 335 - the Holy Cross was first shown to the people and "exalted" for veneration. Macarius I, who was then Patriarch of Jerusalem, took the "vera Cruz" (as it was called) to an elevation on that day. From there, he "exalted" the Cross, so that all could see it and venerate it. Hence the name of the Feast: "Exaltation of the Holy Cross".

Jn 3:13-17

No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.

In these brief words, the whole message of the Gospel is summed up in its essence: To God the Father belongs all glory, and likewise to His beloved Son, who came into the world to glorify the Father and to redeem mankind!

When meditating on the Cross of our Lord, we must first of all look, together with Jesus, at the love of the Heavenly Father. It was the love of the Father that moved Jesus to come into the world, and He acted on commission of His love!

The motivation of our Father rings out clearly here: “*this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son*”. Thus, we can take a deep look into the Heart of our Father.

The world is often not the place where God is offered due reverence and loving obedience; it is often the place of turning away from God; a world of sin and rebellion. So God sends His Son into a world that is hostile to Him, thus putting into action all that the Lord Himself exhorts us to do in the Sermon on the Mount concerning love of enemies (cf. Mt 5:38-48).

God sees people as His lost sheep, wandering away from Him (cf. Lk 15:1-7). He wants to save them from eternal damnation. Without overlooking the ugliness and horror of sin; indeed, taking it upon Himself in the sufferings of His Son, His love is always directed towards the salvation of the person. His attitude is like that of one who kisses a leper, even though his appearance is repulsive and hideous, but love overcomes all and is capable of such a gesture of affection and tenderness!

Thus the love of God kisses us, when the Holy One of God, the Son of God Himself, comes down to us men who are lepers because of sin. The faults of mankind are forgiven through Him, and the Holy Spirit begins to cleanse the depths of the leprosy that we have contracted through sin and that has disfigured us.

If we look at the Cross from the perspective of God's love, it remains a terrible event, for people, in their blindness, were capable of condemning and killing God Himself in the Person of His Son. However, the evil is overshadowed by the fact that the Lord, by His voluntary death, offers salvation to mankind. The act of love prevails over the act of hatred manifested in the event of the Cross.

God and His willingness to save always outshines everything that the wickedness of the devil and his blinded collaborators may devise and carry out. Thus the Cross becomes a sign of the triumph of love. That is why the Cross must be visibly erected everywhere in the world as a sign that God's love will triumph. The Cross only becomes a kind of threat when it is not truth and love, but self-mastery that is sought as the highest good.

The Church must remain faithful to her commission to proclaim Jesus as Saviour of the world. This is an honour and a holy duty for her! She can never allow her message to be overshadowed by worldly speculations, theological absurdities, human respects or

errors. It is precisely in the Cross that the wisdom of God shines so brightly that Paul wanted to proclaim only the Crucified One (cf. 1 Cor 2:2).

Indeed, the Cross is the unsurpassable victory of God's love over the darkness of sin. It only remains for us to thank God with all our heart, with love and reverence, and to worship and serve Him.