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THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

"Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim / Till all the world adore his sacred name."

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today is a special day for our three RCIA candidates. Ed Begalke and Rebecca Shoemith will be baptized, and Kellie Gordon will be received into full communion of the Church. We have also celebrated the Sacraments of Initiation of Karl Jordan at South Health Campus Hospital when his father-in-law, Brian, was dying. And a few months ago Taylor Grace received the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.

Congratulations!

We celebrate today the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross is more than a symbol - it is the *essence* of Christianity.

Throughout most of our history, the crucifix has been prominently displayed in our churches. It's at the head of our processions and it's displayed in our homes and worn on our person.

The important event we commemorate today happened in the year 326 when the relics of the cross on which Jesus was crucified, was found.

St Helen, mother of Emperor Constantine, travelled to Jerusalem where she organized a dig at the hill of Calvary.

The diggers uncovered three wooden crosses. They didn't know which cross was the one Jesus was crucified on and which ones were of the two thieves.

So, they brought a sick woman and a dead man who was about to be buried.

The three crosses were placed one after the other on the sick woman and on the dead man. Two of the crosses had no effect, but on contact with the third cross, the sick woman was healed of her illness and the dead man came back to life. These miracles clearly indicated which of the three was the Holy Cross of Jesus.

News of the finding of Jesus' cross quickly spread and believers gathered to see and to venerate it.

St Helen then commissioned a church to be built over the site. The church of the Holy Sepulchre was consecrated on September 13, 335. The basilica of the Holy Sepulchre is today regarded as *the holiest spot* on earth by Christians of all denominations.

Today when people make the sign of the cross, we recognize them immediately as Christians.

To the early Romans, the cross was an instrument of death and torture. Jesus humbled Himself to great suffering and death on the cross. Jesus was seen as the lowest of human beings, accepting a death reserved for the worst of criminals and sinners though He himself was sinless and divine.

We use the cross as our symbol because of what God *chose to do* with that cross. God changed the cross from a sign of death, defeat and grief, to a sign of hope and promise! The power of the Cross is the power to save.

For us Catholics, it can't just be a cross, it's got to be a crucifix. We keep the body of Jesus, on the cross so that we never forget what Jesus did on the cross for us two thousand years ago.

Christ didn't carry His cross so that we would never have to carry a cross. He didn't come so that we could live a painless life.

The authentic life that Christ has taught us and lived Himself, is made very clear in the Gospel: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"

It is through the cross that we find Christ. It is impossible to follow Jesus without carrying the cross.

To take up the cross in this way we need to accept self-denial and sacrifice as part of our daily lives. Love is measured by sacrifice. People who love much,

sacrifice much. Yet sacrifice does not make us poorer but richer. This is what we see in the lives of Christ and of the saints. This is what we are *all* called to be. This is what the family of St. Gerard's parish have been called to be.

Our parish is a place where we experience what it means to be the people of God. It's a place where people are nourished through love and through the Sacraments. It's a place where prayer happens and where the prayer of each one of us becomes the prayer *of all of us* as a family of faith. And it's a place where people are invited and encouraged to use their God-given gifts in a whole variety of ways as a means of following Christ.

And so every September this Feast Day is a little reminder for us of God's great love for us. He loves us enough to die on that Cross in order to embrace us to himself for all eternity.

Stay safe and healthy.

Fr. Ignatius Tran