

Diakonos Joseph Exaltation of the Holy Cross Feast Homily Jn 3:13-17 14 Sept 2023

this ancient feast

the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

is expressive of the transformation of the human condition

changing a dehumanizing instrument of torture and ignominious death

into the joyous sacramental sign of the glorious redemption of our humanity,

fulfilled in the earth-shaking, angelic proclamation

of the Easter Resurrection of our Savior,

for no one can ever again think of the horror and the sorrow of the cross

without thinking too of the empty tomb,

without recalling

those wondrous apostolic encounters with the risen Lord,

without remembering the Ascension of the glorified Jesus Christ,

God and man, to heaven,

without realizing

that the God who made our souls

in his own image

became one with us in suffering and death

to save us from our sins and our corruption,

that God is love,

that creation itself was an act of love

and the Incarnation

which irrevocably affirms that we are redeemable

is also the everlasting pledge of God's solidarity
with us
with those he made for eternal fellowship with him—
which gives a miraculous transformation
to that seemingly brief
flicker-flash of our lives
the all too-swift turning of the passing years
haunted with all our hopes and injured dreams,
joys, sorrows, achievements, disappointments,
the accumulation of all our happiness and suffering,
reaching for what is just beyond our straining fingertips,
repeating Adam and Eve's fall in every generation,
a transformation toward an indelible sacred significance
which transcends even the failures and frustration
of those brutal mishaps and bitter ends,
a transforming significance which hallows
even our death on the cross of this fallen human condition,
for empowered with that healing grace of his giving of himself
on that cross,
we may rest assured in believing
that if we have died with him,
we shall rise with him
for the cross on which the perfectly innocent man

was murdered in an unjust execution
has been transformed through divine love into the sign of our salvation,
which gives meaning to our lives,
direction to our journeys,
purpose to our efforts and succor for our pain,
shedding redemption
like the blood dripping from the crucified
shedding the light of hope on the path
no matter how uneven or dark
the way ahead may seem,
for the good message is that
in Jesus Christ God is with us
in his beloved Son's passion
God is with us
even on the cross,
he is with us
especially on the cross,
God is with us
and it is his presence on that cross which makes it holy,
his presence on the cross which makes us all,
like Dismas,
able to say to him,
"Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom"

so in that very place
where the sacred path
of all our good intentions
all our good efforts
crosses the dark path of sorrow and suffering—
in that very crossing place where we fall under the weight of our cross
Jesus fell with us
so that in that very crossing place
where the bright good road meets the blue road
of sorrow and shadow
there, that crossing which breaks our hearts
becomes a holy place,
a holy place which is the holy cross
hallowed by the blood he shed
where God's own crucified love
offers the ineradicable promise of our salvation
in the transforming grace of his divine mercy
the cross of death has become the tree of life
in the triumph of his holy cross
Jesus offers his fellowship to all his relatives
in the human kinship of Mary's divine child
all of us have become his relations
“For God so loved the world ...”