

## September 14: The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

### OPENING PRAYER

On September 14, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The first-century Christians in the Roman Empire knew the cross for what it truly was. These early believers had seen men and women suffer agonizing deaths after the Romans crucified them on crosses along roadways or outside city walls. These verses from the second reading for today's Mass help us to grasp both the profound humility of Christ's Crucifixion and the astounding message of his sacrificial death on the cross:

Brothers and sisters:

[Christ Jesus], though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
coming in human likeness;  
and found human in appearance,  
he humbled himself,  
becoming obedient to death,  
even death on a cross.

*(Lectionary for Mass, Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross:  
Philippians 2:6–8)*

### *Let us pray:*

Jesus, you willingly accepted unthinkable humiliation because you love our heavenly Father, and because you love us. Help us to be more like you, ready to make sacrifices for those we love. Accept our sacrifices, small and great, as signs of our gratitude to you.

Jesus, your faith in our heavenly Father led to the cross. Help us to stand up for our faith, knowing that our salvation was won by your unimaginable suffering. Don't ever let us be embarrassed or ashamed of our faith in you, our Lord, who was so courageous in facing torture and death. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## CLOSING PRAYER

As Christians we venerate the cross because Jesus' death on the cross has saved us. When we pray the Stations of the Cross, we say, "By your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world." The cross inspires us to let go of what we want to do and to focus instead on what God wants us to do. Listen carefully to these words from a traditional Catholic prayer in honor of the Holy Cross:

Lord Jesus, from the height of Your throne of suffering You reveal the depth of Your love for us. Lifted up from the world on the Cross, You draw everyone to Yourself.

The Cross is both the symbol and the act by which You raised up the world from all its sin and weakness. But You also ask for our cooperation.

Help us to die to self so that we may live for You and our fellow human beings. Set us free from the slavery of our passions, our prejudices, and our selfishness. Enable us to endure the pains and trials of this life and really help to change the world in our own small way. . . .

Let us take up our cross, and follow You through earthly sorrow into eternal happiness in heaven. Amen. ("The Holy Cross Prayer")

### *Let us pray:*

Please repeat each line of John 3:16 after me:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

R. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him

R. so that everyone who believes in him

might not perish but might have eternal life.

R. might not perish but might have eternal life.

Let us close our prayer with the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.