

MORNING MEDITATION

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

**Gratitude is appreciating the value of things and experiences
for which we did not actively work towards.**

Numbers 21:4-9

In the Biblical world, snakes, viewed as dangerous, vicious, deadly and unpredictable, were understood as agents of Satan or Satan himself. This excerpt from the book of Numbers describes fiery serpents causing severe burning sensations and death itself. They interpreted their pain and suffering as God's punishment for complaining about their living conditions. Forgetting the abuse of slavery in Egypt, they began to remember how the food supply was good and began to curse God and his prophet Moses in the wilderness. In spite of the ungrateful complaints of the people, God heard the prayer of Moses and transformed the sources of evil into agents of healing.

Trust in the transforming power of God. God transforms even forces of evil into agents of healing and wholeness.

Psalms 78

**Hearken, my people, to my teaching;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable,
I will utter mysteries from of old.**

Philippians 2:6-11

In this early Christian hymn, the love of Christ, which Christians are called to share and emulate, is described as "self-emptying" love. Christ emptied himself in total giving by dying on the cross. Christians are called to empty themselves in compassion and love.

Give yourself to each other in love and service!

John 3:13-17

There is an ancient story about an old man saving a scorpion. While meditating under a tree on the bank of the Ganges, an old man saw a scorpion floating helplessly on the river. He stretched himself out and reached out to rescue the drowning scorpion. The scorpion stung him as soon as he touched it. The old man kept trying in spite of being stung over and over again. A passerby, who witnessed it, asked the old man why he was saving a creature that was stinging him. His reply was, "it is the scorpion's nature to sting, but it is my nature to save". Whatever the hurt, the old man was going to remain

faithful to his nature to save. He was going to save a creature that was fighting back.

God has reached out again and again even when we continued to strike back. It is God's nature to save. It is God's nature, God's character, the very essence of God's being to redeem, to save, to love and to heal. We fail to respond; we often strike back like the scorpion in the above story and we remain ungrateful. God does not simply love...God is love. "God loved the world so much that he gave his only son....." (Jn.3:16). "The son of man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." Today is the remembrance of the Cross. The cross, the sign of punishment and scandal became the sign of salvation. God transforms even the signs of punishment and scandal as agents of healing, redemption, salvation, love and Grace.

Trust in the transforming power of God. God transforms even forces of evil into agents of healing and wholeness.

Saint of the day, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross and 8 other saints are remembered this day

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, celebrated every year on September 14, recalls three events:

- 1.The finding of the True Cross by Saint Helena.
- 2.The dedication of churches built by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary.
- 3.The restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem in AD 629 by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, after it had fallen into the hands of the Persian Emperor Chosroes II in the AD 614 Sasanian conquest of Jerusalem.

Early in the fourth century, Saint Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, went to Jerusalem in search of the holy places of Christ's life. She razed the second-century Temple of Aphrodite, which tradition held was built over the Savior's tomb, and her son built the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher on that spot. During the excavation, workers found three crosses. Legend has it that the one on which Jesus died was identified when its touch healed a dying woman.

The cross immediately became an object of veneration. At a Good Friday celebration in Jerusalem toward the end of the fourth century, according to an eyewitness, the wood was taken out of its silver container and placed on a table together with the inscription Pilate ordered placed above Jesus' head: Then "all the people pass through one by one; all of them bow down, touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and, after kissing the cross, they move on."

To this day, the Eastern Churches, Catholic and Orthodox alike, celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the September anniversary of the basilica's dedication. The feast entered the Western calendar in the seventh century after Emperor Heraclius recovered the cross from the Persians, who had carried it off in 614, 15 years earlier. According to the story, the emperor intended to carry the cross back into Jerusalem himself, but was unable to move forward until he took off his imperial garb and became a barefoot pilgrim.

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