

Suffering engenders love

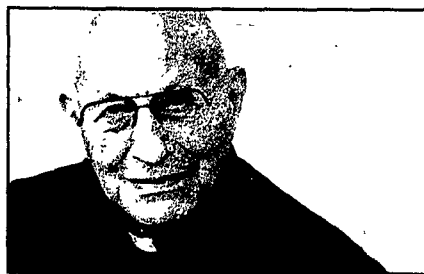
Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept. 14): (R3) John 3:13-17; (R1) Numbers 21:4-9; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

Next Sunday the church celebrates the veneration of the great relics of Christ's cross in Jerusalem after the Emperor Heraclius had recovered them in 628 from the hands of the Persians, who had carried them off in 614. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is considered a feast of the Lord and so takes precedence when it falls on a Sunday in Ordinary Time.

According to the story, the emperor determined to carry the precious relic upon his shoulder into the city of Jerusalem with the utmost pomp. But at the entrance of the holy places, he was not able to go forward. The patriarch, Zachary, who walked by the emperor's side, suggested that the emperor's imperial splendor was hardly in agreement with the humility with which Christ had borne the cross through the streets of Jerusalem. So the emperor laid aside his purple and his crown, put on simple clothes, went along barefoot with the procession, and devoutly placed the cross where it was before. The relics were lifted up for the veneration of the people, and many sick were miraculously cured.

The first reading for this feast was chosen for the obvious parallels between the healing power of the bronze serpent raised up on a pole and the healing power of Jesus raised up on the cross.

The key words in the liturgy for this feast are "lifted up." The Gospel is part of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus speaks of being "lifted up." "Lifted up" had a triple meaning: crucifixion, Jesus lifted up on the cross; resurrection, Jesus lifted up from the tomb; and ascension, Jesus lifted up to heaven. Jesus' lifting up was one continuous movement of exaltation.



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

The second reading is a beautiful hymn from Paul's Letter to the Philippians. It is a wonderful statement of both the incarnation of Jesus (God emptying himself and taking the form of a slave) and his paschal mystery (his death, resurrection and ascension).

The passage is constructed like an hour glass: beginning with Christ's divine origin, narrowing to the point of his death, and then expanding with the proclamation of his glory and culminating in the statement of his identity as Lord.

This same reading is used on Passion Sunday. There, the focus is on Jesus' humiliation through his crucifixion. Here, the emphasis is on his exaltation through his resurrection from the dead. The feast this Sunday celebrates the triumph of the cross. "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee, because by thy holy cross, thou has redeemed the world."

Remember these facts:

Jesus' greatest work came at the end of his life, when enduring unspeakable sufferings. His sufferings were redemptive, so can ours be if accepted freely as Jesus did his.

If a disease is incurable and painful, patient acceptance will merit great rewards in the life to come. St. Paul gloried in the cross, for he said, "I consider the suffer-

ings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to come."

Moreover, God will always give the grace to bear any trial: "My grace is sufficient for you."

Lastly, if a person is disabled, others are given the opportunity to practice charity and compassion, like a Mother Teresa, and to thank God for having protected them from similar crosses.

We suffer to help ourselves and others, by offering our sufferings for sinners and the souls in purgatory.

Others suffer to enable us to become Good Samaritans, like a Mother Teresa.

Suffering releases love, gives birth to works of love and thus transforms human civilization into a civilization of love.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, September 15

1 Timothy 2:1-8;
Psalms 28:2, 7-9;
John 19:25-27;
or Luke 2:33-35

Tuesday, September 16

1 Timothy 3:1-13;
Psalms 101:1-3, 5-6;
Luke 7:11-17

Wednesday, September 17

1 Timothy 3:14-16;
Psalms 111:1-6; Luke 7:31-35

Thursday, September 18

1 Timothy 4:12-16;
Psalms 111:7-10;
Luke 7:36-50

Friday, September 19

1 Timothy 6:2C-12;
Psalms 49:6-10; 17-20;
Luke 8:1-3

Saturday, September 20

1 Timothy 6:13-16;
Psalms 100:2-5;
Luke 8:4-15

"I FEEL LIKE
A FISH
WITH NO WATER."

-JACOB, AGE 5
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