

## **The exaltation of the Holy Cross 2008**

*John 3:13-17*

The Feast of the Cross has its origin at Jerusalem,  
and is connected with the finding of what is believed to be the true cross  
and the building, by the Emperor Constantine,

of churches upon the sites where Jesus died and was buried.

The very solemn dedication of these churches took place

in 335 on the 13th and 14th of September.

The churches were destroyed by the Persians in 614.

The present church of the sepulcher was built in 1149.

A celebration of the Cross is really a celebration of the Son of Man, Jesus,  
and how He poured forth His love, a love which is eternal,  
and so a love which is still poured forth.

John says in this chapter 3 of his gospel that the Son of Man descends  
and the Son of Man ascends.

The Son of Man descends for God so loved the world.

The Son of Man ascends for God so loved the world.

He ascends in being lifted on the Cross

like the bronze serpent mounted on a pole, the sight of which brought healing.

The ascent of the Son of Man is Jesus in His flesh being glorified.

What does this mean?

It sounds rather lofty...

Bear with me:

Jesus, we believe, is God become human: the Son of Man.

During his earthly pilgrimage, during the 33 years he walked the face of our earth,

He withheld from his body the glory that is His as God

so that he could experience hunger and sadness and fatigue and the pain of betrayal  
and death...

Had he not withheld glory, that is, the excess of divine love and light,

- he would not have experienced these things
- he would have been "invincible" in His body

He chose to experience these things not because he needed to understand them, but

- because true love always implies vulnerability
- so that divine love traverse these things,  
and, consequently, they no longer stop love.

As Jesus dies, the excess of divine love and light flow.  
At the Cross, where betrayal and hatred and sadness and denial intersect,  
Jesus loves us—so much so that He cannot but rise from the dead,  
when He is fully glorified in His body, that is,  
when the excess of divine love and light transform His body,  
and He becomes invincible in His body.

Divine love is victorious.

Divine love is victorious in us—if we so desire, if we welcome it.

The triumph of the Cross

The exaltation of the Cross.

The exaltation of Jesus on the Cross.

St. Leo the Great (pope from 440-461), says:

“The Cross is the source of all blessings, the cause of all graces.

Through the Cross, we receive

- strength from weakness
- glory from dishonor
- life from death.”

We gather around the Crucified and Glorified One, our Friend and Savior.

The Biblical language in the first reading,

when it speaks of “looking” at the serpent on the pole,  
suggests “to gaze upon” “to be in awe of” “to adore”.

Let us adore the Son of Man.

In so doing, we let Him take hold of us.

Then we shall rise with Him.

These men whom we welcome back into our parish family,  
journeyed together for three days, on an ACTS retreat.

As you can perhaps tell by their wonderfully disturbing zeal,  
they all gazed upon the Son of Man—each in his own way.

No joy can rival that of the children of God...