

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
14th September 2014

This feast is celebrated every year on 14th September. As it is a Feast of Our Lord it is celebrated even when 14th September occurs on a Sunday as it does this year.

The Feast celebrates the importance of the Cross in our Christian lives.

As Catholics know from an early age we begin every act of prayer and worship by making the Sign of the Cross, and as every priest knows he must always have a cross on the altar when Mass is celebrated. Many Christians like to wear a Cross as a sign of their faith, for the Cross is the universally accepted symbol of Christian faith.

As such it is attacked by those who are opposed to Christ.

Here are a few thoughts about the meaning of the Cross

- 1) It is remarkable that anyone should want to be constantly reminded of an instrument of extreme torture which the Cross was, but it is necessary for us to venerate the Cross in spite of all its horrors because it was the means by which Jesus gave up his life for us.

Jesus was not crucified by accident.

He could have escaped but chose not to.

St John in the Gospel: God gave his only Son.

So the Cross reminds us that our faith and our Church are God's gift to us.

We might compare our giving to God with his giving to us.

- 2) St. John explains why God gave us Jesus. It was because he loved us so much.

The Cross is a sign of the completeness of God's love for us.

No one can give more than their life.

- 3) Catholics always have the figure of the crucified Christ on their crosses. Other Christians prefer to have an empty Cross because this reminds us that God's love for us did not end on the Cross.

Jesus raised Jesus from death to eternal life, restored him to his original state, so the Cross is also a sign not only of death but of resurrection.

St. John tells us that “everyone who believes in Jesus may have eternal life.”

The Cross reminds us of this incredible promise, that if we believe in Jesus we can follow him through death and resurrection to eternal life.

- 4) The Cross prevents us from thinking that we can have these benefits without the suffering. We cannot.

Jesus triumphs through suffering and death and so must we.

God loved Jesus in his suffering; God loves us in our suffering.

The Cross helps us to come to terms with this difficult challenge.

Suffering and death are not necessarily tragedies.

Wilf’s death is shocking us but not necessarily for him.

He has gone where Jesus is leading us all, and in our Catholic tradition we believe that those who have gone ahead of us help us with their prayers.

- 5) The Cross shows how God brings good out of evil.

The Cross was a sign of death, but God had made it a sign of life.

Similarly in our Old Testament reading the sign of the serpent, a cause of death, became a means of recovery from the danger of death

- 6) There is one more lesson from the Cross.

St. Paul makes it very clear in our second reading that Jesus died to save every single person, “all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld.”

He says elsewhere, “God has no favourites” (Romans 2:11).

The Cross reminds us that God loves us all equally, and we must remember this when we think about what certain newspapers tell us and when we choose the members who represent us in local and national government.

On this Feast of the Holy Cross this year the Church is asking us to pray particularly for Racial Justice because we cannot really venerate the Cross without respecting everyone for whom Jesus died. This means absolutely everyone.

Rev Geoffrey Carey