

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

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by

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Today, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, is a special feast day for our Order. But there's a question we need to ask - why do we exalt the cross at all?

The cross was a horrific instrument of torture and execution. Isn't exalting it something like celebrating, say, a guillotine or a hangman's noose? Remember, though, to be precise we don't exalt a cross. We exalt a Crucifix. A cross is empty. A Crucifix has Jesus on it. We are exalting the love of God, the goodness of God, the power of God. We are saying, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mighty love endures forever."

Today we celebrate the love of God, more powerful than sin, more powerful than death, and able to draw good out of any evil. Today's feast reminds us that human suffering is not meaningless: united to Christ it can bring new love into the world.

We desperately need this message. Everywhere we look, we encounter suffering. Global suffering from a pandemic. The suffering of refugees. The suffering of innocent children. Hatred and violence. The secret sufferings we all carry in our hearts. But suffering doesn't have the last word – Jesus Christ has the last word, and his last word is always love.

We read it in today's gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." Let's ask the Lord to help us unite our sufferings to that undying love.

Because, in the end, Jesus did not come to take away human suffering. He came to enter into it, to experience it, to redeem it, to give it meaning, and to enable it to become the source of a new love. His suffering and death unlocked an ocean of love for the world; our suffering, united to his, shares in that same ocean of love. He wants to give us hearts like his, hearts that aren't closed off to others' suffering, hearts that suffer and pray and wait and hope and love with a courageous compassion that comes from God.

And that brings us to our Order's mission. God has called us to witness to the faith, to love in our words and in our actions, and to support the Christian communities of the Holy Land. In a world splintered by anger, fear, and resentment, we're called to be vessels of the healing power of Christ's love.

Today we exalt that mighty love of Christ, crucified and risen. May each one of us enter his love more deeply, and, with the help of Our Blessed Mother and all the saints, radiate it to every person we meet.

