

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son should undergo the Cross to save the human race, grant, we pray, that we, who have known his mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Numbers 21:4-9

A reading from the book of Numbers

On the way through the wilderness, the Israelites lost patience. They spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in this wilderness? For there is neither bread nor water here; we are sick of this unsatisfying food.'

At this God sent fiery serpents among the people; their bite brought death to many in Israel. The people came and said to Moses, 'We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Intercede for us with the Lord to save us from these serpents.' Moses interceded for the people, and the Lord answered him, 'Make a fiery serpent and put it on a standard. If anyone is bitten and looks at it, he shall live.' So Moses fashioned a bronze serpent which he put on a standard, and if anyone was bitten by a serpent, he looked at the bronze serpent and lived.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Ps 77:1-2, 34-38

Response:  
Never forget the deeds of the Lord.

1. Give heed, my people, to my teaching; turn your ear to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable and reveal hidden lessons of the past. (R.)

2. When he slew them then they would seek him, return and seek him in earnest. They would remember that God was their rock, God the Most High their redeemer. (R.)
3. But the words they spoke were mere flattery; they lied to him with their lips. For their hearts were not truly with him; they were not faithful to his covenant. (R.)
4. Yet he who is full of compassion forgave their sin and spared them. So often he held back his anger when he might have stirred up his rage. (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 2:6-11

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians

The state of Jesus Christ was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION  
Alleluia, alleluia! We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you; because by your cross you have redeemed the world. Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 3:13-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.'

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (all bow during the next three lines) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation, O Lord, which on the altar of the Cross cancelled the offence of the whole world, cleanse us, we pray, of all our sins. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON  
When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself, says the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having been nourished by your holy banquet, we beseech you, Lord Jesus Christ, to bring those you have redeemed by the wood of your life-giving Cross to the glory of the resurrection. Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

In this hour of farewell, or, better, of leave-taking, I repeat once more that what matters most in this life is: our blessed Jesus Christ, his holy Church, his Gospel, and in the Gospel above all else the Our Father according to the mind and heart of Jesus, and the truth and goodness of his Gospel, goodness which must be meek and kind, hardworking and patient, unconquerable and victorious.

(St John XXIII: Spiritual Testament)

# Sunday Message

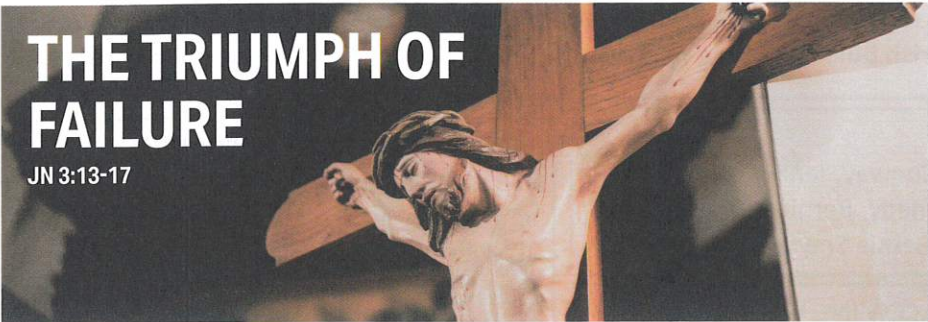
THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

THE WORD

Year C • 14 September 2025 • Colour: Red • Psalter Week 4

## THE TRIUMPH OF FAILURE

JN 3:13-17



We live in a world that rewards success. And it seems easy enough to measure it.

If you win gold in the Olympics, that's success. If you graduate from a top college with a first class degree, that's success. If you manage your team to league or cup glory, that's success. If you climb the corporate ladder and reach the top of your profession, that's success. If you have a bank account that keeps on growing, that's success.

Worldly success is measurable, quantifiable, and others can see it. Failure is measurable, too. We know failure when we see it. The difference between being successful and being a failure is obvious.

That's why on the face of it today's feast seems like some sort of contradiction. We are celebrating the exaltation of the cross. We are celebrating the triumph of something that was used as an instrument of execution. We are celebrating failure.

To be put to death on a cross was to come to the most ignoble end possible. It's what happened to thieves and murderers. It's how rabble-rousers and revolutionaries were dealt with. It was the fate of losers.

Death on a cross was something to be ashamed of, not glory in. It's why down the centuries so many people have had difficulty with a religion that exalts a cross.

But for us Christians there is no contradiction here. For us, the cross of Christ is something glorious, something to boast about, because it points to just how much God loves us.

In order to show us how to live, Jesus was prepared to risk everything, even life itself. He didn't have to do it – but he did. And God vindicated him by raising him from the dead. Tragedy turned to triumph, darkness to light, death to new life.

The cross of Christ has given us life and hope. By any reckoning, even if it cannot be measured on Wall St., that sounds like a definition of success. ■

## REFLECT

Every night when I was young, we prayed the Apostles Creed as part of the family rosary. When I began to pay attention to the words, one line in particular struck me as odd, the line where it said of Jesus that he descended into hell. That didn't make sense to me. I understood hell as a place bad people were sent to for all eternity, a place that was impossible to escape from. You were condemned to hell because you deserved it, and you would be stuck there in agony forever. Innocent people didn't end up in that terrible place, so how then could the creed – our profession of faith – state that God's own son ended up there? Surely, some mistake.

Later, I learned that theologians understood this descent into hell as the period between Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection – the waiting period, the interregnum, between the darkness of Good Friday and the glory of Easter Sunday.

But it also has another more profound meaning. It describes Jesus' experience of total abandonment, loss, misery, suffering. It describes the utter devastation Jesus felt at the time of his passion and death. When we say, 'I'm going through hell,' that's what Jesus experienced. He went through hell – the anguish of torture and crucifixion, of being abandoned by his friends, even seemingly by God. Anyone who has suffered pain and heartbreak knows exactly what this is like. It reminds us that God's son entered

## SAY

Repeat today's entrance antiphon: "We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection: through him we are saved and made free."

## PRAY

In the second reading, St Paul quotes a hymn about Jesus, sung by the early Christian communities. It tells the story of God's Son, who came into the world and became like us, sharing our human nature. He went so far as to be executed as a criminal on a cross, and for his obedience God raised him up and made him higher than all creation. It's a beautiful hymn that sums up what we believe. Read it prayerfully today. Make it a profession of faith.

## DO

Many people wear a crucifix today as a fashion statement rather than a statement of faith. Do you have a cross or crucifix, and how do you use it?

## LEARN

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross marks two historical events: the discovery of the True Cross by Saint Helena on this date in 320 under the temple of Venus in Jerusalem, and the dedication in 335 of the basilica and shrine built on Calvary by Constantine, marking the site of the crucifixion. This feast has been celebrated ever since, in praise of the redemption won for us by the cross of Christ.

fully into the human condition. Jesus has personal experience of abandonment, betrayal, humiliation, suffering and death. He went through hell for our sake, and so we can turn to him with confidence in our need. He knows what it's like to be miserable.

The next verse of the Apostles' creed states that, 'on the third day he rose again from the dead.' God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus passed through death to a new, glorified life and this is the promise of our faith. Whatever hell we go through, whatever setbacks or sufferings we endure as humans and Christians, we know that suffering and death do not have the last word. The cross of Christ has triumphantly opened for us the gates to eternal life. ■