

14 September – Exaltation of the Cross

FEAST; red

Originally this day commemorated the dedication of Constantine's Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in the fourth century; after the celebration, the wood of the cross was venerated. The feast spread in the West after the recovery of the relics of the cross from Persia in the seventh century. A feast of the Lord, it celebrates the "lifting up" of the Son of Man on the cross, into glory, and the paradox of the cross as a sign of humiliation and death, yet the source of victory for all people.

First Reading † Numbers 21:4-9

A reading from the book of Numbers

When those that were afflicted looked upon it, they were healed.

On the way through the wilderness the people 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.

Responsorial † Psalm 77:1-2.34-38

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

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.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

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.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

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.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

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.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Second Reading † Philippians 2:6-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

He humbled himself, therefore God had exalted him.

The state of Jesus 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 the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation

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

Gospel † John 3:13-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

The Son of Man must be lifted up.

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.