

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 21:4b-9

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

A reading from the book of Numbers

On the way through the wilderness the people lost patience. They spoke against God and against Moses,

‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?
For there is neither food nor water here; we are sick of this wretched 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.’

So Moses interceded for the people, and the Lord replied,

‘Make a fiery serpent and raise it as a standard.
Anyone who is bitten and looks at it will survive.’

So Moses made a serpent out of bronze and raised it as a standard, and anyone who was bitten by a serpent and looked at the bronze serpent survived.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial † Psalm 77:1-2.34-38

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Give ear, my people, to my teaching;
incline your ear to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable
and utter hidden lessons of the past.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

When he slew them, then they sought him,
repented and earnestly sought God.
They remembered that God was their rock,
God the Most High their redeemer.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Yet they deceived him with their mouths;
they lied to him with their tongues.
For their hearts were not steadfast towards him;
they were not faithful to his covenant.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Yet he who is full of compassion
forgave them their sin and spared them.
So often he held back his anger,
and did not stir up all his rage.

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Second Reading † Philippians 2:6-11

He humbled himself, therefore God had exalted him.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God,
did not count equality with God
something to be grasped.
But he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
born in human likeness,
and found in human shape;
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient unto death, death on a cross.

And therefore God highly exalted him,
and granted him the name above every name
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend
of beings heavenly, earthly and under the earth,
and *every tongue acknowledge*
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God 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

The Son of Man must be lifted up.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

No one has ascended to heaven
except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man.

As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,
so must the Son of man be lifted up
so that everyone who believes in him
may have eternal life.

For God loved the world so much
that he gave his only-begotten Son,
so that everyone who believes in him
may not perish but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world
not to judge the world,
but so that the world might be saved through him.

The Gospel of the Lord.