

Lifted Up for Love

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In a bustling hospital emergency room, a nurse begins a 12-hour shift. This nurse isn't just treating symptoms; there's compassion in every hand held, every word of comfort, every moment spent with a grieving or frightened patient. Beneath the uniform is a small crucifix, a quiet reminder of why this work is done. As this nurse once shared with a coworker, "Every time I see suffering, I try to remember the cross. I can't fix everything, but I can love in the middle of it."

This kind of self-giving love is a living reflection of today's Gospel, one of the most recognized and profound passages in all of Scripture:

"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." (John 3:16)

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Church lifts up the cross not as a symbol of defeat, but as the glorious sign of victory and love. The cross is not merely an instrument of suffering; it is the place where divine love met human sin and transformed it. Jesus, the Son of Man, was lifted up just as Moses lifted the bronze serpent in the desert (John 3:14–15). And just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, those who gaze upon the crucified Christ with faith are given eternal life.

This is the heart of Catholic faith: that God's love is not abstract. It is sacrificial. God did not send His Son to condemn the world but to save it. This is not the love of one who stands apart, judging from a distance. It is the love of one who enters our brokenness, who carries our wounds, who takes on the weight of our sin to lift us up.

Pope Benedict XVI beautifully captured this mystery when he said: "By raising our eyes towards the crucified one, we adore him who came to take upon himself the sin of the world and to give us eternal life. And the Church invites us proudly to lift up this glorious cross so that the world can see the full extent of the love of the crucified one for all, for us men."

The feast we celebrate today invites us not only to venerate the cross but to embody its meaning. Like that nurse in the ER, we are called to lift high the cross in our lives, not through grand gestures, but through daily acts of faith, mercy, and love.

We might ask ourselves: Do I truly believe that Christ was lifted up for me? And if I believe it, how am I living in response to that love? Am I, too, willing to be lifted up, to pour myself out, for the salvation of others?

In the shadow of the cross, the world sees suffering. But through the eyes of faith, we see salvation. Let us lift our eyes and our lives toward the one who was lifted up for love.

Yours in Christ,

Father Rudy