

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Homily of Bishop Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

September 14, 2022

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation or Triumph of the Holy Cross.

In the Book of Numbers and the Gospel of John Chapter 3, we see reference to Moses in the desert lifting a bronze serpent on a pole to protect and heal the people from the fatal bites of the saraph serpents.

As we know, the Old Testament prefigures and anticipates Jesus and the New Testament so the bronze serpent on the pole prefigures the healing power and conquering of evil of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Today on this Feast we renew our embrace of the Mystery of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

We renew in Philippians 2, with St. Paul, our commitment to *kenosis* or the self-emptying of Christ on the Cross experienced in our own lives.

In the Office of Readings for the Feast today, St. Andrew of Crete states: “As we keep this feast, we are lifted up with the crucified Christ, leaving behind us earth and sin so that we may gain the things above. So great and outstanding a possession is the cross that he who wins it has won a treasure.”

We remember on this Feast that the hardships and Crosses of life have a providential purpose in leading us to the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life.

The power of the Cross purifies us and leads us to repentance and interior peace.

The power of the Cross directs us to the Catholic confessional and the Sacrament of Penance.

The power of the Cross reminds us that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the unbloody renewal of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary

The power of the Cross expands our contemplative concentration in prayer.

The power of the Cross helps us to understand what comes and goes in life and what really lasts and is important.

The power of the Cross gives us an active spirit of compassion and charity.

The power of the Cross helps us to see life with the eyes of Eternity.

The power of the Cross leads us to Heaven and to Eternal Life.

The power of the Cross helps us to live heroically, courageously and faithfully Our Lord's commandment in the Gospel of John 13: "...Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one other."

The Cross deepens our Good Samaritan daily charity because it deepens our humility, our generosity and our fortitude, tenacity and perseverance.

One of the Intercessions for Morning Prayer today reads: "Eternal Son of the Father, you came to cast fire on the earth and you longed to see its flame kindled in the hearts of all people, grant that through holiness of life we may come to share in the undying light of your glory – *Save us through your cross, O Lord.*"

Our Lord casts fire on the earth through the power and mystery of His Holy Cross.

St. Paul's experience and embrace of the Cross is critical to understanding his mysticism and missionary spirit in Salvation history.

St. Paul's own life – beatings, stonings, imprisonments, shipwrecks and a "thorn in his flesh" – is a testimony to the mysterious power of the Cross and his own *kenosis* or self-emptying with Christ.

St. Paul was an effective and vibrant missionary because he lived Christ Crucified.

Every Cross he experienced was providentially designed to deepen his intimacy and mysticism with the Lord and to strengthen his missionary fortitude, perseverance and generosity.

St. Paul teaches us that when we pick up our Cross and follow Jesus, we, at the same time, are Simons of Cyrene.

Just as Simon of Cyrene, helped Jesus to carry His Cross on the road to Calvary, so we, in union with Christ crucified, are mysteriously able to help others to carry their Crosses.

We give encouragement that touches the souls of others deeply and inspirationally.

We become teachers of the power of the Cross because we have embraced the Cross with love and trust and are witnesses to the love that flows from the Cross and the light that streams from the Glorified Wounds of the Risen Christ.

May those same Glorified Wounds of the Risen Christ touch the wounds of all those in Ukraine and Poland and may we embrace our Crosses in union with the Crosses carried by all in Ukraine, Poland and all war-torn and violence-torn regions of the world.

May the Cross of Jesus Christ triumph in our lives!