

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



The cross is the central symbol of our Christian faith—and for those of us in recovery, it speaks directly to our lived experience. On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Church invites us not only to remember Christ's suffering, but to rejoice in the love and victory revealed through it. What once was an instrument of torture has become the sign of redemption and healing. For those of us who have walked through the darkness of addiction, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we understand what it means to encounter God in the place of our greatest pain.

The Twelve Steps show us that transformation begins with surrender. Step One acknowledges our powerlessness. Step Three invites us to turn our will and lives over to God. Step Seven asks us to humbly allow Him to remove our shortcomings. None of these steps promise immediate relief—but they do offer freedom. The cross reminds us that the road to resurrection passes through suffering. Our wounds do not disqualify us from grace; they become the doorway through which Christ enters.

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of the cross as the means through which we receive eternal life (John 3:14–17):

"And just as Moses lifted up the serpent 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 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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

These words remind us that Jesus' death on the cross was not about punishment, but love. He came not to condemn but to save. That salvation is not abstract—it is deeply personal. We encounter it in meetings, in prayer, in the sacraments, and in the quiet decision to stay sober or to respond with patience instead of fear. It is the daily dying to self that makes room for God's grace.

The cross we carry in recovery is not a burden of shame—it is the mark of healing. When we admit our need for help, we stop hiding and start healing. The cross teaches us that true strength is found not in pretending to be okay, but in confessing our need for God. Christ's crucifixion reminds us that love does not run from pain; it enters it, transforms it, and brings forth new life.

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Each of us carries a unique cross—whether it be the effects of addiction, the pain of betrayal, the wounds of the past, or the daily struggle for integrity. But as we bring our suffering to the foot of the Cross, we find a Savior who understands. Jesus does not ask us to carry more than He carried Himself. And in His resurrection, He promises that our crosses, too, will be redeemed.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross invites us to lift high the symbol of our salvation—not to glorify suffering, but to glorify the love that transforms suffering into grace. Our story does not end in the pit. In Christ, it continues into resurrection, healing, and service to others.

May we, as individuals in recovery, come to see our crosses not as marks of defeat, but as signs of transformation. Through them, we are being made new—one day at a time, one step at a time.

- What does the Cross of Christ mean to you personally in your recovery journey?
- How have you seen God bring healing or hope through places of pain in your life?
- What cross are you carrying right now, and how can you allow God to meet you in it?

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First Reading: Numbers 21:4b-9
Responsorial Psalm: Ps 78:1bc-2, 34-35, 36-37, 38
Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11
Gospel: John 3:13-17