

## **Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross**

This Feast is so important because the Cross is not only the symbol of our Faith, it is its very essence.

*“The cross is a stumbling block for the Jews and folly for the Greeks but for us it is the Power of God” (Epistle for the Feast....)*

**This is a power we have to embrace, to be at the centre of our life.**

The Feast should be embraced by the whole Parish, yet there were very few at last evening's Vigil and few at the Liturgy today. Yet, the vigil is when we learn the fullness of the Church's understanding of the Feast and the Liturgy is when we are together to realise the truth expressed.

Here are some of the hymns of the Vigil:

*“O Lover of Mankind, we venerate the Wood of Your Cross, for You, the Life of all, were nailed upon it. O Saviour, You opened Paradise to the thief who turned to You in faith, and You counted him worthy of blessedness when he confessed You by crying out: “Remember me, O Lord!” Accept us like him, for we cry out: We all have sinned; in Your merciful kindness, do not reject us!”*

We venerate the Cross because the Life of All hung upon it and embraced it to bring about our Salvation.

*“O three-branched Cross of Christ, you are my strong protection. Sanctify me by your might, that I may venerate you in faith and love.”*

We too, embrace the Cross to be protected and sanctified in faith and love

*“O Cross of Christ, hope of Christians, guide those who have gone astray: haven of the storm-tossed, victory in warfare, firm foundation of the inhabited earth, physician of the sick and resurrection of the dead: Have mercy on us.”*

The Cross gives Hope, Protection, Haven, Victory, Firm foundation, Support, Resurrection.

We read of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden and there is no further mention of it until the Cross, the restored Tree of Life, stands on Calvary. It is the Tree of life because our Lord was crucified upon it and so it becomes the symbol of our Faith with the Power of the Life-giving Cross.

Like the repentant thief we should embrace it and cry out, “Lord remember me!” Above all, The Cross is the sign of the New Covenant:

Many of you will have a marriage certificate, a degree or diploma certificate, a contract at work. All these give confidence and stability. But we all have the Cross and as we embrace it, we are held in the Covenant of God with His chosen people, all of us, thus:

Adam and Eve were restored and we, their successors, are restored. The shadow of sin and evil is overshadowed by the Light of Christ.

*“The Light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend (overcome) it.” (John 1:5).*

The Repentant Thief was able to cry out, “Lord remember me!”, and he is placed in restored Paradise

Yes, Paradise is restored, Hades, the resting place of souls is emptied, Death is overcome, Eternal Life is restored. The body, at the end of earthly life, no longer functions as before and decays, but will be restored as a glorious body at the end of time.

*“At the last trumpet..... the dead will be raised incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52)”. “The body is raised in incorruption....it is raised in glory....it is raised in power..... it is raised a spiritual body.” (v42-44)*

And the devil's power is reduced and will be eliminated.

*“I will be their God and they will be my people” (explained in 1Peter 2:9,10)*

So, every day we should embrace the Cross, hold onto it firmly, have it at the centre of our lives. It is the sign and symbol of our salvation as we cry out, like the Repentant Thief;

***“Lord remember me! “***



Fr David