

St. Philip the Apostle
Roman Catholic Church



Wednesday, September 14, 2022

- Wednesday of the Twenty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time
- Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- Fr. Sherdel's Morning Mass Intention: ***Milleth Posadas***

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

With their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!"

In punishment the Lord sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died. Then the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned in complaining against the Lord and you. Pray the Lord to take the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses, "Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and if any who have been bitten look at it, they will live." Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 78:1-2, 34-35, 36-37, 38

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Hearken, my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable,
I will utter mysteries from of old. ***R/.***

While he slew them they sought him
and inquired after God again,
Remembering that God was their rock
and the Most High God, their redeemer. ***R/.***

But they flattered him with their mouths
and lied to him with their tongues,
Though their hearts were not steadfast toward him,
nor were they faithful to his covenant. ***R/.***

But he, being merciful, forgave their sin
and destroyed them not;
Often he turned back his anger
and let none of his wrath be roused. ***R/.***

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Brothers and sisters: Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel: John 3:13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. 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.

Reflection

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. (John 3:14)

There is a glorious, divine irony in today's feast: a cruel instrument of suffering and death has been transformed into a grace-filled instrument of healing and resurrection.

We see the irony in today's first reading. The Israelites had begun complaining and accusing God of abandoning them during their journey toward the Promised Land. Ultimately, all the venom in their words and hearts manifested itself in the form of poisonous serpents that attacked them. Their own sin fell back upon them and trapped them in death and destruction. That's one irony: the people's complaining made their situation worse.

Then, when the people begged God to save them, he told them to gaze on an image of a serpent. They had to fix their eyes on a symbol of their own sin and unbelief if they wanted to be set free from the consequences of their sin. That's another irony: looking at their sin brought them salvation.

In the Gospel, Jesus promises Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be “lifted up” so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life (John 3:14). He promises salvation to everyone who comes face-to-face with the consequences of their own sin. Yes, I helped crucify him. It was my own violence, my own hatred, my own self-centeredness and fallen desires that put him up there.

This is the final glorious irony. When we exalt the cross — when we lift it up and gaze on it — we experience God's love and healing. We see that it wasn't just our sin that put Jesus there; it was also his love. It wasn't just our enmity; it was his friendship. It wasn't just our selfishness; it was his selflessness. We thought we were casting him out of our lives when really, he was giving himself to us in the fullest way possible.

Jesus could have stopped his death at any point, but he didn't. He let us lift him up in death so that he could raise us up to eternal life. Let's all exalt the cross in our hearts today.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You

are present in the Most Holy Sacrament
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan,
and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls.
Amen.