**THE EXULTATION OF THE CROSS**

READINGS: Number 21:4-9/ Philippians 2:6-11/ John 3:13-17

THEME: THE VICTORY OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

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Every year the Church celebrates the feast of the Exultation or Triumph of the Cross of Jesus Christ on September 14. According to a legend (story), when some early Christian crusaders went to reclaim some important sites in the Holy Land, they tried to identify the true cross of Jesus in the midst of several crosses. To do this, they decided to place a sick person on each of the crosses. As soon as the sick person was placed on the true cross, he got healed!

Some centuries before the above Christian crusade, the Roman Emperor Constantine, who was then not a Christian, had a vision. In the vision he saw a cross and received a message that he would win his impending battle. Taking the vision of the cross as his banner, Constantine won the battle. He then recognized Christianity in his empire.

Beloved, the above events are instances of the victory of the crucified Christ. But over and above them, the greatest and the original victory of the crucified Christ took place at the moment of His resurrection 2,000 years ago! Jesus Christ predicted and conquered death on the third day! And the mystery of Christ’s death and victorious resurrection has changed our destiny: we who were candidates for hell have not only been rescued but have been made citizens of heaven (*cf*. Phil. 3:20-21)! Imagine that!

Beloved, what could have turned around the whole life of someone like Saul (Paul), who was passionate about persecuting Christians, as hethought that they were following a dead man (Jesus Christ)? It was the victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ! Once he encountered the **risen** Lord,Saul(Paul) was so affected by the resurrection that he would firmly state: “All I want is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).

We can imagine that to some Israelites bitten by snakes in the desert, the motionless bronze serpent lifted by Moses was meaningless, but to those who believed, it was a sign of their salvation (Num. 21: 4-9). Similarly, when Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross, it was meaningless to Saul and many Jews, but those who believed were saved (*cf*. gospel reading). Hence, when Saul (Paul) later came to understand and believe in the victory of Christ crucified while some still did not believe, he would say: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.… We preach ***Christ crucified***, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks [Africans and Europeans, Asians and Americans], ***Christ*** [***crucified and risen***] is the power and wisdom of God” to save(1 Cor. 1:18, 23-24).

Beloved, I pray that our conviction in the power of the victory of Christ crucified would be as strong as that of St. Paul. Furthermore, let us exhibit to the world our strong faith in the victorious cross of Christ. Today, many of us hesitate to make the “***sign of the cross***” in public. On the other hand, some footballers boldly make the ***sign of the cross*** before tens of thousands in the stadium and the millions watching on the TV. Let us learn from these footballers. In addition, we can be inspired by Constantine to make the “sign of the cross” our banner or victory flag. And as we can’t imagine hiding our national flags when our national team is winning a match, so let us wave the ***sign of the cross*** anytime and anywhere, because the victory of Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever! Amen!