September 14th: Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Gospel text (*Jn* 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.

"So that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life"

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, the Gospel is a prophecy, that is, a glance into the mirror of reality that plunges us into its truth, far beyond what our own senses tell us: the Cross, the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ is the Savior's Throne. That is why Jesus asserts, “So must the Son of Man be lifted up” (Jn 3:14).

We do know the Cross was the most ignominious and heinous torture of its time. To exalt the Holy Cross would therefore be some sort of cynical joke, were it not for the crucified Christ hanging on it. The cross, without the Redeemer, is sheer cynicism; but with the Son of man the Cross is the new tree of Wisdom. By “freely submitting Himself to the passion” of the Cross, Jesus Christ has opened the substance and purpose for our lives: to be lifted up with Him to the Holy Cross to fling open our arms and our heart to God's heavenly gift, in an admirable exchange. Here too, we must listen to the Father's voice that came from the heavens: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11). To be crucified with Jesus and resurrect with Him: that is the reason for it all! There is hope, there is a meaning, and there is life! We are not mad when, we Christians, during the Paschal Vigil, in a most solemn way, that is, in the Easter Proclamation, sing a hymn of praise to the original sin: “O happy fault! O necessary fault of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!” who, through his pain has infused a new “significance” to pain.

“See the tree of the cross, where the Savior of the world was crucified: come and venerate it” (Good Friday Liturgy). If we manage to overcome the scandal and insanity of Christ crucified there is nothing else for us to do but to worship Him and be grateful for His Gift. And to decidedly seek the Holy Cross in our own life, to fill us up with the certainty that, “through Him, with Him and in Him”, our offering will be transformed, in the hands of the Father, for the Holy Spirit, in eternal life: “Shed for you and for all men

for the remission of sins.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Wherever there is a Christian striving to lead an honorable life, he should, with his love, set up the Cross of Christ, who attracts all things to Himself" (Saint Josemaría)

- "There is no Christianity without the Cross, and there is no Cross without Jesus Christ. Therefore, a Christian who is not able to glory in Christ Crucified has not understood what it means to be Christian" (Francis)

- "The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. Christian prayer loves to follow the way of the cross in the Savior's steps. the stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 2669)