

# ***HOLY CROSS DAY***

## ***I Corinthians 1:18-25***

In our society, the cross has come to be an ever present symbol. It pops up everywhere. While watching sports on TV we see pious players crossing themselves over their chest before they begin to play. The cross symbol has even become “all the rage” as a fashion statement with elaborate cross inspired jewellery hanging from the neck, ears, wrists, and God knows where else, on models and mannequins.

The notion that our society is all “crossed up” may or may not be a good thing. Indeed, the fact that it is a cross, and not a symbol of another religion that is popping up all over, tells us that some Christian memory is still very active in our society.

But that certainly does not make us a “Christian nation”. What it makes us, as Christians, is a nation that is not sure of what our faith is really about, not sure of who Jesus really is, but we are none the less fascinated by some of the concepts, signs and symbols of the Christian religion.

The calling we have as Christians in a Non-Christian society, is to lift high the Holy Cross. The sad reality in our world, is that so many people know about Jesus, but very few actually know Jesus. Many pass by church everyday and have yet to walk inside a church door. We need to roll up our sleeves and lift high the Holy Cross.

The way to lift high the cross is not to rent cranes and pulleys to erect giant crosses on the lawns of church buildings or on the top

of church steeples. We need not waste our time erecting a giant cross in the highest hills, or flashing one on those huge electronic billboards that we see everywhere these days. The way to lift high the cross for the biggest effect, is for each one of us to lift high the cross in our daily life.

As we seek to lift up the cross, we are to lift it up as a reference to the crucifixion. Jesus was lifted up on the cross and died. He gave His life as a ransom for many. The whole ministry of Jesus, and thus the whole ministry of the church, is based upon the cross. One of the most powerful images for walking in the way of faith is that of “taking up the cross” and following Jesus.

Jesus said that those who would be His followers were to take up the cross and follow Him.

Many in Jesus’ day could not understand the concept of a servant Messiah, or crucified Lord. Even in the Gospel Jesus states that He must be lifted up. The scandal of the cross is just as bewildering for many to understand today as it was when Jesus lived.

For many in our world, the church is an alien concept. Church buildings are curious, but foreign territory. Many seekers are looking for God, but are reluctant to enter the doors of the church, because they are judging the church by the actions of its members. For some, the closest they may get to the Christ and the cross, is the Christ and the cross they see in us. That is what it means to be a witness for the Lord, that is why we are called to be disciples. That is why we are to be ambassadors for the Lord, because many come to faith by first seeing faith in others. We all must come to the realization that the central purpose of the church is to lift up the cross, to let the light of Christ’s life, death and resurrection shine forth in the world. The light shines forth as the church, and every Christian, walks in the way of the

cross in the world. The light shines as we love one another, and show by the way we live our everyday lives, that we are His disciplines. The light shines when we do not hide it under a basket, but let it shine forth in lives of love and humble service.

We are, by nature, ignorant of God and His ways. Our ignorance leads people to set themselves up as the judge of what is wise and what is foolish. And in their foolishness, they consider God's Word and His will, especially as they see it in the life and example of Jesus and His death on the cross, to be utter folly.

Give me what I want, people say. Give me someone who can give me a full wallet and a full stomach. That's the kind of God I want. That's the kind of Savior I want. Give me good physical health and security. Give me financial success. Give me the ability to do what I want, when I want, and in the way I want, and I'll be happy. Give me a winner. Such is the thinking of those who, as Paul said, are perishing.

But to those who are being saved, to those whose very nature has been changed by the work of the Holy Spirit, active in Word and Sacrament; to those who are no longer ignorant of God and His ways; to those who know Jesus as both the Son of God and the Savior of the world, the message of Christ crucified is not foolishness. It is, in fact, wisdom. It is not weakness, it is strength. To those who believe, Jesus is not a loser, He's a winner and, in that, He makes all those who believe and follow Him winners too. For in the cross of Christ, believers find a victory has been won; a victory over sin, death and the power of the devil; a victory not just for a while, but for all eternity; a victory that belongs to all who believe, not because of their own wisdom and strength, but because of God's wisdom and strength.

The world in which we live still considers the message of Christ

crucified to be a stumbling block, and just so much foolishness.

But for us, for us who believe, for us who are being saved, it is still the very power of God. On this Holy Cross Day we are reminded once again of the power that is in that cross of Christ and we are encouraged, once again, to draw on that power in the study and application of Christ's Word in our lives.

On this day dedicated to the Holy Cross, let us recall the cross traced upon our forehead in baptism. The sign under which we live and move and have our being. Let us lift up the cross before others by leading Christian lives until the day when Jesus, the Christ returns to claim His own. In the words of one of the hymns about the cross that will be sung in many churches today, "Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, till all the world adore his sacred Name".

**AMEN.**