



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Year A 2014

St. Paul is perplexed. St. Paul is distraught as he writes to his beloved friends...the people who live in Philippi. These Philippians were good people whose friendship and love he treasured. But there was a problem. They were divided. They weren't as nice to each other as they were to him. They lacked unity. They could easily fall prey to stabbing each other in the back. Their lack of unity stemmed from their own pettiness.

Paul tries to bring healing to this community of friends by dealing head on with this petty behavior and disunity. It is with this in mind that Paul begins the second chapter of his letter to the Philippians. He writes: "make my joy complete: be of the same mind." Paul begs his readers to stop being divisive and tearing each other down.

But this plea isn't enough. So Paul stops complaining about their behaviors and instead turns his eyes and looks upon Christ. Paul now is praying and not preaching. And Paul begins: "though he was in the form of God, (Jesus) did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, rather he emptied himself taking the form of a slave."

So complete was Christ's emptying of himself that He became obedient... "even unto death on a cross." So complete was Christ's humility and so strong was his love for all God's people that He allowed himself to be lifted up high on the cross as the complete and total sacrifice of His life. He did this out of love for each and every one of us. St. Paul is saying to his friends in Philippi...turn your eyes to Christ...fix your eyes on the cross and let the love with which Christ abandoned his life sink deep into your hearts so that you may put aside all that is petty and live instead all that is holy.

On this day when we celebrate this Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross we are called to let the eyes of our heart fall upon the sacrifice of the cross in order that we might realize the depth and the power of Christ's love of each one of us and for all of us. The cross calls us, as it called the Philippians, to allow that love to sink into our own hearts so that we might abandon all that is petty and self-centered and instead work for unity in peace. We are called on this Feast of the Holy Cross to abandon all that is petty and sinful in order to embrace the love of Christ and make it the model for what we do and how we live our own lives.

Christ became obedient even unto death...death on the cross. May we glory in that cross and learn from it to live in love, in unity and in peace with each other. May the power of the cross change our lives so that we might, in turn, change the life of the world.