**Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**

**September 14, 2025**

**Mumbles and grumbles.**

**Rather, he emptied himself.**

**To be lifted up.**

**-rvb**

**Reading 1**

[**Numbers 21:4b-9**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/numbers/21?4)

**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.**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

 **Traditionally, the book of Numbers is a graphic portrayal of mumblers, grumblers, ungrateful, and complainers. The people sin, they are punished, and cry out, “We have sinned in complaining against the Lord and you.” God hears them, his tender mercies are awakened and ultimately, they are forgiven. Mea Culpa, no Felix Culpa! The Israelites experience the pangs of suffering and death. Like Jesus in the second reading, they humbly empty themselves of pride and sinfulness and plead with Moses to speak to God on their behalf, as mediator, model, mentor, and messenger of faith, hope, and love. The Lord’s heart is tuned to the cries of their hearts, and mercy and forgiveness flow freely like a spring rain. Consequently, Moses, through the intercession of God, heals all those who look upon the bronze serpent (Caduceus – you will see this symbol on the side of ambulances - The Caduceus is a symbol of two serpents wrapped around a staff with wings).**

**This symbol is often thought to have the following meanings:**

* **Healing – the Greeks regarded snakes as sacred and used them in healing rituals to honor Asclepius.**
* **Salvation – around 1400 B.C., Moses used the bronze serpent on a rod to save his people from snakes sent by God as punishment. Whenever anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze serpent, the person lived.**
* **Immortality and Transformation – In ancient Greece, the shedding of snake’s skin represents the slipping of the old self towards a newly healed self. It also symbolizes rebirth and rejuvenation.**
* **Cure and Recovery – a snake can change from a lethargic behavior to swift movement, denoting the power of recovering from an illness. The medicinal properties of snake venom also contributed to the use of symbols in medicine.**
* **Peace and Power – in Roman mythology, Mercury ceased the fight between two serpents with his wand and brought restoration and peace between them. The rod represents power and unification, while the wings symbolize higher thoughts.**

**Responsorial Psalm**

[**Psalm 78:1bc-2, 34-35, 36-37, 38**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/78?1)

**R. (see 7b) 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. Do not forget the works of the Lord!
While he slew them they sought him
and inquired after God again,
Remembering that God was their rock
and the Highest God, their redeemer.
R. Do not forget the works of the Lord!
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. Do not forget the works of the Lord!
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. Do not forget the works of the Lord!**

**Reading 2**

[**Philippians 2:6-11**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/philippians/2?6)

**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.**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

 **This reading from Philippians is one of St. Paul’s New Testament masterpieces. It is an early Jewish/Christian hymn in which the deepest realities of human existence were sculptured into a work of magnificent poetry. There is no doubt that it gently proclaims how Jesus, in his humility, emptied himself of his glory and became a man and suffering servant. He was obedient to death on the Cross. Bursting forth from his humility came the fullness of God’s life, glory, and love. Jesus did not have to be subject to death. Nevertheless, he denied himself the fullness of divinity and embraced a life of suffering, rejection, and death on the Cross. He chose to do this because of Mea Culpa (My Fault). We, in turn, cry out Felix Culpa (Happy Fault). From the well spring of our faith life, we proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior.**

 **In his book, “Song of the Bird” by Anthony de Mello, the following quotation praises the good fortunes of sin lifted on the Cross, “It brought me so much joy to think that if I had not sinned God would have no occasion to be forgiving. He needs my sin too. There is, indeed, more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents then over ninety-nine who do not need repentance. O Felix Culpa – Happy Fault! O necessary sin! Where sin abounds grace overflows. We need one another. How strange, yet how sweet it is. A story is told about a person who had an unusual way of praying to God. “Remember, Lord, you need me just as much as I need you. If you did not exist, whom would I pray to? If I did not exist, who would do the praying.”**

**Alleluia**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your Cross you have redeemed the world.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

 **“The blood that from the Lord’s beloved wounds does flow, is the most previous dew He will on us bestow.”**

**“Chose to be my treasure of high value. My body’s plow it is, and also my soul’s anchor.”**

**“One lies most blissfully on suffering, pain, distress; but who will gladly choose on such a bed to rest?”**

**“The passion of Our Lord did not end on the Cross. By night and also day He suffers still for us.” – Angelus Silesius.**

**Gospel**

[**John 3:13-17**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/3?13)

**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.

 A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

 **In today’s Gospel, Nicodemus, the Pharisee, sneaks to Jesus in the stillness and darkness of the night. We might call him a “closet Christian.” However, Nicodemus remains in the dark spiritually (3:1-21). John uses the opportunity to facilitate some catechesis in verses 13-17 – today’s reading, "No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man…. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”
 As we move through the Gospel of John, Nicodemus utters a word on Jesus’ behalf (7:50-51, “One of them, Nicodemus, the same man who had come to Jesus earlier said to them said to them, ‘but surely the Law does not allow us to pass judgement on a man without giving him a hearing and discovering what he is about?,’” and finally he openly identifies himself as a follower (19:39) – at the burial of Jesus, “Nicodemus came as well, the same one who had first come to Jesus at night-time, and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.” Nicodemus represents a small group of Jewish leaders who hesitantly come to believe in Jesus. In faith, they lifted their hearts to the Lord, Mea Culpa-Felix Culpa!**

 **Like Nicodemus, we are all on journeys of faith: how about a pilgrimage?**

**Journeys of Faith: Sacred Catholic Sites Worth Crossing Oceans For.**

**What if your next trip fed your soul, not just your camera roll? Pilgrimage sites aren’t just religious relics, but a full-body experience. Some are quiet and personal. Others feel like walking into the heartbeat of a global faith. Even if you’re not Catholic, you’ll leave changed. From older generations revisiting childhood traditions to Gen Z chasing purpose over party, people are seeking something deeper. These destinations blend beauty, history, and a sense of belonging you don’t get on ordinary trips. -Internet.**

**Slip Away from Paris Noise and Into a Vision**

**Rue du Bac Chapel, France**

**You might miss the entrance if you blink. Inside, it’s a peaceful, ornate chapel where Mary reportedly appeared to Saint Catherine Labouré. Her body lies under the altar, incorrupt. Visitors often leave wearing the Miraculous Medal blessed on-site.**

**Stand in the Wind Where the Virgin Appeared**

**Fátima, Portugal**

**Three children once described visions of a woman "brighter than the sun." Today, the site hosts candlelit processions and daily Masses in multiple languages. The Chapel of the Apparitions marks the exact spot of the first appearance.**

**Confess Where a Saint Once Listened for Hours**

**San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy**

**Padre Pio is known for his stigmata, miracles, and blunt confessional advice. You can still see his cell, vestments, and even his confessional booth. The newer sanctuary is strikingly modern, but the older Church of Our Lady of Grace holds more spiritual weight. -Internet.**

**Final Prayer: Lord, there are themes of humility and exaltation which embrace the Cross. The bronze serpent does not affect healing on its own, rather it is God who heals us; death on the cross grants eternal life to all who accept it. Amen.**