

Reflection Monday Week 24 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross 2020

Does it ever occur to you that sometimes you look at people but don't really see them because you are locked into some issue, concern or situation of your own, concerned more about what has happened rather than who they are? To really see people, we must be completely open, full of expectation, have a sense of wonder, and, with full focus on that person, be unaware of ourselves. Something like falling in love! If we are truly open to people, we will fall in love many, many times in our lives. Not a possessive kind of love, quite the opposite. We don't want possession, we want them to be free because it is the freedom that reveals their true wonder, inner beauty and goodness with a love to be shared. Isn't that the story of the Cross? We don't want to possess Jesus but we certainly don't want to see Jesus that way - the cruelty and abuse with which he was treated. It is the sheer wonder and love that flows from him that captivates and embraces our hearts. Because of the strength, uplift, encouragement and gratitude that come from Jesus on the cross, we don't want to possess him because we want his grace, power and energy to continue to flow into our lives and the lives of those around us. This grace can only be found in the presence of the cross amidst all that suffering and pain. Of all the pictures, symbols, prayers that exist, this is the one that is most lifegiving; an eternal outflowing of true life. Yet, in the Exaltation of the Cross, Jesus wishes to exalts us too, to lift us up, no matter how far we have fallen. The cross reminds us the Jesus came to overcome death and bring us life.

However, our treatment of creation has made us into harbingers of death not life. *Laudato Si'* reminds us that *every speck of life is valued by God and not a single creature is forgotten in God's sight. We are now living in the sixth great extinction event. This mass extinction is, unlike others in previous geological eras, the direct result of human activities. Loss of habitats by deforestation and mining programmes, particularly in the global South, supported by Western multinational companies, not only accelerate that extinction, but also threaten the livelihoods of indigenous human communities.*

The cross calls us to be promoters and bearers of life, like Jesus.

A woman was trying on her new fur coat. Her teenage daughter walked up to her and said. *"Mother, do you realize that this coat is the result of the suffering of a poor, defenceless animal?"*

The woman looked sternly at her daughter. *"Young lady, don't you dare talk about your father like that!!"*