**The Collect and Readings appointed for Holy Cross Day**

Almighty God,
who in the passion of your blessed Son
made an instrument of painful death
to be for us the means of life and peace:
grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ
that we may gladly suffer for his sake;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**The Old Testament Reading is taken from Numbers, chapter 21, verses 4-9**

The Israelites travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea,

to go round Edom.

But the people grew impatient on the way;

they spoke against God and against Moses, and said,

“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?

There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them;

they bit the people and many Israelites died.

The people came to Moses and said,

“We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you.

Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.”

So Moses prayed for the people.

The LORD said to Moses,

“Make a snake and put it up on a pole;

anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”

So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole.

Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake,

he lived.

**The Holy Gospel is written in that according to St John, chapter 3, verses 13-17**

Jesus said:

“No-one has ever gone into heaven

except the one who came from heaven –

the Son of Man.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,

so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,

that whoever believes in him shall not perish

but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,

but to save the world through him.

***Thoughts on Holy Cross Day :***

***An extract from an article by Cally Hammond in The Church Times.***

**Holy Cross Day**, on 14 September, is so called because that was when Helena

(mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine)

discovered a cross in Jerusalem.

*The world is full of crosses,*

not just in churches but on walls of houses, at wayside shrines,

hung around necks, carried in purses, clutched in prayer.

*They are all “holy”, because they all communicate the meaning of the cross.*

Although the first Christians knew the cross as an instrument of execution,

they still combed the scriptures for clues to its sacred significance.

For them, divine-human history contained fragments of the cross —

in the tree of Eden, the oak at Mamre, the outstretched arms of Moses.

In east and west alike, they identified it in Elisha’s axe-head (2 Kings 6.1-7).

And, of course, they recognised it in Moses’s serpent-staff (Numbers 21.9).

*The cross is everywhere, and always: and it is meaning-full.*

In 1 Corinthians 1.18, Paul says,

*“The meaning of the cross is folly to those who are perishing,*

*but for us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

We perceive it figuratively in acts of judicial cruelty and undeserved suffering,

partly because human cruelty and suffering, too, are everywhere and always.

We also observe it materially,

for our vision is attuned to detecting that sacred shape, outside churches as well as within.

The cross of Christ is also more than a fortuitous formation detected by our pattern-hungry eyes.

*Crosses are everywhere, but there is only one Holy Cross.*

Would it matter if what Helena found was *a* cross, not *the*cross?

Would that make its many pieces,

fractured and distributed among the faithful like consecrated bread, worthless?

No. The meaning of every sacred object that we use devotionally, however venerable, is the same: to point us beyond material reality to ultimate reality, for

*“we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen;*

*for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4.18).

When Paul proclaims that Christ Jesus became “obedient to the point of death —

even death on a cross” (see Philippians chapter 2), his focus is firmly on the body of Christ.

He is not investing blood-soaked wood with miraculous power.

Even the one true cross is only ever a means to an end, an instrument of God’s purpose.

Kissing the cross on Good Friday is worshipping not the wood

but the Son of God who died to save us.

That is why we should seek and celebrate crosses everywhere, inside and outside church,

for every glimpse of intersection is a fresh restatement of the promise.

That promise is simple. As the Son came into the world hallowing human flesh,

so he died hallowing the world that human beings inhabit.

He made what is supremely ordinary — wood, material stuff — into a cradle of holiness.

Flesh and blood will not inherit the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15.50). Even touching the wood of the one true cross does not automatically, miraculously, make us something which in truth we are not. The last chronological word on the cross in scripture is 1 Peter 2.24:

 *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross.”*

But the Last Word — in the sense of ultimate message — is about people, not wood:

*“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,*

*so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3.16).*