

Holy Cross Sunday ; Season of Creation

Today we gather on **Holy Cross Day**, when we lift high the cross of Christ and remember it not as a symbol of shame, but as the tree of life. At the same time, we are walking through the **Season of Creation**, and outside these walls, autumn is wrapping Norway in its colours, gold, red, and brown. The air is crisp, the days shorter, the harvest nearly gathered in. Creation is speaking to us. And the cross is speaking to us.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus says: *“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”*. The cross is not only an instrument of death. It becomes a place of healing, where what is broken is lifted up so that new life can begin. When we look at the forests turning colour, we are reminded of that truth. Autumn teaches us that endings and losses are not the final word. Leaves fall, seeds are buried, and yet we know spring will come again. The cross, too, looked like an ending, but in it God planted resurrection.

But Holy Cross day is not only about comfort. It is also a call. Paul tells us in Philippians that Christ *“humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*. To follow the cross is to take the path of humility, service, and self-giving love. Here in Norway, we live in a land of great natural beauty, fjords, mountains, forests, and seas. Yet creation also groans. We hear of storms growing stronger, of species declining, of the urgent need to care for the earth that God has entrusted to us. The cross reminds us that God does not turn away from suffering, God enters into it, bears it, and transforms it. If the cross stands at the centre of our faith, then caring for the wounded creation must also stand at the centre of our discipleship.

The wood of the cross came from a tree. Tradition even links it to the Tree of Life. How powerful, then, to think of the cross as God’s tree of healing, planted at the heart of the world. On this Season of Creation, perhaps we are called to ask: what does it mean to plant trees of hope today? What does it mean to live in such a way that our children and grandchildren will see not only autumn leaves but also a flourishing earth?

And there is another message in autumn. As the daylight shortens, as we prepare for colder months, we are reminded of the need for **community**. We gather food, we light candles, we draw closer together. The cross gathers us, too. It unites strangers and friends, visitors and regular members, into one body, one family of God.

So on this Holy Cross day, let us see the cross not only as a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice, but as a compass for our lives: A call to humility in a world of pride # A call to healing in a world of brokenness # A call to creation care in a world groaning for renewal # A call to community in a world too often divided.

When you see the trees this week, whether leaves turning gold, or a bare branch against the sky, remember the cross. Remember that God takes what seems like death and makes it the beginning of life. And so, let us lift high the cross in our hearts, in our homes, and in our care for one another and for the earth, until all creation joins in the hymn: *“To God be the glory for the things He has done.”*