



EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Numbers 21:4b-9 Philippians 2:6-11 john 3:13-17

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

I would like to focus this feast on epitaphs. An epitaph is a written statement about one's life that either the person puts on their gravestone before they die or the family does after the loved one dies.

In looking up unusual epitaphs, I came across the epitaph of Ludolph van Ceulen, a Dutch mathematician who died in 1610. His was 3.1459265358979323846264338327950. He was the first to calculate pi, which is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. So, he put the number for pi on his gravestone. It must have been a big gravestone or small writing.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s gravestone reads: "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty I am free at last."

Curly Lambeau, who is buried in Allouez Catholic Cemetery, has two gravestones with one just saying Earl L. "Curly 1898-1965 and a gravestone that has the picture of Lambeau Field and under the stadium it says, "Founder of the Green Bay Packers."

When one walks through a cemetery it is not uncommon for the gravestone of a married couple to have their wedding date or the list of their children.

Next time in a cemetery walk around and see the messages of those who have gone before us.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, I would suggest that the cross is Jesus' epitaph. He did not need a gravestone. He didn't stay long in the grave.

Yes, the resurrection is the key for us. His rising from the dead tells us we will follow.

But until that day what does he leave with us as the key representation of his life. Nothing less than the cross. As he told us, "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12) How did he love us? The cross is looking right at us.

The anticipation of that sacrifice led to the sacrifice of the Mass, where we share his body and blood through the sacrament of the Eucharist, a gift he gave us at the Last Supper.

As we heard in the gospel, one of the most memorized lines in the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that he who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life." (3:16)

Jesus' epitaph? The cross. It is where St. Paul reminds us in the second reading, "He emptied himself...he humbled himself. Becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phi 2:7-8)

A good path for all of us to take – Jesus' path of total love. The Holy Cross. It's how we make a difference in people's lives before we are by our gravestone.

Bringing Home the Word Prayer