

# THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

## CYCLE B

Numbers 21: 4b-9

Philippians 2: 6-11

John 3: 13-17

### OPENING PRAYER

*(A crucifix, surrounded with flowers, is displayed on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place. As the session begins, the leader invites members to some minutes of silent acknowledgment of the presence of God. The community then joins in singing the refrain from, "Lift High the Cross", as found on the Internet; after which members pray as follows.)*

### A PSALM OF MY CROSS

**All:** With wisdom, deeper than the oceans, you have fashioned with great love a special cross for each of us. I place my hand with trust, into yours, my suffering Savior, so that I might embrace with joy, everything that I would gladly prefer to discard as disgrace; everything that makes up my cross, my way to you, beloved God.

*(The community sings the refrain from, "Lift High the Cross".)*

**All:** Open my heart this day that I may see with eyes of truth, whether the painful cross I bear as mine, claiming it as a holy burden, does indeed come from you, my God – or if by chance, my cross is one of my own creation.

*(The community sings the refrain from, "Lift High the Cross".)*

Adapted from *Psalm of my Cross: Prayers For A Planetary Pilgrim*, Forest of Peace Books, 1988, p. 140.

## COMMENTARY

**T**he cross as a sign of healing, forgiveness, and salvation: How odd we might think that is! Crosses for us are really unwanted. In fact, very few, if any of us, would pray for a cross. Nevertheless, we do have crosses, from the youngest of us, to the eldest. Some have much heavier crosses than others. Some bless their cross, some curse their cross. Yet, in the shadow of Christ's cross, our crosses also point toward healing, forgiveness, and salvation – when we carry them courageously.

Why do diamonds sparkle? They sparkle because of the cuts. The more cuts they have, the more they sparkle. That is often true for people also. There are many people we admire who sparkle with the graciousness of God, and if we really knew them we would understand how much they have suffered in life.

In the second reading, Paul tells us that Jesus “empties himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in human appearance, he humbled himself becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus willingly took the cross upon himself, to make up for all our shortcomings: our sins, our grumblings, our impatience, our complaints, our inability to forgive, our stubborn lack of compassion.

Jesus showed us how to bear a cross, and ours are not like that of the Romans. For the most part, we make our own crosses, but there are some that we do not make ourselves. A tragic accident, the death of a child – events such as these are profoundly crucifying. We are never going to be crucified literally, but we do feel the excruciating weight of a cross in the events of life. If we look upon the cross of Jesus with faith, asking for his help, we can become like Jesus in giving himself for others. If we unite ourselves to the cross of Jesus, we can become better, not bitter as we carry our own cross. It is a choice.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How well do you carry your cross?
- ◆ Share the story of someone you know who carries/carried his/ her cross graciously.

- ◆ When has bearing a cross led you to new life?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Visit someone who has been bereaved in recent months. Just be with the person as he/she carries that cross.
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week. Sit quietly holding a crucifix. Be united to the cross of Christ and pray, "May the passion of Jesus Christ live always in my heart."
- ◆ Give the gift of a finely wrought crucifix to some child in your life.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(Members join in singing the refrain from, "Lift High the Cross," after which the community dwells for some minutes in silence to recall someone who is carrying a heavy cross. The crucifix is passed from member to member. As they will, members offer a prayer for the person they have called to mind in the silence. The session concludes with the singing of the refrain from, "Lift High the Cross".)*

