

This Month's Liturgy: September 2019

In the middle of the month, the Liturgy gives us a feast which, at first glance, might look as if it is more appropriate to Holy Week - or more specifically Good Friday. It is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14th September) and recalls the discovery (the exaltation or the lifting up) of the relic of the true cross in Jerusalem by Helena, Mother of the Emperor Constantine, around the year 320, and then the building of a church on the site of the crucifixion of Jesus in the year 335 by that same Emperor, Constantine. It is from a small chapel dedicated to Saint Helena that the modern-day town of St. Helens in our own Archdiocese (Liverpool) appears to take its name.

So much for the history. What does it say for us today? Many of us will be familiar with the introduction to each station in the devotion, the Stations of the Cross:

V/ We adore you O Christ and we praise you

R/ Because by your **Holy Cross** you have redeemed the world

Our devotion to, and gratitude to God for, the holy cross and all that it stands for is not merely an acknowledgement of the pain and suffering which was inflicted on an innocent one – Jesus, a suffering of innocents which sadly we continue to inflict even in our modern so-called enlightened day. It is also and perhaps more fundamentally a gratitude for that **generous love** of which Cardinal John Henry Newman wrote:

“And in that garden secretly (Gethsemane) and on the cross on high (Calvary)
(Jesus) should teach his brethren and inspire to suffer and to die”.

It is the saving power of the self-emptying love of Jesus which continues even to this day to teach us and to inspire us how best and most perfectly to live the life with which God has graced us. As we reflect upon the many ways in which the generous love of God – expressed through the kindness and sacrifice of others, has led us to the **today** which we enjoy, we re-dedicate ourselves to making the Sign of the Cross with even greater devotion and sincerity because it is the sign of so great a love and generosity.

Canon Philip

On the Feast Day, September 14th, please remember in your prayer Thomas Varavunkal, a student of the Beda College, who is being ordained as a priest in India.