**“Veneration of the Cross”**

As of this afternoon, our Lord was laid in the tomb and we are here today to venerate the cross that our Lord was crucified upon. To all Christians the cross means a lot. It is the wood of life from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden in Paradise.

The tree was in the middle of the garden. Also present in the garden was the tree of knowledge and evil. It is from the fruit of the tree of knowledge and evil that our first parents eat and death came into the world. Then God drove them out of the garden so they would not eat from the tree of life because if they had eaten from the tree of life, we would live perpetually, separated from God forever in our sin.

According to belief, the wood of the cross came from the tree of life. It is the tree that our Lord carried on His shoulder up to Calvary and died on. That is why we venerate the tree today. Though we might not have the actual tree, we have a symbol of it.

Queen Helena the mother of Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, went to Holy Land in Jerusalem and was able to find the wood of the cross. Her belief in God, led her to find the wood of the cross. She rationalized that only the cross among other crosses, would be have the power of God in it that would cure people from their illness. She was right and was able to identify the true cross our Lord carried.

While our Lord carried a heavy cross up to Calvary, we all have our crosses to carry as well. Our crosses might be different, it could be of illness, hunger, homelessness, poverty, and whatever we might be going through in life that is causing us sorrow and anguish.

When we feel dejected and unable to go on, we should look to the crucifix and remember that our Lord also carried a heavy burden and suffered for us. Even when he fell several times, from exhaustion, for His love of us, He got up and kept going. And by His dying and rising on the third day, we will be able to enjoy eternity with God in heaven if we persevere to carry whatever cross we might have.

Jesus expects us to help each other in carrying our crosses. Most especially, the crosses of those who are marginalized, poor, out casts, and ignored by society. These are those who would be in greater despair without help from us. That is what we do in our dining Hall. A place where many of us volunteer energy, time and part of what God has given us so those who come there for help, might know that there are some people who care about them.

However, we must not forget that there are many people in this world who do not have the help they need. These people can be reached through the Church. That is why the Catholic Church is second only to the United States of America in humanitarian work in the world. So let us continue to give to the Church so we can reach those that we cannot reach on our own, except through the Catholic Church.

May Almighty God bless each and every one with the means to increase our giving.