

++FATHER'S HOMILIES++

September 15, 2012

Tradition has St. Helen rediscovering the Cross of Christ in the late 4th century. Her son Constantine, as Emperor of Rome was recognizing Christianity as the State Religion and rebuilding St. Peter in Rome and the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. From this find, we have yesterday's Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross. The Cross symbolizes death in Roman culture. Here, in religious circles, it becomes a symbol of glory and exultation - Why? Because God so loved us! God would do anything for us. Jesus is willing to empty himself upon the cross.

Now if the Cross has saved us, do we show it? Are we better than those who murmured against God in the desert? Like those bitter in the desert, are we suffering from sinful persons in us?

Today Jesus asks his disciples who he is. He needs to know if they "have it right." Peter says, "You are the Christ!" Jesus knows they do not understand this. So he tells Peter to stop speaking this and Jesus clarifies: He (Jesus) calls Peter Satan meaning an accuser. Jesus tells Peter you are thinking no as God does, but as humans do. They did not recognize God's plan; so he quieted Peter.

"Get behind me" is like our school teachers at end of recess. "Follow God" Peter!
Don't follow anyone else. Leave your wants behind.

To deny oneself in favor of another meant to be willing to defend the other person to death. This is what the Cross is.

If we are to get behind Christ, we must deny ourselves to fight to the death for faith.

Literally. The Cross is not a hardship. It represents death and Jesus and is as demanding as possible. To pick up our cross means not to let anything stand between us and Christ.

Mark wrote this Gospel after Peter's crucifixion. Peter literally turned his cross upside down. No less is expected of us, so we better understand what the cross really is for us!