



Among some of the Feasts and Festivals of the church year is Holy Cross Day on September 14. Counted among some of the earliest celebrations within the church, Holy Cross Day originated in the 4th century AD because the “actual cross” of Jesus was thought to have been discovered. Sadly, much was made of that discovery, authenticity, and of a miraculous supposed healing from the cross. The authenticity is not proven, nor the supposed miracle; the only detail certain is the discovery of a cross. The cross itself, whether the supposed original or any other physical cross is not a matter of faith. What Jesus accomplishes on the cross by His death is the important matter of faith; the way God declares us righteous. **“The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” 1 John 1:7b.** Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, that Jesus takes our place, becoming sin for us by the will of God; **“For our sake He (God) made Him (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (Christ) we might become the righteousness of God.”** Scripture also attests to our redemption through Christ's shed blood in **Ephesians 1:7.** **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”** Therefore, most important to our faith is the work of salvation Jesus secures on His cross on Calvary for us; not whether the original cross still exists.

By having a day set aside within the church year to commemorate the Holy Cross on which Christ died is a reminder of what Jesus does for us out of His grace. The cross on which Jesus died for the sins of the entire world teaches of His great sacrifice, shedding His blood and giving His life for the punishment of our sins. We celebrate the victory Jesus wins on the real and only cross on which He died.

The reality of Christ is that He makes **“peace by the blood of the cross” Colossians 1:20b.** In the sacrificial death of Jesus, death itself is defeated no longer posing a threat to all who believe. Through the suffering of Christ on His cross, the cross itself becomes the emblem of sacrifice by the Father's Son who is sent to save the lost. On the cross, God's love is poured out through the shed blood of Jesus, who stands in our place taking the punishment of our sin. In the death of Jesus, the control death had over us is defeated giving forgiveness and eternal life.

Jesus reminded Nicodemus (**St. John 3:1-21**) how Israel sinned and God sent serpents among them. They asked Moses to pray that God would take the serpents away. God had Moses set up a “fiery” (bronze) serpent on a pole and **“everyone bitten, when he sees it, shall live” Numbers 21:9.** As the people were saved from death, so also all who believe and trust in Jesus be saved through Him. **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” St. John 3:14.** Through the death of Jesus on His cross, the curse of sin is lifted from us as Jesus becomes the curse for us by receiving God's righteous wrath for our sin. The New Testament refers to the Old Testament by saying, **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-for it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” Galatians 3:13.** The love and grace of God is unmistakably clear in the death of Jesus on His cross that by His death we would have forgiveness and life everlasting.

When we see the cross whether in church or at home or on a gravestone, it is a clear reminder of the sacrificial death of Jesus who steps into our place receiving God's just punishment for our sin and gives us life. Through His work of salvation on the cross, Jesus demonstrates His unconditional love and still draws people unto Himself through the Redemption that is in His blood (**1 John 1:7b**). The life giving body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given on His cross is what He gives to us in The Lord's Supper delivering to us the blessings of His cross; forgiveness, life and salvation.

We are reminded by the hymn writer of how we take blessings for granted, sadly, even those from the cross. Yet, by God's grace, we are pointed to the cross of Christ assuring us of an everlasting future by the sacrifice of our dear Savior, Jesus Christ.

Do we pass that cross unheeding,
Though we see you wounded, bleeding,
Yet Your sinless death has brought us
Only what Your grace has taught us

Jesus, may our hearts be burning
May our eyes be ever turning
Till in glory, parted never
Graven in our hearts forever,

Breathing no repentant vow,
See Your thorn encircled brow?
Life eternal, peace and rest;
Calms the sinner's deep distress.

With more fervent love for You;
To behold Your cross anew
From the blessed Savior's side
Dwell the cross, the Crucified.

LSB 423 “Jesus, Refuge Of The Weary” stanzas 2 and 3