

For centuries, the cross has stood as a symbol of the most horrific kind of punishment, and, in a certain sense, it still does. Indeed, how many Christians, even today, in the name of the Cross of Christ, give their lives in martyrdom! The cross thus stands as a special sign, and all the more should it do in this Holy Year, especially in lands and churches afflicted by violence and oppression because of their faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ. In fact, for the Christian, the tree of the cross is a grafting of the tree of justice and peace (Christ himself) to the tree of life (the wedding chamber, the throne, the altar of the New Covenant). From Christ, the new Adam asleep on the cross, spring forth the wonderful sacrament of the entire Church. The cross is a sign of Christ's dominion over all who, in baptism, are configured to him in death and glory (see Rom 6:5).

According to the Church Fathers, the cross is a sign of the Son of Man who will appear at the end of time (see Mt 24:29-31), but also a sign of the great mercy of the Father who, for the love of mankind, offers his Son as the sacrificial victim for the sins of mankind. For this reason, it stands as the primary symbol of this Holy Year. The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which in the East is given a place comparable to that of Easter, deserves to be celebrated with great solemnity as it highlights the mystery of love and redemption which is the cross of Christ: "For you placed the salvation of the human race on the wood of the cross, so that, where death arose, life might again spring forth and the evil one, who conquered on a tree, might likewise on a tree be conquered" (Preface of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross).

In each community if it fitting, especially on this feast day and throughout the liturgical year, that, with due respect for liturgical norms, the cross in the presbytery or in the church hall be decorated in such a way that it stands as an eminent sign of God's mercy and Christ's victory over death and, for this reason, remains a reference point for communal prayer and private reflection.

*Celebrating Mercy: A Pastoral Resource for [Living the Jubilee](#), page 15*