

God Loves You

I was driving into San Diego that other day when I saw a big sign overhead. It read:

“God loves you, He always has, He always will.”

What a great sign. What a great slogan. What good news to never forget.

I wonder if we could have a reminder of God’s love for us everywhere we go. True we can all wear a cross to remind us. Or we can post a cross near our front door to remind us. And on the top of most churches, we post a cross, a cross that we see against the sky, to remind us of God’s overarching love. But it is hard to put a cross everywhere.

Wherever I travel in the US, I see a flag flying—the American Flag—with its stars and stripes proudly proclaiming our nationality. And that is good. Canada also flies its flag, but not as often. We would do worse than to emulate Americans in this. I enjoy seeing flags flying wherever I look. It says something good about pride in one’s country.

Of course, there is also the Statue of Liberty. As one sails into New York harbour, that Statue of Liberty is the first thing one sees. It is there to proclaim the Liberty and Freedom that one can expect (most of the time) in America. It is good.

The Gospel today included these words:

“...and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him will have everlasting life....” (St John 3: 14-15)

Now at the time of the escape from Egypt, the people of Israel camped in a spot in the wilderness where they encountered many snakes. It was a terrifying time for them, for those who were bitten died. Moses went to God in prayer and was told to make a bronze image of a snake and put it on a pole in the middle of the encampment. If a person was bitten, all they had to do was make their way to the image of the bronze snake, look upon it, and ask for healing—and they would be healed.

Every Jew listening to Jesus knew that story; so when Jesus went on to say: “so must the Son of Man be lifted up,” they all understood Him. They may not have liked what He said, but they understood.

Jesus was telling them that He was to be lifted up on the Cross, be sacrificed, so that all who came to Him in Faith, and looked upon Him, would be healed of sin, and brought into a new Relationship with the Father. At the time, many understood, but no one wanted to agree. Yet Jesus knew what would happen to Him, and He chose to make that execution

on the Cross a moment of Healing and Restoration. For Moses, the bronze serpent meant healing from snake bite; for Jesus, the Crucifix would be healing from Sin and Despair.

In the history of the Church, that has been the case. Inside a church building, above the Altar, would be a Cross mounted for all to see. When missionaries went into a new place, they carried a cross, and placed it for all to see. Across England and in many parts of Europe, the Town Cross was a Cross mounted high above a preacher proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. You can see them today. Every church was surmounted by a cross so that all walking by could see and know that Jesus could bring them healing and forgiveness of sin.

In my home, when you enter the front door, there is a cross on the wall to remind all who enter of Jesus. I have a crucifix in on my office wall, because to me the cross with the body of Jesus is the greatest sign of Love that the world has ever known. Around the necks of so many people is a cross or crucifix, to remind others that the love and healing of Jesus can be theirs too. And through the day, when we pray, say grace, turn out thoughts to God, we make the sign of the cross on ourselves, proclaiming that we belong to the One who was lifted up from the earth to bring healing and salvation.

So today, let us so live our lives that we ourselves may be a “cross” for the world to see. May the sign of His Cross, shine through our friendships, our business, our conversations, our joy, our actions, that the world may see Christ, and hear of His love. May we be a crucifix for the world, so that healing and forgiveness and new life will shine forth right here.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Sing the Hymn: “Lift High the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim”]