



Celebrate

Holy Cross Day
September 14, 2025

This festival, which originated in the fourth century, celebrates the triumph of the cross. Paul reminds us that Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God. As Moses put a serpent on a pole to be a source of healing for the Israelites, we lift high the cross as the sign of our health and salvation. Each time we make the sign of the cross we remember our baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. To those who look upon the cross, grant your wisdom, healing, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Numbers 21:4b-9

When the people spoke against God and Moses, the LORD sent poisonous snakes against them. Moses interceded for the people, and the Lord ordered him to erect a serpent of bronze on a pole. All who looked at it after having been bitten by a serpent would live.

[From Mount Hor the Israelites set out,] but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have

sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.



Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done ¹marvelous things,
whose right hand and holy arm have ¹won the victory.

²**O Lord, you have made ¹known your victory,
you have revealed your righteousness
in the sight ¹of the nations. R**

³You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness
to the ¹house of Israel;

all the ends of the earth have seen the victory ¹of our God.

⁴**Shout with joy to the LORD, ¹all you lands;
lift up your voice, re- ¹joice, and sing. R**

or Psalm 78:1-2, 34-38 [not printed]

At the heart of the Christian message is the word of the cross. This proclamation seems foolish to many because it reveals true divine power in the absolute weakness of Christ's crucifixion. True wisdom understands how ours is a God who suffers for and with humankind in the cross.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of
the wise,
and the discernment of the
discerning I will thwart."

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since,

in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Gospel

John 3:13-17

After explaining to Nicodemus that one must be born of water and Spirit, Jesus speaks of being lifted up on the cross, with reference to the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses in the desert. Here the Son of God is revealed as the source of healing.

[Jesus said:] "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Gracious God, we come to you in prayer for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Sustaining God, guide your church on the way. Give us patience in our journey, and protect us from division and doubt. May we look to the cross and live. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Creator God, renew the earth. Heal our planet from the venom of greed and exploitation, and direct us to respect all life as a gift from you. May we look to the cross and live. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God of wisdom, grant discernment to those in authority. Thwart the plans of the proud, bring low the mighty, and uphold those who work for peace. May they seek the way of the cross and live. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

God of grace, alleviate suffering. Comfort the sick and the grieving (*especially*). Come to the aid of those who are hungry or needing shelter. May they find hope in the cross and live. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Good Shepherd, guide your flock. Protect us from the world's lies and lead us in the way of truth. Strengthen us in our faith and inspire us to serve others. May we follow you to the cross and live. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Merciful God, you receive into your loving embrace those who have died. Giving thanks for them, may we find comfort in the cross and live in the hope of resurrection. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.

Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Amos 7:1-6. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, c. 258) Psalm 73. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, 1179) Job 40:6-14; 42:1-6. **Thursday** (commemoration of Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, 1961) Psalm 113. **Friday** Romans 8:31-39. **Saturday** Mark 12:41-44. **15th Sunday after Pentecost** Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13.

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