



**Reflection for September 16, 2020: Holy Cross Day
[transferred]**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

[Philippians 2:5]

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

[John 12:32]

Holy Cross Day (September 14th) commemorates the dedication on September 14, 335 of a complex of buildings in Jerusalem to be a shrine to the resurrection, commissioned by the emperor

Constantine. The date—the 7th month of the Roman calendar-- was selected because of the account in Chronicles of the dedication of the Solomon’s temple in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar. The complex included two buildings: one used for the Liturgy of the Word, and the other with an altar used for the Liturgy of the Table. The courtyard between these two buildings looked out on the site of the crucifixion on the mount of Calvary. The procession from Word to Sacrament passed the Cross, making it the center of Christian life.

The meaning of the cross has varied widely across the ages, across cultures, and across theologies. Our own Anglican tradition, grounded in Celtic spirituality, teaches us to see the cross as a “thin place”, a place where the boundary between heaven and earth virtually disappears, where we can sense the divine more readily. This vision, like the vision of Christ’s suffering, calls us out of self-interest and complacency into a vision of infinite possibilities that is both humbling and empowering.

For me, J. Philip Newell explains this meaning of the cross best [J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008]:

p.xv. The cross is a theophany or showing of Love and the desire for oneness. It reveals God rather than appeases God. pp. 84-85 – And in the Celtic tradition, the cross is the greatest showing of God. It discloses the first and deep impulse of God, self-giving. It reveals that everything God does is a pouring out of love, a sharing of life blood. And so the whole of creation is an ongoing offering of self, a showing of the Eternal Heart that is pulsing with love in the life of all things. Not only does the cross disclose love, but it also discloses the cost of love. To offer the heart is to offer the self. And so the cross, in addition to being a revelation of the nature of God, is a revelation of our true nature, made in the image of God. It reveals that we come closest to our true self when we pour ourselves out in love for one another, when we give our heart and thus the whole of our being. . . .

On this day let us remember that the cross is an opening, a transition to a new journey, not the end of the road. Let us seek the peace it offers with compassionate courage--knowing that there is no way to avoid the cross, but there is also no reason to fear it. The journey to the cross is inherently solitary, but its purpose is always to draw people together.