FEAST OF THE EXULTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2014

Today we celebrate the Feast of the EXULTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS with the red bloodwoven vestments recalling Palm Sunday — the day when the liturgy celebrated Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem ending with the crucifixion — the first reading of the Passion, the laying of Jesus' dead body in the tomb.

In this year of the sad centenary of the First World War in 1914, this poem came to me to express the incredible wonder of Jesus' love for me revealed in his three hours of agony endured upon the cross as he suffered for you and for me:

PAIN

You could have
come, Lord,
in 1914
and have died
in seconds
caught
in a storm
of bullets.

But You chose
to die
in 33 A.D
nailed to a tree
after three long hours
in agony

just to prove
your love
for me.

But the sad thing is that, though the Gospels and St Paul describe how Jesus ' suffering and death won eternal life for every human being that God has created, we have barely, 2 millennia later, unpacked this truth. Would Christians 100 years ago have slaughtered each other so savagely if we had unpacked this truth? The truth that I describe as articulated in these ten words:

GOD
HAS
AN
EXCLUSIVE
LOVE
FOR
EACH
PERSON
HE
CREATES.

Is this the message that we get from the Holy Scriptures?
Don't we tend to interpret them as saying that God has some love for some people, more love for others, when the truth is that He has a unique love for each. He died for each. And, as with Jesus in the womb of Mary, this love is for each of us as we begin our existence as a human being.
This is why the blindness of slavery, the blindness of the holocaust of World War II and our current blindness in killing our unborn is such a betrayal of this love, such a betrayal of the TRIUMPH OF THE HOLY CROSS.

We have heard so often from this podium of the tragedy of ROE V WADE that ushered into our culture the killing of unborn children to the currrent tune of 1.2 million a year. We still remember the eloquent pleading of Pope John Paul — now Saint John Paul — and Mother Teresa now Blessed Teresa — for an end to abortion. The right to life being, as John Paul put it, the corner stone on which all other rights are built or, as Mother Teresa put it in her address on the occasion of her receiving the Nobel Prize for peace: "The greatest enemy of peace is abortion. For if a mother is allowed to kill her own child what is there to stop me killing you!"

We have heard these but have we digested the scandal that this has caused world-wide? Each person aborted is one for whom Jesus died, one for whom God has a unique love revealed in the TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS. And are we all aware that muslims by their faith, — true muslims not the extremists whose behavior is as John Paul called it " A blasphemy of religion" — true muslims have a horror of abortion. For, as they put it, Allah has entrusted his children from conception to their mother and father.

So let me give you one final thought before reading the lyrics of a hymn to close this homily. We are rightly horrified at the portrayal of the executions of two American journalists on a video that is crossing the world — and yesterday of a man from Scotland. Are we equally horrified by the PBS decision to show a video on their program that glorifies last term, third trimester, abortions?

May I conclude with a re-iteration of my joy as a Christian caused by my belief that Jesus has a unique and exclusive love for each person. We glory in that love as a historical fact proved by his triumph over sin and death which we are celebrating today in the feast of the triumph of the holy cross. May we pray my translation of

the Vexilla Regis THE REGAL DARK MYSTERIOUS CROSS and then take a minute of silence to ponder this Great Love.

THE REGAL DARK MYSTEROUS CROSS

The regal dark mysterious cross
In song is lifted high,
The wood on which our God was raised
As Man against the sky.

Upon this wood his body bore
The nails, the taunts, the spear,
Till water flowed with blood to wash
The whole world free of fear.

At last the song that David sung
Is heard and understood:
"Before the nations God as King
Reigns from his throne of wood."

This wood now spread with purple wears
The pageantry of kings;
Of chosen stock it dares to hold
On high his tortured limbs.

O blessed Tree, upon whose arms
The world's own ransom hung;
His body pays our debt and life
From Satan's grasp is wrung.

O sacred Cross, our steadfast hope
In this our Passiontide,
Through you the Son obtained for all
Forgiveness as he died.

May every living creature praise
Our God both one and three,
Who rules in everlasting peace
All whom his cross makes free.