

Montreal Foro
September 13, 2019
Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

As Dr. Just reminded us this morning, tomorrow, September 14, is Holy Cross Day. A day which began as a commemoration of when Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, was said to have discovered the cross of Jesus in the year 320. I don't know if the cross she found that day was really Jesus' or not. I do know that if you're interested, you can find some pieces of it for sale on Ebay. *Caveat emptor*. Let the buyer beware.

But according to Paul and his words that we heard today - God's Word - it is not the cross itself that is the power of God, or folly to those who are perishing, or a stumbling block to the Jews. Crystals, amulets, lucky Rabbit's feet, and other charms - there are many things people today *think* have power. So why not a piece of the cross, too. But according to Paul, it is ***the word of the cross***, the message of the cross, the preaching of the cross - that is the folly. That is the stumbling block. That is the power of God.

Therefore this preaching of the cross is important. For even before Jesus was put upon a cross, crosses preached - a *Roman* preaching. Don't do it. Don't go against the Roman government. If you do, this is what will happen to you. And that was a powerful message.

But this is not just ancient history. Just a couple of months ago, the United States Supreme Court, in a case regarding a large cross on public land, in its ruling allowing the cross to remain, preached that the cross has acquired "an added, secular meaning," and that "the cross symbolized the local community and its past." Or in other words, it was a monument to honor men, not save them. This preaching of the cross neuters the cross of any power or enduring significance.

So in Montreal, as in all our cities, where there are Jews and Greeks and everything in between, the true preaching of the cross is needed. This word that isn't wise enough for some and too foolish for others. No matter. We preach the cross, for ***we preach Christ crucified***. This we proclaim because it's all we have to proclaim. And it's what all people need to hear.

Now to be sure, the cross of Christ preaches a powerful message of Law, similar to Rome. Break the Law of God and this is what you get. Death. And worse. Eternal death. But this is not the *proper* preaching of the cross. That is to say, the Law is the *alien* work of God. So this message of Law is the alien preaching of the cross.

Rather, the proper preaching of the cross is the same as the proper work of God: **the Gospel**. The **for you** of the cross. The Good News, as Charles said this morning.

The Good News that Phillip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch: that for you Jesus was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. For your transgressions He was pierced by men. For you and your iniquities Jesus was crushed, not you. The Lord laid your iniquity on Him. All for you.

But in addition to this preaching, we have the preaching of Jesus, too. The words He preached from the cross. That He was forsaken so you would never be. That even as He bears your sin He prays for your forgiveness. That Paradise is no longer barred. And that all is finished. Your salvation is complete. I am making all things new. That is, another took your place. Life springs from death. You don't have to justify yourself or straighten yourself out with God or atone for your sins. Jesus did. The grace and love of God for you.

Just the cross along a Roman road or on public land - or on the top of a mountain in Montreal - doesn't preach that. So with Paul, we don't just preach the cross, but the one on it. For you. Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So while don't claim to have the selfsame cross that Jesus hung on, we proclaim instead that we have something better: **the Jesus who hung on the cross**. We have Him in water, words, and bread and wine. We have Him as we are washed and absolved and bodied and blooded. We have Him, and in having Him we have His forgiveness, life, and salvation. His *proper* work.

So what a perfect weekend to have a Montreal Foro and a congregational anniversary. Holy Cross Day. But while just one day on the liturgical calendar, the Holy Cross is the daily life of the Christian, as *every* morning we make the sign of the cross, remember our baptism, and die and rise with Christ.

And we pray this would, one day, be the daily life of every Montrealer. That they would know, with us, not just the cross, but the **for me** of the cross. And say with us, AMEN!