

Hymn for Use on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



“ BEHOLD THE ROYAL
ENSIGNS FLY ”
“Vexilla Regis prodeunt”

Meditate on this hymn to Jesus crucified on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), contemplating the saving grace that Jesus won for us by his life, death on the Cross, and Resurrection.

This hymn can be used in quiet prayer time or read aloud with family, friends, a prayer group, or a faith sharing group in your parish to honor the Cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Behold the royal ensigns fly,
Bearing the cross mystery;
Where life itself did death endure,
And by that death did life procure.

A cruel spear let out a flood
Of water, mixed with saving blood,
Which, gushing from the Saviour's side,
Drowned our offences in the tide.

The mystery we now unfold,
Which David's faithful verse foretold,
Of our Lord's kingdom, whilst we see
God ruling nations from a tree.

O lovely tree, whose branches wore
The royal purple of his gore;
How glorious does thy body shine,
Supporting members so divine.

The world's blest balance thou art made;
On thee our ransom, Christ, is weighed.
Our sins, though great, his pains outweigh,
And rescue hell's expected prey.

Hail, Cross, our hope! to thee we call—
On this triumphant festival.*
Grant to the just increase of grace,
And every sinner's crimes efface.

Blest Trinity! we praises sing—
To thee, from whom all graces spring;
Celestial crowns on those bestow
Who conquer by the cross below. Amen.

** This line was traditionally used on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. An alternate line was used during Lent, Easter Time, and Ordinary Time.*