

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Cross or Creed?

A Reflection for Holy Cross Day – Sunday 14 September

This weekend, Blackburn Cathedral is hosting an ecumenical conference to mark the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

It's a moment to remember when the early Church, despite its many divisions and dangers, came together to articulate a shared confession of faith.

The Nicene Creed, born out of that gathering, remains a unifying symbol across Christian traditions.

But this Holy Cross Day reminds us that before there was a creed to confess, there was a Cross to carry.

In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus says: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (*John 12.32*).

The Cross is the instrument of our salvation, and the centre of our discipleship. It is the place where the love of God is made visible, where sin is unmasked, and where death is undone.

In a world full of personal manifestos and curated belief systems, people often speak of 'living by a creed', a guiding statement of their values, priorities, and identity.

Christians do indeed live by such a creed and its shape is cruciform. To follow Jesus is not simply to affirm a set of theological truths but to walk in the way of self-giving love, to endure suffering with hope, to forgive where there is hurt and to remain faithful even when the cost is high.

The Cross teaches us what matters most. It teaches us who God is, and who we are becoming in Christ. And it calls us, again and again, to live not for ourselves, but for the One who died and rose for us.

So while important conversations are taking place in the cathedral, about unity, doctrine, and the legacy of Nicaea, perhaps the most important thing you and I can do this Holy Cross Day is to kneel in wonder before the Cross... and rise to live in its shape."

Amen.

Rev James Lawrence, Canon Missioner for the Blackburn Cathedral

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