***LSW***

children

*church. So, every Sunday morning, people dressed up in their Sunday best and built a church out of any bricks, metal and glass that they could find.*

*In Malaysia, the government did not allow us to use the name of God in our prayers. Those who prayed in Malay, especially those from East Malaysia, suffered. In the kind of harsh environment, it is important for us to remain true to the Cross. If people tell us that we cannot go for mass, we will have mass in secret. If they do not build us churches, we will build our own. If they do not allow us to use certain words in our prayers, we will continue to pray the way Jesus wants us to pray.*

*In doing all these, we will be able to defend the Cross and we will be truly soldiers of our king, Jesus.*

Year A, B, C

Feast of the Triumph of the Cross

**Image**

Defending the Cross

**Points to note**

There are various angles that you can use on this reading. Much of it could be abstract, and doctrinal. I would like to focus on some topical issues arising from what the Pope called Christianophobia, which sometimes degenerates into downright discrimination or even violence and persecution.

While the Cross may have saved us, we too must defend the Cross, not in the meaning like in the Crusades, but more of the ensuring that the Gospel values that the Cross stands for, lives on. We may not succeed in defending the existence of the Gospel values in the world but we must at least ensure its existence in our hearts, from where no one can extinguish it, but ourselves. The Cross has no triumph except through us and in us.

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

We adore you O Christ, and we bless you:

because by your cross, you have redeemed the world.

Alleluia!

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with you.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St John

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Jn 3:13-17)

Jesus said to Nicodemus

“No one has gone up to heaven

except the one who came down from heaven,

the Son of Man who is in heaven;

and the Son of Man must be lifted up

as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that,

everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much

that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost

but may have eternal life,

for God sent his Son into the world

not to condemn the world,

but so that through him, the world might be saved.

This is the Word of the Lord

**Discussion**

What is the difference between a cross and a crucifix? *A crucifix is a cross with the body of Jesus on it. A crucifix is used by Catholics, Anglicans and Orthodox Christians while Protestants use only the plain cross.*

If you look at the top of a crucifix, whether the big one in church or the little one on your rosary, what do you see in the top arm of the cross? *A little square with “INRI” on it. It represents the paper, on which Pontius Pilate wrote out the crimes of Jesus for which he was crucified. “INRI” stands for* Iesu Nazarene Rex Idumea, *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.*

So the Cross was where a king ended up. Does a king have an army? Does a king have soldiers? *Yes.* Who are Jesus’ soldiers? *We are.* If we are Jesus’ soldiers, how do we fight for Jesus?

*Explain that Jesus does not want us to fight like soldiers do. But if needed, Christians have to die for the Cross like soldiers die defending their country.*

Are you ready to die for the Cross? *St Agnes died for the Cross in ancient Rome at a very tender age. She was only 12 when her father decided that he wanted her to marry an old man. She refused as she has dedicated her life of Jesus and for this she was put to death. Imagine that you are only in school and you die for Jesus!! Would any of our school children be willing to?*

*Explain that not everyone likes Christians. Jesus warned us about that in the Bible. In ancient Rome, Christians were arrested and jailed or worse. Some were crucified a lingering death: normally crucifixion takes days; Jesus’ crucifixion was shortened due to the Sabbath. Others were thrown to the lions: they are taken to the sandy pitch in that big stadium in Rome, where hungry lions were let loosed on them while spectators cheered them on.*

*Even today, there are people who do not like Christians and would like to jail them. In North Korea, the government has declared that they do not believe in God and Christianity is banned. Still, there were Christians in North Korea who continued to pray and read the Bible in secret.*

*In Iraq, there are people who took over parts of the country and make the Christians convert to their religion or be put to death. Most of the Christians left while most of those who stayed behind chose death.*

*Even in Malaysia, the government do not allow us to build many new churches. They did that too in Poland once. The communist government there at that time, who didn’t believe in God, built a new city with modern houses, factories, etc, but no*