

Archbishop Smith: Victory Parade

On Monday, the city of Toronto hosted a victory parade for the Raptors, recently crowned NBA champions (how good does THAT sound!?!?). Countless fans lined the streets to cheer and thank their team.

At the heart of the parade was the symbol of victory – the Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy. Team members had lifted it high on the court following their win.

With justifiable pride, and to the delight of the fans, they held it aloft as it was borne through the streets of the city. This was a first. Fans hope, of course, that it will not be a one off.

It puts me in mind of another victory parade that in no way can be a once-only happening but is meant to take place daily. I am speaking of the “victory parade” that is the Christian life.

The sign of victory is the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We hold it high and present it to the world not by marching through the streets but by demonstrating its effects in the way we live.

To embrace the Cross is to allow the power that flows from the death and resurrection of Christ to enter into and change our lives. Our “victory parade” is the daily manifestation of a life transformed by the grace and mercy of our Lord.

More than one commentator has observed that the Toronto team’s win has attracted new fans from beyond that city’s borders.

People gathered in venues across Canada to watch the final game and to rejoice in the victory. Citizens have thus discovered a new basis of unity.

The victory of the Cross aims at uniting the people not only of one country but of the entire world, and not just at the superficial level of transient sports amusement. The “victory parade” that is the Christian life is offered to draw people to the Cross, so that they can encounter in it the power of divine love to heal the human heart and thus unite humanity in a deep and abiding joy.

Participation in the Christian victory parade requires a decisive renunciation of another procession, one opposed to the Cross and that seeks to wind its way through our minds and hearts. This is what from Christian antiquity has been called the *pompa diaboli*, i.e., the procession of the devil. This refers to all the empty and futile enticements that the evil one parades before our attention, things that appear to offer happiness but instead separate us from faith in Christ and thus lead to disappointment and sadness.

In point of fact, every time we renew our baptismal promises, we begin with a decisive renunciation of Satan, his works and his "empty show".

That last expression captures it well. All that the devil "shows" in order to seduce us away from Christ is, indeed, "empty". The *pompa diaboli* is a parade of illusion, and we need to be careful not to be caught up in its enthrall.

The victory over sin and death belongs to Jesus Christ, who by his Cross and Resurrection has won for us the fullness of life, now and into eternity. By his grace, bestowed in the sacraments of the Church, he shares that victory with all who embrace the Cross and its power to liberate from the entrapments of evil and its illusions.

The victory is ours in Jesus Christ; ours, too, is the call to lift high the Cross in a parade of hope and joy.