

## **Typology, Fulfillment in Christ, and the Crucifix as a Sacred Sign**

The passage from Numbers 21:4–9 recounts the event of the Israelites journeying through the wilderness, growing impatient, and speaking against God and Moses. As punishment for their sin, the Lord sends fiery serpents among them, which bite the people, causing many to die. When the people repent, Moses intercedes, and God commands him to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. Anyone who looks at the bronze serpent is healed.

### **Typology and Fulfillment in Christ**

From a Catholic perspective, the bronze serpent is a profound typological prefiguration of Christ crucified. Typology is the study of how Old Testament events, persons, and institutions foreshadow New Testament realities. Jesus Himself draws this connection in John 3:14–15:

*“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”*

The Church Fathers and Saints consistently recognized this typology. St. Augustine, for instance, explained:

*“The serpent was fixed to a pole to be seen, that those who were bitten might be healed by believing. The serpent represents death, and Christ’s death gives life. In like manner, Jesus was lifted up on the Cross, that those who look upon Him in faith may be healed of their sins.” (Sermon 2 on Psalm 60).*

Similarly, St. John Chrysostom comments:

*“He allowed the serpent to bite them, that being chastised they might turn to Him... And when they were converted, then He saved them by means of a symbol... showing that He has power not only to heal, but also to keep them from falling.”*

The bronze serpent, an object of curse, symbolizes the reality of sin and death. Christ, who “became sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21), is raised upon the cross, offering healing and salvation to all who look upon Him with faith.

### **The Importance of Having a Crucifix at Home**

The crucifix, depicting Jesus on the cross, is a profound symbol of our faith and the fulfillment of the Old Testament typology. It serves as a powerful visual reminder of Christ’s sacrificial love, His victory over sin and death, and the promise of eternal life.

Having a crucifix in the home is a tradition that dates back to the early Church, when Christians would place crosses and symbols of faith in their homes to ward off evil and as a profession of their belief in Christ. It is not merely decorative but sacramental—blessed by the Church, it invites God’s protection and presence.

### **Why Is It Necessary?**

1. **Visual Catechesis:** It teaches the centrality of the Paschal Mystery, helping us meditate upon Christ's sacrifice.
2. **Spiritual Protection:** The crucifix symbolizes Christ's victory over evil. As St. Benedict's Cross is often used in exorcisms, the crucifix itself is a reminder of God's power over sin.
3. **Reminder of Love and Mercy:** The crucifix constantly recalls the depth of God's love and the call to repentance and conversion.
4. **Aid to Prayer:** It assists in focusing one's prayer life on Christ's redemptive act.

### **History of the Crucifix in the Church**

The early Christians were hesitant to represent Christ's suffering visually because of persecution and the association of crucifixion with criminals. However, from the 4th century onward, as Christianity became more publicly practiced, the crucifix began to be displayed in churches as a symbol of salvation and triumph.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century) speaks of the sign of the Cross as a seal and a symbol of salvation:

“Let us, therefore, not be ashamed of the Cross of Christ, but though another hide it, do thou openly seal it upon thy forehead, that the devils may behold the royal sign and flee trembling far away.” (*Catechetical Lectures 13:36*)

### **Do We Really Need the Crucifix?**

Yes, the crucifix is essential because it encapsulates the very heart of our faith: Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. As St. Paul said:

“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:23-24)

Without the crucifix, the central message of Christianity—the sacrificial love of God made visible through Christ's death—would be diminished or obscured. It stands as a beacon of hope, a sign of contradiction, and a reminder of the victory won on Calvary.