

The Transforming Power of the Cross

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark 8: 34-9:1.

Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come in power."

Mark 8: 34-9: 1

Introductory Prayer:

O Lord, today take away any false ideas about what it means to be your friend. Prepare my heart for the message of your cross, that it may teach me I can learn authentic love of you and your Kingdom. In your cross is an example of every virtue I need and every goal I wish to attain. In the cross there is hope, an all-powerful hope that transcends every human disappointment. Lead me to you as I seek to I wish to carry my cross with joy as a token of my love and gratitude to you.

Petition:

Lord, make the cross a singular place of friendship with you in my life.

1. Becoming Through Suffering:

Most people move through the day with self-preservation and self-interest influencing their decision-making. Choosing a harder road can still be a self-interested affair, if people seek their own advancement in life. Christ's message is not simply about a work ethic —sweating, toiling and sacrificing to be successful. The self-denial that is asked of a Christian goes deeper than that. It must reach into that place where we try to preserve ourselves and our most cherished desires. Nothing teaches Christ's lesson better than the crosses that have surprised us, the crosses that were not planned or wanted. Every step with these crosses on our backs is true following, true loving, true salvation without delusion or bitterness.

2. Following or Leading?

One day Mother Teresa saw one of her sisters headed out into the streets with a long face. She called her over and said, "What did Jesus say, to carry the cross in front of Him or to follow Him?" The sister responded, smiling, "To follow Him." Mother then asked, "Why are you trying to go ahead of Him?" (Mother Teresa: Come be My Light, p.221) "The cross of Christ" is not just the rightful assumption of the weight of a holy life, it is also an attitude. The wrong attitude can crush our spirits and make us suffer like a pagan: alone. Humble faith reveals the One we follow, who shows us the way, who sustains our hope, and who leads us to profound Christian joy.

3. Sacrificial Love and Life Are Inseparable:

Seeing the Kingdom in power is a consequence for those who suffer for Christ. Our Lord guarantees this: Love will never be defeated in this life or the next. Although they might seem to have suffered in vain, many saints saw the glory of the Lord in special moments during their life and in abundance after they passed to heaven. The incorrupt, the documented miracles of intercession, the great movement of spirituality in the Church—all these attest that God will never let love be separated from the coming of his Kingdom in power.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, bring my soul to the cross without fear, trusting in its mysterious power to change me and the world around me. I should not withdraw from life when it wounds me. I should not seek pity or human consolation when a dark moment prevails. What is needed is simply a true disciple who will rally his soul behind the cross of the Lord and march forward, assured of victory. May I resolve in every low moment, when Christ asks for more from me, to live the resolution of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta: "A hearty 'Yes' to God, and a big smile for all" (Mother Teresa: Come be My Light, p.217).

Resolution:

At night I will examine my attitudes towards difficulties and ensure that they reflect the spirit of a true disciple.