

FAITH AND REASON

The Cross of Christ: ... so that the Cross of Christ may not be made in vain! Saint Paul's warning, should truly make us tremble. The Cross is the sign above all things which uniquely identifies us as Christians; it is without any shadow of a doubt, universally known and recognized. Even in the eyes of those who do not share our Christian experience, the Cross is the symbol par excellence of a life given out of love, of a fidelity that has gone to the most extreme point possible, which manifests the radical truth of the One who gave His life so that we might live.

The Cross, which bore the savaged body of Jesus of Nazareth, was transformed from an instrument of torture into an instrument of salvation. The wood of the tree that became an instrument of death is now a symbol of new and eternal life. The Cross was foolishness for the pagans, because it was and still is for some, philosophically impossible to admit that God could die and moreover, die having been judged guilty of a crime. For the Jews it was a scandal, because a death sentence by crucifixion was reserved for those "rejected by God".

The Cross of Jesus cannot be confused with the scaffold of all the other crucifixions that have taken place throughout history: it is unique and escapes any exclusively human understanding. It is the supreme place of the manifestation of God's Love, it is the complete unveiling of the divinity of Jesus, and it is the turning point in the history of humanity.

Whilst it was dark on earth, as the evangelists tell us in the account of Jesus' death, the Cross became a source of radiant light. This light must be welcomed with the free and priceless gaze of faith, without the preconceptions of so-called human wisdom and without the dull prejudices of religiosity, crystallized in predefined schemes. Through the Cross, God surprises us, that is, takes us and lifts us up to allow us to see things from a different, new and true perspective: His! In Your light do we see Light, says the psalmist (Ps 36:9), and offers us the criterion for understanding life and history.

The Cross is not understood on the basis of human wisdom or even religious reasoning, but, on the contrary, it is human wisdom and the life of faith that are illuminated and strengthened by the Cross. O yes, the risk really is enormous, the stakes are very high, the highest: so that the Cross of Christ and His victory may not ever be made in vain!

Let us be careful not to reverse the factors: it is not like in mathematics, where, inverting the addenda of a sum or the factors of a multiplication, the result does not change. In our relationship with the Lord, each element must be placed in its place and in its order. The same dynamic is proposed to us again by the first luminous words of Jesus' preaching, addressed to the people who walked in darkness: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). Often the attention of the listener focuses on the imperative "Convert", offering an immediate moral reading, as if it were a simple exhortation: "Work to change your lifestyle". Instead, the emphasis should be placed on the reason that motivates the request for conversion: "For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The first action to be carried out is to let oneself be enlightened by a surprising newness: the proximity of the Kingdom of heaven, that is, the loving and saving presence of God, who in His synthetic and complete form is the very person of Jesus. For in that Kingdom, as Pope Francis reminds us: "Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity" (Laudato Si', 240). It flows from the mystery of the Cross.

True light that emanates from His presence, from His works and His words, in Him, with Him and through Him, we have all that is necessary for conversion, first of all, our thoughts, our reasons, our understanding of life. It is only on the basis of intelligence made wise by a personal relationship with Jesus that we are able to build a new and solid moral life. If conversion depends on our moral choices, it collapses with the daily appearance of our human frailty. But let us not become disheartened because, if, on the other hand, our conversion moves from a theoretical transformation of thoughts, beginning with accepting Jesus, the Crucified and Risen and Living One, then it is our whole of life that changes and becomes Christ-like. A life that has the taste of eternity, of holiness, of true and lasting freedom.

It is exactly this invitation that is addressed to us today, to the first disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee: "Follow me: and I will make you fishers of men" Simply: "Share My life, and you will become like Me!" It is by obeying this command that the Cross of Jesus may not ever be made in vain... **By Fr Luke Gregory ofm**

Belief: They alone are able truly to enjoy this world, who begin with the world unseen. They alone enjoy it, who have abstained from it... They alone inherit it, who take it as a shadow of the world to come, who for that world come to relinquish it

Cardinal John Henry Newman

The Meeting of the Waters: There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet as that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet; Oh! the last rays of feeling and life must depart, ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.

Yet it was not that nature had shed o'er the scene her purest of crystal and brightest of green; 'Twas not her soft magic of streamlet or hill, oh! no, it was something more exquisite still.

'Twas that friends, the beloved of my bosom, were near, who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear, and who felt how the best charms of nature improve, when we see them reflected from looks that we love.

Sweet vale of Avoca! how calm could I rest in thy bosom of shade, with the friends I love best, where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease, and our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace... **St. Thomas More**

Prayer to Follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd: Gentle Jesus, compassionate and caring Good Shepherd, help me to follow You faithfully. Strengthen me daily with Your love and guide me along life's paths. Keep me free from every evil, protect me from sickness and danger, and lead me to serve You with all my mind and heart and soul. Hear my needs and grant me petitions, especially these intentions important to me at this time: {Mention your petitions here} Bless me each day with peace of mind and heart. May I experience Your saving power in my daily life, as I await the fullness of life and joy with You forever. **Amen**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless, lie scattered at the feet of men like flowers.

Monday In as much as love grows in you, so in you beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul.

Tuesday The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love; It signifies Love, It produces love.

Wednesday Cheerfulness strengthens the heart and makes us persevere in a good life.

Thursday Pray, hope and don't worry. Anxiety doesn't help at all. Our Merciful Lord will listen to your prayer.

Friday Lord, help me to make time today to serve you to those who are most in need of encouragement or assistance.

Saturday Driven by the forces of love the fragments of the world seek each other that the world may come into being.

A Simple Reflection: When Jesus had finished his work on earth and had returned to heaven, the angel Gabriel met Him. "Lord" said Gabriel "is it permitted to ask what plans you have made for carrying on your work of earth". "I have chosen twelve men and some women. They will pass the message on until it reaches the whole world. But the angel said, "supposing these people fail you, what other plans have you made". Jesus smiled "I have no other plan" he said "I am counting on them".

Lead Us Not into temptation: Just the word Father, through which we put ourselves in the relationship of children to God, is inexhaustible. But the word "our" is no less part of it. Not in saying "I" but in saying "we" am I included in this filial relationship. And thus, the structure of this prayer holds riches that the explanation and interpretations of all the centuries have only gradually revealed. What is true of the Word of God is also true of the Our Father: it has a fixed shape - it is always the same - and yet it is inexhaustible and ever new. It always leads us farther on... The person praying knows that God does not want to force him into what is wrong. He asks God here for his guidance in temptation, so to speak.

The Letter of James says explicitly that God, in whom there is no shadow of darkness, does not tempt anyone. But God can put to the test - think of Abraham - in order to make us more mature, in order to bring us face-to-face with our own depths so as then to be able to bring us back to himself completely. In that sense, the word "temptation" has various shades of meaning. God never wants to lead us onward to what is evil; that is quite clear. But it could well be that he does not simply keep temptation away from us, that as we said, he helps us in temptation and leads us through it. We ask him not to allow us to get into temptations that might make us slide us into evil ways; that he does not subject to the tests that strain us beyond our powers; that he not set aside his powers and leave us on our own, that he knows our weakness and therefore will protect us so that we are not lost.... **Pope Benedict XVI**

An Irish Proverb: May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

In His Will is Our Peace

Fr. William C. Mooney

Spiritual Direction and Confession

Email: Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com

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