

The Cross: A Source of Joy and Glory

While we celebrate the Resurrection feast, it is beneficial for us to reflect on certain aspects of the Cross. In doing so, we would like to present to our readers this 1969 article written by our late Spiritual Father that reflects on the joy and glory stemming from the Cross.

Under this title, there is a blatant paradox. How can the Cross—a symbol of oppression, torture, and shame—be a source of glory and joy? Isn't this inconceivable and thus folly? Yes, indeed, it is. And for that very reason, we have to become fools. This path of the Cross is a must if we are to taste the joy of the Cross. It is imperative if its glory is to come upon us.

For us to encounter the joy and glory of the Cross, we must be willing to become fools¹. We can temporarily ignore injustice, suffering, and shame if we adopt this mindset. But can we turn a complete blind eye to them?

Many are those who rejoice in the Cross—the Cross of Christ. For upon it He suffered and died, through His suffering and death we have attained redemption, and in redemption, there is the greatest joy, for it is a release from eternal death. Christ has redeemed us from suffering and death, both in their spiritual and eternal senses. As He is an eternal Spirit, the joy of redemption has become both spiritual and eternal. But to rejoice merely in the suffering and death of anyone other than myself is hard, cruel, and utterly destructive. This kind of joy means not only ignoring suffering and injustice but also ignoring Christ Himself.

The greatest mystery of Christ is that far from representing someone wholly “other,” He represents my very own self—every bit of me: my flesh, my bones, my spirit, and everything to do with me. To me, God had always been wholly “other.” He is of a nature totally different from mine. He could never have represented me, and I could never have represented Him. This state of affairs prevailed until Christ, the Son of God, became flesh and took on my very nature. From that moment on, He became my type, my representative before the Father, and I also, whenever His Spirit is alive within me, typically represent Him before people who have never known Him. He became a sinner before the Father, seeking God's righteousness for my sake; and I also, clothed in His eternal Spirit, stand before the Father as if I were righteous, as if I were a son, for He brings “many sons to glory” (Heb. 2:10).

Is it then possible that Christ's Cross, i.e., His suffering and death, may be a source of joy and glory to me without my involvement in that suffering or that death? It is absolutely impossible! Whatever belongs to Christ has become my own: His Cross, His glory, His joy, and His suffering—all in one inseparable package. How then can I suffer, rejoice, and be glorified with Him?

From the pulpit, we can get those who hear to join in with Christ's sufferings, glory, and

¹ We must interpret the word “fool” in this context according to what St Paul said about the Cross. “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Cor. 1:25).

everything that goes with them. This can be done in all settings, through words and emotions. We can also persuade the listeners that they have become pure and righteous—also in words. We can even invite them to have their share of joy and glory as if joy were an idea—a mere idea and a mere conviction. Nothing remains for the preacher except to cry out Alleluia! And the whole congregation could go dancing and rejoicing at the Cross of Christ. But when the Cross actually enters our lives, dancing stops, shouting stops, and Alleluia is no longer heard. Instead, people ask that the Cross be lifted off their shoulders. And when God holds back, they start to grumble, debate with God, blame, and rebel. Finally, there is a complete breakdown in relations, so the curtain falls on a short, brief love story ending in a tragic abandonment of God.

This type of access to spiritual joy is decisively flawed—a dangerous delusion. Its acquaintance with the Cross only goes as far as words and definitions. It has no roots in reality or truth. So, what is the true path to genuine joy? In other words, what is a realistic Cross? When we suffer blatant and shameful injustice, Christ is unclothed in readiness for crucifixion. When grief and suffering knock at our door, this is Christ being raised on the Cross. When harm befalls us and tribulation eats its way into our hearts, Christ's hands, and feet are nailed to the Cross. When our honor is trampled into the mud, and we forfeit everything, this is when Christ hangs drops his head, letting go of His Spirit.

Therefore, there is no line of demarcation dividing my own Cross from that of Christ. My own experience is just a mere repetition of Christ's: what Christ accomplished for the first time on the Cross is now being applied and credited to me.

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There are three stages to go through for my Cross to be transformed into the joy of Christ.

The First Stage: Contentment

If I truly believe that God is omnipotent and that He presides over everything (*Pantocrator*), I should surrender my whole life to Him, knowing in whom I believe and trust the eternal arms that can preserve me and raise me from death. Such faith and confidence make it easy for me to accept the Cross that I bear, whatever it be: an incurable illness; a thorn in my flesh or in that of someone I love; the betrayal of a brother or a friend who was dear to me; the loss of property; a humiliating degree of poverty; injustice, persecution, or tyranny; calumny, slander, or the lash of the tongue—whatever form it takes, it is a Cross to bear. So long as my eyes are fixed on Christ, my Savior, and so long as His Cross and sufferings are etched on my heart and flesh, I will accept them. Yes, I will accept my Cross, for to me, it is an experience that is continually renewed. However, it often happens that as soon as I accept my Cross, God tries to probe my acceptance, or rather, He wants me to probe my own acceptance. He thus presses it a bit harder and extends the time of tribulation until I am sure of my contentment, and therefore, He Himself becomes sure of my contentment. It is here, and only here, that the first mystical stage of the Cross is reached when contentment turns into thankfulness, which is a work of grace. Thankfulness now becomes a near-miraculous gift, for

thankfulness is usually commensurate only with welfare. But thankfulness here also goes hand in hand with hardships. So these hardships turn out for my own good by means of the Cross and the power of contentment.

Second Stage: Thanksgiving

After the first ecstatic amazement at the attainment of thankfulness amidst suffering and the depth of tribulation, a person will suddenly catch themselves again and be startled at ones' self: How can I be thankful while being insulted? And why should I give thanks to God while He refuses to exempt me from hardship, even though it is in His power to do so? The soul here enters into a struggle with the gift. Thanksgiving grapples with the agony of pain. But when man dignifies the gift, offers thanks to God, and defies suffering and tribulation night and day to give thanks again, the second miracle occurs. The second mystery of the Cross comes into being when thanksgiving turns into joy, thus becoming a great gift from God.

The Third Stage: The Meaning of Joy

What has happened? How could I find joy in deprivation and injustice? How could I rejoice in the hell of tribulation and the inferno of pain?

Joy is the decisive proof of the soul's exit from the sphere of agony. It also means that a person ceases to dwell on the painful reality once and for all. But how did this exit from the realm of misery actually take place? How did I disdain pain, injustice, and shame while living in the very core of tribulation and nailed up on my own Cross?

Here is the third mystery of the Cross, i.e., the union. What are the terms of this union? The answer is harmony and unity with God's will and His pleasure. My Cross has been God's will for me. When I accepted it, I accepted the will of God, and when I offered thanks for it, I offered thanks to God's will, and thus His will overflowed to me. But when I rejoiced in my Cross, my own will became one with God's will, and so the glory and joy of the Cross—which is God's ultimate delight—alighted on me: "But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed" (1 Pet. 4:13).

Brothers and sisters, rejoice in your Cross that God's delight may alight on you!