

# The Glory of the Cross

The Lord's Flock Lenten Recollection

March 27 – 29, 2024



## **Holy Wednesday: The perfect love of Jesus conquered sin**

*Fr. Anton Pascual, Executive Director of Caritas Manila,  
and President of Radio Veritas*

Jesus' perfect love and sacrifice on the cross conquered sin forever (1 Corinthians 1:23). He transformed the meaning of the cross from violence/horror to a symbol of love, redemption, and victory (John 15).

In ancient times, the cross was understood to be the most horrible, shameful, and evil form of punishment. It was meant to intimidate criminals who were enemies of the Roman Empire. Jesus Christ was innocent but He willingly took upon Himself this shameful execution. He embraced all evil to save us from the inside – from the deepest of our sinfulness, in order to conquer sin and reconcile us with the Father.

Jesus's love was unconditional, everlasting and self-emptying ("kenosis"). His was the greatest love that saved us (1 Corinthians 13). His death on the cross was a costly grace, and He was glorified (Philippians 2:6-11).

Realistically, our life includes suffering. They may come in different forms: physical, psycho-emotional, and existential. All of these sufferings were also experienced by our Lord on the cross. Hence, when we gaze on the Cross, Christ is now our source of hope (John 3:14-15). The cross is the place where we offer our sufferings – it has become redemptive; Jesus promised victory (John. 16:33).

In our times, our Catholic faith is in crisis. Let us not make our Christ on the cross a private matter. We must continue to preach the Christ on the cross, the symbol of God's perfect love that resurrects.

## **Maundy Thursday Topic #1: The Ultimate Hero**

Sis Techie Rodriguez, Elder-Founder, Vision-holder  
The Lord's Flock Catholic Charismatic Community

A hero inspires us to live better lives, whereas a celebrity merely wants to be admired. Jesus is the greatest Hero of all time. He was despised, rejected, shamed and died a very traumatic death. He offered Himself to redeem us from our transgressions (Isaiah 53: 3-6). He willingly laid down His life for us. This is the greatest act of love (1 John 3: 16). Because of Jesus' sacrifice, He changed everything. We can now look forward to eternal life because Jesus promised that He will prepare a place for us (John 14: 3).

Jesus calls His followers to be like Him: to deny themselves and to take up their crosses daily (Luke 9: 23 and Matthew 16: 24-25). To take our cross and follow Jesus means to be willing to identify with Him and to be committed to Him, despite sufferings and persecutions (Matthew 10: 38-39).

There is nothing good with human nature because of the fallen nature of man. But because of God's loving mercy, Jesus came to the world to give us new life, an abundant life (John 10:10).

The cross is a place of violence and unimaginable cruelty. But Jesus changed this. To Mary Magdalene, the cross is a place of redemption; to Mary, a place of faithfulness; and to John, a place of restoration. Jesus turned around the lives of the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4: 7-29), the adulterous woman (Jn. 8: 3-11), Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-9) and many others.

We, too, have all been redeemed. As His disciples, we, too, must be heroes.

## **Maundy Thursday Topic 2: Carry the cross with joy and gratitude**

Fr. Jerry Orbos, SVD, Divine Word Mission Director

If we have the firm belief and conviction that God loves us, we can carry our cross. God promised He will give us the strength.

God's extravagant love for all of us helps us accept and endure the pain of our daily crosses. While withstanding the burden of its weight, we can be joyful, hopeful, and grateful by "*focusing on the Lord, not on the load.*" Problems will always be with us; but what matters is how we can learn to change our mindset with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Galatians 5:22-23). Once we set our minds on this, our cross becomes lighter: "*nada de turbe*" (let nothing disturb us). Experience the cross meaningfully, take the path of humility & hidden-ness:

*R = reparation, make amends for sins;*

*I = intercede for others;*

*P = purification, makes us better persons*

God's love is far greater than our cross. Balance the problems with His many blessings. Live a life with a mission. Do not postpone our conversion with God. Do not postpone loving the people God gave us.

Let us embrace our cross as our share in Christ's pain and suffering all the way to the vision of God's glory. The cross is bearable because God has a big heart.

### **Good Friday Topic #1: The cross is the passage to heaven**

Bishop Honesto Ongtioco, Bishop of Cubao

Why are we here on earth? This is a big question. God had this question for Adam and Eve, "where are you?" after they disobeyed His command in the garden of Eden. This pertains not only to a location; more importantly, how far away are we from God? The garden of Eden symbolized God's goodness and a relationship with Him until they decided to disobey God. For us, to be alive is to decide to be good, honest, and humble; **"ang paglapit sa Panginoon ay sinasadya!"** Whatever our decisions, God can restore everything that we have lost. We only have to decide to bare our sins, sufferings, and God will transform us.

The Cross is the passage to heaven. "Paschal" means Passover, passage. The door was opened to thief who repented on the cross as Jesus assured him, "you will be with Me in paradise." Similarly, whatever is disturbing our conscience, let us offer them to God. Let us look at our lives through His eyes – see His goodness, generosity, love and mercy. During the "Year of Mercy" in 2018, the icon showed the eyes of Christ and Adam partially merged – to signify that Jesus looks with the eyes of man; conversely, we should look with the eyes of God. Consequently, the passage of man to eternal life is only through Jesus.

When we pray the Stations of the Cross, something must be happening inside us. God wants us to resurrect, to get rid of things that obstruct our deep communion with Him. We are all anointed and thus, we must be faithful to our real identity *in deeds* – decide, "sadyain" to be involved in others. Always think *J.O.Y. Jesus. Others. You.*

Let us embrace our cross. We are imperfect, but God will make us beautiful again. After we have done our best, we can say "it is finished," our mission is finished. Grab the opportunity that God gives us to gain eternal life.

### **Good Friday Topic #2: The love behind the cross gives it redemptive value**

*Fr Jason Laguerta, Head of The Office of Promotion of New Evangelization  
Archdiocese of Manila*

The cross makes us spiritually-fit ("*cross-fit*"); it has a purpose to make us spiritually strong and give us healing and victory.

On one hand, the cross is tragic and difficult. From the human perspective, we want to dismiss any cross. On the other hand, the cross is salvific and redemptive. From the glory of the cross perspective, let us embrace it.

The total self-giving love of Jesus until the end gives the cross its redeeming value. The glory is not something we see; it is not the blood, torture, or suffering. The glory of the cross is the love behind the cross which gives it redemptive value. Quoting St. Catherine of Siena, *“the nails could not have held him fast to the cross, if love had not held him there first.”*

The cross is just a part of the paschal mystery. At the heart of the cross is Christ giving of Himself in love. He is a model to us all, on how to endure our cross:

1<sup>st</sup>: He allowed Himself to model for us how to deal with our crosses in life, to not be afraid. It is painful, but it will not be the end.

2<sup>nd</sup>: He accompanies us as we go through our own way of the cross; He transforms the pain to redemption and love.

Let us unite our cross to Jesus' cross. He can bridge the gap between human and divine. He is our bridge from human suffering (our cross) to mercy and healing. He already covered all human sufferings until death. He went through the crucifixion so we can cross-over, be cross-fit. There is no place to go, but the cross of Jesus, where we can find solace and healing (1Peter 2:24).

Hence, death takes meaning, it is a passage to a new life. There is glory because of the love behind it. The wounds are left open so that we can receive the overflowing mercy and love of the Lord.

***To God be the glory!***

**Transcribed by The Lord's Flock Scribes Ministry:**

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