

started with this unexpected meeting with the Cross.

I went to those who were not looking for me; I was found by those that sought me not (Is 65:1).

At times the Cross appears without our looking for it: it is Christ who is seeking us out. And if by chance, before this unexpected Cross which, perhaps, is therefore more difficult to understand, your heart were to show repugnance... don't give it consolations. And, filled with a noble compassion, when it asks for them, say to it slowly, as one speaking in confidence: "Heart: heart on the Cross! Heart on the Cross!" (*Way of the Cross, fifth station*)

Jesus gave Himself up for us in a holocaust of love. What about you, who are a disciple of Christ? You, a favored son of God; you, who have been ransomed at the price of the Cross; you too should be ready to deny yourself. So, no matter what situation we may find ourselves in, neither you nor I can ever allow ourselves to behave in a way that is selfish, materialistic, comfort-loving, dissipated or forgive me if I speak too candidly just plain stupid! If all you want is the esteem of your fellow men, and you long to be respected and appreciated, and you only seek a pleasant life, then you have strayed from the path...Only those who travel the rugged, narrow and austere path of tribulation are allowed to enter the city of the saints, there to rest and reign with the King for eternity. [St. Augustine, *Sermo 85*, 6 (PL 38,523)]

You yourself must decide of your own free will to take up the cross; otherwise, your tongue may say that you are imitating Christ, but your actions will belie your words. That way, you will never get to know the Master intimately, or love him truly. It is really important that we Christians convince ourselves of this. We are not walking with Our Lord unless we are spontaneously depriving ourselves of many things that our whims, vanity, pleasure or self-interest clamor for. Not a single day should pass that has not been seasoned with the salt and grace of mortification; and, please get rid of the idea that you would then be miserable. What a sad little happiness you will have if you don't learn to overcome yourself, if you let your passions and fancies dominate and crush you, instead of courageously taking up your cross! (*Friends of God, 129*)

To love the Cross means being able to put oneself out, gladly, for the love of Christ, though it's hard—and because it's hard. You have enough experience to know that this is not a contradiction. (*the Forge, 519*)

*(excerpted from: www.opusdei.us)

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THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS



"Sacrifice, Sacrifice!"

**It is true that to follow Jesus Christ
is to carry the Cross —**

He has said so.

***THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS**

FROM THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN:

And from then on Pilate was looking for a way to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying, "If thou release this man, thou art no friend of Caesar; for everyone who makes himself king sets himself against Caesar."

Pilate therefore, when he heard these words, brought Jesus outside, and sat down on the judgment-seat, at a place called Lithostrotos, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day for the Passover, about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" But they cried out, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. And so they took Jesus and led Him away.

And bearing the cross for Himself, He went forth to the place called the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. (*John 19:12-17*)

FROM ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA:

Carrying His Cross, Jesus goes out toward Calvary, a place that in Hebrew is called Golgotha (*John 19:17*). —And they lay hold of a certain Simon of Cyrene, who is coming from a farm; and they make him take the Cross and carry it after Jesus (*Luke 23:26*).

The prophesy of Isaiah (*53:12*) has been fulfilled: *cum sceleratis reputatus est*, He was counted among the wicked: for two others, who were robbers, were led with Him to be put to death (*Luke 23:32*).

If anyone would follow me...Little friend: we are sad, living the Passion of Our Lord Jesus. —See how lovingly He embraces

the cross. —Learn from Him. —Jesus carries the Cross for you: you...carry it for Jesus.

But don't drag the Cross...Carry it squarely on your shoulder, because your Cross, if you carry it so, will not be just any Cross: it will be...the Holy Cross. Don't bear your Cross with resignation: resignation is not a generous word. Love the Cross When you really love it, your Cross will be...a Cross, without a Cross. And surely you, like Him, will find Mary on the way. (*Holy Rosary, Jesus Carries His Cross*)

Sacrifice, sacrifice! It is true that to follow Jesus Christ is to carry the Cross—He has said so. But I do not like to hear souls who love Our Lord speak so much about crosses and renunciations, because where there is Love, it is a willing sacrifice—though it remains hard—and the cross is the Holy Cross.

A soul which knows how to love and give itself in this way, is filled with peace and joy. Therefore, why insist on "sacrifice", as if you were seeking consolation, if Christ's Cross—which is your life—makes you happy? (*Furrow, 249*)

Jesus is exhausted. His footsteps become more and more unsteady, and the soldiers are in a hurry to be finished. So, when they are going out of the city through the Judgment Gate, they take hold of a man who was coming in from a farm, a man called Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, and they force him to carry the Cross of Jesus (cf. *Mark 15:21*).

In the whole context of the Passion, this help does not add up to very much. But for Jesus, a smile, a word, a gesture, a little bit of love is enough for him to pour out His grace bountifully on the soul of his friend. Years later, Simon's sons, Christians by then, will be known and held in high esteem among their brothers in the faith. And it all