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"Prayer to the Cross of Love"

Lord Jesus, for how many ages have You remained imprisoned upon Your cross, and still we pass You by, ignoring You? How often have I overlooked Your tender presence in my life, paying little attention to Your great sorrow, Your pain, Your powerful love? How often have I, by my ignorance added to Your sorrow, deepened Your pain, and refused Your love?

You constantly stretch forth Your hands to re-create me, to touch me with Your love, and still I close my eyes to Your presence and force You to remain imprisoned upon Your cross. Yet my name is written in Your heart forever and You will not allow me to ignore You and run from You. You have loved me with an everlasting love, and I continue to place obstacles in Your path Lord. Your cross shows me the power of Your love, that it is stronger than my fear, that it can overcome my need to run from You. Lord let the love that flows from Your cross surround me, break down the walls of my fear, and fill my heart.

Lord Jesus Christ crucified, teach us how to love one another as You have loved us, even to the cross.

The Passionist Radio & Television Ministry, West Springfield, Mass.

EDITOR'S PAGE

Hail O Cross - The Only Hope

It is hard to understand why Jesus chose the Way of the Cross to redeem mankind. As God, He could have chosen another way to open heaven for us, which was closed by the original sin of Adam and Eve. One drop of His blood would have been sufficient to redeem us. Christ chose the way of suffering and the cross to show us that this is the best way, the shortest way and the surest way leading to our salvation.

Soon we begin the Lenten Season and will be reminded of the Cross of Jesus. We will be given the occasions to better understand the Cross in our own individual lives. As Christians, we are the followers of Christ. He gave us an excellent example of suffering during His passion and death as well as in the trials with the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Priests of the old law and even with His own chosen twelve. Recalling the statement of Jesus: "If a man wishes to come after Me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps." *(Mat. 16,24)*

None of us have any doubts that we all must suffer in this valley of tears. Some pass through physical pains, others suffer mentally or spiritually. Sorrows, disappointments, humiliations, poverty, illness, trials and tribulations of all sorts are almost our daily bread. The good suffer according to the words of St. Paul: "Anyone who wants to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus can expect to be persecuted." *(II Tim. 3,12)* The chosen of God suffered like Abel, Moses, Abraham, Joseph of Egypt, Job, David and Tobias of the Old Testament. In the New Testament the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins also had to suffer. The evil likewise suffer according to St. Augustine's words: "There is no greater suffering than a remorseful conscience." Since this is our lot, not only as creatures of God but more so as followers of Jesus, we must learn how to suffer so that our daily crosses may become beneficial to us and meritorious for heaven.

We must learn what the cross is in our life, accept it willingly or at least with resignation, and bear it in the company of Jesus, Mary and all the saints. The cross may be a physical defect coming from a malfunctioning of a certain bodily organ. The cross can be a handicap coming from a birth defect or an accident in life. One may not be able to walk because of old age or arthritis or have a problem in remembering or working or writing or reading. One may have a miserable life in marriage or problems with their children. One can go through mental anguish due to scrupulosity or doubts of faith or remorseful conscience. One cannot get along with an employer or fellow workers or neighbors. There are countless numbers of these trials and tribulations which indeed can be considered your cross to bear.

St. Francis de Sales used to encourage souls, who found it hard to accept their cross with resignation in these words, which were found in the wallet of Dr. Tom Dooley in 1961. *"The everlasting God has in His wisdom forseen from eternity the cross that He now presents to you as a gift from His inmost heart. This cross He now sends you, He has considered it with His all-knowing eyes, understood with His Divine mind, tested with His wise justice, warmed with loving arms and weighed with His own hands to see that it be not one inch too large and not one ounce too heavy for you. He has blessed it with His Holy Name, annointed it with His grace, perfumed it with His consolation, taken one last glance at you and your courage and then sent it to you from heaven, a special greeting from God to you, an alms of the all merciful love of God."*

None of us will be able to suffer alone. We must suffer in union with Christ, who went before us up the steep hill of Calvary bearing patiently His cross. We should not seek relief in our suffering from man by complaining, but rather present our problems to the Lord. It is He who once said: "Come to Me all, who are burdened and wearied, and I shall comfort you!"

The best school of suffering is the meditation of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Only in the sight of His suffering are our own ills and trials to become small. It is here that we will learn the value of our immortal soul. It is here that we will accept our crosses as a just punishment for our sins as a sign of God's merciful love toward us and as a means; a way — the shortest, the most perfect and the safest to heaven.

Our Blessed Mother Mary as the Mother most sorrowful, whose heart was pierced by seven swords of suffering, also can be for us an example and help in our Cross of Life. She as a Mother best understands the needs of Her children.

Edith Stein, a Jewess and a convert to Catholicism, who died during the Second World War in a concentration camp in Poland, wrote that only one who suffers a lot can come to understand the meaning of the cross. She repeated these words often in her suffering: "Hail O Cross, my only Hope." As Christians we must travel on the way of the Cross. The life of a Christian has paschal character through Good Friday to the resurrection on Easter Sunday.□