



*“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
— 1 Corinthians 1:23-24*

Introduction: The Redeemed Tree of Life

In the heart of spring, when nature blooms and life seems to break forth with strength, the Church celebrates with particular fervor an event that unites heaven and earth, time and eternity: **the Holy Cross of May**. Also known as the **Invention of the Holy Cross** or the **Feast of the Crosses**, this devotion rooted in Catholic tradition carries a deep theological and spiritual weight that, far from belonging only to the past, holds an urgent message for our times.

But what exactly are we celebrating in May when we honor the Cross? How did this tradition arise? And what relevance does it have today, in a world that rushes toward the abyss, forgetting what truly matters? This article invites you to discover the hidden treasure of the Cross of May, with its historical roots, theological foundation, and a practical guide so that you too can embrace the Cross as the tree of true life.

1. The Invention of the Holy Cross: A Glorious Quest

The word “invention” in this context does not refer to “inventing,” but rather to its classical Latin meaning: **“discovery”** (*inventio*). It refers to the finding of the True Cross of Christ in Jerusalem, an event attributed by Tradition to **Saint Helena**, the mother of Emperor Constantine.

The Sacred Story

According to ancient sources — such as the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea and traditions recorded by Saint Ambrose and Rufinus of Aquileia — Saint Helena, though elderly and filled with faith, undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land around the year 326 A.D. There, moved by a burning love for Christ, she ordered excavations on Golgotha, the site where Christ had been crucified centuries before.



Three crosses were unearthed, but a sign was needed to identify which was Christ's. The sign came through a miracle: a dying woman was touched by one of the crosses... and was healed. The Cross of Christ had been found. It was then raised high and venerated with reverence by the Christians.

This discovery was liturgically celebrated for centuries on **May 3rd** as the **Invention of the Holy Cross**, though after the liturgical calendar was reformed by Saint Pius V and later by John XXIII, this feast was absorbed into the **Exaltation of the Holy Cross** on **September 14th**, commemorating the Cross's recovery after it had been stolen by the Persians.

Nonetheless, the **Cross of May** remains alive in many regions as a popular and religious celebration, with processions, floral altars, and prayers, especially in Spanish-speaking countries.

2. The Theology of the Cross: Scandal, Wisdom, and Salvation

The Cross is not a decorative symbol. It is the **throne of the Crucified King**, the place where Christ conquered sin, the devil, and death. It is the new Tree of Life. As Saint Paul clearly teaches:

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13).

The Cross is the **central symbol of Christianity**, but its depth can only be understood with eyes of faith. For the world, it is foolishness; for us believers, it is the power of God. And its redemption is not limited to the moment of the crucifixion but is constantly updated in the life of every Christian, called to take up his cross daily and follow the Master (cf. Luke 9:23).

The Cross is:

- **Redemption:** On it was paid the price of our freedom.
- **Bridge:** It unites heaven with earth, love with justice.
- **Throne:** From there Christ reigns, not with worldly power but with love that gives itself



unto death.

- **Path:** It is the daily journey of the true disciple.

3. The Cross of May: Living Tradition and the Blooming Symbol

The **Holy Cross of May** blooms in spring because Christ's Cross, though hard and bloody, is also fruitful. From it sprouts new life. This is why in many cultures, especially in Spain and Latin America, the Cross of May is adorned with flowers, raised in altars, and carried in procession.

This feast expresses a powerful visual message: **the wood of death has been transformed into the tree of life**, and just as spring renews the earth, so too does the Cross renew the soul.

Traditional Practices:

- **Floral Altars:** In homes, streets, or parishes, a cross is raised and decorated with flowers as a sign of resurrection and hope.
- **Processions:** People sing and pray as the Cross is carried through the streets, as a public testimony of faith.
- **Prayers and Novenas:** Petitions are offered at the foot of the Cross, entrusting sorrows and hopes.

4. Practical Applications: How to Live the Spirituality of the Cross Today

The Cross is not only to be honored once a year. It is to be **lived every day**. Here is a theological and pastoral guide to embody the Cross in your daily life.

a) Embrace Your Daily Crosses

Do not seek the Cross as spiritual masochism, but **when suffering comes — and it will — do not reject it as useless**. Give it meaning by uniting it with Christ. Remember that the saints were not those who ran from the Cross but those who embraced it with love.



Practical tip: Frequently repeat: *“Lord, through your Cross, give me strength to carry mine.”*

b) Remember the Cross

Place a crucifix in a visible place in your home. Teach your children to look at it, to cross themselves with reverence, to understand that this is the price of their salvation.

Practical tip: Every May 3rd, celebrate a small family liturgy in your home: a Gospel reading, a prayer, flowers placed at the crucifix.

c) Be a Witness of the Cross

Do not hide your faith. Do not disguise your Christianity. In a world that glorifies pleasure and easy success, proclaiming Christ crucified is more urgent than ever.

Practical tip: Talk about the Cross with others. Give someone a crucifix. Wear one with reverence.

d) Offer It for Others

The Cross has the power of redemption. Your small crosses — an illness, a contradiction, a worry — can be offered for the conversion of sinners, the souls in purgatory, or the persecuted Church.

Practical tip: Every time something hurts, do not waste it. Say: *“Lord, I unite it with your Cross for...”*

5. The Cross: A Sign for Our Time

In a world that flees from sacrifice, **the Cross is uncomfortable**. And yet, it is exactly what we need to rediscover: the logic of love that gives itself.

We are surrounded by “crosses without Christ” (pain without meaning) or “Christs without a cross” (a faith without demands). The Cross of May, with its powerful symbolism, **reminds us that there is no resurrection without passion, no glory without sacrifice**.

The Cross is hope for the sick, comfort for the afflicted, guidance for the lost, a call for the



indifferent. And above all, it is the signature with which God sealed His love for us.

Conclusion: Bloom Beside the Cross

Pope Saint John Paul II once said: *“The 21st century will be the century of martyrs.”* And we, even if we do not suffer bloody martyrdom, **are called to be martyrs of daily love**, witnesses of the Cross amid noise, relativism, and emptiness.

This May, don't let the Cross be just decoration. Make it your banner, your guide, your refuge. Celebrate the Holy Cross of May with flowers, yes, but also with acts of faith. Make your life an altar, and your suffering an offering.

May the Cross bloom in you. May the victory of crucified love always resound in your heart.