



*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)*

Few phrases spoken by Jesus Christ are as well known and, at the same time, as misunderstood as this one. We hear it in homilies, see it written on religious images, and repeat it when we suffer an illness or go through a difficult trial. Yet do we truly know what Our Lord meant when He spoke about carrying the cross?

In an age that seeks immediate comfort, instant gratification, and the elimination of every form of suffering, Christ’s words are profoundly countercultural. While the modern world proclaims, “Avoid pain at all costs,” Jesus teaches, “Take up your cross and follow Me.”

But attention: carrying the cross does not mean seeking suffering for suffering’s sake. Nor does it mean passively resigning ourselves to injustice or accepting every situation without striving to improve it. The Christian cross is far deeper, far more demanding, and paradoxically, far more liberating.

Understanding this mystery can completely transform the way we live through illness, family problems, financial struggles, humiliations, disappointments, and even the small sacrifices of everyday life.

## The Cross: A Symbol That Once Scandalized

To understand Christ’s words, we must place ourselves in their historical context.

Today we see crosses in churches, homes, cemeteries, or hanging around people’s necks. They seem familiar to us. Even those who are not believers recognize the cross as the symbol of Christianity.

But in the time of Jesus, the cross was not a religious symbol.

It was an instrument of execution.

It represented the cruelest, most humiliating, and most shameful form of death known in the Roman Empire. Those condemned to crucifixion were forced to carry the crossbeam to the place of execution amid the mockery and contempt of the crowd.

That is why Christ’s words must have been shocking to those who first heard them.



Jesus did not simply say, “Accept life’s difficulties.”

He said something far more radical.

He said that whoever wished to be His disciple had to be willing to follow Him even along the path of the cross.

Long before He Himself was crucified, He was already announcing that the road to glory would necessarily pass through sacrifice.

## The Cross Is Not Just Any Suffering

One of the most common mistakes is to call every problem a “cross.”

Yet from a Christian perspective, not every suffering is a cross in the Gospel sense.

The consequences of our own sins, for example, are not necessarily a cross.

If a person destroys his marriage through infidelity, the painful consequences that follow are not the Cross of Christ but rather the fruit of a bad decision.

Nor is something a cross when it could legitimately be corrected and we refuse to change it out of comfort or laziness.

The Christian cross is, above all, the suffering that arises when we seek to remain faithful to God.

It is the price of fidelity.

It is what we must endure out of love for Christ, in obedience to His will, or simply because God permits a trial for our sanctification.

An illness accepted with faith.

An injustice endured without hatred.

Marital fidelity amid difficulties.

The struggle against temptation.



Defending the truth when it is unpopular.

Persevering in faith within a hostile environment.

All of these can become authentic Christian crosses.

## The Great Difference Between Suffering and Carrying the Cross

All human beings suffer.

Believers and unbelievers alike.

Saints and sinners.

Rich and poor.

The difference is not in suffering.

The difference lies in how that suffering is lived.

Two people can go through exactly the same illness.

One may live it with despair, anger, and resentment.

The other may offer it to God, unite it to Christ's Passion, and turn it into a source of spiritual growth.

Outwardly, the situations appear identical.

Spiritually, they are entirely different.

The cross does not consist merely in suffering.

It consists in uniting suffering to Christ.

Saint Paul expresses this reality with astonishing words:

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I



*complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church." (Colossians 1:24)*

Obviously, nothing is lacking in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. What Saint Paul teaches is that Christians are called to participate in that redemptive work through our union with the Passion of the Lord.

When we offer our sufferings united to Christ, they acquire a supernatural value.

The cross ceases to be an absurdity and becomes a path of redemption.

## The Modern Scandal of the Cross

Contemporary culture has enormous difficulty understanding this teaching.

We live in a civilization that regards suffering as the ultimate evil.

Everything must be comfortable.

Everything must be easy.

Everything must be immediate.

If something requires effort, it is abandoned.

If something causes suffering, it is eliminated.

If a relationship demands sacrifice, it is broken.

If a responsibility becomes too burdensome, it is avoided.

Yet human experience constantly demonstrates that the most valuable things often require sacrifice.

A mother suffers for her children.

A father sacrifices himself for his family.

A student works for years to achieve a goal.



An athlete endures intense training.

A priest gives his life in service to God.

A saint renounces even great goods out of love for Christ.

Suffering, in itself, is not good.

But it can become the path to greater goods.

The cross reminds us precisely of this forgotten truth.

## The Daily Cross of Every Christian

When we hear about the cross, we usually think of great tragedies.

But Jesus said something very specific:

“Take up his cross daily.”

Every day.

Not only during great dramas.

Not only in extraordinary crises.

The daily cross is usually much more humble.

It is getting up to fulfill one’s duty when one does not feel like it.

It is responding with patience when someone irritates us.

It is remaining silent in the face of an offense.

It is praying when we feel no consolation.

It is fulfilling our family obligations.

It is persevering in chastity.

It is rejecting temptation.



It is forgiving a wound.

It is accepting a limitation.

It is enduring a chronic illness.

It is continuing to love when we receive no love in return.

These small daily crosses, accepted out of love for God, possess immense spiritual value.

The saints repeatedly insisted that holiness is usually built more through fidelity in small crosses than through occasional acts of extraordinary heroism.

## Christ Did Not Carry the Cross Merely to Teach Us

Here we find an essential point of Catholic theology.

Jesus did not carry the cross merely to give us an example.

He carried it to redeem us.

The cross is the place where divine justice and divine mercy are simultaneously revealed.

There we contemplate the gravity of sin.

But we also contemplate the infinite love of God.

Every time a Christian embraces his own cross, he participates in some way in that redemptive mystery.

That is why the saints did not see the cross merely as a burden.

They saw it as an opportunity for union with Christ.

Not because they loved pain.

But because they loved the Crucified One.



## The Saints and the Mystery of the Cross

The entire history of the Church is filled with men and women who profoundly understood this mystery.

The martyrs accepted persecution rather than renounce the faith.

The confessors endured misunderstanding.

Missionaries faced dangers and deprivations.

Christian mothers sacrificed countless comforts for their children.

Religious men and women freely renounced many legitimate goods.

All of them understood something that the modern world often forgets:

The cross is not the end of the story.

The Resurrection comes afterward.

Good Friday leads to Easter Sunday.

There is no Christianity without the cross.

But neither is there a Christian cross without hope.

## How to Carry the Cross Today

From a pastoral perspective, we can point to several concrete steps.

### 1. Recognize the Cross That God Permits

We should not invent imaginary crosses.

The true cross is usually found in the duties and circumstances that God permits in our lives.

### 2. Avoid Sterile Rebellion

It is legitimate to seek solutions to problems.



But when something cannot be changed, constant rebellion only increases suffering.

### 3. Unite Everything to Christ

A brief prayer can completely transform a trial:

“Lord, I offer You this suffering united to Your Passion.”

### 4. Maintain Hope

The cross never has the final word.

The final word always belongs to God.

### 5. Remember That We Do Not Walk Alone

Christ continues to carry our crosses with us.

Just as He allowed Simon of Cyrene to help Him carry His own, He also sustains those who trust in Him.

## The Christian Paradox: Losing in Order to Gain

The Gospel contains one of the most profound paradoxes ever spoken:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” (Luke 9:24)

The world teaches us to cling.

Christ teaches us to surrender.

The world promises happiness by avoiding every cross.

Christ promises eternal life by embracing the cross with love.

History demonstrates which of these two paths produces true peace.



## A Cross That Leads to Glory

The cross can never be understood apart from the Resurrection.

Had Christ remained in the tomb, the cross would be nothing more than a tragedy.

But Christ rose from the dead.

And precisely because He rose, every cross carried with Him acquires meaning.

Every sacrifice offered.

Every tear endured with faith.

Every act of fidelity.

Every renunciation made out of love for God.

Nothing is lost.

Everything can become a seed of eternity.

Perhaps the great problem of our age is not that we suffer too much.

Perhaps it is that we have forgotten what suffering can accomplish when it is united to Christ.

To carry the cross does not mean to seek pain.

It means to walk with Christ along the path that leads to holiness.

It means to trust when we do not understand.

It means to love when it is difficult.

It means to remain faithful when the world invites us to abandon the way.

And it means remembering that behind every Good Friday there always awaits the glorious light of Easter.

Because the cross is not the end of the journey.



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The cross is the bridge that leads to the Resurrection.