

Week Four/Day Six: *Jesus and Love of the Cross*

1. **Place yourself in God's presence.**
2. **Ask for the grace that you seek in this meditation:** *knowledge of Jesus Christ so as to love Him more deeply and serve Him with greater fidelity.*
3. **Today's Meditation:**

"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." (Heb 12:1-2)

When asked whether the demons who oppressed him or the people who persecuted him caused him misery and distress, St. John Marie Vianney said, "It is the cross which gives peace to the world; it is the cross which ought to bring peace to our hearts. All our miseries come of our not loving the cross. It is the fear of crosses which gives weight to the cross."

But why the cross? The Saint answers, "nothing so likens us to our Lord as the bearing of his cross."

If we want to love Christ, to imitate Him, and to serve Him better we must acquire a love of the cross. It was the cross that Christ longed for his entire earthly life. He longed for it, not because of the suffering He would endure on it, but because of the profundity of the love He would make manifest on it. And in a certain sense, we can also say, that Mary likewise, did not love the cross for the cross's sake alone, but because of what hung from the cross, her Beloved Son and Savior.

The cross is made light when it is born with love. This is what Jesus and Mary both teach us.

But, as Thomas A. Kempis writes in the *Imitation of Christ*, "Jesus has always many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who bear His cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who care for trial. He finds many to share His table, but few to take part in His fasting. All desire to be happy with Him; few wish to suffer anything for Him. Many follow Him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion. Many revere His miracles; few approach the shame of the Cross. Many love Him as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless Him as long as they receive some comfort from Him. But if Jesus hides Himself and leaves them for a while, they fall either into complaints or into deep dejection. Those, on the contrary, who love Him for His own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless Him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. Even if He should never give them consolation, yet they would continue to praise Him and wish always to give Him thanks. What power there is in pure love for Jesus—love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!"

This is what love of the cross gives us—true love for Jesus Christ and not self-seeking love. It gives us the freedom to love of Christ, as it was on the Cross that Jesus freely revealed His love to us.

Even more, we should heed these words from Kempis and meditate on them well:

“To many the saying, *Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me,*²⁰ seems hard, but it will be much harder to hear that final word: *Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*²¹ Those who hear the word of the cross and follow it willingly now, need not fear that they will hear of eternal damnation on the day of judgment. This sign of the cross will be in the heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the cross, who during life made themselves one with the Crucified, will draw near with great trust to Christ, the judge.

Why, then, do you fear to take up the cross when through it you can win a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is highest virtue, in the cross is perfect holiness. There is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross.

Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. He Himself opened the way before you in carrying His cross, and upon it He died for you, that you, too, might take up your cross and long to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you shall also share His glory.”

Questions to help guide your meditation:

Do I fear the cross? Do I avoid the crosses that Jesus sends to me? Do I seek a Jesus who only gives me consolation? What is/are the cross(es) in my life that I need to learn to carry with love? Do I recognize that the crosses that Jesus sends me are tokens of His love towards me? How can Mary's example help me in loving my cross?

- Today's Prayer -

O Jesus living in Mary, come and live in your servant in the Spirit of your holiness, in the fullness of your gifts, in the perfection of your ways, in the truth of your virtues, in the communion of your mysteries. Subdue within me the power of flesh and demon by you Holy Spirit, for the glory of God the Father. Amen.