

Charity's Cruciform Aspect

Sermon: September 20 2026

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Brethren, I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.

*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

Dearest friends, the heart of the Gospel is the Holy Cross, and it was made so by the Most Holy Trinity in the ancient mists of the creation of the world. For, as St. Peter would have it, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but manifested in the last times for you. To which St. Thomas Aquinas echoes back:

*By His eternal will, God the Father preordained the Passion of Christ for the deliverance of
the human race.*

Friends, it is simply beyond the powers of the human mind to fathom the depths of the care with which the Triune God ordained, then orchestrated, the redemption of mankind and the salvation of those who would repent and believe the Gospel.

It is for this reason that St. Irenaeus could hail the cruciform shape of the world:

*The Son of God was also crucified in the dimensions of the world, imprinted in the form of a
Cross on the universe; for He had necessarily, in becoming visible, to bring to light the
universality of His Cross.*

*If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

But, friends, even though God has cast the world in the form of a Cross, men have incessantly mocked the world's cruciform reality, allowing the creation's nascent form to become an occasion of scandal.

*We preach Christ crucified, the Apostle says:
unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block,
and unto the Gentiles foolishness.*

But, dear friends, this ought not to surprise the honest Catholic. For when we approach day's end to perform our examen, when we, of all men, are made most aware of the necessity of the Cross, do we not find ourselves, often enough, if not regularly, resisting the confession of the very things in our lives which reveal the necessity of the world's cruciform aspect?

*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

When we review the course of the day, how often do we find that we have actively staved off the recognition of the blinding impact of our exaggerated opinion of ourselves—opinions which impede our ability to recognize the particular sins for which God is making us suffer and make satisfaction in this life?

When we review the course of the day, how often do we find that we have deliberately magnified the role that the sins and weaknesses of others have played in our suffering? And we do that even as we willfully ignore the fact that our own personal sins, recognized or not, are the true causes of our suffering.

In the midst of our daily examen, how often have we been reminded that, by complaint or sourness of mood, we have failed to carry our cross well? Oh, that we would be brought to tears when Our Lord opens our eyes to the many opportunities we have missed to embrace our cruciform life with a measure of joy. Oh, how deeply should we mourn the loss of each of these easy opportunities to lessen the suffering that we will be made to endure in the purging fire to come.

*He that loveth his life shall lose it;
and he that hateth his life in this world
keepeth it unto life eternal.*

Friends, my dear friends, the world has been made cruciform by eternal decree, and so too the way of salvation. The Cross is not one among many features of the world. The Cross is the central event of human history. The Cross is the axis of the Gospel. The Cross recapitulates Adam's fall. And the Cross is the world's ransom price. The Cross is the glory of the Holy Roman and Apostolic Church. And the Cross remains the only road into life everlasting.

As St. John Chrysostom and St. Cyril of Jerusalem preached:

The glory of the Cross led those who were blind through ignorance into light, loosed all who were held fast by sin, and ransomed the whole world of mankind.

The Cross is the wood which lifts us up and makes us great. The Cross has uprooted us from the depths of evil and elevated us to the summit of virtue.

And it is for this reason that St. Paul cries out from his Roman prison:

Brethren, I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you were called.

My dearest friends, how long will you resist the cruciform shape of the world, the cruciform shape of the Gospel? How long will you resist the cruciform aspect of your own Catholic life?

You were born into a cross and saved by a Cross, so that you might follow the pattern of the Blessed Virgin and live your life at the foot of and upon the Cross; so that you might live a life worthy of the vocation in which you are called, a life that is worthy of the Holy Cross.

So, on this Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, and in the shadow of the third installment of our mini-catechesis on the Seven Sorrows and the Holy Cross, as you come to receive upon your tongues and in your persons the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I entreat you to beg of Our Lady, the Virgin Mother of our selfsame Lord, to grant you the grace faithfully to live your cruciform life, saying:

Obtain for me this grace, O Virgin Mother, who didst see Thy Son suffer and didst suffer with Him: that I, when I suffer, may associate my sufferings with His and with thine; and that through His Passion, and thy merits and those of all Saints, they may be a satisfaction for my sins and procure for me eternal life.

And of her Son, to secure for you the graces to love Him as He has loved you, saying:

O most tender and gentle Lord Jesus, when will my heart have a portion of Thy perfections? When will my hard and stony heart, my proud heart, my unbelieving, my impure heart, my narrow, selfish heart, be melted and conformed to Thine? O teach me so to contemplate Thee that I may become like Thee, and to love Thee sincerely and simply as Thou hast loved me. Who liveth and reigneth with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

*Grant, O Lord,
that I might always and only glory
in the Cross of Jesus Christ;
Charity's cruciform aspect.*

*St. Helena, pray for us.
Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*