

# Men of the Cross

Sermon September 27 2026

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child,  
I understood as a child, I thought as a child.*

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

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

*How few receive with cordial faith  
the tidings which we bring!  
How few have seen the arm revealed  
of heaven's eternal King!*

*The Saviour comes! No outward pomp  
bespeaks His presence nigh;  
no earthly beauty shines in Him  
to draw the carnal eye.*

*Fair as a beauteous tender flower  
amidst the desert grows,  
so, slighted by a rebel race,  
the heavenly Saviour rose.*

*Rejected and despised of men,  
behold a Man of Woe!  
Grief was His close companion still  
through all His life below.*

*Yet all the griefs He felt were ours,  
ours were the woes He bore;  
pangs not His own His spotless soul  
with bitter anguish tore.*

*We held Him as condemned by Heaven,  
an outcast from His God,  
while for our sins He groaned, He bled,  
beneath His Father's rod.*

*His sacred Blood hath washed our souls  
from sin's polluted stain;  
His stripes have healed us, and His death  
revived our souls again.<sup>1</sup>*

Dear friends, when the Fathers, Doctors, saints, and mystics of our holy religion speak of the Holy Cross, the prophet Isaiah's foretelling of the life, Passion, and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ is what they have firmly fixed in their minds.

*Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.*

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<sup>1</sup> An 18th century Scottish rendition in verse (Isaiah 53).

And when those selfsame Fathers, Doctors, saints, and mystics speak of the way of salvation open for us, it is to the Evangelists' eyewitness accounts of the life, Passion, and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ—Isaiah's prophetic vision realized—that they turn their eyes before offering their counsel. And this is as it should be, because Our Blessed Lord Himself taught the same doctrine:

*It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,  
and the servant as his lord.*

Friends, this is the reason that we can safely assert that St. Thomas is simply repeating Our Lord's doctrine concerning the life of grace when he writes:

*Why did the Son of God have to suffer for us? There was a great need, and it can be considered in a twofold way: in the first place, as a remedy for sin, and secondly, as an example of how to act. We know that the Cross is a remedy, for in the face of all the evils which we incur on account of our sins, we have found relief through the Passion of Christ. Yet the Cross is no less an example, for the Passion of Christ completely suffices to fashion our lives. Whoever wishes, therefore, to live perfectly should do nothing but disdain what Christ disdained on the Cross, and desire what He desired; for the Cross exemplifies every virtue.*

And St. Thomas is not a solitary witness to this fundamental truth—to the fundamental truth that to follow after Christ is, by its very nature, to carry the Cross after Him. As such, St. Bonaventure, Pope St. Leo the Great, and the spiritual master Thomas à Kempis all teach one and the same doctrine regarding the Christian life:

*Christ was prepared to restore fallen humanity by the most fitting means, the Cross and Passion, to give us a perfect example of virtue.*

*Our acceptance of the Cross is the end and crown of all imitation of Christ. The Cross is the summit of virtue.*

*The Cross of Christ is both a mystery and an example: a sacrament whereby the divine power takes effect; an example whereby man's devotion is excited.*

*The taking up of the Cross means the slaying of lusts, the killing of vices, the turning away from vanity.*

*If thou wilt reign with Me, bear the Cross with Me; for only the servants of the Cross find the way of blessedness and of true light.*

Friends, listen carefully to that last statement: only the servants of the Cross find the way of blessedness and of true light. Put another way, the Cross of Christ only saves those who take up and carry their own crosses in this life.

*He who flees from the Cross and self-denial in order to preserve his soul in this life shall lose his soul in the life to come.*

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child,  
I understood as a child, I thought as a child.*

But, friends, many a Catholic is ensnared by the deceit that, if they simply avoid the big sins, then they will be all right. You know, the big sins: adultery, fornication or whore-mongering, drunkenness, effeminacy and extortion, idolatry, lying with mankind and murder, witchcrafts and sorcery.

They say to themselves, "If I only dabble in a bit of foolish talk, dress immodestly on occasion, and throw in a little white lie now and then, then I will be okay."

But, friends, let us not deceive ourselves. The narrow gate is narrower than all that. Only those found bearing the Cross well may enter it. And as St. Leo teaches, and Fr. Scupoli echoes:

*The taking up of the Cross means the slaying of lust, the killing of vices, the turning away from vanity, and the renunciation of all error.*

*Let him take up his cross and follow Me. Whether threats or caresses, or whatever hindrances there be, if thou wish to follow, turn them into thy cross; bear it, carry it, and do not give way beneath it.*

*True spirituality seeks for God's sake that which is distasteful, rather than that which is delectable, and inclines itself rather to suffering than to consolation. The other is perchance to seek oneself in God, which is clean contrary to love.*

*It consists not in exercises which are pleasing to us and conformable to our nature, but in such only as nail that nature, with all its works, to the Cross.*

*Any spirituality that would fain walk in sweetness and with ease, and flees from the imitation of Christ, is worthless. So St. John of the Cross says.*

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child,  
I understood as a child, I thought as a child.  
But when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Friends, the Cross is the decisive event in every man's life. It will either become the birthplace of a saving humility or the burial ground of a damning hubris. The Cross either makes a man, or it breaks him. The Cross takes the weak men of this world and makes them strong.

Friends, the time of manhood is upon us. The time has come for us to consecrate ourselves as altars to the Lord, to offer all that we are and have on the same as holocaust, sacrificial victims. Evening is upon us. Let us therefore sacrifice the best of what remains, as an odor of sweetness to the Lord, in the sight of the children of modernity.

The time for fussing and whining has passed. So too has the time of complaints and murmurings. So the question is simple: will we remain as children, seeking vainly to satisfy our restless desire for the eternal God with things that will be consumed in the fire? Or will we finally allow Our Lord to impose the cruciform character of His own life upon us, and make us men of the Cross?

And with this call ringing in your ears, as you come to receive upon your tongues and in your persons the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ on this Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, as we commemorate Saints Cosmas and Damian and bring our mini-catechesis on Our Lady's Seven Sorrows and the Holy Cross of her Divine Son to a close, I implore you to beg our Heavenly Father to give you the grace to disdain what Christ disdained on the Cross and to desire what He desired; to give you the grace to become a man of the Cross, so that He will confirm you unto the end in the great and terrible day of the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, saying:

*Let the exercise of Thy compassion, we beseech Thee, O Lord, direct our hearts; for without Thee we are not able to please Thee.*

*Grant, we beseech Thee, O Almighty God, that we who celebrate the feast day of Thy holy Martyrs Cosmas and Damian may, by their intercession, be delivered from all dangers that threaten us. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.*

*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.*