

Good Friday Mediation
At Stations of the Cross
April 19, 2019
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

The Cross

Take up your cross and follow me.

From the earliest of times, when people could openly and legally do so, Christians made pilgrimages to the Holy City of Jerusalem. One of the most moving things to do there is to walk the walk that Jesus walked from the courtyard of the Antonia Fortress where he was put on trial before Pontius Pilate, to the hill called a Place of the Skull, Golgotha, where he was crucified and died on the cross for you and me. Many could not make the journey whether for monetary reasons or health, and so it became the custom to substitute a pilgrimage of the way of the cross in the local parish church in which all could participate. Hence the Stations of the Cross were created which we do this night.

Crux est Mundi Medicina: The Cross is the medicine of life/the world. This is the motto which is carved into the stone over the entrance to the mother-house monastery of our Episcopal Benedictine Order, the Order of the Holy Cross.

Crux est Mundi Medicina: The cross is the medicine by which the world is healed. It is the medicine to heal you and me. It drives out the cancer of sin and darkness. It drives out the heavy burdens of guilt and anxiety of the heart and the mind and the soul. The cross is the invisible sign on your forehead, made there with the Holy Oil blessed by your Bishop and signed there by the priest who did your Baptism, made visible once a year on Ash Wednesday as the ashes are rubbed on your forehead. It is the sign that makes your life tender and currency for all indebtedness to God. If you remember when Jesus was asked whether they should pay taxes, he asked for a coin of the realm. Then he asked them whose image was on the coin? They replied, Caesar's. Then he said, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God, the things that are God's. God's image is on you. You belong to God, and to God you will return. This is the desire of God's loving heart. The cross is the bridge from you to the loving God who desires you deeply to come back to God. God so loves you, that God gave God's life on the cross today, that in your faith and belief, you might not perish, but have eternal life with God and not

be destroyed by the forces of darkness, alienation, separation and death. The cross is a symbol and ever-present reminder of this every time we gaze upon it.

Where you there when they crucified my Lord? Yes. I was there and am there. I too hide in shame and fear for my betrayals of my promises which have caused our beloved Jesus to suffer on the cross. His goodness shines a light onto my own darkness. His love lifts me out of the valley of the shadow of death, and allows me to move on. His rod and staff comforting me along the way.

The empty cross. It is full of meaning. It is a goal to walk toward. It is a symbol to walk through life with. It is the focal point of our faith: both the agony of defeat and the thrill and joy of victory of which we will sing and experience in three days.

The empty cross. I wear an empty cross of ebony, of little value in this world, but of infinite value to me. It is a reminder to me That God walks with me ever where I go. The hymn text [by Anne Murray] lovingly reminds me...

“I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses

And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

He speaks and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing

I'd stay in the garden with Him
'Tho the night around me be falling
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe
His voice to me is calling...”

Lift high the cross... I witness our Acolytes doing that. The hymn in our hymnal that stirs and moves us has much meaning today:

Lift high the cross
The love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world
Adore His sacred name.

Led on their way
By this triumphant sign,
The hosts of God
In conquering ranks combine.

Refrain:
Lift high the cross
The love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world
Adore His sacred name.

Each newborn servant
Of the Crucified
Bears on the brow
The seal of Him who died.

Refrain:
Lift high the cross
The love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world
Adore His sacred name.

O Lord, once lifted
On the glorious tree,
As Thou hast promised
Draw the world to Thee.

Refrain:
Lift high the cross
The love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world
Adore His sacred name.

So shall our song
Of triumph ever be:
Praise to the Crucified
For victory.

Refrain:

Lift high the cross
The love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world
Adore His sacred name...

The Cross. Empty yet full. The arms of God outstretched to embrace us. The arms of God outstretched to forgive us. The arms of God reached out in love to me and to you. Personally.

Take up your cross and follow me. I don't know how to love him in the words of Mary of Magdala in the Rock Opera, Jesus Christ Superstar. But Jesus did tell us how to love him as he loves us. At the Last Supper: Love one another as I have loved you. And I would add, and take up your cross and follow me. I am still working on getting that one right. AMEN