



Diocese of Rockville Centre New Evangelization

"... the Church needs genuine witnesses for the new evangelization: men and women whose lives have been transformed by meeting with Jesus, men and women who are capable of communicating this experience to others. The Church needs saints. All are called to holiness, and holy people alone can renew humanity."

*Pope John Paul II
August 2004*

Volume II, Issue X

Theme: The Cross

March 2008

ENCOUNTER: With The Lord Jesus

Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, (and) come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

Matthew 27: 38-44

For your reflection:

- I. Those around the cross encounter Jesus on the cross. They not only see a man on a cross; they are forced to encounter Him and the meaning of his cross. To them, this encounter provoked a deep reaction of scorn and ridicule. What sentiments does the cross provoke in you?
- II. The cross is often worn today as a piece of jewelry. Some even wear it as they mock all that the Cross stands for. Why do you wear or carry a cross on your person?
- III. The cross is often ridiculed and misunderstood when it is first encountered. When it is understood, it is referred to as the tree of life. How has your encounter with Jesus on the cross led to life for you?

CONVERSION: To The Way Of The Lord

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2: 13-18

For your reflection:

- I. These verses highlight the divisions that is a consequence of sin. The cross of Jesus reconciles all divisions and heals all the effects of sin. What have been the effects of humanity's sinful condition in the lives of those you know and love?
- II. Acknowledging the effects of sin, how is the cross of Christ able to move people to conversion?
- III. Christ's cross led to reconciliation and peace between God and all humanity. How might we share in His Cross so as to be agents of peace and reconciliation?



EUCCHARIST: "I Am Not Worthy To Receive You"

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2: 5-11

For your reflection:

- I. This hymn contains the fullness of the Eucharistic mystery. The root of the life giving attitude of Christ is His acceptance of the cross. When you receive Holy communion, do you do so with this same attitude which Jesus demonstrated in His entire life?
- II. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to death; death on a cross. This death offers the fullness of life. When you receive Holy Communion, do you do so with such humility and obedience?
- III. "... at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, ..." - Before such a great sacrifice, we need to bow low. After you receive Holy Communion, do you promise Jesus that you will bow low with your life by being lifted up on the cross with Him?

HOLINESS: "So Be Perfect As Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect"

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

Matthew 16: 24-26a

For your reflection:

- I. Jesus connects holiness ("come after me") with taking up the cross. Do you make the same connection?
- II. Society preaches the religion of the "self" and its fulfillment achieved by absolute freedom. Yet holiness is attained through a life of denial, the cross, and faithful discipleship. Do we follow the religion of 21st century American life or the holiness preached by Jesus?
- III. Have your Lenten resolutions and acts of denial helped to make you a more free, and therefore, holier person?

MISSION: "You Are Witnesses Of These Things"

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1: 17-18

For your reflection:

- I. As Paul sets out to explain his missions, he immediately refers to the Cross. What does this indicate to us about our own priorities in mission?
- II. Why is the Cross understood to confound human wisdom?
- III. Paul is not embarrassed by the Cross of Christ but instead, he is inspired by it. What do you proclaim to others every time you make the sign of the Cross?



New Evangelization Guide
is published monthly
and is available on:
www.dvc.org/newevangelization.html

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