

Triumph of the Cross

September 14

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

All powerful and ever living God, in the plan of your wisdom you chose to save us by perfect self giving love of your crucifixion. This day we give glory to your cross, for through it, we come to know the promise of our salvation, our life and our resurrection. Amen.

Scripture

“So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull ... There, they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.”
(John 19: 16-18)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

The cross, the cruel instrument of Jesus’ death, represents the burden that Jesus carried and the weight under which he stumbled. The cross reminds us that sometimes we are overburdened and stumble. Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross, Jesus assures us that he will help us with our burdens. As we gaze upon the cross, this program will help us realize the cross was at the heart of Jesus’ mission to reveal the love God has for each one of us. It will remind us that we are also here to help lift each other’s burdens.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

The crucifixion of our Lord is an overpowering saga of grief, pain and loss. The events that lead up to the crucifixion are also harsh and brutal. It appears that all hopes found in Christ’s message would be lost as he hung on the cross. When looking at the gospel accounts of Jesus, we see that no matter how his ministry is portrayed and what each gospel writer wished to tell us about who Jesus was, all leads to the moment of the crucifixion. In this event we are faced with the paradox of God’s complete and total love for humanity. How can the innocent receive the death sentence of a criminal? How can such a bloody death bring about salvation? How can our God be so easily apprehended and murdered? The answers to these questions, the sufferings of Jesus, and the glory of his resurrection are inseparably joined in the Paschal Mystery. Consequently, the cross only makes sense when it is seen in the light of Jesus’ obedient love, resulting in his reunion with the Father and Spirit in the resurrection.

The reality is that through the cross we come to understand Jesus’ suffering. Ultimately the way of the cross becomes a way of looking at life that gives meaning to everything we struggle with, either individually or in society. Reclaiming the triumph of the cross is reclaiming a long tradition that captures the love of God who embraced the pain of humanity...and walked through the gates of death to show us how to love, how to forgive and how to return to our Father.

“The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the ‘one mediator between God and men.’ But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, ... he calls his disciples to take up their cross and follow him.” *(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #618)*

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What meaning does the crucifixion have?
2. How can the cross be tragic and triumphant at the same time?
3. What effect does meditating on the cross have in the life of Serrans?

Closing Reflection

The Cross of Christ is the true signpost to the meaning of life's journey. Hanging on it, Jesus showed us how to abandon ourselves to God. This stumbling block of murder and redemption offers us the image of courage and hope in difficult times. Whenever we are in great pain, we have the assurance that through each daily death comes more life if we abandon our hearts to God.

Bibliography

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Mossi, S.J. John. *Prayers From The Cross*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994.

Thiede, Carsten Peter & Matthew d'Ancona. *The Quest For the Cross (as seen on the Discovery Channel)*. USA: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000.