

The mystery of the cross, the revelation of God. The mystery of the cross, a Christian way of life.

The madness of the cross is only conceivable and intellectually or emotionally acceptable if one tries to open oneself to the mystery of the relationship between Christ and God.

Christ's Passion and his death on the cross, as the culmination of all the actions of his life, manifest this relationship as that of the Son and the Servant. Son, in a freedom of trust towards God who sends him and whom he calls Father, and Servant, in an active obedience that does not fear the work to be done, Christ reveals with his whole life God's plan for our humanity. Moreover, he makes perceptible, intelligible, to what extent God is committed, in him, to our humanity. In the mystery of the Incarnation, Christ reveals God's humanity. Christ's death on the cross is nothing other than the logical-and at the same time graceful- completion of the Incarnation, the way in which God takes full charge of our humanity, even to its extreme test. The Gospel of John and the letters of Paul invite us to believe that the moment of the cross is the moment when the glory of the Son, and of the Servant, is finally revealed, which is none other than the glory of God himself.

Paul never stopped proclaiming Christ, and Christ crucified. At the same time he speaks of him as a new man, a new creation. This means that Christ's act on the cross must also be understood as an act of God himself, who reveals himself there decisively as Creator. Unlike creation at the beginning of Scripture, the moment of the cross reveals how God "creates something new on earth", in an act that nothing can counteract. We have read in the Letters to the Romans and to the Philippians that what is sustained and seen at the moment of the cross is God's fidelity to himself and to our humanity. To himself, in the act of creation, which reveals him as the giver of the power of life; to our humanity, in the justice of reconciliation despite our sin; in the design of the covenant with us held against all; and, finally, victorious over all evil and all injustice.

The mystery of the Cross also has a consoling dimension, as the Letter to the Hebrews testifies. Through the freedom of Christ, Son and Servant to the end of the Cross, God reveals himself as eminently comforter for all men and women.

The mystery of the cross, a Christian lifestyle. It is easy to hear, in Paul's concerns for Christian communities, how much the mystery of the cross contributes to the building of these communities. They are the body of Christ, the family of God; through the blood of Christ the wall of hatred has been broken down, reconciliation and peace have been achieved; and above all, the Church appears as the place of concrete action, of the manifestation of love that witnesses to the gesture of Christ on the cross. Thus proposed as the founder of the Church, the event of the cross opens the reading of the Scriptures, introduces the understanding and acceptance of the divine word of promise, and offers access to the presence of God.

A new regime is opened "once and for all" by the event of the cross for all those who are linked to the following of Christ, in his life and even in his death. If the Synoptic Gospels invite us to take up our cross in following him, the Pauline letters explain the freedom of the Christian who consents to be co-crucified with him. Following in his footsteps, allowing himself to be conformed to the logic of his life and death, the Christian experiences suffering, humiliation and failure in a different way. He receives the strength to bear them, and to stand firm in the trials. The attachment to the crucified Christ makes him sensitive and in solidarity with all the little ones, with all the crucified of our history. The way of the Crucified One, which becomes his way through the faith that He gives him, opens him up to an incomparable freedom, to an availability, and, paradoxically, makes him see that he is predestined to glory.

The style of Christian life is marked by attachment to the crucified Christ, in his ways of being and acting, and in the paths he has traveled; but also in the intimacy of the relationship with Christ, and in openness

in the relationship with others. Looking at the cross, contemplating Christ on the cross, both in moments of prayer and in the choices that guide our history, reinforces this intimacy that has the name of faith and that brings deep joy. The proclamation of the Gospel is nothing other than the proclamation of the mystery of the cross - as we do in every Eucharist - and therefore presupposes techniques of communication whose wisdom and effectiveness are beyond all forms of rhetoric in speech. Based on the "word of the cross", evangelization will courageously offer a critical judgment on the realities of our world, discerning what it really maintains of what is destined to disappear.

The Christian life is discreetly characterized by two habits that may seem trivial. Christians always open their prayers and celebrations with the sign of the cross, to which a Trinitarian confession is linked. In all Christian churches, the gaze is directed towards the cross from the moment of entry. Through these simple things, the mystery of the cross finds its true place and its rightful place in our lives. The old poem says it well: "On the paths where we endeavour, / how good it is, Lord, / to find your cross. / On the peaks we seek / we know, Lord, / we will find your Cross / and, when we finally see you, / in your clarity, Lord, / we will understand your Cross." Louis Aragon.

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