

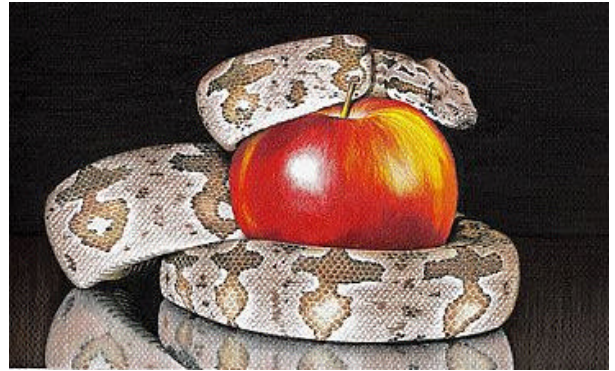
Good Friday 2008

LESSON: The Mystery of the Cross

The history of salvation began with a breakdown of **trust**.

That's what original sin was.

- ✍ The devil tempted Adam and Eve by making them **suspicious** of God.
- ✍ He **undermined** their trust in God: "Did God really tell you that you couldn't eat the fruit of these trees? You won't really die if you eat it..."
- ✍ When they stopped trusting in God, their relationship with God was shattered. The human race was cut off from its source of happiness.
- ✍ From that moment on, we needed a Savior. We needed someone who could reestablish communion between the human race and God.



That was Jesus' mission.

- ✍ Christ's cross has **rebuilt** that shattered trust.
- ✍ Christ's cross is a **bridge of trust** that makes it possible for us to return to communion with God, the source of our happiness.
- ✍ On the cross, Christ is trusting his Father **for us, in our place**. He is reversing Adam's lack of trust.



That's what the **mystery of the cross** is all about.

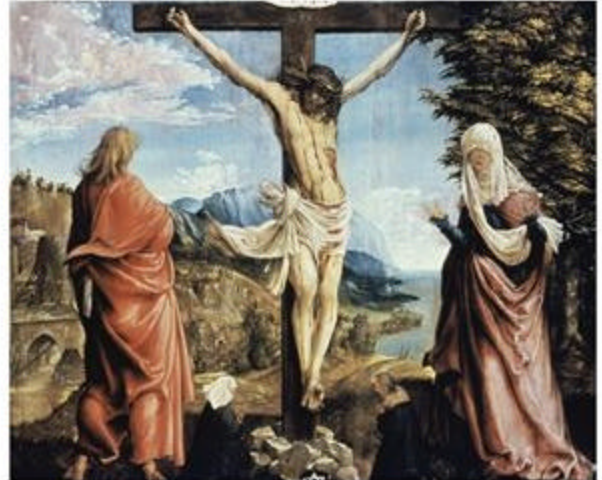
- ✍ Jesus willingly came down to our level. He willingly allowed himself to suffer, to be subject to the power of evil and the devil.
- ✍ And when evil made it **hard for him to obey** the Father's will, just as the devil had made it hard for Adam and Eve to obey the Father's will, Jesus **continued to trust**.
- ✍ He continued to trust and obey, in spite of the indescribable suffering he experienced.
- ✍ As the letter to the Hebrews expressed it: "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered..."

Christ's limitless trust in God rebuilt the bridge between us and God that Adam's lack of trust had destroyed.

That's what we mean when we say that Christ saved us by dying on the cross.

Illustration: Mary at the cross

In the Passion of John, we are offered, among others, the image of Mary and John (the beloved disciple) at the cross – and it becomes an image of the pilgrim Church.

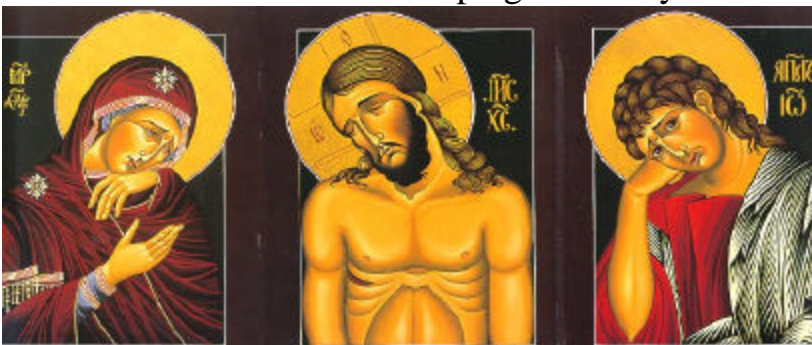


Mary is the model of discipleship in her total availability to the will of God.

- ✂ She had no business of her own.
- ✂ To the angel's announcement, she says "Let it be done according to your word."
- ✂ She has given herself totally over to God – and yet she is dependant upon others here on earth – upon Joseph her husband – and now upon John – to whom Jesus entrusts her.
- ✂ At Jesus' conception, she was alone – but God told Joseph "have no fear of taking Mary, your wife, into your home."
- ✂ Now, at the cross, Mary is alone again – and again God intervenes and provides her with comfort: "Behold, your mother.' And from that hour he took her into his home."
- ✂ In Mary's discipleship – in her being totally available to God – she is also totally dependant upon God's providing for her needs.

This is how Mary teaches us to be true disciples of Christ

- ✂ true availability to God overcomes any fear of being dependent on others, because God always provides.
- ✂ Our determination to be independent by being in control (an idea so prevalent in our culture and world today) is what makes us totally unavailable to God – rather than trusting God.
- ✂ Availability is letting God have His way, even when it brings us to the cross.
- ✂ For those who are available to God, our very lives are at His disposal – and so, Mary, "at the cross her station keeping" is totally available to God even "to the last."



Weeping at the cross, Mary is both the Mother of Sorrows (a heart which loves so much broken in anguish) and the Mother of Hope (because in her availability, she knows God will take care of her – and us!). This is the key to true Christian discipleship. Here at the cross, in Mary and

in John, we come to know that we are capable to total surrender – of love so deep that it surrenders itself into God’s hands.

It is the cross that binds John to Mary, and binds all of us as Christians to one another in a mutual gift of self. Christ is THE gift, and Christ enables us to give the gift of ourselves – which is ultimately the gift of Christ.

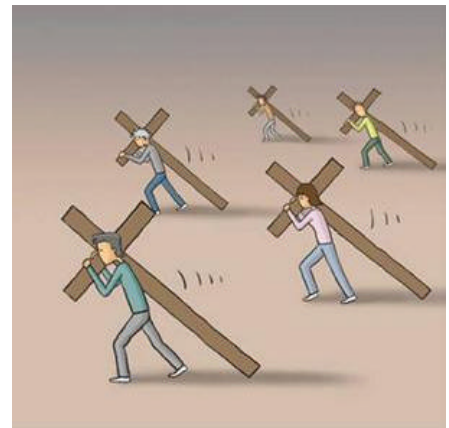
Mary’s presence at the cross, Mary’s last recorded words in Scripture tell us how to be Christ’s disciples:

1. be available – place yourself totally in God’s hands – it may bring great sorrow, but be filled with hope and trust.
2. “Do whatever He tells you.” Whoever wishes to be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me.

APPLICATION: Embracing Our Crosses

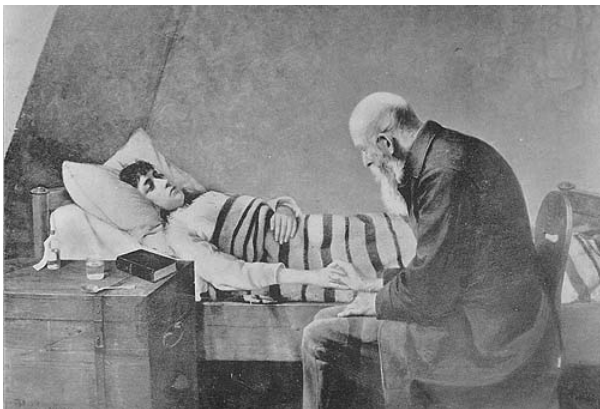
Christ's cross shows his limitless trust in his Father's will, which reveals his limitless and unconditional love for each one of us.

- ✍ This is why we kiss the cross today.
- ✍ That is why it teaches us how to bear **our** crosses.
- ✍ **His** total trust in the Father makes possible **our** total trust in the Father.



Our crosses are intersections of wills. When our natural preferences **contradict** what God asks or permits, we are faced with a personal cross.

For example, God permits a sickness to come upon me.



- ✍ My initial reaction, my natural preference, is that I would rather be healthy.
- ✍ But God has permitted me to become sick.
- ✍ That is an **intersection of wills** - God's will is going in one direction, and mine is going in another direction.
- ✍ If in that moment, I **turn to Christ's cross**, he reminds me, through his example and through that supreme expression of God's love for me,

that God is trustworthy.

- ✍ In Christ's cross, then, I can find the strength to trust that God knows what he's doing, and I embrace my cross.

Every cross is a chance to do that, to **exercise** our trust in God and thereby to rebuild the relationship that sin has ruptured.

This is why God **sends and permits** crosses in our lives.

He wants us to **rehabilitate** our trust in him, to follow in Christ's trusting footsteps, so that we can deepen our communion with him and experience the fullness of life that comes from that communion.

Today, as the Church **reminds** us of the intensity of Christ's suffering, which symbolizes the intensity of his love, let's **renew our trust in God**.

Let's **ask** him for the strength we need **to embrace our crosses**, just as Christ embraced his, out of love, and as a way to exercise and strengthen our trust in God, which still has plenty of room for growth.

