

COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO

*Our life -
Our Works*

Digital Spiritual Letter 09/2019

Theme:

Discussing the Meaning of the Cross of Christ

SEAT IN LIFE

Beginning of January 1993 there was a heated discussion on the Dutch television. The topic was the indispensability of the death on the cross for the salvation of men. Was it necessary and why?



It was always a concrete event, an article in the press, an encounter with someone and this time a TV program that gave Mother Marie Therese the idea for a reflection and that shortly thereafter and induced by the Holy Spirit she wrote down. On 26 January 1993 she wrote the following text:

Karl-Heinz Haus
Superior General

THE REFLECTION OF MOTHER MARIE THERESE



Purely by chance I heard a discussion about the meaning of the Cross of Christ on Dutch television. Religious-minded people vehemently debated about God who – out of love for mankind – permitted his only Son to suffer death. Not even the protestant minister seemed very convincing in pointing out that this death had a case history in which the whole creation was involved. Not a single word was to be heard about love, nor had anyone discovered the meaning of the Cross.

The discussion grew more and more heated until a heckler, a middle-aged woman, almost spitefully shouted: “Christ needn’t have died for me. I find such a demonstration macabre.” Most of those present wholeheartedly agreed with her and felt they had no part in the guilt. The statement: “God could have saved the world without the Cross,” was fully supported by those present.

Regarding the sufferings of Christ controversial conflicts arise time and again. In our time the Cross has increasingly been betrayed. It reveals the love of God and the position of man. Indeed it says to man: “Since I died 2000 years ago, you have been my honour and glory. You are no longer the contemptible nothing but my companion.”

All that has been discarded. Modern man neither believes in God in the meeting with Christ nor does he admit his own weakness and inability.

In the resurrection and ascension of Jesus love gloriously reveals itself in the salvation of mankind. But can that be the case without a confrontation with the Cross? A light has risen above our darkness dispelling all doubt and uncertainty: This is our salvation.

As the foundress of the Communio in Christo I can see more and more clearly why it was the Cross in particular that I wanted to make the centre of my community. To begin with I had no idea of the binding consequences, neither was there the slightest indication of a necessity to experience suffering. Today the salvation of all is a fact that is evident in my calling

and discernable in my life. God has revealed it to me and it encourages the Church in her message of hope.

If you see only the one side of the Cross, regardless of the love it involves, you will certainly fall into the sin of pride and malice. Such a person cannot accept the preaching of salvation because he fails to see the necessity of self-accusation.

When God received my Fiat, I found myself – with my volition and my talents – torn between my own impotence and the certainty of my salvation. At that point I was offered something great: the imitation of Jesus in utmost consistency including the ultimate amalgamation with his Cross.

It is a supernatural way because it is an ordination to total dedication. Eternal bliss is the aim, the dignity of man.

My attending physician once remarked in view of my unbearable sufferings: “More and more I discover the meaning of your suffering...” The sufferings eventually led to a deep insight into the Cross of Christ.

I heard God calling me and followed

I want to free the world from its degradation and the delusion that things will straighten themselves out. Our ties to God have been torn through our guilt and will not be restored unless we take action. Without regard to the Cross a person will be unable to accept his salvation. It was especially through the Cross of Christ that I came to know of the calling to a holy life, of the service to God. The decisive struggles I have to go through are the conditions I met with as a consequence of this vocation. My vocation is the tool of the crucifixion of Christ, the sign of the genuineness of my vocation as the foundress of the *Communio in Christo*. I heard my name called out and responded. I heard the call from another world. I heard God calling me and followed, so that this world, so poor and hungry, may take up this call and be led back to the faith once again. For our world is poor in love. Mankind separated from love and satisfied its sinfulness with persecution, dissipation and fraternal hate.

We Christians are on pilgrimage to blessedness alternating between persecution and beatification. We no longer feel sure and secure because love is not the only commandment anymore. Now more than ever, when everything seems so hopelessly confused and bogged down, when every move seems to end in a blind alley, we are confronted with the meaning of the many sufferings. It would be so easy to discover the Cross of Christ and to fathom its history in order to accept the sufferings of this world and to think of the future. The kingdom



of God has been promised to us. God has become everything to us. Christ has redeemed the world. He has made us just before God.

In these times of doubt and despair a foundation took place. God has become everything to us. The name alone reveals the extraordinary. Our time experiences opposition and hostility against God as never before in the history of the Church. The good that has been born in today's world is criticized and rejected. The many afflictions, epidemics and persecutions force us into action. We need to speak with one another.

The spirit of God becomes very powerful in a vocation. An elected person pursues his - or her - purpose with determination; consequently people see in his or her works an imminent danger. Such a person, however, wishes to bear witness to God. He has personally experienced God's glowing love and recognized the Redeemer whose love he valued so highly that – out of gratitude towards God – he dedicated his whole existence to the fellow-being in need.

None of his already existing or projected institutions is the result of his own initiative. They are the consequence of a promise. I can assure you that my commitment merely means the passing on of what God gave me to understand, so that I may bear witness to this love for all and already now the world might profess to this love and fulfil it in serving the neighbour.

The Communio in Christo wants to live this love, realizing more and more clearly how beneficial it is. The path is selfless dedication to the afflictions of the world.

FATHER

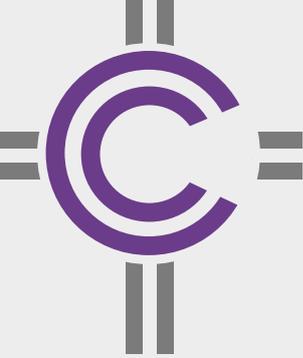
*You are no mere word that promises love.
You are the spirit that gives evidence of God.
You reveal Your essential nature,
whose everlastingness is the source of activity.
Ceaselessly You manifest Your identity,
I permanently experience Your presence.*

*Your word does not authorize me
to judge Your love with regard to extent or law.
You are the word from which springs life.
Deep in my heart I feel who You are.
If I wish to share my knowledge,
my voice falters, for I fail to do justice to You.
I tasted Your majesty in my suffering,
and wished to thank You, but did not know how...*

*I am filled with the longing
to duly praise Your divine grace,
but my speech is inadequate,
an incoherent groping for words.
I find you in my fellow-beings
asking for help and as divine grace.
You help me to think of You always.
As You approach me,
I approach my neighbour.*

*You are no non-committal word,
Your word is my life.
Your word is human togetherness,
community life in Christ,
Your Incarnate Son.
In my word of consent You are the Lord
who made me the tool of his word.
My will, heart and soul are in Your hand.
You fill the weak and simple with life,
enabling them to pass on Your word.*

*I sense Your infinite greatness
and realize Your absolute love.
The Redeemer means my salvation,
but to recognize the power that saved me,*



*makes me rejoice and praise Your love,
given not only to me but to all.*

*You revealed to me Your nature
to be imparted to the world,
so far removed from You,
so estranged by prosperity.
Your word has become a prisoner of the law,
lost in the confusion of tongues.
You showed me the way into the life
that equals the power of Your word.
My heart is opening to Him
who commissioned me to convey His spirit.*

*O Father,
I know how much this world craves to know
whether You will really love us,
having rejected You so often
when You are visible.
Your spirit is the certainty of our faith.
In the Creed we find all the humility
we need to sincerely laud and praise You,
today as every day
to all eternity.*

(From **Mother Marie Therese**,
"I implore you o holy Church – In the name of the Spirit,
Patris 2015, P. 70 ff)

COMMENT AND INTERPRETATION

REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

From Dr. Robert Mutegeki

(Extract, the complete commentary can be found
on our homepage at www.communio.nrw)



*Fr. Robert Mutegeki upon his
admittance to Communio in Christo*

Historically, from about the 6th century BC until the 4th century AD, the Greeks and Romans used the cross as an instrument of execution for criminals and captives that resulted in death by the most torturous and painful of ways. As an instrument of death, the cross, therefore, was detested by the Jews, hence became a stumbling block for them when considering Jesus.

It was also definitely inconceivable for the Greeks to believe that a God could end on a Cross! And we see that this Greek logic is also the common logic of our time. For the Greeks, and for us today, as Benedict XVI rightly observed, “the Cross is folly, ignorance, saltless food, an error, an insult to common sense”!¹

The question is, “why did God choose such a humiliating instrument? Why did God even allow that his “own son” be harmed by humans? Does it have any significance for us?

God the Father, through the death of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross, gave the cross a different meaning. Once the cruelest form of execution, now it is a symbol of abundant life. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3). Our salvation flows from God’s initiative of love for us, because „he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins“ (1 Jn. 4:9). Jesus freely offered himself for our salvation. Beforehand, during the Last Supper, he both symbolized this offering and made it really present: „This is my

¹ Benedict XVI, General Audience Address, Rome, Vatican City, October 29, 2008.



body which is given for you“ (Lk 22:19). The redemption won by Christ consists in this, that he came „to give his life as a ransom for many“ (Mt 20:28), that is, he „loved [his own] to the end“ (Jn. 13:1), so that they might be „ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] fathers“ (I Pt 1:18).

By his loving obedience to the Father, „unto death, even death on a cross“ (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfils the

atoning mission (Is. 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will „make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities“ (Is 53:11; Rom 5:19).² In this way, Christ’s whole life is an offering which restores man to communion with God through the „blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”.³

“Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God”

Jesus Christ, then, is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God points back to the institution of the Jewish Passover in Exodus 12. The Israelites were commanded to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and smear the blood of that lamb on the doorposts of their homes. The blood would be the sign for the Angel of Death to “pass over” that house, leaving those covered by blood in safety.

Jesus in the New Testament substituted this sacrifice of animal blood, with His own blood on the cross. His death on the cross became an atoning sacrifice, so that, those who turn to Him are delivered from both the penalty and the power of sin. The centrality of the cross is crucial to all sound Christian doctrine.

The „stumbling block“ and „folly“ of the Cross lie in the very fact that where there seems to be nothing but failure, sorrow and defeat, there is the full power of God’s boundless love, for the Cross is an expression of love and love is the true power that is revealed precisely in this seeming weakness.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nos. 619 – 623.

³ Matthew 26:28; Exodus 24:8; Lev. 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:25.

To accept the Cross of Christ, therefore, means bringing about a profound conversion in the way of relating to God.⁴ The Cross reveals „the power of God“ which is different from human power; indeed, it reveals his love: „For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men“ (1 Cor. 1: 25). Centuries after St. Paul, we see that in history, it was the Cross that triumphed and not the wisdom that opposed it.

This is also the message of Mother Marie Therese. She experienced in her extraordinary charism, and literally on her own body, that God uses means and ways which people see, at first, as a sign of weakness.

“The Strength will be complete in weakness”

The Crucified One reveals on the one hand man’s frailty and on the other, the true power of God. St. Paul experienced this even in his flesh: „My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness“ (2 Cor. 12: 9); and again „God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong“ (1 Cor. 1: 27).

St. Paul gave a wonderful synthesis of the theology of the Cross: everything is enclosed between two fundamental affirmations: on the one hand Christ, whom God made to be sin for our sake (2 Cor. 5: 14-21), he died for us all; and on the other, God reconciled us to himself without imputing our sins to us (vv. 18-20). It is from this „ministry of reconciliation“ that every form of slavery is already redeemed (1 Cor. 6: 20; 7: 23).

Here it appears how important this is for our lives. We too must enter into this „ministry of reconciliation“ that always implies relinquishing one’s superiority and opting for the folly of love, which is salvation for us all. For Mother Marie Therese it was the undeniable consequence for her founding, be it the Ordo Communio in Christo, as well as the social work for the needy.

May we be able to find our strength precisely in the humility of love and our wisdom in the weakness of renunciation, entering thereby into God’s power. It is our participation in Christ’s sacrifice that is being called for.⁵ We should follow in his steps (Matthew 16:24; I Pt. 2:21). Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.⁶

4 Ibid.

5 Gaudium Et Spes 22, Nos 2 and 5.

6 P. Hansen, St. Rose of Lima: Vita mirabilis, Louvain, 1668.



We are called upon to die to our will, as Christ did, “Not my will, but Your Will be done.” Together, then we can say with St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Imprint

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