



IN FOCUS Search for the Holy Cross

There is a centuries-old fascination for the search for the so-called “Holy Cross” or the remnants of the cross where Jesus Christ was allegedly nailed on Good Friday. This search is portrayed in the Maytime Santacruzán devotion where Queen Helena, mother of Roman Emperor Constantine, went to Israel in for a shopping spree of antique items related to Jesus and his apostles. She believed that possession of such religious relics will bring people closer to God because of its “holy” powers. A relic of the tell-tale cross is said to be encased at the Monasterio de Tarlac, a hilltop monastery in San Jose town.

Carrying the cross and being nailed on it, is Rome’s most cruel punishment to those who vigorously defy its rule. It is meted to those who are considered rebels or threats to the Empire, and not to common lawbreakers. Before Christ, the most popular crucifixion was that of the 6,000 warriors of gladiator-turned-freedom fighter Spartacus, where crosses ran to hundreds of kilometers.

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” It is a verse often used too loosely to refer to the tough trials, grave illnesses or small sacrifices we do in the course of Christian living. While these may be true, they fall short from the true essence of carrying the cross in the time of Jesus. Equating these to the cross of Jesus may even trivialize the nature of his sacrifice in Golgotha.

The Lord was accused by religious leaders of blasphemy which was punishable by stoning to death or being pushed over a cliff under Jewish laws. However, the execution was carried out through the Roman manner, emphasizing that His crime was against the Empire—perhaps the ancient equivalent of inciting sedition or rebellion, by declaring that he is the Son of God, a direct challenge to Emperor who has the same claim.

Carrying the cross is reflecting on the popular childhood question “What Would Jesus Do (WWJD)?” WWJD in these critical times where civil liberties are being curtailed, travesty of the judicial system, betrayal of public trust and national sovereignty, and disregard for the welfare of the least, the last and the lost in this pandemic. Standing up for justice and righteousness is an age-old obligation for God’s followers, dating back to the Old Testament era and still holds true as the prophetic role of the church and individual believers. Jesus addressed pressing social issues of his time which led to his crucifixion.

Carrying the cross isn’t a glamorous Santacruzán, an archaeology search, or a suggestion we can ignore. It is a mandate from the Lord if we want to be true followers.
Written by Bernard L Supetran

June 29, Monday

The Church is not a frictionless surface, so to speak. Even amongst those pursuing God’s call upon their lives there will be strife. But, conflict can be resolved in a Biblical way that the Lord’s will may still be done in and through us. Be encouraged and strengthened to resolve conflict in the Church. Paul eventually came around to accepting Mark and mentions what a help he is to him (2 Timothy 4:11).

Read: Acts 15: 37 – 41

June 30, Tuesday

God does not want just our sacrifices or our good deeds. He will not share us with our ambitions or hobbies. He wants all of us. Sunday mornings and a few quick prayers said before we lay down to sleep are not enough. He wants us to relentlessly pursue Him. Not because He needs us, but because we need Him.

Read: Micah 6:6-8

July 01, Wednesday

When the seventy disciples return from their evangelistic mission and give their report to Jesus, He and the Holy Spirit rejoice that God the Father has chosen, to reveal the Son to babes and to hide Him from the wise. The point of this is not that there are only certain classes of people who are chosen by God. The point is that God is free to choose the least likely candidates for His grace. God contradicts what human merit might dictate. He hides from the wise and reveals to the most helpless and unaccomplished. When Jesus sees the Father freely enlightening and saving people whose only hope is free grace, He exults in the Holy Spirit and takes pleasure in His Father’s election.

Read: Luke 10:21

July 02, Thursday

At first it may feel like freedom and fun to skimp on prayer and neglect the Word. But then we pay: shallowness, powerlessness, vulnerability to sin, preoccupation with trifles, superficial relationships, and a frightening loss of interest in worship and the things of the Spirit. Christ gives Himself to us in proportion to how much we want His refreshment. “You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). In the mindset of Col. 3:1–2, it is God’s earth! It is a preview to the reality of what the eternal summer will be like when “The city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23). The summer sun is a mere pointer to the *sun* that will be. The glory of God. Summer is for seeing and showing that. Do you want to have eyes to see? Lord, let us see the *light* beyond the light.

Read: Colossians 3: 1-2

July 03, Friday

Jesus is not just saying: If things go bad, don’t fret, since you are dead anyway. He is saying: *choose* to die with me. Choose to hate your life in this world the way I have chosen the cross. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). He calls us to choose the cross. “Take up your cross,” means, “Like a grain of wheat, fall into the ground and die.” Choose it.

Read: John 12: 24-25

July 04, Saturday

Do you need help? Where do you look for help? When the Psalmist lifted up his eyes to the hills and asked, “From where does my help come?” he answered, “My help comes *from the Lord*”— not from the hills, but from the God who made the hills. So he reminded himself of two great truths: one is that God is a mighty Creator over all the problems of life; the other is that God never sleeps. God is a tireless worker. Think of God as a worker in your life. Yes, it is amazing. God is working for us around the clock. God loves to show His tireless power and wisdom and goodness by working for people who trust Him. Jesus was the main way the Father showed this: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Jesus works for His followers. He serves them. God is up all night and all day to work for those who wait for Him.

Read: Psalm 121:1-3

July 05, Sunday

Jesus knows those who are His. When Jesus says, “I know them,” this means at least that He knows them by name; that is, He knows them individually and intimately. They are not anonymous, lost in the flock. There is a real similarity between the way Jesus knows His Father in heaven and the way He knows His sheep. Jesus sees Himself in the Father, and He sees Himself in His disciples. To some degree Jesus recognizes His own character in His disciples. He sees His own brand mark on the sheep. It is hard to overemphasize what a tremendous privilege it is to be known personally, intimately, lovingly by the Son of God. It is a precious gift to all His sheep, and it contains within it the promise of eternal life

Read: John 10:27