



The Cross as the Way of Life

Our lives make sense. This may not always seem to be true, but it is. For each of us, there are inner principles that guide our decisions and prioritize our actions. Life is not entirely random.

Much of that inner sense of things is not conscious. The day becomes very busy, and we can't stop and analyze each action and think about its meaning and purpose. Sometimes, you just have to drive the kids to school, go to the store, the doctor, two other places, and do a dozen things at home and have dinner on the table. Our inner sense on many days is just survival.

We are not particularly burdened by our hardships, not when compared to the stretch of history. But we often neglect the true principles of our lives. "Necessity" is a very empty principle for getting through the day.

The central point of the Christian life is the Cross. It is more than a single event in history. It is *The Event* in history and continues as an eternal presence. The Cross of Christ is the revelation of God's true life in the world. The Cross is the proper shape of our existence. But what does that mean? Especially on a daily basis?

For one, it means that our true lives are not centered in ourselves. We are not created to be self-fulfilling. Our lives, especially in difficulty, find their right shape as we give ourselves to others. The Other and not the Self is the way of the Cross. This is extremely counter to our culture. Of course, the fullness of the Other is God. St. Paul says that our "true life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). We can only find ourselves outside of ourselves. There are very practical ways of applying this in our lives.

Prayer is directing our hearts outside of ourselves and towards God. Pray.

Kindness places the other ahead of ourselves. Be kind.

Giving thanks acknowledges that our lives are not the products of our own efforts, but a gift from God. Give thanks always, for all things.

Forgiveness accepts the fact that our actions have consequences and the lives of those around us. The refusal to forgive is a radical separation of ourselves from others. Forgive. Forgive everyone for everything.

We do not exist to consume. We have our daily needs. Satisfying them is enough. If our true life is found outside of ourselves, then sharing what we have with others is the most natural thing to do with our possessions. Give stuff away. The more, the better.

Lying is the ultimate act of selfishness. It is an attempt to create a false reality that exists only in our own perverse attempt to remake the world and avoid the truth. Do not lie. Do not participate in the lie.

The Cross is the way of life. Learn to love the Cross. Make the sign of the Cross frequently. Indeed the Fathers say we should cross ourselves before beginning anything. And when we are done, we cross



ourselves in thanksgiving. The Cross is the remembrance of God and the truth of our lives. Our lives are not our own. They belong to the Crucified God who invites His friends to join Him in the most pure act of love.

Love God. Love His Cross.