



Bringing Home the Word

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
September 14, 2025

Embrace the Cross

Paige Byrne Shortal

One of my most privileged moments in the Church year is when I witness the embrace of the cross on Good Friday. Old and young, vigorous and lame, all come forward—young parents with their babies, elders, the successful, and the beaten down. And they kneel or genuflect or kiss or touch or bow to the cross presented to them.

Everyone suffers. Everyone dies. Everyone lives with loss and fear of loss. What makes suffering Christian? What makes it redemptive? What makes the

cross we embrace the cross of Jesus? There were three crosses on Calvary that dark day. There were crosses everywhere in the Roman Empire. It was how the state executed those who posed a threat.

I think the answer has something to do with “embrace.” When we finally say “yes” to our suffering—to the loss, no matter how great—there is room for God to heal and mend and bring back to life.

Our cross becomes one with the cross of Jesus when we can say with him, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). To join our cross with the cross of Jesus, we must forgive whoever it is we blame for our suffering—even if that blame is heaped upon ourselves or on God.

Such forgiveness doesn’t come easily. Perhaps that is why Jesus followed the Spirit out into the desert: to be ready—not for the ordeal of the cross, but for the ordeal of forgiveness. †



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A Word from Pope Leo XIV

I chose to take the name Leo XIV... mainly because Pope Leo XIII in his historic encyclical *Rerum Novarum* addressed the social question in the context of the first great industrial revolution. In our own day, the Church offers...the treasury of her social teaching in response to...challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice, and labor.

ADDRESS TO THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS, ROME, MAY 10, 2025



Sunday Readings

Numbers 21:4b–9

The LORD said to Moses: Make a seraph and mount it on a pole, and everyone who has been bitten will look at it and recover.

Philippians 2:6–11

[Christ Jesus] humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

John 3:13–17

“So must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What cross am I bearing today?
- Can I pray for the grace to accept my cross and offer my suffering as prayer?



Mary Magdalene: The Shout of Faith

Sergio Stevan

Finally, the dawn of Sunday came. Mary, dragged down by the events of Friday, aimlessly wanders to the tomb. She is a woman walking ever so slowly. Depressed, she goes toward the dullness of the day with death in her heart and wrapped in a profound sadness. Mary cannot help but go. She cannot do anything less. Love pushes her to the tomb. She goes to repay the Lord for what she has received—liberation from seven demons. She goes looking for a dead body to give it a fitting gesture of attention and to honor her teacher and

her Lord. For Mary Magdalene, who loves Jesus more than any other, it is still night. Night! It is the test of faith. In the Gospel of John, we read that when Judas left the room of the Last Supper, it was still night. (See John 13:30.) Mary goes to the tomb while it is still night, not knowing she is heading toward the light of dawn. Having arrived at the tomb, she sees with horror that the stone blocking the tomb has been rolled away, and the body of Jesus is gone. Mary feels faint. She sits on a rock and cries.

The angels ask her, “Why are you crying?” And Jesus asks, “Who are you seeking?” Jesus wants what really is in the heart of this woman to emerge. Jesus invites her to escape from the slavery of her past, and he calls her by name: “Mary!” She feels again recognized and loved. Mary’s joy is full. An unforeseen peace, after so much suffering, descends into her soul. The weight that oppressed her heart rolls away like the stone of the tomb. The man who has called her by name approaches her. She, at first not believing her own ears, suddenly falls to her knees and, sobbing with joy, shouts, “Rabbouni!” †

The weight that oppressed her heart rolls away like the stone of the tomb.

From *Jesus and the Women of Faith, Hope, and Love* by Sergio Stevan, Liguori Publications (820274). To order, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.

Wisdom from Catholic Update

From “The Way of the Cross” by Jack Wintz, OFM

We come to walk with you, Jesus, confident that you will lead us into the presence of God. We choose you as the model for our life journey. Your journey to the cross dramatizes what your whole life has been: an offering of praise to God and of loving service to humanity. This is what we want for our lives, too. Like the rest of your life, your passion and death were acts of praise—a response to God’s infinite love for you. We, too, want to praise God in sharing your cross.... Christ Jesus, open our hearts to your amazing love. As we walk with you on this way of the cross, help us respond with praise and grieve over our failure to return your love.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. Liguori.org • 800-325-9521



Merciful God, give us the grace to carry our crosses and unite them with the cross of your Son, Jesus, so that we may offer our suffering as prayer for the world. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 15–20

Monday, Our Lady of Sorrows:

1 Tm 2:1–8 / Jn 19:25–27 or Lk 2:33–35

Tuesday, Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian:

1 Tm 3:1–13 / Lk 7:11–17

Wednesday, Weekday: 1 Tm 3:14–16 / Lk 7:31–35

Thursday, Weekday: 1 Tm 4:12–16 / Lk 7:36–50

Friday, Weekday:

1 Tm 6:2c–12 / Lk 8:1–3

Saturday, Sts. Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn and Paul Chŏng Ha-sang and

Companions:

1 Tm 6:13–16 / Lk 8:4–15

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