



## Catechesis At Home – Take Up Our Cross

### Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time– Year B

#### DISCUSSION – The Suffering Servant Takes Up Our Cross

The first reading this week comes from the prophet Isaiah. It is part of the prophet's book that we call the description of the "Suffering Servant". When read with the eyes of those who believe in the Messiah and recall His Passion and death, we recognize Isaiah's description of Jesus. He suffered without retaliation or complaint; He offered Himself as ransom for all of us. In this week's Gospel, He tells His closest disciples in plain speech that He would suffer, die, and rise again after three days (Mk. 8:31). He would take up our cross for us; to show us how to do it. Even though He spoke plainly, the disciples did not necessarily understand or may have thought He was speaking in another parable. But Peter seems to get it and "rebukes" Jesus for talking this way! And Jesus says those famous words, "Get behind me Satan!"

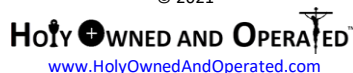
Jesus did not want to go through that suffering, He would rather not have to die the horrible death of crucifixion. But, He knew He had to for our sake – for our salvation. He knew what was coming. That He would take up our cross, and He wanted to prepare His friends for it and to know there was great rejoicing on the other side of the suffering. How often do we refuse to believe bad news? How hard is it for us to believe that the suffering we are going through is going to have a positive outcome? How often do we doubt God's promise that He *will* make all things new?

Jesus exhorts us, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Then He attaches a promise to those who do so: "... whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it." It is because of this that we should welcome any opportunity to take up our cross.

**Self-denial.** What does self-denial mean from a Christian perspective? It means to put aside our own wants and desires for the sake of another. It does not mean to be a doormat and allow others to walk all over us, take advantage of us, or abuse us. It means to be strong and have the fortitude to say no to those luxuries or even necessities that get in the way of us bringing about true Good for another. We take up our cross by denying these things which tear us and others down. It also means [not spoiling our children](#), or enabling another's addiction or bad habit. We may trick ourselves into thinking we are "[being nice](#)" or "keeping the peace" by doing things for other people. But, if it is taking away from their own growth, responsibilities, or learning, then we are actually hindering their opportunity to deny themselves. We must let others experience the peace and joy when they can take up their cross and we take up our cross by suffering for them in prayerful support.

**Self-sacrifice.** Similar to self-denial, self-sacrifice goes beyond simply putting aside our wants or desires, but includes the [virtue of Love – true caritas or agape](#). It encompasses the idea of surrender. When we surrender ourselves to God, we give Him all of ourselves, including our will – we take up our cross for His sake. When we [pray the Our Father](#), we [ask for the strength to do this](#), "thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus prayed similarly in the Garden of Gethsemane when He really didn't want to go

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through with His Passion and death: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.” (Mt. 26:39) We learn how to give up our own wants and desires and even necessities by imitating Jesus. If He can take up our cross for us, can’t we take it up a little bit?

#### **ACTIVITY – How Do We Deny Ourselves? Take Up Our Cross!**

Calling upon the Holy Spirit to give us a spirit of Courage and Love is how we deny ourselves and take up our cross. It is through the Gifts of the Spirit that we come to live fully in alignment with Jesus Christ. This week, spend time praying to the Holy Spirit for these gifts and work on the virtues of Love and Courage in order to bear the fruit of self-control. Self-control is one of the Fruits of the Spirit. You can learn about that through our short video on [Self-Control](#).

Remember, when we pray for these virtues and gifts, God does not just magically make us more courageous or loving. He gives us opportunity to unwrap those virtuous gifts He gave to us at our Baptism so we can practice them and get better by doing so. When the opportunity presents itself and you are wondering why it is so difficult, say, “God, in this you are speaking to me and granting my prayer. Let me not complain but instead practice the virtue this needs. Thank you for this opportunity to take up my cross!”

Think of two or three ways you can practice this self-control, self-denial, and self-sacrifice this week. Let’s take up our cross and grow closer to Jesus and spending eternity with Him!

#### **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY – It Is Hard to Take Up Our Cross. “Offer It Up”**

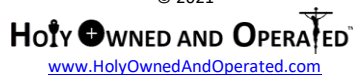
Over the years we may have heard the phrase, “Offer it up.” What does this mean? Simply put, it means that when tough stuff comes our way and we are suffering, we can tell God we want to offer this suffering for a particular intention. Just as Jesus took up the cross for our suffering and sin, we can take up our cross for ours and others’. These intentions might include conversion of our heart or that of another person; it might be for the holy souls in Purgatory; it might be to simply make it through this suffering with virtue instead of sliding into self-pity or despair. The key is to recognize our suffering as being a means to help us grow in holiness and virtue. In this way, we unite our sufferings with Christ’s Passion and death, and in doing so, we become more open to the grace He offers!

So, offer it up!

Start your mornings with a Morning Offering prayer, a beautiful way the Church has provided for us to take up our cross first thing every day. Every day, Kristofer prays a version he modified slightly:

**O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Perfected Hands of Joseph, I offer you my prayers, thoughts, words, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, for the salvation of souls, the reparation of sins, the reunion of all Christians, the intentions of the Holy Father, and in particular for the protection of my family.**  
**† Amen.**

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