

PASTOR'S COLUMN

“Lift High The Cross Of Christ!”

The Cross is the major symbol of Christians. It is on the foundation of the cross that our faith is built.

The Cross and Jesus' approach to it shows us the way in which we are to approach our crosses whatever they may be.

Jesus had a choice. He could either embrace his cross or run away from it. In faith, trusting in the Father, he embraced the cross. He did not fight it, resist it, or run away from it. He surrendered. In that faithful surrender and embrace of the Cross, evil was transformed and changed into Good News – the Resurrection – new life, new hope and new beginnings for the entire universe!

We human beings spend so much time running away from the crosses that come into our lives. We deny them. We pretend and lie to others that they do not exist. We medicate them. We abandon them. In all these ways, though, they are still there. The suffering, the pain, the illness, the death, or the sin is still very much present. The more we try to ignore or run away from our crosses, the more ill health, physically, emotionally, and spiritually we cause for ourselves and others. It is only in our embrace of the cross that transformation and healing take place.

In the first reading today, the Israelites are being bitten and killed by saraph serpents. They seek Moses' help in ridding themselves of these creatures. Yahweh gives Moses these directions: “Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and if any who have been bitten look at it, they will live.”

A bronze serpent is made and mounted on a pole. The people who have been bitten look upon it and are healed. The very thing that brought pain, suffering, and death, when looked upon, brings healing!

In the Gospel, we hear the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

When we acknowledge and embrace our crosses and lift them high in faith, they become the very instruments that bring new life, new hope, and new beginnings. The instrument of death becomes the instrument of life.

M. Scott Peck writes, “I cannot be any more specific about the methodology of love than to quote these words of an old priest who spent many years in the battle: ‘There are dozens of ways to deal with evil and several ways to conquer it. All of them are facets of the truth that the only ultimate way to conquer evil is to let it be smothered within a willing, living human being. When it is absorbed there like blood in a sponge or a spear into one's heart, it loses its power and goes no further.’ The healing of evil – scientifically or otherwise – can be accomplished only by the love of individuals. A willing sacrifice is required...I do not know how this occurs. But I know that it does...Whenever this happens there is a slight shift in the balance of power in the world.”

Embrace your crosses, unite them to Christ, and lift high the Cross of Christ!

F. Mike