



The Way of the Cross is not a sad devotion

Bishop Javier Echevarria

“The Way of the Cross is not a sad devotion. Msgr. Escrivá taught many times that Christian joy has its roots in the shape of a cross. If the Passion of Christ is a way of pain, it is also a path of hope leading to victory. (Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, prologue to [The Way of the Cross](#) by Saint Josemaría)

The Stations of the Cross, or Way of the Cross, is a devotion that consists of considering fourteen moments on the journey Jesus made to Calvary on the first Good Friday, to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and unite ourselves to him. Saint Josemaría loved this devotion very much, as Bishop Javier Echevarría recalls in the passage below.

He had a great devotion to the Way of the Cross. We thought it entirely natural when, for Epiphany one year, he asked for a portable representation of the Way of the Cross as a present, so that he could have it constantly by him and contemplate the scenes of the Passion that he loved so dearly.

I often followed the Stations of the Cross in prayer with him, and with Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, and I could see how devoutly he knelt down after each station was read out. He used to contemplate those scenes on the road to Calvary every Friday, and very specially on the days of Lent.

He encouraged us to keep those moments, in which mankind's salvation is accomplished, in our minds like a film, so that in any circumstance we could take part in the scene as one of the people there, to repent of our faults, to keep Jesus company, and to feel an obligation to be co-redeemers.

On September 14, 1969, with deepest reverence, he showed us a reliquary of the Holy Cross, and spoke to us at length about our Lord's Passion and Death. I will quote a few extracts from that conversation.

“We love – we should love – the Cross sincerely, because where the Cross is, there is Christ with his Love, his presence that fills everything... And so, my sons, with the spirit of the Work we can never run away from the Cross, from this holy Cross, in which we find peace, joy, serenity and strength... In this reliquary that we have here, we venerate a fragment of the *Lignum Crucis*, the Wood of the Cross, which is kept in [the church of] Santo Toribio de Liébana. The Bishop of Leon gave it to me many, many years ago. It really bothers me when people use the Cross as a synonym for difficulty and mortification. The Cross is something positive, and has been ever since God chose to give us true life through means of the Cross... After Benediction we’ll come up and kiss the Cross, saying sincerely that we love it, because we no longer see in the Cross something we find or might find difficult, but the joy of being able to give ourselves, stripping ourselves of everything in order to find all the Love of God... Under this reliquary I’ve had a quotation inscribed that says: *Iudaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam!* [‘A stumbling-block to Jews, and folly to Gentiles,’ 1 Cor 1:23], because for those who cannot grasp it, the Cross is scandalous and incomprehensible.”

In 1970 Saint Josemaría urged us: “Only if we unite ourselves continually to the Passion of Jesus Christ, will we be able to be useful instruments on earth, even though we are full of wretchedness.” It is impossible to cite exhaustively all the many considerations he made, but I think that in a way, what I heard him say in Holy Week that year sums up his personal union with the Sacrifice of the Cross. He said: “Our Lord’s Passion: that’s where we get all our strength. When I think about the Passion of Jesus Christ, there comes to mind straight away all that I’ve done in these forty-two years of my life in Opus Dei, and in those other years when the Lord was preparing me, before it began. And I see myself as nothing, and less than nothing. I’ve only been an obstacle. And so every day I feel the need to become little, very little, in God’s hands. Like that I console myself with what I have so often written: what does a little child do? He gives his father a headless toy soldier, an old cotton-reel, a glass bead. And I do the same: the little I have, I want to give to God really and truly. Like that my littleness, merged with Christ’s Passion, has full redeeming and saving effectiveness: nothing is lost!”

From *Memoria del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*, and Salvador Bernal, Madrid, 2000.

* The relics of the Passion that are preserved in [The Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme](#): a reliquary with the Lignum Crucis or fragment of the True Cross, a finger of the Apostle St Thomas, some fragments of the rock of the Holy Sepulcher, and two thorns from the Crown.