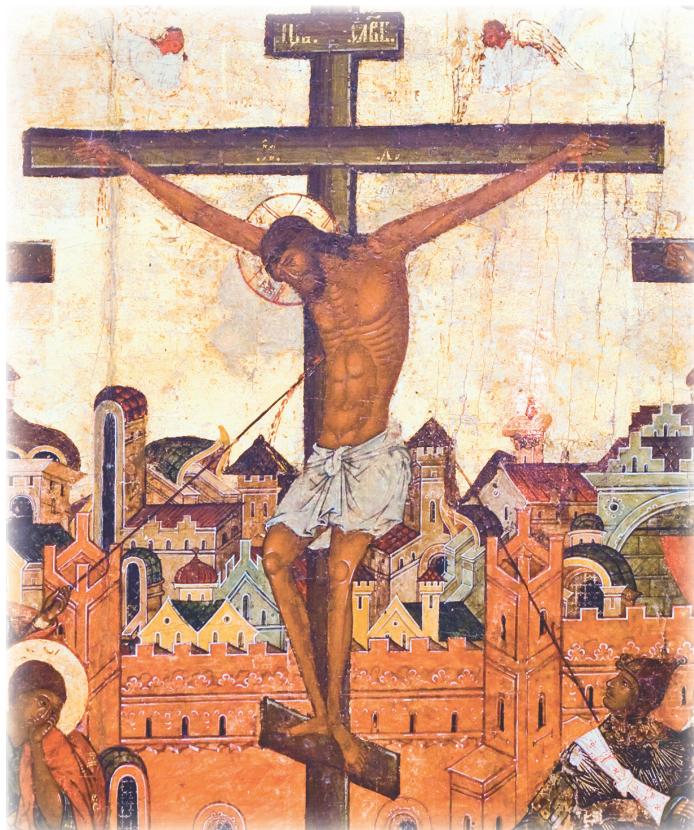


Session 6



THE PASCHAL MYSTERY



SYMBOLON®
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

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Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver
August 1, 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the many catechists, teachers, and diocesan leaders from across the country that have given invaluable advice and guidance in the development of Symbolon:

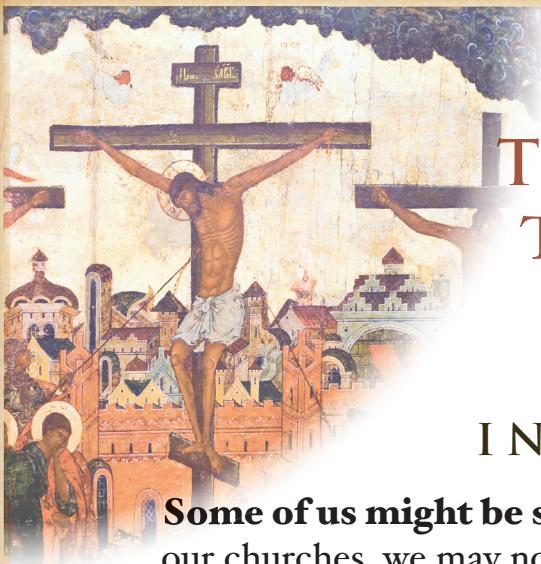
Michael Andrews, Keith Borchers, Steve Bozza, Dr. Chris Burgwald, James Cavanagh, Chris Chapman, Fr. Dennis Gill, Jim Gontis, Dr. Tim Gray, Lisa Gulino, Mary Hanbury, Deacon Ray Helgeson, Dr. Sean Innerst, Ann Lankford, Deacon Kurt Lucas, Sean Martin, Martha Tonn, Kyle Neilson, Michelle Nilsson, Ken Ogorek, Dr. Claude Sasso, Scott Sollom, Deacon Jim Tighe, Mary Ann Weisinger, and Gloria Zapiain.

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6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Information: 303-937-4420
Formed.org

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-9972037-0-7

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THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: The Mystery of Jesus's Death & Resurrection

INTRODUCTION

Some of us might be so accustomed to seeing images of crosses in our churches, we may not realize that in the ancient world, the cross was a horrifying image. For people living 2,000 years ago, wearing a cross like jewelry around one's neck would be as shocking as wearing a little electric chair around our necks would be today. The cross was a well-known means of capital punishment, just as an electric chair has been in modern times. And yet the cross is the primary symbol of our faith because it is through Jesus's Death on the Cross that we have been given the gift of salvation and eternal life.

We call Jesus's work of redemption, accomplished principally through his Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, the Paschal Mystery. The word *Paschal* refers to Jesus's offering of his life as the new Passover (or Paschal) lamb for our salvation.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- How the Cross “works”—how it brings about our salvation
- How Christ, being fully human and fully divine, was able to heal our relationship with God through his sacrificial Death
- The meaning of Jesus going to the realm of the dead and opening Heaven’s gates
- That by his Death, Jesus liberates us from sin
- That by his Resurrection, he opens us to new life
- How Jesus invites us to unite our entire lives with his self-giving love on the Cross



OPENING PRAYER

Hail, sweet Jesus!
 Praise, honor, and glory be to you, O Christ,
 who of your own accord did embrace death,
 and, recommending yourself to your heavenly Father,
 bowing down your venerable head, did yield up your spirit.
 Truly thus giving up your life for your sheep,
 you have shown yourself to be a good shepherd.
 You did die, O only-begotten Son of God.
 You did die, O my beloved Savior, that I might live forever.
 O how great hope,
 how great confidence have I reposed in your death and your Blood!
 I glorify and praise your Holy Name,
 acknowledging my infinite obligations to you.
 O good Jesus,
 by your bitter death and Passion,
 give me grace and pardon.
 Give unto the faithful departed rest and life everlasting.
 Amen.

—Dom Augustine Baker, 1575–1641

"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world."

—From St. Alphonsus Liguori's Stations of the Cross, a devotion meditating on Jesus's carrying the Cross and his Death on Calvary



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Scripture tells us that the Son of God humbled himself to become man, and was obedient to the Father even to his Death on the Cross (Philippians 2:5–11). What does God's willingness to enter our world, embrace our humanity, and die for our sins tell us about God's love for us? How can Jesus's self-sacrificial love be an example for our lives?
- Generally people try to avoid suffering. In the news we might even hear about some people with terminal illnesses who have committed suicide in order to avoid their suffering. But let's consider for a moment this quote from John 12:24: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth

and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Here's another way of saying that: "Every death presents an opportunity for a resurrection. Every suffering can be a tremendous gift." How can suffering or carrying a cross be a great gift?

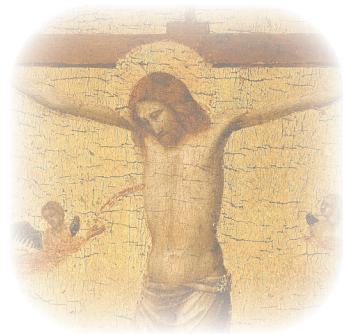
3. Dr. Sri says that there are two ways to live your life: the way of self and the way of the Cross. Why is there more joy and fulfillment found in the way of the Cross?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

- #1** Have you ever considered what it means that Jesus died for you and paid the price for your sins? Take a few minutes now to thank him for the great gift that he gave you. You may want to silently pray the following prayer called the Act of Contrition, which expresses heartfelt sorrow for our sins:

"My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen."



#2 In the video, we heard that because we live in a broken world, we should never ask, “Will I suffer?” but rather “What will I do when I suffer?” As St. Peter says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12). In fact, Jesus himself entered our humanity and has shared in our suffering. And he wants to be with us to help us in the midst of our trials. What do you do when you encounter suffering in your life? Do you turn to God or do you turn away from God? Make a commitment now to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters your life.

#3 Reflect on the following quote:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” —Luke 9:23

Consider some ways you can imitate Christ’s sacrificial love more in your life. For example, how can you be more generous in your relationship with God? What are some ways you can deny yourself—your time, comfort, or desires—and make sacrifices to serve better the people God has placed in your life?



CLOSING PRAYER

O Jesus, you have called me to suffer because you on your part suffered for me, leaving me an example that I might follow. When you were insulted, you did not return the insult. When you were mistreated, you did not counter with threats but entrusted yourself to the One who judges justly. By your wounds we are healed. Help me to imitate you in suffering. Let me break with sin by means of my sufferings, so that I may no longer live according to the lusts of sinners but according to the will of the Father. Since you yourself have suffered and been tempted, I know that you are able to bring aid to all who suffer and are tempted. I entrust myself to you and to the Father, my Creator, knowing that you will never fail me.

Amen.



—Prayer to Imitate the Suffering Christ

<http://www.2heartsnetwork.org/wounds.htm>

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

—Galatians 2:20

DO YOU WANT TO UNITE YOUR LIFE MORE WITH JESUS'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION?

TO ENRICH YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH, VISIT FORMED.org

Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, and ebooks from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about the Paschal Mystery, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *The Trinity: CCC 238-248, 452-455*
- *Value of Christ's sacrifice: CCC 616–617*
- *The descent into Hell: CCC 632–635*
- *The meaning of the Resurrection: CCC 651–655*
- *Jesus precedes us into Heaven: CCC 665-667*
- *Our participation in Christ's sacrifice: CCC 618*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 8*
- *Making Sense Out of Suffering* by Peter Kreeft
- *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week* by Pope Benedict XVI

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