**Upper Room: August / September 2020**

*Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer hour by first reading this message from Fr. David:*

Dear friends in Christ:

I’d like the Upper Rooms of August and September to consider taking up one’s Cross. It remains to be the single most effective way a human being can change (for better or for the worse). Even more effective than the virtue of Love, I would say. Catechism quotes and Scripture passages will be our guide along the way. How does the ideal Catholic carry the Cross?

In Christ;

Fr. David

**Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

L: **Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created.**

R: And you shall renew the face of the earth

L: **Let us pray – God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent the Spirit on Your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel; now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. Through Christ our Lord.**

R: Amen

L: **You, O lord, will open my lips.**

R: And my tongue shall announce Your praise.

L: **Incline unto my aid, O God.**

R: O Lord, make haste to help me.

L: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit**.

R: As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

**Lesson**

**CCC 1435 Conversion and the Cross**

**1435** Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.

 a. Of these means to conversion, how many relate to your daily life. That is, how many do you do, or do you find yourself being an active participant in daily?

 b. Of these which do you find most difficult?

 c. Why should one practice penance in an active way? What does it do for one’s soul?

 d. If you feel comfortable share the heaviest cross you have ever endured (with the group) and how it changed your life.

*I found an interesting CCC paragraph on the Sacrament of Marriage and taking up ones cross.*

**CCC 1615 Marriage and the Cross**

This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy - heavier than the Law of Moses. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and **taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ.** This grace of Christian marriage **is a fruit of Christ's cross,** the source of all Christian life.

1. What is the original meaning of marriage (Adam and Eve’s bond)?
2. Would you ever admit that your spouse is your greatest cross? How can you see this happening one day if it isn’t happening now? Do you think you will be prepared to carry them? What prepares you to carry (for example a spouse that has cancer or Alzheimer’s)?
3. What is the fruit of the cross?
4. What is the purpose of your marital bond?

***Please read CCC 1642 as a summary of 1615 to the group***

 **CCC 2015 The Cross and the Way of Perfection**

The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

*He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows. (St. Gregory of Nyssa)*

1. Why is dying to oneself so important to progressing in the spiritual life?
2. The irony found in the Beatitudes is precisely the irony of the Cross, right? Discuss
3. The greatest challenge, “finding joy” in the cross. Discuss
4. A way to put context to the way of perfection and the cross is to discuss Purgatory (read CCC1030)

**Read Matthew 16:24-26**

1. Do you think the Apostles knew what Jesus meant by “carrying your cross” when He uttered this phrase?
2. Do you have the same confusion sometimes?
3. What is the mystery of the cross for you?
4. Do you think the Apostles understood the Cross after it was the instrument of Jesus’ death? Do you?

**Prayer**

 **The Litany of the Precious Blood of Jesus**

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| Lord, have mercy. *(Lord, have mercy.)* Christ, have mercy. *(Christ, have mercy.)* Lord, have mercy. *(Lord, have mercy.)* Christ, hear us. *(Christ, hear us.)* Christ, graciously hear us. *(Christ, graciously hear us.)* God the Father of Heaven, *(have mercy on us.)* God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *(have mercy on us.)* God, the Holy Spirit, *(have mercy on us.)* Holy Trinity, One God, *(have mercy on us.)*  |
| Blood of Christ, only-begotten Son of the eternal Father, Blood of Christ, Incarnate Word of God, Blood of Christ, of the New and Eternal Testament, Blood of Christ, falling upon the earth in Agony, Blood of Christ, shed profusely in the Scourging, Blood of Christ, flowing forth in the Crowning with Thorns, Blood of Christ, poured out on the Cross, Blood of Christ, price of our salvation, Blood of Christ, without which there is no forgiveness, Blood of Christ, Eucharistic drink and refreshment of souls, Blood of Christ, stream of mercy, Blood of Christ, victor over demons, Blood of Christ, courage of Martyrs, Blood of Christ, strength of Confessors, Blood of Christ, bringing forth Virgins, Blood of Christ, help of those in peril, Blood of Christ, relief of the burdened, Blood of Christ, solace in sorrow, Blood of Christ, hope of the penitent, Blood of Christ, consolation of the dying, Blood of Christ, peace and tenderness of hearts, Blood of Christ, pledge of eternal life, Blood of Christ, freeing souls from purgatory, Blood of Christ, most worthy of all glory and honor,  | *save us* |
| Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *(spare us, O Lord.)* Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *(graciously hear us, O Lord.)* Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *(have mercy on us, O Lord.)* Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy Blood. *(And made us, for our God, a kingdom.)* Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, Thou hast appointed Thine only-begotten Son the Redeemer of the world and willed to be appeased by his blood. Grant, we beg of Thee, that we may worthily adore this price of our salvation and through its power be safeguarded from the evils of the present life so that we may rejoice in its fruits forever in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. *(Amen.)* |