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Message from the Spiritual Advisor: Symbols in Many Forms

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Message from the Spiritual Advisor



Symbols in Many Forms

While commercialism offers many modern styles for men and women to imitate so that through the use of cosmetics, stylish clothes, charm and exercises for physical fitness they may be godlike in their appearance, the saints chose completely different means to become more to the image and likeness of God.

When addressing sports-minded Greek citizens, St. Paul spoke of himself as an "athlete." In order to become popular, to be an ideal symbol of strength so as to win the race and obtain the perishable crown, it was necessary for him to train and deny himself many essentials, including food and rest. Success depended on his motivation to discipline himself for victory. It was living in this image which enabled him to perform heroic acts and apply them in his spiritual life, thus becoming one of the greatest disciples of Christ.

St. Paul explains how Our Lord identified Himself in His relationship to the Father. "Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6).

Slaves were forced to perform acts which were demeaning, and as individuals, they were regarded as being less than human. As Paul saw himself as a slave, he was thus able to endure beatings, exhaustion, shipwreck, starvation and even chains without complaint. Jesus, as a slave, "humbled Himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross! Because of this, God highly exalted Him"

It is not easy to be humble, to accept a cross and see it as a blessing, as a means of salvation. When the 10 lepers were healed (and surely their leprosy was a cross for them), only one came back to Jesus and "fell on his face at His feet giving Him thanks." It was then that Jesus made this startling statement to the foreigner who was cured: "Arise, go your way, for your faith has saved you." Who would ever think that a disease such as leprosy could be a blessing, an occasion for salvation?

When Simon of Cyrene was given the cross of Christ, little did he realize that his Calvary journey was related to all of humankind's redemption. As he witnessed the sufferings, falls, beatings and bleeding of an innocent man in pain, he was then closest to Christ our Redeemer. When listening to the jeers, sneers, curses and insults which were directed at the God-man, he was able, through his presence, to buffet the hurts and uplift the painful cross for the God of love. It is beyond our comprehension, yet true, that "God needed Simon."

Being close to the Savior, Simon was also next to the women standing nearby who expressed their warmth, sorrow and love to their God. As our Blessed Mother prayed, Simon became the beneficiary of her prayers, for he was the only person who physically relieved her Son on that journey of torture. I wonder if onlookers recalled the words of Jesus, Who said, "Whoever gives a drink of cold water to the least of these My followers, because of Me, will certainly receive his reward" (Matt. 10:40). Who could possibly imagine Simon's reward?

Doctors, I see you as the athletes, the slaves, the Simon of today. God needs you. You are nearest to Jesus in the sick you serve, in the care you give them, in the cross you carry for them, and in the abuse you often are required to accept for them. How frequently unappreciative family members complain of your not "doing enough." How difficult the brothers in the legal profession can be in their accusations toward you, and how alone you stand with those who "cry death," wanting an abortion or mercy killing instead of accepting the cross and salvation.

Like St. Paul, you can rightfully say, "I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for Me" (Gal. 2:19).

— Msgr. Dino J. Lorenzetti