

Sermon for Fall Assembly 2005

Today we celebrate Holy Cross Day, transferred from September 14. As you well know, one of your obligations as Daughters of the King is to wear the Cross of the Order. But as Father Nicky Gumble points out in one of his talks in the Alpha series, it is more than a bit odd that Christians wear the Cross as a symbol of their faith. We would all feel a bit out of place wearing an image of a gallows, or an electric chair, or a guillotine, all means of execution. But the cross also was a means of execution. Those who were crucified died a horribly painful, lingering death, and so it was with our Lord.

And, yet, we do not wear the Cross morbidly, or to shock, because the Cross has been transformed by Christ from a symbol of death into a symbol of life.

Nevertheless, we must always remember that, in a deep sense, the Cross remains a symbol of death.

Now this should not frighten us, rather it should

remind us of our call as Christians. In the Gospel some two Sundays ago Jesus told us that if we want to be his disciples, we must pick up our cross and follow him. This statement implies that we must be crucified with him if we are to rise with him. We must, as Paul puts it, die to self so that Christ can live in us. We should wear the Cross as a symbol, and even a prayer, that we, by the grace of God, will be able to open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit that will transform us into what God calls us to become: other Christs, beings united through Christ and love to the Father.

Beloved sisters in Christ, Daughters of the King, our Savior, the cross you wear bears the motto, "Magnanimiter crucem sustine." Because the hymn of the Order is "Lift High the Cross," you may suppose that this is what this motto means, but it is more accurately translated, "Carry the cross generously." Perhaps we might even more loosely translate it as,

"Carry your cross boldly."

Thus, the Daughters' motto underlines Christ's teaching on the need to bear the cross by those who wish to be his disciples. Of course, in this troubled world that is all too full of pain, there are few who do not have more than enough crosses to bear. Suffering is a two-edged sword. It can lead some to a deeper faith, and it can cause some to doubt or lose their faith. We, as Christians, are called to witness to the truth that the cross is a sign of life restored and not of life destroyed. The Cross is a sign of God's immeasurable love for us, as well as a sign that God grieves with us in our own pain because he, through his own Son, also knows what it is to suffer.

But you, as Daughters, are called by the motto of your Order not merely to bear the cross, but to bear it generously, boldly, even if you will, abundantly. You are to be witnesses to the transforming power of the Cross, to the love of God in Jesus Christ that the

Cross represents, love for all humanity and for all creation.

I have, as I am sure many of you have, an Episcopal shield on the back window of my car. When I drive, I have to remember that other drivers will see that shield and judge the Episcopal Church to some extent on how I drive. If I cut people off and make nasty gestures at drivers who offend me, I am a poor witness for the Episcopal Church. I also wear a clerical collar, and it identifies me as a representative of the Church. If I am rude or behave inappropriately in public, it will reflect poorly not just on me, but on the Church, whether I think it should or not. I have chosen to put the Episcopal shield on my car, and I have been called by God to be a priest. You have been called by God to be Daughters of the King, and, thereby, to wear your crosses daily as a witness to that call. You have been chosen to wear that Cross, to bear that Cross, and you are therefore called to

witness to what that Cross represents. You are called to live according to the Gospel that the Cross symbolizes. You are called to live your lives, not just for yourselves, but, in the motto of the Daughters of the King, "For His Sake."

Today we remember the Cross in a special way through the propers of our celebration, but you must remember the Cross every day of your lives. When you are tempted to behave thoughtlessly toward someone, look at your Cross. When you are tired and discouraged, look at your Cross. When you wonder if God loves you, or if the effort of being a Daughter is worth it, or you should continue to struggle with a prayer life that seems dry and pointless, look at your Cross and be reminded of the One to whom you belong and who loves you more than you can ask for or imagine. Let the Cross carry you, just as you carry the Cross.

Magnanimiter crucem sustine. Bear the Cross boldly. Bear the Cross generously. Bear the Cross

lovingly. Bear the Cross so that, in sharing his death, you share in his Resurrection. Bear the Cross for the sake of the whole world that is filled with so many troubles and so much sin. Bear the Cross so that others may see your Cross and also come to know God's love. Bear the Cross that your life may reflect the power of, and preach the Good News of, the Cross. Now and always, bear the Cross, wear the Cross, for his sake.