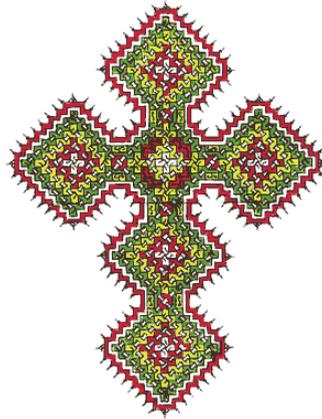


# The Feast of The Holy Cross

By:  
A Monk from  
Sheheet Desert

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# **The Holy Cross**

**Reflections on  
The Doxology of the Feast**



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As we are celebrating the feast of the Cross, we will reflect on the doxology of the feast. Particularly, we will focus our attention on four verses which start with the following phrase,

**“Hail to you, O Cross!”**

**The Ninth Verse:**

**“Hail to you, O Cross, the weapon of victory.”**

**“Weapon of Victory”**

Every Christian is a Cross-bearer **ἑταυροφορος** because the Cross is our defense against the evil one; the Cross is our weapon. The Cross is our weapon with which we defeat the enemy (this is repeated). A true Christian’s cross is not made up of wood or leather, but rather, is his continuous readiness and determination to accept pain and suffering through communion with the crucified Lord. The strength of a Christian heart is measured by one’s determination to partake in the sufferings of the Lord until his last breath.

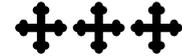
**The Cross, the Weapon of Victory**

In the old Coptic iconography, the letter “Ϡ” is always drawn under the Cross. For decades, scholars debated the meaning of this letter, until they found the word “Ϡρο”, fully written on one of the icons. This Coptic word means, “Victory,” and for this reason, the traditional Coptic cross always has the following phrase written on it, “**Ἰη̅ς Χ̅ρ̅ς Π̅ι̅ Ϡ̅ρο**” This sentence translates to, “Jesus Christ the Victorious” and was taken from the book of Revelation, “He went out conquering and to conquer. ἐξῆλθεν νικῶν καὶ ἵνα νικήσῃ” (Revelation 6:2)

**“Hail to you, O Cross, the throne of the King”**

The word, “**πιθρονος**” reminds us of the hymn, “**πεκθρονος**” which is sung on Good Friday. It also reminds us of the book of Revelation where it states, “*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the*





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*elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain,”* (Revelation 5:6), and all the praises of the heavenly multitudes surrounding the Lamb, which stood as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne (where did this last part come from? Is it a bible verse?).

This vision mentioned in the book of Revelation shows the significance of the Cross and how it gives us a taste of the eternal, heavenly feast. All the praises of the heavenly multitudes, that we will partake in, God-willing, are all centred around the throne on which the Lamb stands “as though it had been slain”. We are exalting the victory of the cross or the victory of His divine passion; we are praising His divine love, which was manifested on the Cross. This will be our eternal praise, without ceasing.

### **“The Throne of the King”**

“Say among the nations, “The Lord reigned on a wood.” (Psalm 96:10)

The altar is itself the throne. In the book of Revelation, sometimes the throne is mentioned and sometimes the altar. It’s an altar because the sacrifice was offered on it, but it’s also the throne because through His love that was manifested on the Cross, He reigned over all our hearts.

Thus, the Kingdom of God was established through the Cross, and this Kingdom is His reign in our hearts. When we say, “Thy kingdom come,” we are asking Him to reign in our hearts through His divine love. The Cross is the throne of the king, by which He reigns over the hearts of His beloved.

### **The Tenth Verse:**

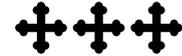
**“Hail to you, O Cross, the sign of salvation.”**

In the Friday Psali, we sing: “Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a sign to His servants, who do fear him, to escape from the face of the bows... to shut the mouths of the lions, to put out the power of the fire, and to cast out the devils”. This sign is the Cross and we make the sign of the cross, which is the sign of salvation, so we may be saved from the enemy’s trap.

The word “sign” was first mentioned in the Bible in the story of Cain and Abel and was linked to salvation from the edict of death.

*“And the Lord set a **mark** on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.”* (Genesis 4:15)





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*When St. Mary and St. Joseph the carpenter brought the baby Jesus to the temple, St. Simeon took Him in his arms and announced that he had seen God's salvation in Christ, "Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a **sign** which will be spoken against." (Luke 2:34)*

*Also the Bible says on the second coming, "Then the **sign** of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."(Mathew 24:30)*

The bow is an old weapon, used to throw arrows and this sign is meant to save us from the devil's bow (πινοῦνοϋφιϋ). Jeremiah the prophet mentions it, "He has bent His **bow** and set me up as a target for the arrow."

*"Let us not then be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and on everything; over the bread we eat, and the cups we drink; in our coming in, and going out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we rise up; when we are in the way, and when we are still.*

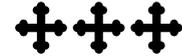
*Great is that preservative; it is without price, for the sake of the poor; without toil, for the sick; since also its grace is from God. It is the Sign of the faithful, and the dread of devils: for He 'triumphed over them in it, having made a show of them openly' [Colossians 2:15]; for when they see the Cross they are reminded of the Crucified; they are afraid of Him, who bruised the heads of the dragon. Despise not the Seal, because of the freeness of the gift; but for this the rather honour your Benefactor." St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

**"Hail to you, O Cross: the shining light"**

+ "The light shines in the darkness"

Light, for St. John the evangelist, always points to the love of God: "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), "God is light" and "God is love" and also "He who loves his brother abides in the light," (1 John 2:10).





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The light that has shone upon us, is the love of God which has shone upon us in the Face of Jesus Christ and St. Paul talks about this light when he says, “*give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

So, the glory of God shone on the face of the crucified Jesus. And Christ Himself, during his final speech to His disciples, before His last prayer (in John 17) and before He goes to the Cross said, “*but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.*” (John 16:25). Then, He prayed and proceeded to the Cross. Christ told us plainly about the Father, when He revealed to us the love of the Father. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*” (John 3:16). So, the light of the Father has shone upon us, when we have seen it transfigured on the face of the crucified Christ and how much the Father loves us.

### **The Eleventh verse:**

**“Hail to you, O Cross, the sword of the Spirit.”**

The Cross is the sword of the spirit by which the Spirit wounds the hearts of the saints by God’s love.

The first person to be wounded by the sword of the crucified’s love, was His Mother St. Mary when the prophecy of Simeon the elder was fulfilled, “*yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also*” (Luke 2:35), so the mother stood at the feet of the cross and said, “The world rejoices in receiving salvation, while my heart burns as I look at Your crucifixion which You are enduring for the sake of all, my Son and my God.” (Agpeya 9<sup>th</sup> Hour Litanies)

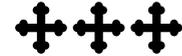
**“Hail to you, O Cross, the spring of grace.”**

Spring of grace can also be translated to “spring of gifts”, like gifts of healing, tongues, and interpretation. Therefore, the Cross is the spring of gifts as we can never attain any gifts except through the Cross. So, when we face tribulations or sorrows, we should not grieve, but rather accept them knowing that gifts will surely follow.

According to the Church Fathers, as St. Isaac the Syrian says that the magnitude of tribulations always corresponds to the magnitude of gifts and vice versa.

***“God has ordained in His incomprehensible wisdom that the granted gifts must always correspond to the magnitude of the tribulation. Thus, the gift***





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***would never be greater than the tribulation, but rather, the gifts are as much as the tribulations. So, when you face difficulties, ordained according to God's economy, you must realize how great the gifts you will receive from God are, because the magnitude of gifts is in correspondence to the magnitude of comfort". (St. Isaac the Syrian)***

The saints attained the grace of God through the cross and by their acceptance of pains and sorrows in communion with Christ.

### **The Twelfth Verse:**

**"Hail to you, O Cross, the treasure of good things."**

The Cross is the treasure of all gifts in the church, for all the sacraments spring from the cross. St. John the evangelist emphasizes the importance of Christ's spear wound in his Gospel and in his first epistle, when he says, "*This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*" (1 John 5:6-8).

When water and blood came out of Christ's side on the Cross, it represented the pouring of the Holy Spirit onto the church in the sacraments. The Fathers stated that water represents Baptism and blood represents the Eucharist.

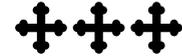
Therefore, water and blood together, represent the sacraments of the Church springing from the Christ's side on the Cross.

Some fathers go beyond this explanation mentioning that all the Church, represented in baptism and eucharist came out from the side of the second Adam (Christ), when He "slept" on the cross, just as Eve came out of Adam's side when he slept.

So, all the Church sacraments are a result of the Lord's passion on the Cross.

In the Absolution prayer that is prayed for the confessor and at the end of the raising of incense and in the Liturgy, the priest says, "*Our Master, Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son and the Word of God the Father, who has broken every bond of our sins through His liberating, lifegiving sufferings. Who breathed into the face of His holy disciples*





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*and pure apostles and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you will remit, they are remitted, and those which you will retain, they shall be retained.' You also our Master, through Your holy apostles, have given grace to those who struggled in priesthood in Your holy church, to forgive sin on earth, and to bind and loose every bond of iniquity". Christ's passion became the spring from which the priest's authority to loose and to bind originates in the sacrament of Confession. The same is true for all other sacrament for they all originated from the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **The Twelfth Verse (Cont'd):**

**Hail to you, O Cross, to the end of the ages.**

We will get weary from exalting the Cross to the end of all ages, along with the twenty-four presbyters, the four living creatures, and the hundred-forty-four-thousand and the great innumerable multitude, standing around the slain Lamb saying,

*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!...You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God;" (Revelation 5:12,9).*

To the end of all ages, we will not cease to praise the passion of the One who was slain for us and redeemed us to God by His blood, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Hymn of the Cross – The Processional Hymn:**

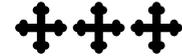
We notice that the tune of the doxology is a marching tune, and that it is the same tune we use on Palm Sunday. When you listen to it, you will feel as though you were marching in a victorious procession.

On Palm Sunday, we use this tune as our Lord entered Jerusalem with a great procession, but why do we use the same tune on the Feast of the Cross?

Truly the Feast of the Cross is the procession of victory, in which we follow our Lord.

In the hymn of the three saintly youths, "**We follow you by all our hearts,**" several verses come to mind such as, "*Take up the cross and follow me*", the same verse that St. Anthony heard and became the foundational verse for monasticism, "*Go your way, sell whatever*





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*you have and give to the poor, ... and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mark 10:21), so taking up the Cross is the primary action by which we follow the Lord.*

Christ also said, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Mathew 16:24).*

Also in Luke’s Gospel, the Lord said, *“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke14:27).*

And in John’s Gospel, after talking about the wheat seed, the Lord said, *“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (John12:26).*

Thus, the mystery of the cross is like a flowing stream drawing us to follow the Lord as he said, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” (John 12:32)* This drawing force is a divine force that pulls us to follow the Lord, but not unwillingly, for each one of us has the free will to choose to place himself either in the field of this divine force, or away from it.

### **The Cross is the Power of God:**

The cross is the source of power, *“For the **message** (λόγος) of the cross is foolishness (μωρία) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians1:18).* The Greek word “Logos” stated in this verse could be translated as “a conversation, a message, or a topic”, so the message of the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing, as the Greek word “moria”, which means foolishness or craziness, but for those who are being saved, it is the power of God.

The cross is a source of an infinite force. This force is what moved the hearts of all the saints to become holy, overcome the world and turn it upside down as mentioned in the book of Acts (17:16). Twelve fishermen were able to transform the whole world, from paganism to follow the Cross of the Lord.

This power of change originated from the divine love flowing from the Cross and is the same power that moved the hearts of saints. St. Paul was right when he said that the word of the cross, for those who are being saved is the power of God, an unconquered force that overcomes the world, is the power that made the saints who they are.





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He also writes, “[that you] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height (the dimensions of the Cross)— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:18,19) This “comprehension with all the saints” is nothing but understanding the Cross’ dimensions, which made all saints holy. In other words, no person can become holy without standing at the feet of the Cross and receiving the spiritual power within it.

As St. Paul said, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2), so the Cross abolished from his mind everything but Jesus Christ and His cross. In the eyes of the world he became crazy, but in reality, he has the power of God inside him.

According to this verse, we can deduct that the cross is the school of saints, in which all saints were taught about the love of God. The cross is the factory of all saints, who looked at it and felt the love of the crucified for them and thus, this love was transmitted to their hearts in the form of an irresistible energy, “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1John 4:19), “For the love of Christ compels us,” (1Corinthians 5:14), and also, “because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” (1 Corinthians 5:14,15)

Christ captivated the hearts of the saints by His love on the cross and they felt as though they could no longer live for themselves; the Cross captivated their hearts.

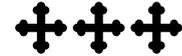
Also St. Paul said, “you are not your own, For you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20). No one is free to do with himself whatever he likes. Whoever stands in front of the cross is not free in himself but became a bond servant of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul calls himself “Paul the bond servant of Jesus Christ”, it is the service of love.

This power originating from the cross, makes things easy for us. The most difficult things become very easy with the power of the cross. If you know this, isn’t it worthy to focus all your efforts to gain this power?

### **The Cross in the Lives of the Saints:**

Now we will take a look at the saints’ experience of the power of the Cross:





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St. Ignatius of Antioch, who departed 110 A.D. (after St. John by less than ten years) says,

***“Let my spirit be counted as nothing for the sake of the cross, which is a stumbling-block to those that do not believe, but to us salvation and life eternal”<sup>1</sup>***

In other words, I do not count myself as anything, even if they hurt my body or threw me to the wild beasts, all my life is so cheap, when compared to the love of Christ who loved me.

This is the same feeling that St. Paul had, when he said, *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8).*

And again he says, *“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:24).*

Nothing counts as anything when compared with the love of Christ for me.

Also the book of Acts mentions when Agabus the prophet took St. Paul’s belt, tied his hand and feet, and said, *“Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” (Acts 21:11)* Everyone started to urge St. Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he answered them saying, *“What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:10-1113).* The decision was so easy for him, and he counted it as the least thing he can offer to Christ.

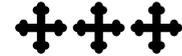
The Cross in the lives of the saints, made everything easy for them, and this was the testimony of Abba Poemen about St. Isidore in the Sayings of the Desert Fathers,

***“Abba Poemen used to say this about Abba Isidore: every night he plaited a bundle of palms, and the brethren pleaded with him saying, 'Rest a little, for you are getting old.' But he said to them, 'Even if Isidore were burned, and***

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<sup>1</sup> The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians 18





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***his ashes thrown to the winds, I would not allow myself any relaxation because the Son of God came here for our sake.”***

St. Isidore’s life and all his struggles was so cheap in his eyes; what is its worth if he plaited a bundle of palms every night, or if they burnt him and threw his ashes to the winds? It cannot be compared to what the Son of God done for his sake.

St. Macarius explains this in a beautiful way,

***“The soul that really loves God and Christ, though it may do ten thousand righteousnesses, esteems itself as having wrought nothing, by reason of its insatiable aspiration after God”***

The soul that loves God and comprehends Christ’s love on the cross and that “We love Him because He first loved us”, though it may do ten thousand righteous deeds, they count as nothing. All the soul’s deeds including fasting, which some used to fast for the whole week, counts as nothing. Even praying all night and staying for late hours in service, is considered nothing compared to what Christ did for us.

For the love of Christ compels us, and makes all our deeds very cheap, when compared to what Christ has done for us.

This statement by St. Macarius, was resembled in the life of Jacob.

Jacob served his uncle Laban seven years to take Rachel as his wife, and it is written that they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her (Genesis 29:20). His service was easy, and all his work was so cheap because of the love he had for her.

It is the same for the person who loves God. Seven years flow by as though they were only a few days, and all the sufferings like those of St. Ignatius, when he was about to be thrown to the wild beasts, are considered nothing for him, because of his great love for Christ.

When we see the experiences of these saints, we understand what St. Paul meant when he said that the Cross is the power of God, not on the theoretical level but practically. The Cross is a “magnetic” force that compels you to fast, pray, do metanias, without feeling that you are doing something too hard or heavy for this force helps you to easily endure any tribulation that comes in your way for the love of Christ.





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## St. Anthony's Experience of the Cross:

St. Anthony says,

***“My beloved children, I beseech you to present yourselves to the Lord, with all your hearts and souls, and know that all our deeds that we present to the Lord is by His grace that He grants us, can never be compared to His humility for our sakes.” (Letters of St. Anthony 7:2)***

If we have the Love of God in our hearts, and we know how much He loves us, we will realize that all the deeds we present to Him, through His grace, cannot be compared to His humility for our sake or with what He has done for us.

St. Anthony also says, “My beloved children, struggle to gain this power, with which you can do all your deeds easily and comfortably.” (St. Anthony Letters 9:2).

You will find all the ascetic deeds done easily, Why? For a very simple reason, The Lord said: “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” (John 12:32). If you put yourself in the divine magnetic field, the magnetic field of the Cross, and if your heart felt Christ's heart on the Cross, all your ascetic deeds become so easy for you. You will, by no means, be carried by this divine stream flow, for the Lord's words will never pass away, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*” (Mathew 24:35), as He said: “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself,*” pointing towards the Cross.

St. Anthony also says, “I will teach you another deed that confirms man from beginning to end; to love God with all your heart and worship Him. At that point, God gives him great power and joy, and all the spiritual deeds become delightful for him, and so are all the ascetic deeds, like vigil and carrying the Lord's burden, would all be completed with ease.” (St. Anthony's letter 18:8)

*“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Mathew 11:30)*

## The Exposition of the Feast of the Cross:

***“Hail to the Cross on which the Lord was crucified, and He stretched His Hands and attracted everyone to Him”***





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In the Antiphonarium of the Feast of the Cross, we read: “Hail to the Cross, the magnet stone that attracted everyone to it”. These words are so true, for whoever puts himself in the field of this power, must be attracted to it, just like iron is attracted to magnet. Our only job is to merely put ourselves in the field of this power. We are not asked to perform heavy ascetic deeds, but to put ourselves in the field of the power of the Cross.; the power of love. Only then will our ascetic deeds seem easy.

### **The Cross is the Source of Joy:**

We were talking about the tremendous power of the Cross, but we see St. Anthony talking about some sort of a new joy, “And then, God grants him great power and joy, and he enjoys all the spiritual deeds very much.”

Truly, the Cross is the source of joy, and this is one of the great mysteries of the Cross. St. Paul mentions in several places using contradicting terms, “Rejoice in my pain”. Pain is always associated with grief, so how can it be associated with joy? This is the mystery of the Cross, that I rejoice in my pains.

### **The Cross is the Source of All Sweetness:**

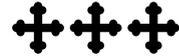
In the Exposition of the feast of the Cross: “***Hail to the Cross that was put in the bitter water and it was rendered sweet to quench the thirst of the faithful.***”

We find this same meaning mentioned by St. Cyril the Great, commenting on Moses’ staff, which was thrown in the bitter water of “Marah” (Exodus 15:23), transforming the bitterness of the water to sweetness, and so they can drink from it, “The water in Marah was really bitter, but it became sweet, when God used the staff of Moses and commanded him to throw it in the water, and thus, this staff became a type of the Holy Cross”.

There is a deep mystery in this story, it is the mystery of transforming our sufferings and humiliations to something sweet and enjoyable, the mystery of turning all bitterness of this world to sweetness. The Cross is like a “secret powder” that when added to any bitter food, it sweetens it. If you were ever insulted or humiliated, add two drops of the Cross’ “secret powder”, just like Moses put the staff in the water, and you will find the bitter water sweetened, ready for you to drink and attain eternal life.

Just stand a few minutes before the Cross, before the Beloved, who endured all these sufferings for you, and you will find all your tribulations as though they were nothing, even





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if they burnt me and threw my ashes to the wind (as St. Isidore said), it does not count as anything and even if I did ten thousand deeds (as St. Macarius said), I don't consider myself to have done anything compared to what Jesus has done for me.

Stand before the Cross, you will find all sorrows, all your sufferings so little. On the contrary, it's your pride to be a partaker in the suffering of Christ.

### **The Joy of Partaking in Christ's Sufferings:**

This is a theme throughout the Bible. Here are few examples:

St. Paul says: *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church."* (Colossians 1:24)

Why are you rejoicing in your sufferings? I am rejoicing because my sufferings yield fruits in the body of Christ, the church, and revives it. So, my sufferings, when I am partaking in Christ's sufferings, become fruitful because Christ's sufferings must always be fruitful. The Fathers usually resemble the Cross to a piece of wood or a tree that blossomed and brought forth fruit. This is what St. Paul said that Christ's sufferings yielded a fruitful church and a fruitful vine. When I share in His sufferings, I share in producing the fruits.

*"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."* (John 15:8)

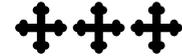
You will never bear much fruit, except when you resemble me *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."* (John 12:24).

St. Paul's sufferings were to fill up in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, the church. So, how can he not rejoice when he knows that his sufferings will yield fruits and allow the comfort of the Holy Spirit to be poured abundantly on the church?!

For this reason, St. Peter also says, *"rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."* (1Peter 4:13)

**"In much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit"**





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St. Paul says, “*And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.*” (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

We notice in this verse, the relationship between affliction and the joy of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only One who blends affliction with joy as St. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they have become followers of him as he rejoices in his sufferings just like the Lord who also rejoiced in His sufferings, “*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.*” (Hebrews 12:2)

Through His Cross, Christ shared in our sufferings, and transformed it from its sorrowful and accursed nature, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*” (Galatians 3:13), to become a blessing and a source of fruits for the entire church and: that’s what St. Paul says,” *Rejoice in my sufferings, for the sake of His body, which is the church.*”

St. James also emphasizes the same idea in his words, “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials*” (James 1:2)

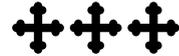
### **How can we rejoice in suffering?**

All the above-mentioned verses reveal the paradox of suffering and joy, which might not make sense, “*for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” Thus, the idea of carrying the Cross is illogical. How can we rejoice in pain, and how can we “*count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*”, it’s totally illogical if you take it from a worldly point of view, but for us who are being saved, it’s “**the power of God.**” Because the Son of God endured those sufferings, the curse that they used to carry were demolished and were transformed to joyful and fruitful experiences that we go through.

This is the tremendous transforming power of the Cross, which is offered to all of us, if we stand before the Crucified, just for a few minutes with a heartily prayer and when we do so, we will discover the endless love by which we were loved, and as a result, this same love passes on to us, as He promised, “*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*” (Luke 12:49).

This divine fire is transmitted from the heart of the crucified Son of God to our hearts, becoming a tremendous power, “**The power of God**”, which helps us to endure all sufferings joyfully, becoming a strong undefeated force, transforming all bitterness to





sweetness, and instead of saying, “we grief in suffering”, we say “we rejoice in suffering” and instead of grieving when insulted, we receive life instead of deadly poison that it used to carry within.

**The Life-giving cross:**

This is why the doxology calls the Cross, “The life-giving Cross”.

The Cross is the source of eternal life, from which we receive the power of life. The source of death and curse became a source of eternal life.

May our Lord Jesus Christ move our hearts by his divine love and help us to be edified by His Life-giving Cross that we receive the power of eternal life, that we may rejoice in all tribulations that face us this coming year. Glory be to God forever Amen.

*“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him...and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”*  
(Mark 10:21)

The Cross is a special gift that Christ grants to His beloved ones, the Cross is very special to Christ, that He reveals only to His beloved.

A saint is not the one who does miracles, but is the one who succeeded in entering the mill of sorrows, and was crushed by its blades, yet he got out, closer and more attached to God, sanctified, renewed and more ready for the Kingdom of God.

Tribulations are healthy signs for the correctness of the way, and a guarantee for its safety, the more the sufferings, the more the glory!





The Feast of the Cross..

There is such a paradox in this title..

If it is a cross, why are we celebrating it?! It makes common sense for the cross to be considered the worst disaster in human history. How can St. Paul say, "*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 6:14).

How can we boast in the cross? It makes sense to boast in the resurrection, but in the cross? It's too difficult. Why are we celebrating the cross? Why do we boast in it? How is the cross a source of joy, pride and glory?

**There is only one answer to these questions. The cross is the revelation of Christ's indescribable love for each and everyone of us.**