



A Newsletter from the Missions Office/Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States
Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio

An Instrument of Torture became a Symbol of Hope

*To monthly mission donors:
“Thank you for your support!”*

On behalf of His Excellency Frederick F. Campbell, the Bishop of Columbus, and Father Andrew Small, OMI, the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, I would like to thank you for your prayers, sacrifices and financial support for the missions.

Some people ask: “How could God be both just and kind at the same time? How could God dispense both truth and mercy at the same time? How could God forgive our sins without endorsing sin?”

These are very good questions. From our perspective there are only two ways to look at the opposites asked by these questions – we would have to choose one option or the other. But from God’s perspective there is a third option – the cross of Christ.

The cross is the symbol of Christianity. You can see it on top of a church, carved on a tombstone, engraved and suspended on a chain.

Do you sometimes find it strange that a tool of torture would come to embody a movement of hope? The symbols of other religions are upbeat – like the six pointed Star

of David for Judaism, or the crescent moon for Islam, or the lotus blossom of Buddhism.

Yet for Christianity it is the cross. Why is the cross a symbol of our faith? The answer to the question is found on the cross itself. One beam is horizontal and the other is vertical; one beam reaches out like God’s love; the other beam reaches up as does God’s holiness. One beam represents the width of God’s love; the other beam reflects God’s holiness.

The cross is the intersection where God forgives us without lowering His standards. God puts our sins on His Son and punishes our sins there so that we could be right with God (2 Cor. 5:21).

Though Christ never sinned, on the cross God treated him as sinner so that we could become acceptable to God. Picture this: God is on His throne; you are on earth; between you and God is Christ on the cross. Your sins have been placed on Jesus. God, who punishes sin, releases His rightful wrath on your sins. Jesus receives the blow. Since Christ is between you and God, God’s wrath does not hit you. Sin is punished, but you are safe – safe in the shadow of the cross.

God gave His Son, His only Son! Would you give your only son or daughter for someone else? I would not. There are those for

whom I would give my life. But if you would ask me to make a list of people for whom I would kill my child, the paper would be blank.

But God’s list contains the name of every person, from the beginning of the world to the end of the world, for this is the scope of God’s love. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (John 3:16).

God’s love is wide enough for the whole world. You are a part of the world, so you are included in God’s love.

It is a good feeling to be included. We are not always included. Universities do not include us if we are not smart enough. Business enterprises exclude us if we do not qualify. Sadly, sometimes churches exclude us if we don’t meet certain standards. Churches may exclude us, but Christ does not.

Jesus stretched one arm to the right and the other to the left and he had them nailed in that position so that you and I would know that he died loving us. Is there any limit to God’s love? David the adulterer did not find it. Paul the persecutor did not find it. Peter the denier never found it. When it came to life, David, Paul and Peter hit bottom. But when it came to God’s love, they never did.

Death is Dead!

Death is like a bully. It catches us in the midst of life. It taunts us and it badgers us on our way home to the Father, saying: "You too, will die someday."

You can see death at the head of every funeral procession. Its presence is felt in a hospital's intensive care waiting room. We can see the face of death in cancer wards and in the faces of the children dying of hunger in Third World countries. We can see death as we slow our cars down out of respect when we encounter a funeral procession.

"Your time is coming," death reminds us. Oh, we try to prove that death is not coming for us. We jog, we diet, we pump iron. We try to escape death, knowing all along that we will only at best postpone it. Like taxes, death is real.

Everyone has a number and every number will be called. The thought of death tightens our stomachs and leaves us wide-eyed and flatfooted and blankets us with fear. Death steals the joys of our youth and the peace of our golden years. If death succeeds in what it intends to do, death makes us so afraid of dying that we might never learn to live.

Our unease with death indicates that we know more than we realize – that death, like sin, does not belong here. We are meant not to experience sin and death. Sin leads to death. The existence of death proves the reality of sin.

God is life. Turning away from God is fatal. Death is the consequence of sin (Gen. 2:16-17). Death is one of the most normal things about life in this

world – as normal as birth. Yet we cannot reconcile ourselves with this reality. Death never feels natural. Death feels wrong. So we put too much effort into living as though death is not going to happen.

That's why we should never face death alone. Death is too big a bully for you to fight by yourself. That is why you need a big brother. And Jesus is that brother. That's why Jesus shared in our humanity so that by His death He might break the power of the one who holds the power of death – to free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Jesus did not come to free angels, but to free humankind (Heb. 2:14-18).

When Jesus came, He unmasked death. Jesus exposed death for what it really is. Death tries to appear big, but in reality death is but a midget.

If you want to know how to conduct yourself at a funeral, don't look at Jesus as an example. In fact, Jesus interrupted every funeral He attended. Like a lifeguard, Jesus couldn't sit still when someone was drowning. Like a teacher, Jesus could not resist helping when a student was confused. And Jesus could not watch a funeral without doing something about death.

Though death still terrifies us, it has no more sting. Death is dead. Jesus conquered it. The resurrection is not only the conclusion of the Gospel story – it fulfills it. In fact, there is no Gospel story without the resurrection. Without the resurrection we have nothing – we are nothing. The resurrection

saves us. Good Friday is not good without Easter Sunday.

There is no salvation without the resurrection. Jesus died for our sins and He rose for our salvation (Rom. 4:25). If Jesus did not rise, our debt of sin would remain unpaid. We would still be under the dominion of sin. If there were no Easter life for Jesus, there would be no new life for us.

Happy Easter!

A joke a priest can tell... LOL!

George W. Bush, in an airport lobby, noticed a man in a long flowing white robe with a long white beard and flowing white hair. The man had a staff in one hand and some stone tablets under the other arm.

George W. approached the man and inquired, "Aren't you Moses?" The man ignored George W. and stared at the ceiling. George W. positioned himself more directly in the man's view and asked again, "Aren't you Moses?" The man continued to peruse the ceiling. George W. tugged at the man's sleeve and asked once again, "Aren't you Moses?" The man finally responded in an irritated voice, "Yes I am."

George W. asked him why he was so uppity, and the man replied, "The last time I spoke to a Bush I had to spend forty years in the desert."

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