

# Saints - Take Up Your Cross

R058-ae

This homily "Take Up Your Cross" was given on 12-14-20 the Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, priest and doctor of the Church on a Gospel from Luke 14:25-33 on a topic of "Take up your cross."

*Summary Description Rev. Britto M. Berchmans, Pastor of St. Paul of the Cross Parish, shared his practical thoughts on the everyday advantage of saints to us: "Take up your cross!" Gain the experience of St. John of the Cross. Understand how a mystic is different, what the mystic undergoes, and the lessons learned for us.*

Luke 14:33

"In the same way, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

The Gospel of the Lord.

I always love it when we have the feast of the saints because when we hear the Gospel, the scriptures, we hear those words, but when you listen to the stories of the saints, they teach us how to live those words, how to live the Gospel, how to bring those words of scripture alive. So today we celebrate the Feast of St. John of the Cross. Now that appendage to his name, of the Cross, practically defines who he was. He was born in 1542 in Spain, and his father was a nobleman, but the father was kind of disowned by the family because he married a common girl, not a woman of nobility. So the family fell into different difficult times, and soon after John was born, his mother died.

So John started with a lot of suffering, but then the father was able to afford John a good education, and as a young man, John decided to join the Carmelites because the Carmelite Order at that time was one of those orders that really emphasize prayer life and spiritual life and all that. So he joined the Carmelites.

At that time, the Carmelites both of the nuns as well as the priests, they had kind of become lukewarm, tepid, and this happens in many religious communities. A founder starts a community with a great spirit, but then eventually that spirit kind of fritters away and people become lukewarm. That's what happened at the time of John of the Cross.

When he was ordained a priest, as a young priest, he meets a great stalwart of the spiritual life, Teresa of Avila. Teresa of Avila already had started the reform of the Order of Carmel because among the nuns the same kind of tepidity had crept in. So she wanted to renew the Carmelite Order. So she sees she wanted a priest in the Carmelites to be her partner and she recognizes in John of the Cross that person, but there was an age difference of almost 25 years between them. She was 50 something and he was 20 something, but they struck this beautiful friendship between the two of them with a common goal of improving the spirit of the Carmelites and those of the Discalced Carmelites.

But the problem was that John's own brothers did not like it. They did not want to live a life that was tough. So you know what they did? At one point, they imprisoned him. His own brothers put him in prison in the community, in the monastery, and they fed

him only bread and water for months, nine months. Even when he was close almost to death, then he miraculously escaped from there. But even then, the community that he founded, the Order that he founded, stripped him of all his responsibilities and leadership. So this poor man suffered all his life. He wrote beautiful spiritual classics called the Ascent of Mount Carmel, the Dark Night of the Soul, and many other beautiful books on spiritual life, but all of these became famous only after he died. When he died, he was unknown, unrecognized, and unsung.

So what is the lesson? In his own spiritual writings, he says we all go through what he calls the dark night of the soul. See, those of us, we try to get closer to God. In the beginning, God gives us a lot of comfort and consolation, and everything is so beautiful. We love going to church. We love praying. But then there comes a period as you grow closer to God. There is this dark night. God seems to be quiet. Similar to what Mother Teresa experienced for the last many years of her life. God seems to be absent, but what John of the Cross says, "God is not gone. He is just there, but quiet." So you got to believe that. God uses all our sufferings to take away all that hinders his gift from getting close to him. So John of the Cross said we need to embrace the cross. Just like our own patron (St. Paul of the Cross) we follow the cross. They understood. That is why we heard the Gospel, and the first reading from **2 Corinthians 10:17**

But as the scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast must boast about what the Lord has done." That is bear the cross.

So we all are called to embrace our disappointments, the difficulties, and even

the suffering that our own people who are supposed to love us bring to us, and to bear them, because God uses all that to purify us to get us closer to him. So today, as we go through the day, whatever challenges we have, whatever setbacks or even if the people we love, our family, our friends, even if they bring us some suffering, we can offer it all up because God, in His own infinite wisdom, uses all that to draw us closer to Him. God bless you.