

Singing Our Faith
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 3, 2017

This Sunday's gospel contains the familiar phrase, **“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”** The idea of **taking up** or **bearing** one's cross is often used to describe bearing suffering or hardship. While the idea of “offering up” suffering is certainly valid, Jesus is talking about a different cross – the cross of discipleship.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah expresses inner frustration with the Lord. After being criticized for his prophecies, Jeremiah wants to give up. But then he proclaims, **“I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones.”** This is a reminder that God has placed a desire for holiness in each of us. It's our job to listen to him in prayer and discern his calling for our life.

The opening hymn “Lift High the Cross” (below) is often heard on Holy Thursday and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (9/14). Today it leads us into these readings about the cross of discipleship.

The hymn begins with a core principle of discipleship – to proclaim Christ ceaselessly to all the world. Stanzas 1 and 2 are an invitation to take up our cross. The text invites us to follow Christ on the path of discipleship which involves *trotting* on the path of suffering, just as Christ journeyed to be crucified. It reminds us that the road of discipleship is not easy. Stanza 2 reassures us that we aren't alone on this road. We are accompanied by the “hosts of

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God,” the martyrs, saints, and all who have given their life to Christ. We pray to the saints to give us strength to be more like Christ, to intercede that we may some day join them in the Kingdom of God.

Stanza 3 recalls St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (6:3) – we are baptized into the life and death of Jesus Christ. We bear on our soul the seal of his life, death, and resurrection.

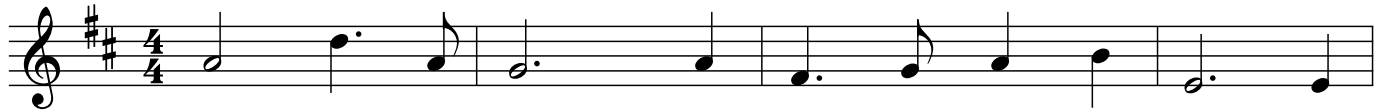
Stanzas 4 and 5 together create a prayer – try praying those stanzas back to back. The text of stanza 5 expresses the great paradox of our faith; that we give praise to a crucified Messiah. As Saint Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians - **“But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.”** Like St. Paul, many non-Christians in our world today wonder why an all-powerful God had to be crucified. We know that it’s through his suffering, death, and resurrection that we have life. Indeed - “So shall our song of triumph ever be: Praise to the Crucified for victory!”

Stephen Eros

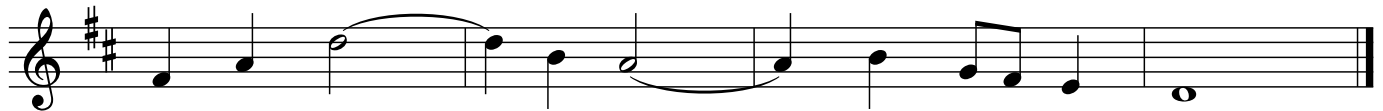
Director of Liturgy & Music

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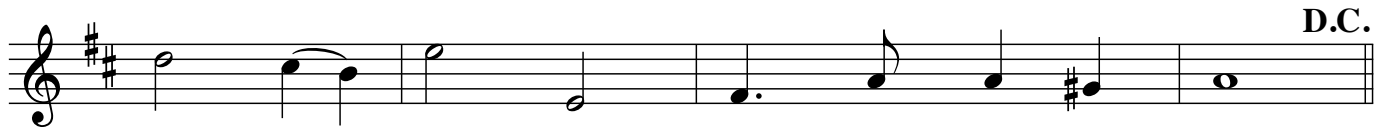
Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro-claim till



all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.



1. Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where the Mas - ter trod, our
2. Led on their way by this tri - um-phant sign, the
3. Each new - born fol - l'wer of the Cru - ci - fied bears
4. O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree, your
5. So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be: praise



King vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.
 hosts of God in con - quering ranks com - bine.
 on the brow the seal of him who died.
 death has bought us life e - ter - nal - ly.
 to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry!

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18; George W. Kitchin, 1827-1912, and Michael R. Newbolt, 1874-1956, alt.
 Tune: CRUCIFER, 10 10 with refrain; Sydney H. Nicholson, 1875-1947
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