



## And They Wore a Crown of Thorns-- *an extraordinary mystical gift given to victim souls.*

...the sphere of action of a young woman who remains in the world is necessarily limited, no matter what her position; while if she enters religion, she becomes an instrument in God's hands by means of which valuable services are rendered to the whole human family. ...The first service she renders the human race is that of expiation. All who believe in God know that such a thing as sin exists; sin, which offends His supreme majesty. They also know and acknowledge that sin requires expiation: that this expiation might be adequate— equal to the offence—God has demanded it of the Incarnate Word, and He has paid it by all the works of His mortal life,—more particularly by His Passion and death. The Redemption is the great and 'divine work of expiation. "This expiation of Christ is, indeed, adequate,—even superabundant; but, still, God demands something further: the family, which forms a moral unity, must itself expiate the sins, the disorders of its members; society, especially when crimes are multiplying in its bosom, must submit to this law of expiation.

Jesus told St. Theresa, "Woe to the world if there were no religious," for it is through the merits of religious that the world still exists. He was especially referring to contemplative sisters as essential to the business of the world and the work of redemption, for the highest usefulness is spiritual rather than physical, intellectual rather than corporal. During the fourteenth century at least twenty-three Saints and great servants of God were adorned with the glorious stigmata of the Passion or with the mystic crown of thorns. In Roman Catholic traditions, those called "mystics" have been distinguished from ordinary saints by their ecstasies or personal experiences with God. These mystics are recognized by their deep contemplation and identity with Christ's Passion and their devotion to the eternal sacrifice of the Lamb of God upon our altar tables in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Eucharist. <http://www.catholictradition.org/Passion/crown-thorns14.htm>. Reference: "The Mission of the CONTEMPLATIVE ORDERS", printed by the Society of the Divine Word. Cleveland, Ohio, August 17, 1912.

The Eucharist memorializes throughout time and into eternity Christ's perfect expiation for the sins of all mankind by His life, death and resurrection which are made present on every altar where the Most Holy Eucharist is celebrated. Certain chosen souls are invited by Christ into that mystical experience of divine espousal whereby they are united with Him in His sufferings in a most intimate way in expiation for the sins of the family. These souls wear a crown of thorns and/or bear the stigmata as well. These extraordinary mystical gifts are given to select victim souls, as St. Catherine of Siena, now



*St. Catherine of Siena*



*St. Rita of Cascia*

a doctor of the Church, who was offered a golden crown, ensuring riches on earth, or a crown of thorns, guaranteeing glory in heaven. She chose the latter, suffering greatly for love of Jesus. She died at 33.

Another mystic was St. Rita of Cascia who, after hearing a profound sermon on the Passion of Jesus, went back to her convent and prostrated on the floor. After prayer she felt one of the thorns from Christ's crown, like an arrow flung by Jesus, penetrate the flesh and bone in the middle of her forehead. The wound in time became ugly, as little worms formed in the wound, revolting her sister companions. Hence, she stayed

in her cell for the next fifteen years, in great pain and deep prayer. At her death a great light emanated from the wound on her forehead and the worms became sparks of light.

St. Gemma of Galgani lost her mother when eight years old. At nineteen, she lost her father. Shortly after, she became gravely ill but Jesus appeared and cured her. She saw her guardian angel who tutored her. Then Our Lady appeared and said Jesus had a special grace for her. She was given the stigmata and a crown of thorns; she also experienced the scourging. She had many ecstasies and wrote so many passages of fiery love. She wished only to suffer with Jesus as He had suffered for us. In 1902 she became ill with tuberculosis which began to consume her body. At 25, she died, consumed by the fire of divine love.



*St. Gemma Galgani*



*Marie Rose Ferron*

A contemporary, American mystic and stigmatist who lived from 1902-1936 in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, also graced with the crown of thorns is Marie Rose Ferron. She had visions of the Child Jesus at age six. At thirteen one hand and one foot became paralyzed, but the hand healed when she blessed herself with holy water after Mass; the foot did not heal. Sadness overcame her as she felt she would be handicapped for the rest of her life. Meanwhile, the bishop of the diocese wanted to build several high schools but a segment of the French speaking Catholic population opposed him bitterly and refused to support the church. He excommunicated the 56 leaders. The bishop felt that he needed a victim soul to pray for his ministry and asked the bedridden Marie Rose if she would suffer for the Diocese of Providence, for its priests, and for those he was obliged to punish. **She said: "I am willing to suffer as you wish and for the return of those you have excommunicated. I accept at once. It will be my mission to pray for their return." She prayed to Jesus: "Take everything I have and cherish. I am ready to suffer until the last one is converted, even one hundred years if You so wish it!"** While in ecstasy she could not be lifted, even by four grown men, although she weighed not more than seventy-five pounds. Moreover, her body remained rigid, except when she spoke or wanted to use her hands while in conversation with Christ. Her sufferings in union with Jesus' Passion were intense. Finally, in 1936, after years of suffering with Jesus, she died at the age of 33, the same age at which Jesus was crucified.

Reference:

<https://www.mysticsofthechurch.com/2010/03/marie-rose-ferron-american-mystic>.

Another stigmatist was St. Veronica Giuliani whose mother died when she was only four. Her mother had consecrated each of her five children to one of Christ's wounds and bade them seek refuge there when in need. Veronica received the wound in Christ's side. At seventeen she entered the convent. One Good Friday she received the stigmata and later the crown of thorns. She entered into a divine espousal with Jesus who gave her a mystical ring as a pledge of His love. Part of her suffering was being put to a test of humility and obedience, being imprisoned in a remote cell and denied Holy Communion and Mass, except on Sundays and holydays. She was tormented and ridiculed by her sisters. Wishing to suffer what Jesus did, she made herself a cross on which she hung for an hour each night until forbidden to do so. Her identity with Christ's sufferings was so great that when she died, the instruments of His torture during the



*St. Veronica Giuliani*

crucifixion were engraved on her heart. <https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/saint-veronica-giuliani.html>

While St. Francis of Assisi is the first saint to receive the stigmata, and Padre Pio is likely the most well-known today, we have focused on women saints graced with the stigmata of the Holy Wounds or the thorn stigmata, the crown of thorns. There are many more, like St. Julian of Norwich, Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, Therese Neumann, and Saint Faustina. We could only address these few in this short space, but the one dearest and most contemporary to us all is our own beloved Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, 1916-2000. Most of her life was spent in Ohio in a life of sheer humility and utter simplicity. Her intimate encounters with Jesus, Mary and Joseph began in the 1940's. Visions of St. Michael and St. Gabriel and then Our Lady of America, Jesus and St. Joseph and the guardian angels over America began in 1954 and continued until 1984. These supernatural happenings consisted of locutions, visions, infused knowledge, bi-location and divine espousal. Sister's August 6, 1956 letter to her spiritual director recounts Jesus' invitation to her: **Jesus came to me holding a large cross and a crown of thorns. He said to me smiling, as though He knew what the answer would be (He did of course.)**

**"I come with My cross and My crown of thorns, will you accept Me My spouse?"** You know the only answer I could give, Father. Who could refuse Jesus anything? During the night I awoke and Jesus said to me, and He said it with a profound emphasis: **"I have placed you upon the Altar of Sacrifice."** Later, He asked her again: **"Bride of My Heart, do you still wish to suffer all things to give Me to souls?"** I answered: **"Yes, yes dear Lord, I am poor and wretched and unworthy, but you know what is in my heart."** He said, **"My little white dove, will you then continue to wear the Crown of Thorns, and permit yourself to be nailed to the Cross?"** And so she was, another beautiful victim soul for the expiation of sin!



Sister loved the humble, hidden life of the cloister. Being forced out of the monastery, the religious habit, the seclusion of the cloister by a more liberal-minded active order under whose authority her cloister was set up, brought her great anguish. Hence, she chose exile rather than return to an order too active to appreciate a contemplative vocation. Thus, she became a member of a religious association living amidst the laity in private vow, under the counsel of her spiritual director, Rev. Edmund Mormon. He told her "you are what you are, a contemplative sister," and so we continue to refer to her as our "Sister" Mildred, even though she no longer had canonical vows once she separated from the active order of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. **Oddly, this exile was spoken of by Our Lady as Sister's haven of rest, but not from suffering.** She died January 10, 2000. Those who knew her believe that when her body is exhumed, it will show signs of both the stigmata and the crown of thorns. She was crucified with Christ and became a co-redeemer with Him in His bitter Passion. St. Gemma's guardian angel advised these special victim souls: **"Remember that the precious jewelry that adorns the spouse of the Crucified King can only be thorns and the cross."**

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<https://www.ourladyofamerica.com/whatsnew/DevotionstotheMostPreciousBloodofJesus.pdf>

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