



Titian – 1487 - 1576

We Go to Heaven by Way of the Cross!

“If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. (New American Standard Bible, Mt: 6:24.) Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.” (Mt: 10:38.)

“Will You Accept the Cross?” In a vision in the fall of 1954,

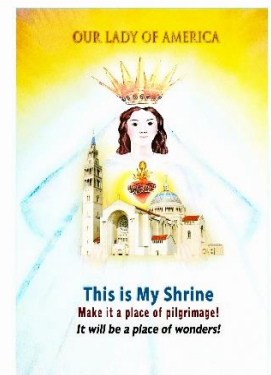
St. Michael offered Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, visionary for Our Lady of America’s messages, the palm of victory, but unaware of any victory of hers, Sister simply ignored him and returned to her prayers. However, when he asked if she would accept the cross, she found him more credible. Sister said “Yes,” she would accept the cross.

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, *The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA*, Tiffin, Ohio, Pgs. 7-8.)

Warning for America: On the feast of the Holy Rosary, October 7, 1957, Our Lady gave sister a warning for her children in America. **“Unless they do penance by mortification and self-denial and thus reform their lives, God will visit them with punishments hitherto unknown to them.”** (Diary, Pg. 21.) We must reform our lives!

Our Lady’s Exhortation to Priests: The tone of penance and the cross continues as Our Lady exhorts her beloved sons, the priests, to be an example to those they serve, living lives of penance, self-denial, and imitation of the Eternal Priesthood of her Divine Son. **“I am pleased, dearly beloved sons, by the honor and love you have until now accorded me. Will you now go further and honor me by taking my words to your hearts and doing what I ask?”** (Diary, Pg. 20.) Previously, Our Lady had asked: **“My daughter, will my children in America listen to my pleadings and console my Immaculate Heart? Will my loyal sons carry out my desires and thus help me bring the peace of Christ once again to mankind?”** (Diary, Pg. 15.) Our Lady’s urgent desire is for the enthronement of her statue as Our Lady of America in our Patronal Church for which she promises the protection of our Land. **“The Forces of Evil are enveloping the world. Their hatred, however, is now particularly focused on the United States because of the Divine Mandate given to it to lead the world to peace.”** (Diary, Pg. 39.) We need her protection!

Only One Shrine and Pilgrimage Site: On October 13, 1956, just days after her first appearance, Our Lady appeared to Sister holding a replica of our National Shrine which was not yet completed. She bid us hasten to finish it and make it a place of special pilgrimage and she will make it a place of wonders. On November 15 that year, Our Lady specifically asked that a statue of her, carried in solemn procession, be placed in a position of honor in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., our Patronal Church. She wishes to be honored **there** as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin. **It is the only shrine and pilgrimage site Our Lady asked for.** Only the US Bishops, who have authority over the Shrine, can do this. The question remains: Why do we not do what Our Lady has asked for, and instead, do what she did **NOT** ask for? (Diary, Pg. 14.)



“O my sweet child, when will my desires be realized?” “O my small one, beloved of my Son’s Heart, prepare yourself by prayer, penance, and suffering for what is to come.” (Diary, Pg. 24.)

Baptized Into the Paschal Mystery: The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that in Baptism we are plunged into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, united with Him in His Passion, death, and resurrection. Is this not sharing in the redemptive mission of Jesus in His Mystical Body as co-redeemers with Him, as St. Paul would have us understand our sharing in the priesthood of Christ? Although Jesus completely paid the debt for our sins, can His work be complete if we do not accept the salvation that He won for us and help others to do the same? Our Lady told Sister that **“nothing is accomplished without pain”**, and she should **“prepare to suffer much”**, for **“suffering completes the work of grace in the soul.”** (Diary, Pg. 23.)

The Thorns, the Wounds, and the Cross: Various chosen souls have been configured to Christ’s Passion in extraordinary ways. St. Catherine of Siena, St. Rita of Cascia, St. Gemma Galgani, and St. Veronica Giuliani were asked by Our Lord to wear a replica of His crown of thorns. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Padre Pio received the stigmata and bore the imprint of Christ’s Sacred Wounds in their own bodies. (Sister) Mildred Mary Neuzil wore the crown of thorns, too. She refused Jesus nothing. She was rejected by her own community even as Jesus was by His. Will her body, when exhumed, show the Sacred Wounds as well? She wrote:

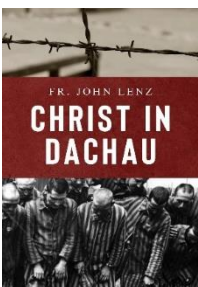


(Sister) Mildred Mary Neuzil

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?”** (August 6, 1956 letter to Fr. Paul Leibold, her spiritual director, a few weeks before Our Lady first appeared. This is living in the Divine Will.)

“Father, Why Have You Abandoned Me?” (Mt: 27:46.) There are those from history whose names immediately evoke terror in our minds and images of seeming abandonment by God for those subjected to the rule of these evil men: Nero, Herod, Hitler, Stalin, and more. The names of Dachau and Auschwitz send shivers up our spine as we try to imagine the desolation of so many of God’s children tortured and dehumanized in concentration camps. Where is their God? Any place where people are enslaved, persecuted, or trafficked and abused adds new dimensions to Christ’s Paschal Mystery, for He continues to suffer in His Mystical Body as He did in His physical Body two thousand years ago. **“Whatever you do to the least of My brothers, you do unto Me.”** (Matthew 25:40.)



During World War II, Hitler’s Dachau Concentration camp became the Priestblock 25487 for the incarceration of 2,720 priests, 94% Roman Catholics, largely Jesuits, and mostly from Poland. Andreas Reiser, an Austrian priest, was sent to Dachau for posting a notice in his church denouncing the Nazi system. Prisoners were stripped to the waist, heads shaved, and condemned to hard labor. An SS guard’s job was to torment

them. **Father Reiser was forced to shape barbed wire into a “crown of thorns” and place it on his head and to process around, carrying planks, in mockery of Christ’s Holy Cross, while the other prisoners were forced to jeer at and spit on him.** Despite such demonic brutality, these priests found ways to resist this dehumanization process and to encourage one another in their sufferings. They saved scraps of bread and conducted secret Masses and Communion services late at night. Father Lenz, who also survived the camp, wrote **CHRIST IN DACHAU**, recording these priests’ identity with Christ’s torture and Passion. Other priest survivors have also written books on the horrors of the experience and God’s amazing grace in the midst of it all. **“If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also,” Jesus said. (John 15:20.) How can we not expect the same?**

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest_Barracks_of_Dachau_Concentration_Camp

Living in the Divine Will: In August of 1957, Our Lady spoke to Sister: **“The Will of the Father must be dearer to you than all else. This is the lesson every soul desiring intimate union with my Son must strive to learn.”** (Diary, Pg. 19.) The earthly trinity, the Holy Family, is the clearest and most profound example of doing and living in the Divine Will. Jesus said, “I have come to do the will of my Father.” Our Lady said, “Let it be done unto me according to thy word.” Joseph, without words, went immediately to do what God had commanded him to do. So must we.

How do we know the Divine Will? Another Jesuit priest, Father Walter J. Ciszek, was captured by the Russians during World War II and was accused of being a Vatican spy. He spent twenty-three agonizing years in the prisons and labor camps of Siberia, pondering on the Will of God. Priests were despised. He felt useless. No one would speak to him. He struggled in prayer how to retain his humanity and hope amidst so much evil, desolation, and despair, how to trust that God had some purpose for what was happening to so many, so long imprisoned like himself. He wrote:

No man, no matter what his situation, is ever without value, is ever useless in God’s eyes. No situation is ever without worth and purpose in God’s providence. It is a very human temptation to feel frustrated by circumstances, to feel overwhelmed and helpless in the face of the established order—whether that order is an NKVD prison, or the whole Soviet system, or “the status quo,” or “city hall,” or “the rat race,” or the “establishment,” or social pressures, or the cultural environment, or the whole, oppressive rotten world! Under the worst imaginable circumstances, a man remains a man with free will, and God stands ready to assist him with his grace. Indeed, more than that, God expects him to act in these circumstances, this situation, as he would have him act. For these situations, too, these people and places and things, are God’s will for him now.

(Walter J. Ciszek, S.J. **HE LEADETH ME**, Image, New York, Pgs. 47-48.)

The Gospel of John contains Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer from the Garden of Gethsemane. Knowing the agony He was about to experience on the cross, Jesus took time to pray, not only for His apostles but for all future Christians. He prayed for us!

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” (John 17:22–23.) Amen!

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