

THE GREAT TREE OF THE CROSS

A Christian rendering of the Rabbinic Story of the Great Tree of Sorrows.

Intent of these jottings:

- ✓ *A reflection on the Christian meaning of Suffering.*
- ✓ *For a Christian there are no crosses, but only crucifixes*
- ✓ *Christ has killed the sting of suffering and the shame of the cross.*
- ✓ *Crosses without Christ are abominable, with Christ adorable.*

The Story

People were complaining about the many crosses they had to carry in life. Each one affirmed that his crosses were the worst and the heaviest of all, and that God had afflicted them most! Then, Jesus told them

Before the Day of Judgment, when all people will gather before God my Father, I'll free you from all your sufferings and crosses, by allowing you to hang them from the arms of my big Cross standing in the midst of all.

And so, it happened

After that, for a long time, everybody was free from pain and sorrow. Everybody could enjoy to his heart's content, free from sufferings and crosses.

At the end of that glorious time, Jesus asked the people to go around His large and heavy Cross wherefrom all their crosses hang and pick up from His big cross any crosses they would find best suited to them.

People milled and milled around and around Jesus' Cross. They looked at all the crosses hanging from its limbs. It wasn't easy for them to decide which crosses to choose.

Finally, when all had picked up the crosses of their choice, lo! And behold! Each one had reclaimed his own crosses, but oh wonder!. **They were no Crosses any more; they had turned into small crucifixes!**

Points for Reflection

1. Are we easily willing to accept sufferings and crosses in our life?
2. When visited by suffering and crosses, what do we usually do?
3. What's the result of it?
4. What should we do?
5. Is it easy to accept sufferings and crosses in our life? Why?

6. How can we make our pains and troubles bearable?
7. What does the story of the Great Tree of the Cross teach you?
8. Does suffering for a Christian have any meaning? If so, which? Explain.
9. What does the final line of the story tell you?
10. Reflect:
 - For a Christian there are no crosses, but only crucifixes.
 - The cross alone is abominable, with Christ adorable.
 - Life is a way of the cross from start to finish, walking it alone is unbearable, walking it with Christ comfortable, even enjoyable.

POINTS FOR MEDITATION

First Part.

Christ's Cross v/s Christ's Crucifix.

Holding the Crucifix in your hands. Look at it from the reverse: What do you see?

Just a plain cross!

What was the cross before Jesus' crucifixion?

Just a jibbed, an abominable thing, something frightful to be avoided at any costs, an instrument of torture and execution, of cruelty and ignominy

Next, look at the Cross from the front. What do you see?

A Crucifix, An object of veneration! A sign of victory, of salvation and hope!

What did change the meaning and symbolism of the Cross? What did transform the Cross into a Crucifix?

Christ willing and loving acceptance of the sufferings of the Cross as the means of our salvation.

From then on, when we see a Cross, with Jesus nailed to it, we do not pay attention to the Cross – the old symbol of suffering – but to the person of Jesus, our Savior, Lord and Master. The sign and assurance of our salvation.

Christ has transformed the Cross into a Crucifix

Personal Prayer:

- Thank him for accepting the cross for our sake of our salvation.
- Then kiss the Cross. The Cross is the instrument of our deliverance.
- Sing, or hum several times the tune: of” **We hail Thee; Savior and Lord. Because of thy Cross has redeemed the world”** .

2nd Part .

Our Crosses vs Our Crucifixes.

What are the crosses besetting you, right now?

- Sicknesses, hardships failures, accusations, loneliness, poverty, joblessness, etc Recall them all, one by one.
- Do you accept them lovingly?

- Do you grumble at God because of them?
- Do you try to avoid them at any cost?
- Are you aware that because of these crosses, you, like Jesus and with Jesus, save yourself and others as well?
- By accepting your crosses lovingly you turn them into Crucifixes.
- By not accepting them, you turn them into be gibbets, into objects of torment for you?
- Every time you nail yourself to your cross – by lovingly accepting it like Jesus, - you become a Crucifix

Personal Prayer:

- Spend time praying with the words of Jesus in Gethsemane:
“Fatter, if it is possible, let this chalice - my crosses - pass by;
but not my will, but yours be done! **Not what I want, but what you want**”
- **Ask for courage to always gladly carry your crosses.**