

The 34th Annual Summer Conference—Building the Church

A Retreat for All Ages

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Benedictine Sisters, Mt. Angel, OR

CONFERENCE FOUR

BASIL HUME: THE PREACHER

There is no spiritual maturity without the Cross. If you don't meet the cross sometime in your life you can never be spiritually mature: you remain spiritually a child.

—Basil Hume, unpublished conference, 1965

The Cross and Discipleship

"It is remarkable that in the Gospel, as far as I remember, our Lord does not talk about following him or being his disciples without a reference to the Cross or to the chalice, the symbol of suffering."¹

No one who does not carry his cross and come after me can be my disciple.
(Luke 14:27)

FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ What does it mean to carry your cross?

REMEMBER...

"The Cross on its own does not make sense. The Cross together with the Resurrection does."²



Why do you seek the living among the dead? HE is not here but HE has been raised.
(Luke 24:5-6)

¹ Hume, *Searching for God*, 142, April 4, 1966.

² Hume, *Searching for God*, 142.

CARRYING ON THE WORK OF REDEMPTION³

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.
(Luke 23:48)

It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts should boast in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:30-31)

"In Jesus Christ, our lives—all that we are and all that we do—find their true meaning. He who became one of us, who lived as we do, has made holy all that we are and all that we do, save, of course, when we sin. He has made our joys and laughter holy, our daily tasks as well, and so, too, our suffering and also our dying. These are now holy things, sanctified because he has touched them. Human tragedies, the sorrows and pains of men, of women, of children, have been given a special dignity, and they hide within them the promise and the giving of new life. When pain is most acute, or when there is only darkness in the mind, or love is wounded, new life is born within us; it is suffering's gift to one sorely tried by pain and sorrow." (Hume, 68-69)

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.
(John 12:24)

"It is like the seed that is in the ground; it must die before new life can come from it. The dying of the seed is deep, hidden from view, and the new life is there, too, before ever it can be seen. We do not know how that new life comes to be within us—it may be when our suffering becomes a cry to God for help; or it may be when our thoughts and actions turn away from what is evil to a life in which God's wishes become our desiring; or perhaps when we resign ourselves into his hands totally and lovingly. "Into your hands I commit my spirit." This was Jesus Christ's prayer at the last moment, repeated down the ages by men and women, tortured and killed for their beliefs, the martyrs. That prayer has been said by countless men and women lying sick in the hospital; martyrs, too, in their way; by parents mourning a child; by lovers broken by their parting from each other; by people tortured by anxiety and worry—by men and women of great courage and endless patience, all of them masters of their pain and sorrow because disciples of their suffering Lord." (Hume, 69-70)

³ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, taken from, Basil Hume, *Hope from the Cross: Reflections on Jesus' Seven Last Words*, ed. Liam Kelly (Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2010), 67-75. Specific page numbers follow the quotations.

**Jesus said in reply,
 “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?”
 (Matt. 20:22)**

“These are the people who have discovered, in the carrying of their cross, the secret of the resurrection—that new life comes from the dying seed. They have made themselves one with Jesus Christ in his passion and death. They share with him now that new life, the divine life, which was his when he rose from the dead, and first comes to us when we are baptized. That divine life in us will grow, if we allow it, and it is often through pain and sorrow that this will happen. We share in his suffering and death, and discover in ours the meaning of the resurrection. There is no Good Friday experience that does not lead to a greater understanding of and sharing in the joys and triumph of Easter Sunday. Resurrection can become for each of us a daily experience. Every slight pain, every small anxiety, misunderstandings, disappointments, and life contradictions—all of these are experiences of little deaths. Our daily hurts, every one of them, have within them the joy of resurrection.” (Hume, 70)

**Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking
 in the afflictions of Christ on behalf on his body, which is the church.
 (Col. 1:24)**

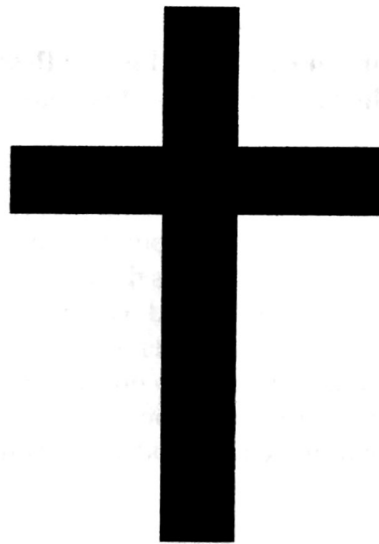
“If we kiss the crucifix, we shall discover him who suffered like us and for us. That kissing can, sometimes, more easily be done when words seem empty and meaningless. It is a way of saying, “Into your hands I commit my spirit,” and often it is the best way, perhaps the only way. Relief from pain and sorrow may not be immediate; indeed, we may be called to walk further carrying the cross, but the yoke will be sweeter and the burden lighter. Of course we cannot, and must not, rejoice in our pain. That would be doing violence to our instincts and to our nature. But recoiling from the cross, as is natural, we can yet rejoice in the carrying of it, but it must be for his sake, I mean, to be like Christ, and so with him, he in us and we in him.” (Hume, 71)

**Behold, I make all things new.
 (Rev. 21:5)**

“The figure of the crucifix was not overcome by death. When the hopes and expectations of his friends seemed to be buried with him in the tomb, new hopes sprang forth from the midst of despair when he rose from the dead. He made all things new, suffering and death as well, your suffering and your death, too.” (Hume, 71)

Carrying on the Work of Redemption: Praying with Your Eyes

I like that because sometimes in the morning when you're tired and have a lot of worries in your head, it's not easy to get the head up to God, so you have to pray with your eyes. Sometimes I just sit and look at the cross and say to myself: in all hospitals there are people dying. A lot of people I meet or who write letters to me are suffering terribly at this moment. So, looking at the cross, I think of all those people sharing that passion, sharing the agony of the Lord. And if God became man—as indeed he did—he came to share a lot of what we all have to live and undergo and gives it meaning and purpose and makes it holy. I find that very powerful, and when people say to me, “I’m very worried” or “I’ve just lost my husband” or “There’s been a terrible tragedy in our family—please pray for me,” I say, “Yes, I’ll do it tomorrow morning.” So sitting in the chapel, looking at the crucifix, I remember that person.⁴



FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ How does new life come from the dying seed? What are some of your personal experiences of how life comes from what seems to be death?
- ✓ How do we build the Body of Christ by carrying on the work of redemption?

⁴ Hume, *Hope from the Cross*, 77-78.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

The end was near.⁵
 He was in great distress,
 overcome by pain,
 his mind in turmoil.
 He had no choice
 but to abandon himself
 into the outstretched hands
 of his heavenly Father.
 His prayer, "Into your hands
 I commend by spirit,"
 was his leap of love
 from life on earth
 to life with the Father.
 "Into your hands
 I commend by spirit."
 That was the password
 into his presence,
 into those hands,
 safe hands,
 stretching out
 to receive
 his weary soul.
 Not for him
 the fear of judgment,
 for in him,
 there was no sin.

For us, fear indeed.
 And rightly so
 if arrogance,
 pride,
 avarice,
 cruelty
 have reigned
 and are not forgiven,
 because we have not sorrowed.
 We can refuse
 to be lifted
 by those hands,
 remaining self-sufficient,
 steeped in evil
 and empty.

⁵ Here and following, Hume, *Hope from the Cross*, 72-75.

Our judgment
will be swift,
for we stand
self-condemned.

For those who have turned away,
but in spite of failure,
weakness, and sin
have not rejected him,
we shall approach,
trembling,
nervous, no doubt,
but reassured and at peace
as we tell the story
of our lives, which only
he can understand.
He knows the burdens
we have carried,
the struggle too,
the reasons for our failure
and our sins.

He whispers into our ear,
"Come."
Then we enter,
happy and ready
to wait
till purified
and made worthy
to be with him
and rest forever
in those loving hands.

KEEP GOING...

The way is often rough for a pilgrim and hard going, but pilgrims must keep going resolutely and courageously. They are lost if they stop looking for the right way to reach their destination. But there is one who is on the look-out to guide us: it is the Son of God who is the way, the truth and the life.⁶

I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.

(John 14:6)

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP THE SEARCH FOR GOD ALIVE?

⁶ Hume, *To Be a Pilgrim*, 39-40.