**Take up his cross every day and follow me**

**THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18 (Lk 9, 22-25)**

There is no general cross for the baptized, confirmed, deacons, presbyters, bishops, popes. Each individual disciple has his own particular, personal cross to take and carry. For example, the cross of St. Paul are the countless persecutions: *“Are they ministers of Christ? (I am talking like an insane person.) I am still more, with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, far worse beatings, and numerous brushes with death. Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led to sin, and I am not indignant?" (2Cor 11, 23-29).* "*For as I see it, God has exhibited us apostles as the last of all, like people sentenced to death, since we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and human beings alike. We are fools on Christ's account, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clad and roughly treated, we wander about homeless and we toil, working with our own hands. When ridiculed, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;"(1 Cor 4: 9-12).* The cross for Paul is also his will to make himself all to everyone in order to gain someone for Christ. The cross is his total consecration to the Gospel in the greatest poverty and freedom from all things of this world: *“Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law - though I myself am not under the law - to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law - though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ - to win over those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it." (1Cor 9: 19-23).* Every day the cross can be new. Cross means to remain faithful to the Lord, to his Gospel, to the Holy Spirit, to his truth, to his gifts, to the mission entrusted to him. Without ever failing. The cross that gives salvation is obedience to God’s will in every condition of one’s life.

*He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?*

Every cross can be transformed into a temptation for the Christian, so that he can descend from it or take on another one of his taste. The tricks of Satan are endless. Only with the light of the Holy Spirit they are brought to light. To overcome them one must grow in wisdom and grace, otherwise it is easy to assume the will of man instead of the will of God and walk with the fear of man instead of the fear of the Lord. When one leaves God’s will, one takes on a thousand crosses of the earth, but these do not give either salvation, redemption, or sanctification. They are crosses, fruit of sin and not of obedience to the divine will. Today we get rid of the cross that comes from obedience to the Commandments and it is said that it is for love and for our dignity.

Mother of the Redemption, Angels, Saints, let each one of us carry their own cross.