



De Sales

SPIRITUALITY SERVICES

"practical paths to holiness"



"Calvary: The School for Lovers"

"Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth, because once we truly accept this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult – once we truly understand and accept it – then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters."

So says M. Scott Peck, M.D., in his book The Road Less Traveled. So say all Christians who reflect upon the image that sums up the life and love of Christ.

Calvary.

Jesus did not love to suffer. Jesus suffered because he loved. He embraced life, and each person in it, fully, openly and honestly. He did not avoid life's sometimes complex, challenging and "messy" nature. Jesus came to redeem *all* of creation, not just the pleasant, joyous and light-hearted parts.

Such is the world of relationships. Such is the world of life. Such is the world of love.

Jesus had his share of heartache. He experienced rejection; he experienced disappointment, he experienced frustration; he experienced humiliation; he experienced loss; ultimately, he experienced death. The temptation? "To avoid life's challenges; to

turn away from opportunities for growth that can be found in grief; to choose to withdraw from the world; to choose to withdraw from oneself."

As tough as life can be sometimes, we only make things worse when we try to avoid life's difficulties at any/all costs. The truth is straightforward: if we want to enjoy life's roses, we must be willing to accept our share of its thorns.

Where do we learn to find opportunities for love even in the face of life's painful realities? Francis points us to "Calvary, the school of lovers. All love that does not take its origin from the Savior's passion is foolish and perilous. Unhappy is death without the Savior's love; unhappy is love without the Savior's death. Love and death are so mingled in the Savior's passion that we cannot have one in our hearts without the other."

This is not being maudlin. This is being real. And if true love is nothing else, it must be real. This world is all about the continuing confluence of success and surrender, of embracing and letting go, of life, and death.

St. Jane de Chantal encourages us to calm our passions and inclinations and "live according to sound reason and the holy Will

of God. Otherwise, you will always be anxious and perturbed. But, if you are fortunate enough to accept the difficulties of this life, which God sends to those He loves for their growth and progress toward blessedness, then even in this life you will begin to get a little taste of the delights of a glorious eternity."

However, we need to be sure that the cross we embrace is that of Christ, not crosses of our own making. We sometimes fashion crosses of our own when we fail to deal with life's challenges in a humble, gentle, patient and trusting manner: such crosses are not a means for salvation as much as sources for our own misery. St. Jane once noted to a member of her community: "Must you continue to be your own cross? I can see that no matter which way God leads you, you change everything into bitterness and trouble, brooding over everything."

May God, in all compassion, grant us the grace to embrace the difficulties we sometimes encounter when we attempt to follow the Will of God. In so doing, may we likewise experience something of the glory of God promised to all who enroll in the school of hard knocks, the school of trial and error, the school of everlasting life...Calvary.