

His Eminence the Metropolitan of Sweden Sermon for the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Sunday after the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, the Lord addresses each one of us with a clear and demanding invitation: “Whoever wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Saint John Chrysostom draws our attention to the words, “Whoever wishes.” Christ does not compel anyone to follow Him. He respects our freedom and invites us to respond freely to His love. Yet He also makes clear that Christian discipleship cannot exist without self-denial and the bearing of the cross.

To deny ourselves does not mean to reject our human dignity or the gifts God has given us. It means to renounce our selfish will, our passions, our pride, and everything that separates us from God and our neighbor.

It means that Christ, rather than our own desires, becomes the center of our life. As Saint Paul declares in today's Epistle: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives within me."

The cross that each of us is called to carry may take many forms; illness, sorrow, disappointment, loneliness, injustice, or the daily struggle against sin. Christ ask us to bear faithfully and patiently whatever trials come into our lives, trusting that He walks beside us. No one carries the cross alone, because the Lord who commands us to take it up has carried it before us.

Christ then reveals the great paradox of the Gospel: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it." When we offer our life to Christ through love, sacrifice, forgiveness, and service, we discover life in its fullness.

The world often teaches us to seek comfort, recognition, and personal success. The Cross teaches us another way; humility, faithfulness, and self-giving love. It reminds us that true victory is found not in dominating others, but in serving them; not in preserving ourselves at every cost, but in giving ourselves for the sake of God and our fellow human beings.

Let us therefore ask the Lord for the strength to deny our selfishness, to carry our daily cross without despair, and to follow Him with faith. Amen!

Metropolisofsweden