

September 14, 2025



LOVE RADIATES FROM THE CROSS

By Sister Bernadette Inocencio, CSJ

A Quote

*“Some non-Christian person might ask: why ‘exalt’ the Cross? We can respond that we do not exalt any cross whatsoever or all crosses: we exalt the Cross of Jesus, **because in it God’s love for humanity was fully revealed.***

*That’s what the Gospel of John reminds us of in today’s liturgy: ‘God so loved the world that He gave his only Son’ (3:16). The Father ‘gave’ the Son to save us, and this resulted in the death of Jesus, and his death on the Cross. **Why? Why was the Cross necessary?** ... The Cross of Jesus **expresses both things: all the negative forces of evil, and all of the gentle omnipotence of God’s mercy.** The Cross would seem to decree Christ’s failure, but in reality, it signals His victory. On Calvary, those who mocked him said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross’ (cf. Mt 27:40). But the opposite was true: it was precisely because Jesus was the Son of God that He was there, on the Cross, faithful to the end to the loving plan of the Father. And for this very reason God ‘exalted’ Jesus (Phil 2:9), conferring universal kingship on Him.”*

Reflection

Reflect and ponder using the bold italicized words as suggested prompts for your pondering.

Was it necessary for Jesus to suffer and die on the Cross?

Theologically, we might say Jesus became flesh because God sent the Son due to the outpouring love from the Trinity. ***Do we really understand what that outpouring love meant?*** This mystery is hard to fathom; its depth is a blind spot hard to calculate by human reasoning and logic. In this day and age suffering is avoided, and people cringe at the thought of suffering. It is something that may be hard for us to fully understand or grasp.

I invite you to contemplate the following: Imagine Jesus hung on the tree, blood dripping from his holy head. He wanted to brush off the sweat and blood, but his hands were tied. All he could do was blink a little and the sweat and thick blood stung his eyes. Imagine Jesus' back sliding down that coarse piece of wood as he tried to prop himself up. His back rubbed against the wood again and again; splinters even pricked his skin. Imagine how, with Jesus' slightest movement, those nails hurt his hands and feet; they bore into His flesh and bones. While he hung on the cross for three hours, he ached for someone to embrace him, for someone to mercifully quench his thirst. Still, He trusted. ***Bludgeoned, scorned, mocked, he hanged on a tree. Despite the horrible way he was treated, he was still able to say: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."*** When the centurion pierced his side and blood and water gushed out, he emptied himself, ***poured out everything of himself for us.*** He hung on and clung to his trust of the Father. ***Viewing from above, how did God perceive Jesus and the Crucifixion?***

Why, then, do we celebrate that barbaric instrument that led to the heinous killing of the Son of God? Is it the killing, that torture that we celebrate? We must look beyond that crucifixion ... Instead, ***slowly let these words sink in... Perseverance... Surrender and trust... Love...***

Jesus suffered with us, ***persevered and endured*** humiliation, rejection, abandonment, mockery, every crime possible, and every possible evil that can be laid on a human being.

Jesus gave up his life in ***total surrender and trust to the Father.*** He had faith in the Father's love, that the Father's love would exalt him in the end.

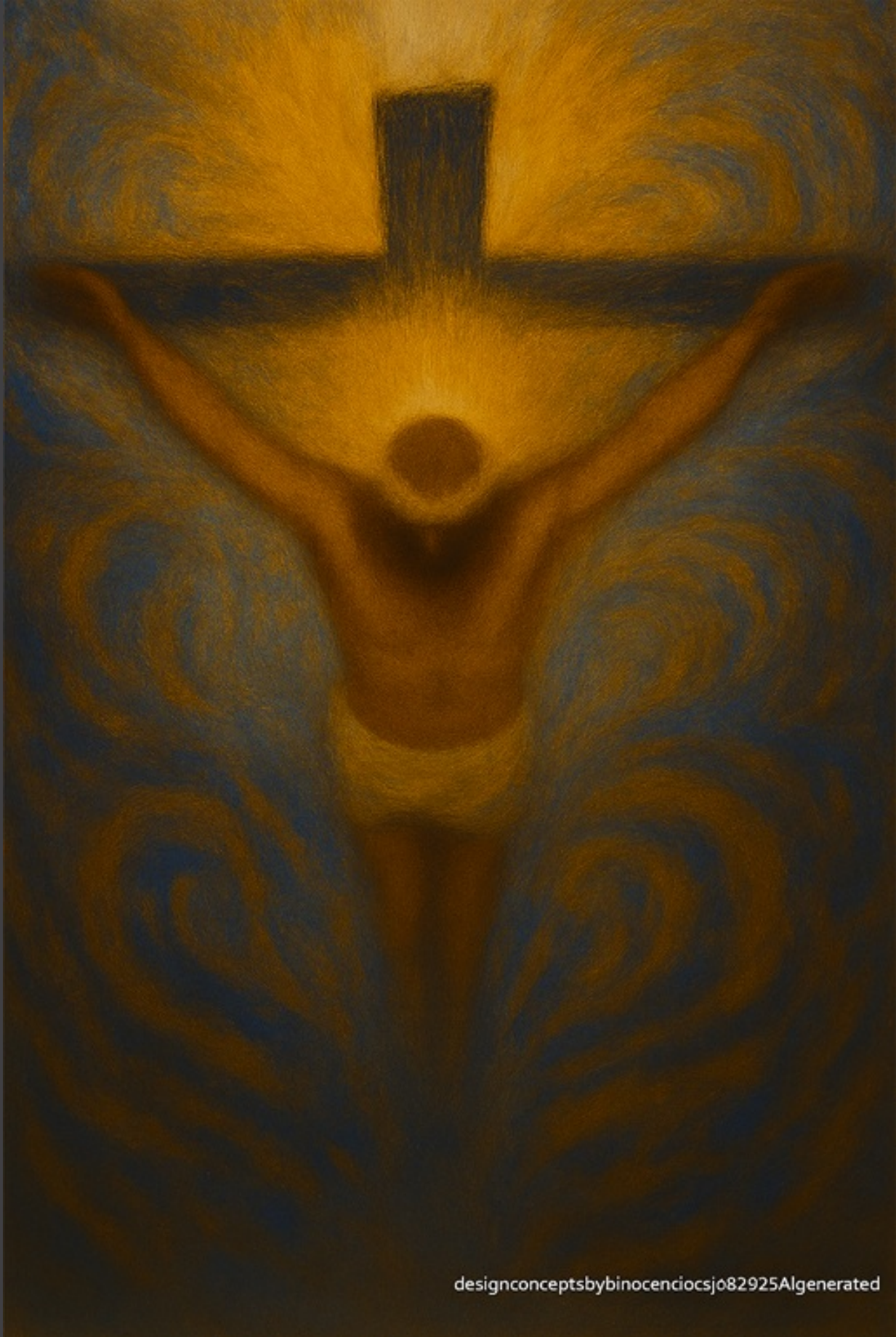
God's love is incomprehensible because that love is ready to pour out blood, sweat, and tears. ***God's presence is in our suffering.*** We often say when we are suffering that we participate in Jesus' passion and death on the cross.

I invite you to reverse that notion. When you are truly in love, you go to great lengths to be with and to do everything for the one you love. You hold nothing back.

Could it be that Jesus suffered and died on the cross in participation in every human suffering as a way for God to be acquainted with our suffering and for us to know God understands, loves us greatly, and goes to this extreme to show the depth of Love?

Jesus' crucifixion is a revelation of God's mystery. When the cross is lifted, it points up to the heavens, up to where Love began. It also points to east and west, reminding us that the love that is outpoured must be imbibed by us and given to all parts of the world. The cross creates right angles where it intersects, indicating universal love in every encounter, without distinction, symbolizing equality, obtaining balance.

Jesus' perseverance, surrender and trust made way for the ***revelation of God's love*** for Creation, the fruits of the work of God's hands. This ***love made way for the hope*** of the resurrection, the radiant light from above. Jesus' ***full trust in the Father gave way to immeasurable graces*** shared with the universe. The cross, once an instrument of torture, became the Tree of Life from which Jesus' redemptive grace sprang. God's power and love used the worst of circumstances to bring forth the Greatest Good.



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Image created by Sister Bernadette Inocencio, CSJ

For Prayer

*Unfathomable Divine Love
Shines and radiates from above.
Wellspring that is ever-giving,
Hold us in every suffering!
Guide us in our daily living.
Accompany us in dying.
Give us strength in infirmity.
Lead us into eternity.
Amen.*

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