

THE TRANSFORMING CROSS

In the inexhaustible joy of his love, God the Father wills to transform the whole universe with the glory shining now in Jesus, his Son. The glory that was his before the foundation of the world now radiates through every cell of Jesus' body. His Spirit bears that glory into the hidden core of every sub-atomic particle, and across all the light-years to the remotest galaxy. Most deeply of all, the life-creating Spirit transfigures us into flawless icons of our glorious Christ.

Our imaginations fail when we try to picture all creation radiant with the light now shining on the face of Christ. How can we say what it will look like when we are united in the never-ending happiness of God, and all sadness has forever vanished? To imagine that—no more division, no more war, no more disease, no more misunderstanding, no more waste, no more goodbyes, no more loneliness, no more poverty, no more sin, no more pain, and no more, never again, death—this is quite beyond our power.

But not beyond the Father's. As medicine for our hearts' healing, he gives us images of what we shall soon fully be: Christ our Master transfigured on Mt. Tabor, and Mary his Mother lifted bodily—as securely and tenderly as once she lifted her Son—into his glory.

It will be, then, as we look at the Lord and his Mother, something like this: to be clothed like the New Jerusalem in a morning brightness that never fades; to taste no darkness in memory or intelligence or in will. To receive from the Master the gift of his own freedom.

To stand at last as a truly human person, without shackles, free of all the lies that told us we were locked in competition with God. Free of fear, free of guilt and self-hatred, free of the ache of egotism.

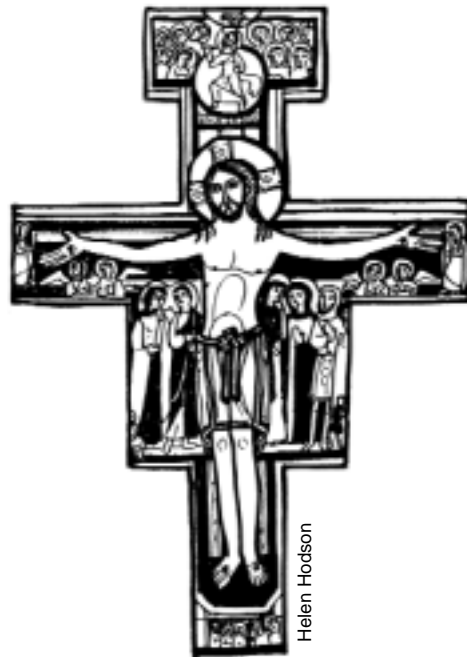
It will be to love. To see, not just for a moment, but always, the beauty of our brothers, our sisters. To know the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints as God knows them, intimately, in their full magnificence. And to know from their love and delight that we too have become as glorious as they. To know what it is to rejoice in one's own beauty and the beauty of others without envy or shame, because all that joy flows forth from and back into God's own Triune delight.

Above all, it will be to receive from Jesus the gift of worship, the fullness of adoration. To fall down before the Father as our hearts hunger to, to be swept away by his

holiness and to find our true life before him as his child, his beloved.

Saints, both far away and very close at hand, have shown convincingly that if we could let the Lord teach us to look at his cross with his own eyes, nothing could resist the tide of transfiguration in us any longer. Perfect joy, complete transformation, lies in knowing that, in Jesus, the Father has transfigured pain and death and sin itself.

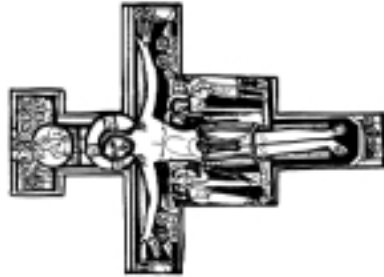
It is as if the Lord Jesus says this about his cross: "I have touched your pain. I have entered every refusal of love, and each act of non-love I have embraced. I have pressed it into my body. I have become all pain. I have



Helen Hodson

The Transforming Cross

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become all anguish. I have become all estrangement. I have become a curse. I have become ugliness.

“I have even become, in a way you will never understand, sin itself. I have taken it into me—into my flesh, into my heart, into my spirit, and as I took it into me, I made it something new. I took it into me because I love you, because the Father loves me, because he loves you. And until the end of time my cross stands before you as the great sign of what I have done to pain. It stands before you as the sign of my love forever.

“My cross is a sign of my Father’s love for you, too. My passion is my Father’s passionate love for you. I am the infinite joy of my Father, but he was glad to see me die because he loves you so much, because your suffering is such an abomination to him that he could not bear you to endure it. In my heart he embraced all refusal to love, and filled it with my yes to him and to you, so that what was death has become life and what was nothing has become a work of love.

“Now, when I am speaking a new creation into being in the heart of every person on this earth and throughout the universe, now when my love is redeeming all sin and transfiguring all pain, I call you to be with me, to share with me the joy of loving as I love.

“Don’t be afraid! I want you to know the joy of God whose work is to make men and women live. I want you to know that the ugliness that has attached itself to you so closely that you cannot ever rid yourself of it is no

longer what it seems to be. I have so embraced your refusal to love and so soaked you with light that you are becoming all light.

“So, my brothers, my sisters, take up my cross, the cross of the poor, and let me make you one with me as you become one with them. I will make you one with my Father, and in my Spirit you will know and love us as we know and love you. And God’s joy will be your joy.”

From *Circling the Sun: Meditations on Christ in Liturgy and Time* by Fr. Robert Pelton, priest of Madonna House

Artwork by Helen Hodson