

IN PRAISE OF THE SACRED CROSS

By St. Bonaventura

Translated from the Latin by David H. Graham, a first year student in the B.D. program at Hartford Seminary Foundation, and pastor of the Scotland (Connecticut) Congregational Church. The Translation was made as part of Mr. Graham's basic work in Church History. (*Note, Professor Ford Battles*).

Sacred Cross, O pray remember,
You who walk the way that's holy;
 In it ceaselessly delight.
Cross so sacred, yea remember;
On it gazing, ever raising
 Eyes unto its holy light.

In the Cross, the Master guiding,
Stand secure and never waver
 For as long as you shall live.
Weary not, but grow in fervor,
Heart e'er yearning, zeal e'er burning,
 Giving all you have to give.

Love the Cross, the world's sure beacon,
'Queathing you both way and leader
 Now and for eternity.
With this Cross so gird your body,
That so binding, you'll be finding
 This your constant strength will be.

Let the Cross the heart encompass;
 Let each heart be set within it,
 Satisfied and soiled no more.
 Sacred Cross, O tongue proclaim it,
 Of it singing, ever ringing
 Praises forth forevermore.

Heart encompassed, tongue proclaiming,
 O the joy, the Cross e'er reigning;
 What a sweetness doth impart.
 Let the Cross have all dominion;
 In man dwelling, all compelling,
 Ruling passion of the heart.

With the Cross be saturated,
 Heart in Cross your earnest seeking
 With a love that is afire.
 With the needs of life forgotten,
 May mind's dying, crucifying,
 Be your joy and your desire.

Bring each one great love and honor
 To that source of man's salvation
 With the ardour of the heart.
 To this Cross bring with all striving,
 Your aspiring and desiring,
 All your love to it impart.

In the Cross be ever zealous,
 Finding refuge in it only,
 That your life with gladness rings.
 Nailed with Christ, together suff'ring,
 What sweet union, What communion
 Leading you to heavenly things.

Seek the Cross and seek the keys, the
Hands they pierced, the feet they hollowed,
 And that riven, bleeding side.
For as long as you are able,
Stand there gazing, ever praising;
 With all honor, there abide.

May this pledge be never broken,
That the Cross direct each action,
 Blessing you each hour and day.
When the devil would defeat you,
Him repelling, by your dwelling
 In the Cross, the healing way.

Dwell with body, soul, and spirit
In this Cross with jubilation,
 With a will you consecrate.
It reveals and marks the pathway,
Both protecting and perfecting
 Those who'd walk the way that's straight.

When you're tempted, when afflicted,
Overcome, by all forsaken;
 Troubled, weary, at a loss;
Be not stagnant, be not sluggish,
Be not lonely, find strength only,
 Waiting, trusting, at the Cross.

In your going, in your coming,
When you're laughing, when you're crying,
 In your grief or joy untold;
In your resting, in your working,
Jubilation, tribulation,
 Grasp the Cross and firmly hold.

For each care and anxious moment,
For each trial, if you but seek it,
 In the Cross there is a cure.
When you're torn and plagued with torment,
O the sweetness and completeness
 Finding there a place secure.

By the Cross the earth found healing,
And the way that heavenly goodness
 All its wonders has unfurled.
O the Cross, the gate of Heaven,
Through whose portals pass all mortals
 Who have overcome the world.

To the earnest soul that's seeking
For the way to his salvation,
 In the Cross is the true light.
And the Cross is to the perfect
Such a treasure, beyond measure,
 Full of beauty, grace, delight.

How the Cross reflects all virtue,
Imparts hope unto the faithful,
 To salvation is the guide.
How it is to the believer,
There retreating, him entreating;
 And his glory, grace, and pride.

To the brave the Cross is mighty;
As their armour and protector,
 It the enemy destroys.
Boat and harbor, yea, a garden,
By it nourished, all things flourish,
 By this Cross, true place of joys.

As a tree arrayed in splendor,
By Christ's blood is consecrated;
 Full of fruits to fill each need;
From the Cross the soul is nourished,
For true living, to it giving
 Food on which the angels feed.

O how happy is that person
Dwelling there with constant fervor;
 At the Cross for all his days.
O how happy is the seeker,
Joy unending, will ne'er bending,
 At the Cross forever stays.

In the Cross great faith discover,
Languish there in love and longing,
 Lifting hearts in endless praise.
Seek the Cross, the Cross so holy,
There desiring, there aspiring,
 Trusting always as you gaze.

On the Cross let thoughts be dwelling,
Let it swell the heart to fullness;
 In your mind be so agreed.
'Round this Cross, be as you worship,
Ever working, never shirking
 In each yearning, word, and deed.

Oft remember, devout Brother,
Seven times each day be mindful
 Of the passion of our Lord.
For by it all men find freedom;
Those who've striven will be given
 Mortal man's supreme reward.

Seven times, from early morning,
 Prime, Matins, Terce, Sext, and vespers,
 Ninth, and last, when you retire;
 If the Cross you love and honor,
 Be it seeking, to it speaking
 At these hours with great desire.

Seek this Christ in whom you're trusting,
 In your heart bear him who suffered,
 Where'er you are, pray, so will.
 When you're standing, sitting, resting,
 When you're weary, all is dreary,
 When you speak and when you're still.

Fix your mind on Christ in earnest.
 For the One who for you suffered,
 Suffer such in this same way.
 Of the death of Christ, O Christian,
 Be rejoicing in the voicing
 Of your grief, both night and day.

How despised and how forsaken
 Has been made this King of Heaven;
 For man's soul he so became.
 Hungry, thirsty, poor and wanting,
 How rejected, how subjected,
 Led away to suffer shame.

His great poverty remember,
 The sad worthlessness and torment,
 And the punishment severe.
 Be e'er mindful of his passion,
 For your blessing, you possessing
 Eyes to see and ears to hear.

When they brought and crucified Him
On that Cross above the watchers,
 His disciples fled away.
As He hung there pierced and bleeding,
One a scoffer, drink did offer
 To this King, O dreadful day.

See the eyes of Christ so blessed,
Darkened now from hours of suff'ring,
 And his countenance grown dim.
Hanging there, his body naked,
Beauty draining, naught remaining
 Of the loveliness of Him.

For the sake of all man's sinning
On the Cross was He so punished,
 Scourged, tormented, flesh all torn;
Limbs ripped loose by their rough torture,
Him defiling and reviling,
 O what violent wounds were borne.

On the Cross amidst great suff'ring,
God's own Son gave forth his spirit,
 Weeping from a heart of love.
Let us grieve with all our being,
Heart outpouring, spirit mourning
 God's begotten from above.

You who hear, torment your body,
Shatter self with that death's fierceness
 Suffered at the hands of men.
Join with all in your lamenting
His rejection and dejection,
 That you feel, as He did then.

Gaze upon the man of sorrows,
In the face of death courageous;
 Yea, the last of men was He.
Suffer, too, reproach so violent,
Your self dying, crucifying,
 Dear to you may this Man be.

When you see yourself afflicted,
Overcome, by all forsaken,
 Weak, disheartened, at a loss;
Think of Christ's humiliation,
His rejection, his dejection,
 His sad grief upon that Cross.

O good brother, with him suffer,
On his wounds forever gazing
 In whatever you may do.
May these wounds so fill your spirit,
By so seeing, ever being
 For all time as food to you.

Make me strong, O crucified one,
That with pleasure, my heart willing,
 I your death may ever mourn.
To be wounded and embrace you,
So aspiring, so desiring
 There with you forever borne.

Let thy sorrow fall as dewdrops,
That for you I may be grieving,
 Christ who doth rekindle me.
Now may I your wounds e'er suffer,
Fire my yearning, soul set burning;
 O Redeemer, let it be.

Let it be that all here spoken
Glorify the One who suffered,
 To Him praise and honor bring.
May to me, if He so will it,
Life be giving, sins forgiving,
 Glorious, eternal King.