



Homily for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost

October 5, 2025

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Cruciform charity requires humility and obedience

St. Paul writes from prison, “I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in charity, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This single verse could summarize the entire Christian life. Holiness is not achieved through intensity or eloquence, but through humility, meekness, and patient charity. In a word, the Christian life is the application of the virtues exemplified by Jesus on the cross – humility, meekness and patient charity that stretched Him heavenward to God the Father and from East to West to encompass all humanity in His sacrificial love. These are the virtues, too, that make our soul cruciform – stretched between love of God and love of neighbor, lifted upward in obedience and extended outward in mercy.

St. Paul’s words come from the heart of a man in chains. He teaches that the Christian life itself is a participation in the Cross of Christ. Unity in faith, humility in spirit, and charity in action are not born of comfort, but of crucifixion. The Church is one Body because she has one Lord who was nailed to one Cross. Every time we cling to our own preferences or demand our own way – even in the name of good things – we risk breaking that unity. To walk “worthy of the vocation” is to be ready to crucify not only our sins but even attachments to our own will, our own tastes, our own opinions, whenever they threaten the bond of peace.

In the Gospel, when Jesus is asked which commandment is greatest, He answers with the summary of all revelation: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... and thy neighbor as thyself.” These two loves – of God and of neighbor – form the two beams of the Cross. Love of God lifts the soul upward in worship; love of neighbor extends it outward in mercy. Every act of true charity bears this cruciform shape. It costs something; it demands surrender. St. Gregory the Great said, “The proof of love is in the willingness to suffer for the beloved.” Without that willingness, love remains sentiment. With it, love becomes redemptive.

This cruciform charity requires humility and obedience as its foundation. Pride seeks its own way; humility seeks God’s way, even when it is mysterious and uncomfortable. Obedience is the concrete expression of humility. Christ Himself, as St. Paul writes elsewhere, “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” To be holy, then, is not first to be right, but to be obedient. We have to put obedience to God before our own ideas of what is right. The saints were men and women who allowed the will of God – sometimes revealed through imperfect instruments – to shape their lives more than their own opinions or desires. St. Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom, wrote, “It is better to be silent and be a Christian than to talk and not obey.” Obedience is the silencing of pride and the music of love.

For those of us who cherish the beauty of the traditional liturgy, these words carry a particular weight. The love of tradition is a good and holy thing, but it must always remain cruciform. When love of form or custom ceases to be an offering and becomes a possession, it loses its shape. The Cross teaches us that nothing truly ours is ever safe until it is surrendered. To be docile to the Holy Spirit, to the legitimate shepherds of the Church, is not to betray tradition – it is to live its inner logic. The liturgy itself is an act of obedience: the Son offering Himself to the Father through the Spirit. Every Mass, old or new, is Calvary made present; every altar is the place where preference dies, and communion is born.



Charity that is cruciform does not fracture; it unites. It is humble enough to kneel and strong enough to endure misunderstanding. It is patient with weakness — in ourselves, in our pastors, and in the Church — because it knows that Christ Himself bears those wounds. St. Augustine wrote, “Where there is humility, there is charity; where there is charity, there is peace.” The peace we long for in the Church will not come from victory in argument or triumph of one group over another, but from souls who, out of love for Christ, choose the Cross of obedience over the comfort of self-will.

Therefore, to live “worthy of our vocation” is to let our hearts take the shape of the Cross — upward in adoration, outward in service, downward in humility, inward in surrender. Every act of obedience, every small renunciation, every patient acceptance of what God allows, carves this shape more deeply into the soul. And the more cruciform we become, the more the light of the Resurrection shines through us.

I invite you, then, to renew your devotion to the Lord not only in the beauty of the liturgy, but in the beauty of obedience. Let even your love of this ancient form of worship be joined to the humility and docility that mark true discipleship. The Cross stands before us as both pattern and promise: the pattern of our daily dying to self, and the promise of divine unity that no division can overcome.