THE DAILY BREAD

The Missio of the Beloved



Suffering and the Apostolic Life

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Missio of the Beloved

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The Cross Is Not Optional, and Not the End of the Story

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INTRODUCTION

Giving Suffering Its Proper Address

No woman needs to be told that life involves suffering. She knows it in her body, in her relationships, in her losses, and in her long experience of carrying pain that is not always her own. What she often lacks is not the experience of suffering but a framework for it, a way of understanding her pain that transforms it from something merely to be survived into something that can participate in the redemptive work of Christ. For suffering, in the Christian vision, is not meaningless or wasted, and the apostolic life in particular will bring its own sufferings that a woman must be prepared to face. Without a theological address for suffering, pain can destroy her mission; with one, the same pain can deepen it.

This book is about suffering and the apostolic life, giving suffering its proper theological address. It will show that the Cross is not optional in the Christian life; the mystery of redemptive suffering, by which pain united to Christ's has saving value; how suffering is a sharing in the Paschal mystery of death and resurrection; the particular closeness of a woman's suffering to Christ's; what this teaching does not mean, so that it is never used to justify accepting avoidable harm; the role of suffering in the credibility of witness; and the truth that suffering is not the end of the story. The aim is not to romanticize suffering but to give it its proper address, so that when suffering comes, as it will, it does not destroy a woman's mission but deepens it.

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. — Matthew 16:24

Christ told His followers plainly that to come after Him means to take up the cross and follow, so that the Cross is written into the very heart of discipleship and cannot be avoided by anyone who would truly follow Him. This book will help a woman understand that Cross, not to seek out suffering or glorify it, but to meet the suffering that comes with a framework that gives it meaning. The Cross is not optional for one who follows Christ, and it is not the end of the story, for beyond every Cross is the Resurrection. This book is about understanding suffering rightly, so that the pain a woman inevitably carries can become, united to Christ, a share in His redemptive work rather than a weight that crushes her mission.

CHAPTER ONE

The Cross Is Not Optional

Why the Mission Will Cost Something

Any honest preparation for the apostolic life must face the Cross, for following Christ and carrying His mission will cost a woman something, and the one who expects the Christian life to be comfortable and affirming will abandon it the moment it becomes costly. Understanding that the Cross is not optional prepares a woman to meet the cost of her mission rather than flee it.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. — John 16:33

Following Christ Means the Cross

To follow Christ is necessarily to take up the Cross, for He Himself joined discipleship to the carrying of a cross, so that no genuine following of Him avoids it. Christ did not hide the cost of following Him but stated plainly that whoever would come after Him must take up the cross, so that the Cross is not an optional addition to the Christian life for the especially heroic but is written into the very nature of discipleship, and to follow Christ is necessarily to follow Him to and through the Cross, so that a woman cannot truly follow Christ while avoiding all suffering, the Cross being inseparable from the path of the one who bore it. This means a woman understands that following Christ means the Cross, so that she does not expect a cross-free discipleship but accepts the Cross as inseparable from truly following Him. The woman who understands following Christ means the Cross accepts suffering as part of discipleship. Following Christ means the Cross, so that a woman cannot truly follow Him while avoiding all suffering, the Cross inseparable from discipleship.

The Mission Will Cost

The apostolic mission in particular will cost a woman something, for authentic witness invites resistance, and standing for Christ in the world brings a price she must be prepared to pay. The apostolic mission carries its own cost, for authentic witness to Christ in a world that does not welcome Him invites resistance, misunderstanding, and rejection, so that a woman who takes up the mission must expect it to cost her something, whether comfort, approval, relationships, or more, and the woman who imagines that witnessing to Christ will be easy and universally welcomed is unprepared for the reality that the mission will cost, the price being part of what it means to stand for Christ in the world. This means a woman expects the mission to cost her something, so

that she is prepared for the resistance and price that authentic witness brings rather than surprised and defeated by it. The woman who understands the mission will cost is prepared to pay the price of witness. The mission will cost, for authentic witness invites resistance, so that a woman must be prepared to pay a price for standing for Christ.

Expecting the Cost Prevents Collapse

A woman who expects the cost of the mission is not defeated when it comes, whereas one who expects comfort collapses at the first hardship, so that realistic expectation sustains perseverance. The woman who expects the apostolic life to cost her something is strengthened to persevere when the cost arrives, for she is not surprised or disillusioned by hardship but has counted on it, whereas the woman who expected comfort, affirmation, and ease collapses the moment the mission becomes difficult, abandoning it in disappointment, so that expecting the cost prevents collapse, realistic preparation for suffering being what allows a woman to endure it rather than flee, her foreknowledge of the Cross steadying her when it comes. This means a woman expects the cost of the mission so that she is not defeated when it comes, so that her realistic preparation for suffering strengthens her to persevere rather than collapse at the first hardship. The woman who expects the cost prevents her own collapse when hardship comes. Expecting the cost prevents collapse, so that a woman prepared for suffering endures it rather than fleeing at the first hardship.

CHAPTER TWO

The Mystery of Redemptive Suffering

Pain United to the Cross

At the heart of the Christian understanding of suffering is the mystery of redemptive suffering, the astonishing truth that a person's pain, when united to the suffering of Christ, takes on a redemptive value and participates in His saving work. Understanding the mystery of redemptive suffering transforms how a woman regards her own pain.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. — Colossians 1:24

Filling Up What Is Lacking

Saint Paul's startling words about filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions reveal that human suffering, united to Christ's, has a share in His redemptive work. Saint Paul wrote the astonishing words that in his own flesh he was filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the Church, and these words reveal the mystery of redemptive suffering, that human suffering united to Christ's has a real share in His redemptive work, so that a believer's pain, joined to the Cross, is not wasted but taken up into the saving work of Christ, filling up, in a mysterious way, what remains to be applied of His redemption, the sufferings of the members joined to the suffering of the Head. This means a woman understands the mystery of filling up what is lacking, that her suffering united to Christ's shares in His redemptive work, so that she sees her pain as capable of being taken up into His saving work rather than wasted. The woman who understands filling up what is lacking sees her suffering as a share in Christ's redemptive work. Filling up what is lacking reveals that human suffering united to Christ's shares in His redemptive work, so that a woman's pain is not wasted but taken up into His saving work.

Not the Cross's Insufficiency but Suffering's Dignity

This teaching does not mean Christ's Cross was insufficient, but reveals the astonishing dignity God gives to human suffering, allowing it to participate in a redemption already complete. The mystery of redemptive suffering must be rightly understood, for it does not mean that Christ's Cross was insufficient or that His redemption was incomplete, since His sacrifice is perfect and lacks nothing, but rather reveals the astonishing dignity God gives to human suffering, allowing the pain of His people, joined to the Cross, to participate in and apply the redemption Christ accomplished, so that the teaching exalts not the insufficiency of the Cross but the dignity of suffering that God permits to share in His finished work. This means a woman understands that redemptive suffering reveals suffering's dignity, not the Cross's insufficiency, so that she sees her pain honored by being allowed to share in a redemption already complete rather than completing something lacking in Christ. The woman who understands it is suffering's dignity, not the Cross's insufficiency, sees her pain honored by sharing in Christ's finished work. Not the Cross's insufficiency but suffering's dignity is revealed, so that a woman's pain is honored by being allowed to share in a redemption already complete.

Offering Suffering with Christ

Because suffering can share in Christ's redemptive work, a woman can offer her pain to God in union with the Cross, giving it meaning and making it fruitful for others. The practical fruit of the mystery of redemptive suffering is that a woman can offer her suffering to God in union with Christ's Cross, consciously giving her pain meaning by

joining it to His, so that her suffering, instead of being merely endured as a senseless burden, becomes an offering with redemptive value, able to be applied for the good of others and the Church, and a woman can thus transform her pain by offering it with Christ, uniting her cross to His. This means a woman can offer her suffering with Christ, uniting her pain to the Cross and giving it redemptive meaning, so that her suffering becomes an offering fruitful for others rather than a senseless burden. The woman who offers her suffering with Christ gives her pain redemptive meaning. Offering suffering with Christ unites a woman's pain to the Cross, so that her suffering becomes a fruitful offering rather than a senseless burden.

CHAPTER THREE

Sharing in the Paschal Mystery

Dying and Rising with Christ

Christian suffering is understood within the Paschal mystery, the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection, so that a woman's suffering is not masochism but a dying with Christ that leads to rising with Him, a transformation rather than a mere endurance of pain. Understanding suffering as a sharing in the Paschal mystery gives it its deepest Christian meaning.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. — Philippians 3:10

The Pattern of Cross and Resurrection

Christ's death and resurrection form the pattern into which Christian suffering fits, so that suffering is understood as a dying with Christ that is ordered toward rising with Him. The central pattern of the Christian mystery is the Paschal mystery, Christ's passage through death to resurrection, and Christian suffering is understood within this pattern, for the believer's suffering is a sharing in Christ's death that is ordered toward sharing in His resurrection, so that pain is not an isolated or final thing but part of a movement from Cross to glory, a dying with Christ that leads to rising with Him, suffering set within the pattern of death and resurrection rather than standing alone. This means a woman understands her suffering within the pattern of Cross and Resurrection, so that she sees her pain as a dying with Christ ordered toward rising with Him rather than an isolated or final affliction. The woman who understands the pattern of Cross and Resurrection sees her suffering ordered toward glory. The pattern of Cross and Resurrection sets Christian

suffering within a movement from death to glory, so that a woman's pain is a dying with Christ ordered toward rising with Him.

Transformation, Not Masochism

Christian suffering is not masochism, a seeking or loving of pain for its own sake, but a transformation, the painful passage through which God works a deeper life. The Christian embrace of suffering must not be mistaken for masochism, the seeking or loving of pain for its own sake, which is neither healthy nor holy, for Christianity does not teach that suffering is good in itself or to be sought, but that suffering, when it comes, can be transformed by being united to Christ, becoming the painful passage through which God works a deeper life and a greater good, so that the point is transformation, not the love of pain, the redemption of suffering rather than its pursuit. This means a woman understands that Christian suffering is transformation, not masochism, so that she does not seek or glorify pain for its own sake but allows the suffering that comes to be transformed by union with Christ. The woman who understands transformation, not masochism, allows her suffering to be transformed rather than seeking pain. Transformation, not masochism, is the Christian view of suffering, so that a woman allows pain to be transformed by Christ rather than loving it for its own sake.

New Life Through the Passage

Because suffering shares in the Paschal mystery, it can become the passage to new life, the dying through which resurrection comes, so that a woman's pain can bring forth growth and life. The fruit of sharing in the Paschal mystery is that suffering can become a passage to new life, for just as Christ's death gave way to resurrection, the believer's suffering, united to His, can become the painful passage through which new life, deeper faith, greater love, and spiritual growth come forth, so that a woman's suffering, rather than being purely destructive, can be the dying through which resurrection comes, bringing new life out of pain as Christ brought life out of death. This means a woman understands that suffering can become a passage to new life, so that she hopes for the resurrection that follows the dying and allows her pain to bring forth growth and life rather than only destruction. The woman who understands new life through the passage hopes for the resurrection that follows her suffering. New life through the passage means suffering can become the dying through which resurrection comes, so that a woman's pain brings forth growth and life.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Woman's Suffering, Close to Christ

The Hidden, Embodied, Relational Cross

A woman's suffering often takes particular forms, embodied, relational, and hidden, that are especially close to the suffering of Christ and to that of His mother, so that her pain has a special dignity and closeness to the Cross. Understanding how a woman's suffering is close to Christ gives her pain a particular honor and meaning.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also. — Luke 2:35

The Embodied and Hidden Forms

Much of a woman's suffering is embodied and hidden, borne in the body and in silence, a form of suffering particularly close to the hidden sufferings of Christ. Women often carry suffering in embodied and hidden forms, pain borne in the body, in the quiet endurance of the home, in sufferings rarely seen or acknowledged by others, so that much of a woman's suffering is hidden and physical, carried silently and without recognition, and this hiddenness and embodiment bring it close to the suffering of Christ, much of whose own suffering was hidden, borne in the body, and endured without the world's notice, so that a woman's hidden, embodied pain shares a particular closeness to His. This means a woman understands that her embodied and hidden sufferings are close to Christ's, so that she sees her silent, bodily pain as sharing in His own hidden suffering rather than being insignificant for going unseen. The woman who understands the embodied and hidden forms sees her silent pain close to the suffering of Christ. The embodied and hidden forms of a woman's suffering, borne in the body and in silence, are particularly close to the hidden sufferings of Christ.

The Relational Cross

Much of a woman's suffering is relational, the pain of loving, of carrying others' burdens, of watching those she loves suffer or stray, a cross deeply like Christ's love-borne suffering. A great part of a woman's suffering is relational, flowing from her love and her bonds, the pain of carrying others' burdens, of loving those who do not love in return, of watching children or loved ones suffer or make destructive choices she cannot prevent, so that her suffering is often the suffering of love itself, and this relational cross is deeply like the suffering of Christ, whose own suffering flowed from love and who grieved over those He loved, so that a woman's love-borne pain shares in the very heart of His suffering. This means a woman understands her relational suffering as a cross close to Christ's, so that she sees the pain that flows from her love and bonds as sharing in His

own love-borne suffering rather than as mere misfortune. The woman who understands the relational cross sees her love-borne pain close to the suffering of Christ. The relational cross is a woman's suffering that flows from love, deeply like Christ's own love-borne suffering.

Mary and the Sword

Mary, whose soul was pierced by a sword, is the model of a woman's suffering united to Christ, showing how a mother's and a woman's pain can be joined to the Cross in faith. The suffering of Mary is the model of a woman's suffering close to Christ, for Simeon foretold that a sword would pierce her soul, and Mary carried a mother's anguish through her Son's life and death, standing at the Cross in silent, faithful suffering, so that she is the perfect example of a woman whose embodied, relational, and hidden suffering was united to Christ's own, and a woman can look to Mary and the sword as the model of how her own suffering can be borne in faith and joined to the Cross. This means a woman looks to Mary and the sword as the model of her suffering united to Christ, so that she sees in Mary's pierced heart the pattern of bearing her own pain in faith and joining it to the Cross. The woman who looks to Mary and the sword finds the model of her own suffering united to Christ. Mary and the sword show the model of a woman's suffering united to Christ, a mother's pain joined to the Cross in faith.

CHAPTER FIVE

What This Does Not Mean

Never a Reason to Accept Avoidable Harm

The theology of redemptive suffering is easily and dangerously misused, and a woman must understand clearly what it does not mean, for it is never a reason to accept harm that can and should be avoided, to remain in danger, or to refuse help. Understanding what this teaching does not mean protects a woman from a distortion that would turn a holy truth into a cause of harm.

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. — Isaiah 1:17

Not Romanticizing Suffering

The teaching on redemptive suffering does not romanticize suffering or call it good in itself, for suffering remains an evil that God permits and redeems, not something to be

sought or celebrated. Understanding redemptive suffering rightly means not romanticizing suffering, for the teaching does not make suffering good in itself or something to be desired, celebrated, or sought out, since suffering remains an evil, a consequence of a fallen world, which God permits and can redeem but does not delight in, so that a woman must not sentimentalize or glorify pain as if it were itself holy, but understand that its value lies only in what God can make of it when it is united to Christ, not in the suffering itself. This means a woman does not romanticize suffering, understanding that it is not good in itself but an evil God redeems, so that she neither seeks nor glorifies pain but sees its value only in what God makes of it. The woman who does not romanticize suffering sees it as an evil God redeems, not a good to be sought. Not romanticizing suffering means a woman does not call it good in itself, so that she neither seeks nor glorifies pain but trusts God to redeem it.

Never Accepting Avoidable Harm

The teaching on redemptive suffering never requires a woman to accept harm that can and should be avoided, to remain in danger, abuse, or injustice, or to refuse help, protection, or escape. A crucial boundary must be clear: the theology of redemptive suffering never requires a woman to accept harm that can and should be avoided, for it does not ask her to remain in an abusive situation, to tolerate injustice she could resist, to endure danger she could escape, or to refuse medical help, protection, or deliverance, since God wills her good and not her harm, and Scripture itself calls His people to seek justice and correct oppression, so that redemptive suffering concerns pain that genuinely cannot be avoided, never a passive acceptance of harm that should be fled or resisted. This means a woman understands that this teaching never requires accepting avoidable harm, so that she resists injustice, escapes danger, and seeks help when harm can be avoided rather than enduring it in the name of the Cross. The woman who understands never accepting avoidable harm resists and escapes harm that should not be borne. Never accepting avoidable harm means the teaching does not require enduring abuse, danger, or injustice that can be avoided, so that a woman seeks help and resists harm.

Seeking Help Is Right and Holy

Seeking help, protection, healing, and relief from suffering is right and holy, not a failure of faith, so that a woman is free to pursue every good remedy for her pain. It must be clear that seeking help and relief from suffering is right and holy, not a failure of faith or a refusal of the Cross, for a woman may and should pursue medical care, counseling, protection, justice, and every legitimate remedy for her suffering, since God works through such means and desires her healing and good, so that there is no contradiction between accepting unavoidable suffering in faith and seeking with all her power to

relieve, heal, or escape the suffering that can be remedied, both being right, and seeking help being an act of wisdom and not of weakness. This means a woman understands that seeking help and relief is right and holy, so that she freely pursues healing, protection, and every good remedy for her suffering without regarding it as a failure of faith. The woman who understands seeking help is right and holy pursues every good remedy for her pain. Seeking help is right and holy, so that a woman freely pursues healing, protection, and relief from suffering without it being a failure of faith.

CHAPTER SIX

Suffering and Credibility

The Witness of Faithful Endurance

A woman who has suffered and remained faithful, and even joyful, through her suffering becomes one of the most persuasive witnesses there is, for faithful endurance of pain authenticates the faith in a way that comfort never can. Understanding the role of suffering in credibility reveals how a woman's faithful suffering becomes a powerful witness.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair… always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. — 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

Faithful Suffering Authenticates

Faithful suffering authenticates the faith, for a woman who holds to God through genuine pain shows that her faith is real and not merely a comfort of easy times. There is a credibility that only faithful suffering can give, for anyone can profess faith in comfort, but a woman who holds fast to God through real suffering, who keeps believing, keeps loving, and keeps serving in the midst of genuine pain, demonstrates that her faith is real, tested, and not merely a convenience of easy times, so that her faithful endurance authenticates the faith, proving its reality in a way that untested profession never can, suffering borne faithfully being the seal of a genuine faith. This means a woman understands that faithful suffering authenticates the faith, so that she sees her endurance through pain as proof of the reality of her faith, a credibility that comfort could never supply. The woman who understands faithful suffering authenticates sees her endurance as proof of real faith. Faithful suffering authenticates the faith, so that a woman who holds to God through pain shows her faith is real and tested.

The Persuasive Power of Joy in Suffering

A woman who remains not only faithful but joyful through suffering is especially persuasive, for joy in pain points unmistakably to a source beyond the natural and draws others to ask about it. Beyond faithful endurance, a woman who remains joyful in her suffering is especially persuasive, for joy in the midst of genuine pain is inexplicable by natural means and points unmistakably to a supernatural source, making the woman who suffers with joy the most compelling witness in any room, since her joy amid suffering raises the question of what sustains her and draws others toward the faith that can produce such joy, the persuasive power of joy in suffering being immense. This means a woman understands the persuasive power of joy in suffering, so that she sees her joy amid pain, where she can find it, as a compelling witness that points others to its supernatural source. The woman who understands the persuasive power of joy in suffering witnesses powerfully through joy amid pain. The persuasive power of joy in suffering points to a supernatural source, so that a woman joyful amid pain becomes a compelling witness.

The Most Persuasive Witness in the Room

The woman who has suffered and remained faithful and joyful is often the most persuasive witness in any room, her very presence testifying to a reality that arguments cannot convey. When a woman has suffered genuinely and remained faithful and joyful through it, she becomes often the most persuasive witness in any room, for her endurance and joy speak of a reality that no argument can convey, her life itself testifying that the faith holds even under the heaviest weight, so that her witness carries a weight and credibility beyond words, drawing others by the undeniable evidence of a faith that has been tested by fire and not been destroyed, the suffering and faithful woman a witness of unmatched power. This means a woman understands that faithful, joyful suffering can make her the most persuasive witness in the room, so that she sees her tested faith as a testimony of unmatched power, drawing others by the evidence of her endurance. The woman who understands the most persuasive witness in the room sees her tested faith as a testimony beyond words. The most persuasive witness in the room is often the woman who has suffered and remained faithful and joyful, her life testifying to a reality arguments cannot convey.

CHAPTER SEVEN

It Is Not the End of the Story

Beyond Every Cross, the Resurrection

The Cross, however heavy, is never the end of the Christian story, for beyond every cross lies the Resurrection, and the suffering of this present time is not worth comparing to the glory that is to come. Understanding that suffering is not the end of the story gives a woman the hope that carries her through the Cross.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. — Romans 8:18

The Cross Gives Way to Resurrection

In the Christian story the Cross always gives way to Resurrection, so that suffering is never the final word but a passage to the glory that follows. The deepest truth about Christian suffering is that the Cross is never the end, for in the pattern of Christ's own story the Cross gave way to the Resurrection, and so for the believer suffering is never the final word but a passage, however dark, that opens onto the glory beyond it, so that a woman can face even the heaviest cross knowing that in Christ it is not the end but gives way to resurrection, the darkness of Good Friday always opening onto the light of Easter. This means a woman understands that the Cross gives way to Resurrection, so that she regards her suffering not as the final word but as a passage to the glory that follows, holding to the hope of resurrection beyond every cross. The woman who understands the Cross gives way to Resurrection holds to hope beyond her suffering. The Cross gives way to Resurrection, so that a woman's suffering is never the final word but a passage to the glory that follows.

The Glory That Outweighs the Suffering

The glory that awaits so far outweighs present suffering that Scripture calls them not worth comparing, so that a woman's pain, however great, is held in proportion by the glory to come. Scripture declares that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed, revealing that the glory awaiting the faithful so vastly outweighs even the greatest present suffering that the two cannot be set on the same scale, so that a woman can hold her pain, however heavy, in proportion by the immensity of the coming glory, her suffering real but temporary and finite against an eternal and infinite glory, the weight of glory far surpassing the weight of the Cross. This means a woman understands that the glory to come outweighs present suffering beyond comparison, so that she holds her pain in proportion, real but finite against the infinite glory that awaits. The woman who understands the glory that outweighs the suffering holds her pain in the proportion of eternity. The glory that outweighs the suffering is so

great that present pain is not worth comparing to it, so that a woman holds her suffering in the proportion of the coming glory.

Hope That Carries Through the Cross

The certainty that suffering is not the end gives a woman a hope that carries her through the Cross, enabling her to endure present pain in the confidence of the glory and resurrection to come. The knowledge that suffering is not the end of the story gives a woman a hope that carries her through the Cross, for she endures present pain not in despair but in the sure confidence that resurrection and glory lie beyond it, and this hope sustains her through the darkest suffering, giving her the strength to carry her cross in the certainty that it leads somewhere, to glory, so that hope is the power that carries her through, transforming endurance from grim survival into faithful waiting for the joy to come. This means a woman draws on the hope that carries her through the Cross, enduring present suffering in the confidence of the glory and resurrection to come, so that her hope transforms endurance into faithful waiting. The woman who has hope that carries through the Cross endures her suffering in confidence of the glory to come. Hope that carries through the Cross sustains a woman in present suffering, so that she endures in the certainty of the resurrection and glory to come.

CONCLUSION

Carry the Cross in Hope

The woman who had no framework for her suffering now has its proper address. We have seen that the Cross is not optional, for the mission will cost something, and expecting the cost prevents collapse; that there is a mystery of redemptive suffering, by which pain united to Christ fills up what is lacking in His afflictions, revealing not the Cross's insufficiency but suffering's dignity; that suffering shares in the Paschal mystery, a dying with Christ ordered toward rising, a transformation and not masochism; that a woman's embodied, relational, and hidden suffering is particularly close to Christ's, with Mary as its model; that this teaching never means accepting avoidable harm, for seeking help is right and holy; that faithful and joyful suffering makes a woman the most persuasive witness; and that suffering is not the end of the story, for beyond every Cross is the Resurrection.

Running through all of it is a single truth: the Cross is not optional, and it is not the end of the story. A woman's suffering, when it comes and cannot be avoided, need not destroy her mission but can deepen it, united to Christ and carried in the hope of resurrection.

So carry the Cross in hope. Expect the mission to cost you something, and do not be surprised or defeated when it does. When unavoidable suffering comes, unite it to Christ, offering it with Him so that it shares in His redemptive work. See your embodied, relational, and hidden suffering as close to His, and look to Mary, whose soul a sword pierced, as your model. But never accept harm that can be avoided, for this teaching never asks you to endure abuse, danger, or injustice, and seeking help is right and holy. Let your faithful, joyful endurance be a witness more persuasive than any argument. And above all, remember that the Cross is not the end, for beyond it lies the Resurrection, and the glory to come far outweighs every present pain. Carry your cross, united to Christ, in the sure hope of the glory that is to be revealed.

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