THE DAILY BREAD

The Missio of the Beloved



Redemptive Suffering in a Woman's Life

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Redemptive Suffering

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Carrying the Everyday Crosses with Christ

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INTRODUCTION

Where the Cross Actually Falls

A woman may understand the theology of redemptive suffering, that pain united to Christ shares in His saving work, and still not know how to live it when the Cross actually falls on her ordinary life. For the crosses a woman carries are usually not dramatic martyrdoms but the quiet, grinding sufferings of a faithful life: the loneliness of being the only one in her home who practices the faith, the fatigue of giving and giving with no visible return, the grief of watching people she loves make choices she cannot stop, and the rejection that comes with standing for something in a culture that has decided she should know better. The question is not whether a woman believes suffering can be redemptive but how she actually carries these particular crosses in a way that unites them to Christ rather than being crushed by them.

This book is about living redemptive suffering in the concrete crosses of a woman's life. It will show how to actually offer suffering up; how to carry the loneliness of being the only believer at home; how to bear the fatigue of sustained generosity without visible return; how to endure the grief of loved ones who stray; how to meet the rejection that comes with standing for the faith; how to carry the Cross without falling into an unhealthy martyr complex; and how to persevere through the long seasons when nothing seems to grow. The aim is wholly practical, to help a woman carry the real crosses of her life with Christ, so that the suffering she cannot avoid becomes, united to Him, redemptive rather than merely crushing.

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. — 1 Peter 4:13

Scripture tells a woman to rejoice insofar as she shares in Christ's sufferings, pointing to the glory that will follow, and this is the spirit in which she carries the everyday crosses of her life, as a sharing in Christ's own suffering that leads to glory. This book will help her do it concretely, taking up the particular crosses she actually carries and uniting them to Christ. The crosses of a woman's life are real and heavy, but they need not be wasted or merely endured, for carried with Christ they become a share in His redemptive work. This book is about carrying those crosses well, so that the suffering that falls on a woman's ordinary life becomes, united to Christ, a participation in His saving love.

CHAPTER ONE

How to Offer It Up

Making the Offering Concrete

The phrase offer it up is familiar to many Catholic women, but a woman does well to understand what it actually means and how to do it concretely, turning a vague saying into a real spiritual practice that transforms her suffering. Understanding how to offer it up gives a woman the concrete act by which her pain is united to Christ.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. — Romans 12:1

What Offering It Up Actually Means

To offer suffering up means consciously to give one's pain to God in union with Christ's Cross, presenting it as a sacrifice for His purposes rather than merely enduring it. The familiar phrase offer it up actually means a definite spiritual act, consciously giving one's suffering to God in union with the Cross of Christ, presenting the pain as a sacrifice joined to His and asking that it be used for His redemptive purposes, so that offering it up is not a dismissive platitude but a real act of uniting one's suffering to Christ and giving it to God, turning mere endurance into a conscious offering, the pain presented to God as a living sacrifice rather than simply suffered. This means a woman understands what offering it up actually means, the conscious giving of her suffering to God in union with Christ, so that she turns a vague phrase into a real act of uniting her pain to the Cross. The woman who understands what offering it up means makes it a real act of uniting her pain to Christ. What offering it up actually means is consciously giving suffering to God in union with Christ's Cross, so that pain becomes an offering rather than mere endurance.

The Morning Offering and Offering in the Moment

A woman makes offering it up concrete through the morning offering, giving the whole day to God in advance, and through offering her sufferings to Him in the moment as they come. Offering it up becomes concrete through simple practices, chief among them the morning offering, by which a woman at the start of each day gives the whole of it, her prayers, works, joys, and sufferings, to God in advance, and the practice of offering particular sufferings to Him in the moment they arise, saying inwardly as a pain comes that she unites it to Christ and offers it for some intention, so that through the morning offering and offering in the moment she makes the uniting of her suffering to Christ a concrete and repeated act. This means a woman makes offering it up concrete through

the morning offering and offering her sufferings in the moment, so that she has definite practices by which to unite her pain to Christ rather than only a vague intention. The woman who uses the morning offering and offering in the moment makes her offering concrete and repeated. The morning offering and offering in the moment make offering it up concrete, so that a woman unites her suffering to Christ through definite, repeated acts.

Offering for Others

A woman gives her suffering added meaning by offering it for specific others and intentions, so that her pain becomes a gift of love poured out for the souls she carries. The offering of suffering takes on added meaning and power when it is offered for others, for a woman can unite her pain to Christ and offer it for a specific person or intention, the conversion of a loved one, the needs of her family, the souls she longs to reach, so that her suffering becomes a gift of love poured out for others, an intercession made not only in words but in pain borne for their sake, offering it for others turning her cross into an act of love. This means a woman offers her suffering for specific others and intentions, so that her pain becomes a gift of love poured out for the souls she carries rather than a burden borne for nothing. The woman who offers her suffering for others turns her cross into an act of love. Offering for others gives suffering added meaning, so that a woman's pain becomes a gift of love poured out for specific souls and intentions.

CHAPTER TWO

The Loneliness of Being the Only One

Carrying the Faith Alone at Home

One of the heaviest and most common crosses a woman carries is the loneliness of being the only one in her home who practices the faith, holding it alone amid a family that does not share it. Understanding how to carry the loneliness of being the only one helps a woman bear this particular cross with faith rather than despair.

For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? — 1 Corinthians 7:16

The Weight of Carrying It Alone

A woman who is the only believer in her home carries a real and heavy loneliness, holding the faith without the support of those closest to her. Many women bear the particular cross of being the only one in their home who practices the faith, carrying it

alone amid a spouse or children who do not share it or have fallen away, and this is a real and heavy loneliness, for she holds the faith without the support, encouragement, or companionship of those closest to her, often feeling isolated in the very place that should be her deepest fellowship, so that the weight of carrying the faith alone at home is a genuine and painful cross. This means a woman acknowledges the real weight of carrying the faith alone in her home, so that she recognizes this loneliness as a genuine cross rather than a personal failing or something to deny. The woman who acknowledges the weight of carrying it alone bears this cross honestly rather than denying it. The weight of carrying it alone is the real loneliness of being the only believer in one's home, a genuine and painful cross.

The Patience of Monica

A woman carries this cross by the patient, hopeful perseverance of Saint Monica, who prayed for years for her unbelieving family and saw them come to faith at last. In carrying the loneliness of being the only believer, a woman can draw on the example of Saint Monica, who for many years was the only Christian in her household, praying patiently and persistently for her pagan husband and her wayward son Augustine, never giving up hope, and seeing in time both come to faith, so that her patient, hopeful perseverance models how a woman carries this cross, not with despair or nagging but with steady prayer and patient witness, trusting God over the long years. This means a woman carries the loneliness of being the only believer with the patience of Monica, so that she perseveres in prayer and patient witness over the long term rather than despairing or resorting to pressure. The woman who carries this cross with the patience of Monica perseveres in hopeful prayer. The patience of Monica models carrying this cross through steady prayer and patient hope over the long years.

Being Faithful Without Control

A woman bears this cross by being faithful herself while leaving the faith of her family to God, witnessing and praying without trying to force or control what only grace can give. Carrying the loneliness of faith at home well requires a woman to be faithful herself while leaving the conversion of her family to God, for she cannot force faith on anyone, and attempts to control, pressure, or coerce usually drive people further away, so that her task is to live her own faith joyfully and consistently, to pray, and to witness gently, while surrendering the outcome to God, trusting that her faithful and non-coercive witness, joined to grace, may in time bear fruit she cannot compel. This means a woman carries this cross by being faithful without trying to control her family's faith, so that she witnesses and prays while leaving the outcome to God rather than forcing what only grace can give. The woman who is faithful without control witnesses and prays while

surrendering the outcome to God. Being faithful without control means living one's own faith and praying while leaving the family's conversion to God, so that a woman does not force what only grace can give.

CHAPTER THREE

The Fatigue of Giving Without Return

Pouring Out with No Visible Fruit

A particular cross of the apostolic and maternal life is the fatigue of sustained generosity that seems to bring no visible return, of pouring oneself out for others and family with little gratitude or evident fruit. Understanding how to bear the fatigue of giving without return helps a woman continue to give when her generosity seems unrewarded.

I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. — 2 Corinthians 12:15

The Exhaustion of Sustained Generosity

A woman who gives and gives over years grows weary, and the exhaustion of sustained generosity without visible reward is a real cross she must recognize. The sustained generosity of a woman's life, the endless giving to family, to others, to the mission, can bring a deep fatigue, for pouring oneself out year after year with little rest, gratitude, or visible reward is genuinely exhausting, so that a woman often carries the cross of weariness from giving, the slow depletion that comes from constant self-expenditure, and she must recognize this exhaustion as a real cross rather than a sign of failure or a lack of love, the fatigue of sustained generosity being a genuine burden. This means a woman recognizes the exhaustion of sustained generosity as a real cross, so that she acknowledges her weariness honestly rather than treating it as failure, naming the fatigue that comes from giving without rest. The woman who recognizes the exhaustion of sustained generosity bears her weariness honestly. The exhaustion of sustained generosity is the real fatigue of giving year after year with little reward, a genuine cross a woman must recognize.

Giving Without Seeing Results

A woman must often give without seeing results, pouring herself out for people and purposes whose fruit is hidden or delayed, and she bears this by trusting that no love given is wasted. Much of a woman's giving brings no visible result, for she pours herself out for children, family, and souls whose growth is hidden, slow, or yet to come, and may

labor for years without seeing the fruit of her love, so that she must learn to give without seeing results, bearing the discouragement of unrewarded generosity by trusting that no love given in Christ is ever wasted, that God sees and uses what she pours out even when she cannot see its effect, the hidden fruit real though unseen. This means a woman learns to give without seeing results, trusting that her love is not wasted even when its fruit is hidden, so that she continues to pour herself out in faith rather than only when she sees reward. The woman who gives without seeing results trusts that no love given is wasted. Giving without seeing results means pouring oneself out without visible fruit, so that a woman trusts her love is not wasted even when its effect is hidden.

Drawing on Grace, Not Just Willpower

A woman sustains generosity that seems to bring no return not by her own willpower, which fails, but by drawing on God's grace, letting Him replenish what she pours out. The fatigue of giving without return cannot be sustained by willpower alone, which eventually fails, so that a woman must draw on God's grace to continue, returning to prayer, the sacraments, and rest in God to be replenished, letting Him refill what she pours out rather than running on her own depleting strength, for only the grace of God can sustain a lifetime of generosity, and a woman who tries to give from her own resources alone will burn out, while one who draws on grace is continually renewed. This means a woman sustains her generosity by drawing on grace rather than willpower, so that she returns to God to be replenished and gives from His strength rather than her own depleting resources. The woman who draws on grace, not just willpower, is renewed to keep giving. Drawing on grace, not just willpower, sustains a woman's generosity, so that she lets God replenish what she pours out rather than running on her own failing strength.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Grief of Loved Ones Who Stray

Loving Those You Cannot Control

Among the deepest griefs a woman can carry is watching someone she loves, a child, a spouse, a dear friend, make destructive choices or walk away from the faith, a suffering she cannot fix and must learn to bear. Understanding how to carry the grief of loved ones who stray helps a woman love them through it without being destroyed by it.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. — Luke 15:20

The Pain of Watching Them Choose

A woman suffers acutely in watching a loved one make choices she knows are harmful yet cannot prevent, a grief of love that she must recognize as a heavy cross. One of the sharpest sufferings of love is watching a loved one make destructive choices, for a woman who sees her child, spouse, or friend choosing a path she knows will harm them, or walking away from God, suffers acutely yet cannot force a different choice, and this pain of watching them choose, bound by her love yet powerless to prevent the harm, is among the heaviest crosses, a grief that comes precisely from loving someone whose freedom she cannot override. This means a woman recognizes the pain of watching a loved one choose harm as a heavy cross of love, so that she acknowledges this grief honestly rather than denying it or blaming herself for what she cannot control. The woman who recognizes the pain of watching them choose bears this grief as a cross of love. The pain of watching them choose is a woman's acute grief at a loved one's destructive choices she cannot prevent, a heavy cross of love.

Surrendering Them to God

A woman carries this grief by surrendering her loved one to God, entrusting to Him the person she cannot save and releasing the burden of an outcome that is not hers to control. The way a woman bears the grief of a straying loved one is by surrendering that person to God, for she cannot save them herself, and clinging to the impossible burden of controlling their choices only crushes her, so that she must entrust the loved one to God, placing them in His hands, releasing the outcome she cannot command while continuing to love and pray, this surrender freeing her from a weight she was never meant to carry and placing her loved one with the only One who can reach them. This means a woman surrenders her straying loved one to God, entrusting to Him the person she cannot save and releasing the outcome she cannot control, so that she is freed from an impossible burden while continuing to love and pray. The woman who surrenders them to God entrusts her loved one to the only One who can reach them. Surrendering them to God means entrusting the loved one one cannot save to Him, so that a woman releases an outcome she cannot control.

The Hope of the Waiting Father

A woman carries this grief in the hope of the waiting father of the parable, who watched the road for his prodigal and ran to embrace him, trusting that love and prayer keep the door open for a return. In the grief of a straying loved one, a woman can hold the hope of the waiting father in Christ's parable, who watched the road for his prodigal son and ran to embrace him when at last he returned, for this reveals God's own heart toward the

straying and models the hope a woman can keep, continuing to pray, to love, and to leave the door open, trusting that her loved one, like the prodigal, may yet come home, the waiting father's hope sustaining her through the long absence. This means a woman carries the grief of a straying loved one in the hope of the waiting father, so that she keeps praying and loving with the door open, trusting that a return is possible however long the absence. The woman who holds the hope of the waiting father keeps the door open for her loved one's return. The hope of the waiting father sustains a woman through a loved one's straying, so that she keeps the door open in the trust that they may yet come home.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Rejection of Standing for Something

Bearing Marginalization for the Faith

A woman who stands visibly for the faith in a culture that has largely rejected it will meet rejection of her own, being marginalized, mocked, or dismissed for her convictions, a social suffering she must learn to bear with grace. Understanding how to bear the rejection of standing for something helps a woman hold her ground without bitterness.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. — Matthew 5:11

The Cost of Visible Conviction

A woman who visibly holds to the faith and its moral convictions will pay a social cost, meeting disapproval, mockery, or exclusion for standing apart from the culture. Standing visibly for the faith carries a social cost, for a woman who holds openly to Christian convictions, especially on matters the culture rejects, will often meet disapproval, mockery, exclusion, or the quiet marginalization of being thought backward or intolerant, so that her visible conviction makes her a target of a certain rejection, and she must expect that standing apart from the prevailing culture will cost her socially, the price of visible conviction being real in a world that resents dissent from its views. This means a woman expects the cost of visible conviction, recognizing that standing for the faith will bring social rejection, so that she is prepared for it rather than surprised or wounded into silence. The woman who expects the cost of visible conviction is prepared for the rejection it brings. The cost of visible conviction is the social rejection a woman meets for standing openly for the faith against the culture.

Counted Blessed in Rejection

A woman bears rejection for the faith knowing that Christ called those reviled for His sake blessed, so that her suffering for standing with Him is not shameful but honored. Christ reframed rejection for the faith by calling blessed those who are reviled and persecuted falsely on His account, so that a woman who suffers rejection for standing with Christ can understand it not as shame or failure but as a share in the blessedness He promised, a mark of fellowship with Him and the prophets who were rejected before her, and this reframing lets her bear the rejection with a strange joy, counted blessed in her very suffering for His sake, honored rather than diminished by it. This means a woman bears rejection for the faith as those Christ called blessed, so that she sees her suffering for standing with Him as honored and a share in His blessedness rather than as shame. The woman who knows she is counted blessed in rejection bears it with joy rather than shame. Counted blessed in rejection, a woman bears suffering for the faith as the blessedness Christ promised, honored rather than diminished.

Standing Firm Without Bitterness

A woman holds her ground under rejection without letting it turn to bitterness, keeping her charity toward those who reject her and refusing resentment or retaliation. The danger in bearing rejection is that it can curdle into bitterness, so that a woman must stand firm in her convictions without becoming bitter, keeping her love and goodwill toward those who reject or mock her, refusing resentment, self-pity, and retaliation, and holding her ground with a charity that does not harden, for bitterness would poison her witness and her soul, whereas standing firm with love keeps her faithful and winsome even under rejection, firm in conviction yet free of rancor. This means a woman stands firm under rejection without bitterness, keeping her charity toward those who reject her and refusing resentment, so that she holds her ground without letting rejection harden her heart. The woman who stands firm without bitterness keeps her charity even under rejection. Standing firm without bitterness means holding one's convictions while refusing resentment, so that a woman keeps charity toward those who reject her.

CHAPTER SIX

Carrying the Cross Without a Martyr Complex

Suffering for the Gospel, Not for Yourself

A woman must learn to carry her crosses without falling into an unhealthy martyr complex, distinguishing genuine suffering for the Gospel from suffering manufactured by

her own stubbornness, ego, or unhealed wounds. Understanding how to carry the Cross without a martyr complex keeps a woman's suffering healthy and real rather than self-inflicted and self-pitying.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed. — 1 Peter 4:15-16

Suffering for the Gospel Versus for Yourself

A woman must distinguish genuine suffering for the Gospel from suffering she brings on herself through her own faults, for not all suffering is redemptive and some is self-inflicted. A crucial distinction in carrying the Cross is between suffering genuinely for the Gospel and suffering that a woman brings on herself through her own stubbornness, pride, tactlessness, or sin, for Scripture warns against suffering as a wrongdoer or meddler while honoring suffering as a Christian, so that not all suffering is redemptive, and a woman must honestly discern whether a particular suffering comes from faithfulness to Christ or from her own faults, needless offense, or self-created conflict, only the former being a true share in the Cross. This means a woman distinguishes suffering for the Gospel from suffering caused by her own faults, so that she does not dignify self-inflicted suffering as a holy cross but discerns honestly where her pain comes from. The woman who distinguishes suffering for the Gospel from suffering for herself discerns her crosses honestly. Suffering for the Gospel versus for yourself distinguishes genuine crosses from self-inflicted ones, so that a woman does not dignify her own faults as holy suffering.

When Suffering Comes from Unhealed Wounds

Some suffering a woman takes for holy comes in truth from her own unhealed wounds, and such suffering calls for healing rather than being offered up as a cross. Some of what a woman experiences as suffering, and may be tempted to treat as a redemptive cross, actually arises from her own unhealed wounds, her past hurts, insecurities, or emotional patterns that distort her perceptions and relationships, so that this kind of suffering calls not for pious offering up but for healing, through prayer, counsel, and sometimes professional help, and a woman does well to discern when her pain signals a wound to be healed rather than a cross to be carried, seeking healing rather than sanctifying the wound. This means a woman recognizes when her suffering comes from unhealed wounds, so that she seeks healing for such pain rather than offering it up as a cross, discerning the difference between a wound and a cross. The woman who recognizes suffering from unhealed wounds seeks healing rather than sanctifying the wound. When

suffering comes from unhealed wounds, it calls for healing rather than offering up, so that a woman seeks to heal such pain rather than carry it as a cross.

Healthy Self-Giving, Not Self-Destruction

A woman carries her crosses in a way that is healthy self-giving, not self-destruction, caring properly for herself and refusing a false holiness that neglects her legitimate needs. Carrying the Cross rightly means practicing healthy self-giving rather than self-destruction, for genuine Christian sacrifice does not require a woman to neglect her legitimate needs, destroy her health, or refuse all care for herself in the name of holiness, since such self-destruction is not the Cross but a distortion of it, so that a woman gives generously while still caring properly for herself, resting, seeking support, and maintaining her wellbeing, her self-giving healthy and sustainable rather than a self-neglect masquerading as virtue. This means a woman practices healthy self-giving rather than self-destruction, caring properly for herself even as she sacrifices, so that she rejects a false holiness that would neglect her legitimate needs. The woman who practices healthy self-giving, not self-destruction, cares for herself even as she gives. Healthy self-giving, not self-destruction, means a woman cares properly for herself while sacrificing, so that she rejects a false holiness of self-neglect.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Perseverance Through the Long Seasons

Enduring When Nothing Seems to Grow

Much of the apostolic life is lived not in moments of crisis but in long seasons of discouragement, apparent failure, and invisible growth, and a woman must learn to persevere through these, continuing faithfully when nothing seems to be happening. Understanding how to persevere through the long seasons sustains a woman for the endurance the apostolic life requires.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. — Hebrews 12:1-2

The Long Seasons of Apparent Failure

A woman must expect long seasons when her efforts seem to fail and nothing appears to grow, understanding these as a normal part of the apostolic life rather than a sign of defeat. The apostolic life includes long seasons of apparent failure, stretches of months or

years when a woman's prayers seem unanswered, her efforts fruitless, and nothing she does appears to make a difference, so that she must expect these seasons and understand them as a normal part of the mission rather than a sign that she has failed or should quit, for even faithful labor often passes through long periods of invisible growth and apparent barrenness, the dry seasons being part of the journey rather than its end. This means a woman expects the long seasons of apparent failure, understanding them as a normal part of the apostolic life, so that she is not defeated by stretches when nothing seems to grow but recognizes them as part of the journey. The woman who expects the long seasons of apparent failure is not defeated by barren stretches. The long seasons of apparent failure are normal stretches when nothing seems to grow, which a woman must expect rather than take as defeat.

Faithfulness in the Absence of Fruit

A woman perseveres by remaining faithful even when she sees no fruit, measuring herself by her fidelity rather than by visible results and trusting God with the harvest. Perseverance through the long seasons requires faithfulness in the absence of visible fruit, for a woman must continue to pray, serve, and witness even when she sees no results, measuring her apostolate by her faithfulness rather than by visible success, and trusting that God is at work in the unseen even when nothing appears, so that she remains faithful in the barren seasons, continuing to do what is right regardless of the lack of evident fruit, her perseverance resting on fidelity rather than on the encouragement of results. This means a woman remains faithful in the absence of fruit, measuring herself by her fidelity rather than visible results, so that she perseveres through barren seasons by continuing to do right and trusting God with the harvest. The woman who is faithful in the absence of fruit perseveres by fidelity rather than results. Faithfulness in the absence of fruit means continuing to serve without visible results, so that a woman perseveres by fidelity and trusts God with the harvest.

Looking to Jesus and Not Giving Up

A woman sustains her perseverance by keeping her eyes on Jesus rather than on her circumstances, drawing strength from Him to run the race with endurance and refusing to give up. The strength to persevere through the long seasons comes from looking to Jesus, for Scripture bids the faithful run the race with endurance by keeping their eyes fixed on Him, the founder and perfecter of faith, so that a woman sustains her perseverance not by focusing on her discouraging circumstances but by fixing her gaze on Christ, drawing strength and hope from Him, and in His strength refusing to give up, continuing the race to the end because she runs it looking to the One who ran it before her and now helps her finish. This means a woman sustains her perseverance by looking

to Jesus rather than her circumstances, so that she draws strength from Him to endure and refuses to give up through the long seasons. The woman who looks to Jesus and does not give up runs the race with endurance to the end. Looking to Jesus and not giving up sustains perseverance, so that a woman draws strength from Christ to endure the long seasons rather than quitting.

CONCLUSION

Carry Them with Christ

The woman who knew suffering could be redemptive but not how to carry her actual crosses now has the practical means. We have seen how to offer it up concretely, through the morning offering, offering in the moment, and offering for others; how to carry the loneliness of being the only believer at home with the patience of Monica, faithful without controlling; how to bear the fatigue of giving without return by drawing on grace, not willpower; how to endure the grief of loved ones who stray by surrendering them to God in the hope of the waiting father; how to meet the rejection of standing for the faith, counted blessed and firm without bitterness; how to carry the Cross without a martyr complex, distinguishing true suffering from self-inflicted pain and practicing healthy self-giving; and how to persevere through the long seasons, faithful in the absence of fruit, looking to Jesus and not giving up.

Running through all of it is a single practice: to carry the real crosses of her life with Christ. A woman's everyday sufferings, the loneliness, the fatigue, the grief, the rejection, need not crush her or be wasted, for carried with Christ and united to His Cross they become a share in His redemptive love.

So carry them with Christ. Offer up your sufferings concretely, uniting them to His Cross and offering them for the souls you love. Bear the loneliness of faith with Monica's patient hope, and the fatigue of giving by drawing on grace. Surrender your straying loved ones to God, keeping the door open like the waiting father. Meet rejection counted blessed, firm but never bitter. Guard against the martyr complex, carrying real crosses while seeking healing for wounds and caring rightly for yourself. And persevere through the long barren seasons, faithful when nothing grows, your eyes fixed on Jesus. The crosses of your life are real, but you need not carry them alone or in vain. Carry them with Christ, and even your suffering becomes love poured out.

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