

Children of the Cross: Guidelines

These *Guidelines* are a sure way to interior conversion and the renewal planned by God for the Church. Designed to unite individual Catholics through the expression of ‘a common spirituality,’ there are also provisions for living the spirituality of *Children of the Cross* with others, in community.

Read the guidelines, pray the consecration, follow the guidelines, and belong to the movement.



"BRING THE PEOPLE BACK TO THE CROSS" – The Lady of All Nations, Amsterdam November 15, 1951.

Preface

The first time I embraced *the Cross* was September 14, 1994. In those days I learnt that telling the truth may get you into trouble, but it will always get you out of trouble. Bearing witness to the truth was my first taste of the Cross and eventually I got out of a lot of trouble!

From that point I travelled the world whilst having to write every month for two years to my probation officer. What I experienced changed me. I met people striving for holiness who gave their all to God, bearing witness to their love for Jesus. They were *moved* by the same Spirit, belonged totally to Our Lady, and fervently adored her Son in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

And “everyone ***moved by the Spirit*** is a child of God. The Spirit makes us cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ bearing witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing His sufferings so as to share His glory” (Romans 8:14-17).

In Europe, particularly Italy, Amsterdam, and Slovakia, and also Russia I met groups of believers of the same Spirit. They thought the same and were free to smile, laugh, love, and were happy like little children. As it is written in the book of Acts, they “were united, heart and soul” (4:32). **I had found in the world in the devotees of Our Lady, true children of God moved to holiness and to love of Jesus Christ.**

My journey began 30 years ago. As best as I can, in these guidelines, I have articulated how the Spirit moves us towards certain practices and devotions and charisms, leading us to the fulness of Truth. In particular the Eucharist becomes the centre of our life and Our Lady always the object of our affection! And importantly, we are open to suffering. For the sake of love, and out of love, we embrace the Cross of Christ to know Him, to reproduce the pattern of His death (Philippians 3:10) and to have God live in us to reveal His love in our lives (1 John 4:9-12).

The charism of our movement “is *self-giving* formed by perpetual prayer and our surrendering to God’s Love. Thus, our interior conversion wrought by penance is made perfect through the purifying action of the Spirit. This frees us to give our lives along with the Divine Victim perpetuating in spirit and by good works His Sacrifice consummated on the Cross”—Guidelines.

Please Lord, bless our movement!

Australia Day, 26 January 2024

Guidelines for Children of the Cross

General Introduction

Our association is a movement of the Spirit

Church law provides for the association of Christians who pursue a more perfect life, promote private worship, exercise good works, and animate the temporal order with a Christian spirit (can. 298, §1). However, our organisation is by movement of the Holy Spirit and not limited by rules of association. Led by the Spouse of the Virgin Mary, we experience and are bound by a particular love for **Our Lady**. And as the Spirit guides us to life in Christ, won for us on a Cross, we are inflamed with love for the **Eucharist** which commemorates Jesus' Sacrifice and that is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life (Vatican II: Lumen Gentium, LG 11). **Hence, our association characterised by Marian and Eucharistic devotion, is a movement of the Holy Spirit leading the children of God to sanctification.** This phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 1 in accordance with the dream of Saint John Bosco.



Figure 1. The Pope steers his ship safely between the two columns and moors it to the two columns; first to the one surmounted by the Host, and then to the other, topped by the statue of the Virgin.

We abandon ourselves to this movement by our total consecration to the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, who once was Mary. Now clothed with the sun (Revelation 12:1; JPII: Redemptoris Mater, RM 47) this heavenly woman imbued with the Holy Spirit has become the true ark of the Covenant (cf. Revelation 11:19) in whom God's graciousness dwells and, by whose loving intercession, is given for all of creation. Entrusted to her care (John 19:27) she calls us her children, by the power of her Holy Spouse, to *embrace the Redeemer and His Cross*; or as described in the apocalypse, to "*obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus*" (Revelation 12:17). Thus we, Our Lady's children, who, in fulfillment of our baptismal vows, embrace our redemption in Christ—of which she is advocate—are equally children of the Cross.

The purpose of Children of the Cross

The purpose of recognising this movement of the Holy Spirit is to illuminate the path of interior conversion and renewal planned by God for the Church. Hence, Children

of the Cross propose guidelines for general conduct and spiritual disciplines that free us to follow Jesus more perfectly.

The Spirit is calling us to a life of love for Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother and to self-immolation as the means of surrender to the Cross the Lord gifts us. The mystery is that we are to follow Our Lord *by laying down our life* in the service of each other (John 10:15; 15:12-13; 1 John 3:16), *by giving witness* to the Truth that the kingdom to which we aspire is not of this world (John 18:36), and *by fighting* a battle that is interior and spiritual. The Sacred Mystery is the fount from which the Spirit flows.

Achieving our purpose

We who embrace the Spirit's call to interior conversion consecrate our lives to God in imitation of Jesus Christ through the total surrender of our will to God. This union wrought by love begins at baptism, is wonderfully aided by our consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and only possible by grace. Still, this path of loving union can be navigated by surrendering to these guidelines whose purpose is to help us respond more fully to God's gifts of grace and new life received in baptism.

The Guidelines

Objects of the movement

The following of Christ proposed in the Gospels and in the charism expressed in these guidelines, are the guiding principles of our movement. Our aim is to live a Eucharistic life and spirituality, adhering in spirit and in every moment to the perpetuation of Christ's Sacrifice—that is the sacrifice of the Cross. To achieve this end which represents the fulfilment of Gospel living, we profess eight objects:

- (a) To provide guidelines for faithful Catholics resolved to love God above all else and attain Gospel perfection.
- (b) To be set free in Christ whilst uniting with other Catholics in “belief and practice” (1 Corinthians 1:10) through the expression of a common spirituality.
- (c) To provide discipline and structure to a disciple's life through a generous and structured response of prayer, works, and sacrifice. Conversely, practicing Christian discipline reduces dissipation and the subsequent corruption of our spiritual life, particularly if enduring trials such as persecution, spiritual attack, or confinement.
- (d) To proclaim the Good News (Luke 4:18-19), to “obey God's commandments, and to bear witness for Jesus” (Revelation 12:17; 14:12).

(e) To heed Our Lady of Fatima's urgent call to interior conversion and penance that "draws us to the heart of the Gospel" (Vatican online).

(f) To pray and make reparation to God for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference committed by human beings.

(g) To love our brothers and sisters with the love that comes from God and was fully revealed on the Cross (cf. 1 John 4:7-11). In obedience to the Word of God, we are to give them something . . . ourselves (cf. Matthew 14:16, Mark 6:37) and ultimately, "we too ought to lay down our lives for" (1 John 3:16, cf. John 10: 15) them.

(h) To make up what is lacking in the Body of Christ (Colossians 1:24) by ourself offering to embrace vicariously any ongoing affliction that must be suffered out of love, for the sake of the Church's Passover. Our intercession is as a victim. Just as Jesus offered Himself as a victim for our sake, we offer ourselves for the sake of the Church that must follow her Lord in His death and Resurrection (Catechism 677).

Our Apostolate

Our apostolate is to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Prayer opens our mind to Jesus's presence whose Spirit kindles our love for Him, and this growing desire helps purify our heart of venial sin. The Spirit also illuminates our mind, revealing the path of virtue. Thus, through prayer our behaviour changes modelled on our new mind (Romans 12:2) leading us to surrender our will to the movement of God's Love, to union with Christ, and to works of love tending to Christ's Body.

This apostolate demands interiorly drawing nearer to the Cross of Christ in the spirit of His Sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 9:14). We seek to more perfectly imitate Our Lord who laid down His life for others, teaching us to love (1 John 3:16). Through our self-giving may we show a special care for the little ones, the destitute, and the marginalised, contemplating in them the living presence of Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

Our daily life consists of routine prayer, discipline, and works of charity and mercy (cf. Catechism 2447) even if done in secret as times may again demand (cf. Tobit 1:16-18). The relationship between prayer and works is articulated in this way: As we walk the path of faith interiorly with Jesus it is by encountering the Holy Spirit that we come to know Christ's Love and are compelled to be His ambassador by manifesting that Love to all, to reconcile the world to God (2 Corinthians 5:14-20).

The greatest example of love is Jesus gifting us His Body and Blood, and then extending that gift of self by sacrificing His life on the Cross. That spirit of self-

offering to the Father—of being *given up* and having His life *poured out* for our redemption—reveals equally the inner form of the Eucharist and of our charism.

Following the Lord's example, we also strive to give of ourselves for the good of others. The inner form of this act is Eucharistic and by celebrating Christ's Sacrifice those who commune with Jesus "*offer the Divine Victim to God and offer themselves along with*" Him (LG 11). It follows that, as Holy Communion unites us to Jesus and draws us into the mystery of His Paschal Sacrifice and of His Love, those receiving Him with a proper disposition are strengthened by that Love to the point of desiring being *given up and poured out with Him*. By our participation in the Eucharist we can "truly become a living sacrifice in Christ" (Eucharistic Prayer IV).

Clearly, Eucharistic celebration is vital to our 'spirituality of the Cross' as communing with Jesus draws us into the mystery of His Sacrifice. However, for greater insight we consider that "*As often as the sacrifice of the Cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on*" (LG 3). Thus every Eucharist commemorating Jesus's death on a Cross is an occasion to offer His Sacrifice and to make It ever fruitful; carrying on the work of redemption also in us, who, in thanksgiving and love, offer ourselves along with Jesus desiring to intercede as a victim along with the Divine Victim.

Truly, the Eucharist is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life (LG 11). We accept that Holy Communion is ordered to union and spiritual nourishment, but also to thanksgiving and offering. Though we seek intimacy, love, and spousal union from communing with Jesus, we also desire our will be one with His, in the spirit of His Sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 9:14). So, having offered ourself with Jesus and having been nourished with the Sacrament—*again tasting of His Love*—communion that reconciles us also fortifies us, disposing us to surrender ourself totally to God who is Love (1 John 4:8). The fruit of Holy Communion is thus a greater compulsion to love and offer ourselves with Jesus to the Father in thanksgiving, and in imitation of Jesus to lay down our lives for each other. This truly carries on the work of redemption, bearing fruits of Jesus' Sacrifice and Spirit beyond the liturgy, its fount.

Thus, the aim of Children of the Cross is to live a Eucharistic life and spirituality, adhering every moment in spirit to the perpetuation of Christ's Passover Sacrifice—that is the sacrifice of the Cross. As Benedict XVI wrote, "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of His self-giving" (Deus caritas est, DCE 13). We simply aim to renew Jesus' Sacrifice in our lives.

Our spirit is to espouse the spirit of Our Lord's Eucharistic self-offering so that the Passover mystery may be present in our daily living. To that end, and in a wonderful way, Children of the Cross rely on the Mother of God's "maternal help [that] they may more intimately adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer" (LG 62). Just as woman is the helpmate of man (Genesis 2:18) Mary was the woman (cf. John 19:26) who fulfilled God's design at the foot of the Cross (LG 58) by helping Jesus in His work of Redemption. This woman who is the mother of all of God's people (John 19:27) now comes to the aid of her children helping them to embrace the gift of her Son's Redemption. She does this by helping them to adhere to her Son's surrender and new Covenant of love begun at table and consummated on the Cross, ever more perfectly. Therefore, Mary is seen as the one who helps us embrace the Cross of her Son.

Mary's role in our Eucharistic spirituality. Children of the Cross recognise the "maternity of Mary in the order of grace" and see in her our refuge (LG 62, 66). We aspire to be children of this now heavenly "Woman, clothed with the sun" and, as her children, are called to "obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus" (Revelation 12:17).

As it pleased God that the divine Son of God was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so now it pleases God that the divine life of her Son be born in His adopted children through her motherly care, intercession, and mediation as "advocate . . . and mediatrix" (LG 62). And in union with the universal Church, we acknowledge that the Mother of God "calls the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice" (LG 65) by helping her spiritual children to join their lives to Christ, to imitate Jesus in His way of love, and to be one with Him in His offering to the Father.

Hence Children of the Cross recognise Mary's role in our spiritual life as *mother* and *helpmate* in the work of our redemption. However, the vocation to motherhood is superior, as mothers are naturally a refuge and advocate for their children. And as Mary is the Mother of God, of all grace, and of each individual—we rejoice in God's wondrous design that the Immaculate Woman who once was Mary, but now clothed with the sun (Revelation 12:1; RM 47), is the Mother of all who live (cf. Genesis 3:20)! Her maternal desire is that her spiritual children undertake their own Passover journey so they may be born to eternal life. That is why she assists us to take up *our cross* and follow Jesus, leading us through the turbulent and chaotic waters of this passing world—with its false spirit—by imbuing us, her children, with the spirit of her Most Holy Spouse. In this way Mary helps her children adhere to her Son in His surrender, teaching them to love as He, Who died for us on the Cross, loved.

Above all the place Mary teaches us Christ's *surrender of love* is at Eucharist which commemorates His Passover via His Sacrifice. Within this mystery the Woman who stood with Jesus at the foot of the Cross now helps her adopted children (John 19:27) 'pass over' with Him. This journey requires the "Eucharist [to nourish and to draw] us into Jesus' act of self-oblation" (DCE 13). It also requires the Woman's help. Now in heaven (Revelation 12:1) the new Eve intercedes for her children by her continuous help in the work of their redemption: helping *us* adhere more intimately to our Redeemer by our embracing Him our Sacrifice, by entering into the mystery of His Passover, and by our journeying with Him while on earth to life in heaven.

Definitions. Children of the Cross are defined as children of God abandoned to the love, care, and guidance of Mother Mary who *helps us embrace the Cross of her Son—our redemption*. In her Immaculate Heart we receive the Holy Spirit who impresses upon our hearts the pattern of Our Lord's death (Philippians 3:10) so Jesus may live in us and the power of God's Love bear fruit in our lives.

Our charism is *self-giving* formed by perpetual prayer and our surrendering to God's Love. Thus, our interior conversion wrought by penance is made perfect through the purifying action of the Spirit. This frees us to give our lives along with the Divine Victim perpetuating in spirit and by good works His Sacrifice consummated on the Cross. Let us cry out, "Father, let your Son live in me as I give my life along with Jesus, welcoming His Passion in my heart that I may appease His Sacred Heart."

Our mission is to *offer ourselves* out of love for God; to pray and intercede, to reconcile, to make reparation, to manifest Jesus' Love, and become instruments of the Spirit of Love to make up what is lacking in the Body of Christ (Colossians 1:24).

In these guidelines "a common spirituality" is one in accordance with the faith of the Church as revealed through Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium. Our spirituality is characteristically Eucharistic and Marian. We embrace facets of Eucharistic spirituality including Adoration, devotion to Divine Mercy and to the Holy Cross on which Jesus died for the forgiveness of sins. We embrace traditional devotions such as first Fridays/Saturdays etc., but not devotions that are divisive cf. Appendix A (f).

As the mediation of the Redeemer gives rise to a manifold cooperation and sharing in this single source of Redemption (LG 62), and as the Mother of the Redeemer is our mother in the order of grace (LG 61) who helps her adopted children more intimately adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer (LG 62), it follows that Our Lady is the supreme co-operator in Redemption. She does this by calling those faithful to Jesus to cooperate in their redemption. An appropriate title for her role in

Redemption is co-redemptrix which she accomplished at the foot of the Cross of her dying Son, fulfilling the Woman's vocation as helpmate (Genesis 2:18) and mother of all those who live (Genesis 3:20).

The purpose, spirit, character, and the literal meaning of the guidelines for Children of the Cross are in the mind of Father Christian Paul Webb who is the author.

Conduct of the members of this movement. The daily conduct of Children of the Cross is ruled by love:

(a) We love God for God's own sake. Devotion to God takes precedence over all other actions. Let the heart of everything we do or say be a continuous *yes* to our Trinitarian God revealed to us in Person by Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Let us cry out with Saint Paul, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and partake of his sufferings by being moulded to the pattern of his death" (Philippians 3:10).

Let our love of God also manifest itself in an abhorrence of sin and a firm resolution to avoid sin and atone for sin. Children of the Cross are resolved to do penance for our conversion and the conversion of sinners and to make reparation to God for humanities lack of love towards God.

(b) We love of God in our brothers and sisters. As Jesus "gave up His life for us, we ought to give up our lives for [them]," as He taught us (1 John 3:16).

(c) We love God in His angels and in His saints and are encouraged to develop personal relationships with the cohort of heaven, never forgetting to honour Our Lady, Saint Joseph, our guardian angel and Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.

Our daily conduct is to be governed by (a) the Word of God (b) a formed conscience (c) the precepts of the Church (Catechism 2041-2043) (d) frequent reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance (e) the teachings of the Church's Magisterium (f) the writings of the Saints and (g) God's Will including *obedience* to the commandments and lawful counsels given by a spiritual director, *docility* to inspirations of grace, *fidelity* to one's duty and *submission* to the guidelines.

In particular, let us heed Saint Paul's exhortation to the Galatians. We who are set free by Christ are to remain free. We are to obey the Truth and be concerned only by matters of faith that makes its power felt through love. By serving each other through works of love no opening will be made for self-indulgence which is not to be tolerated as "you cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires" (5:24).

Disciplines for individual aspiration. The following disciplines are aspirational. Children of the Cross are not bound to fulfill them, rather we aspire to do so. Therefore, the disciplines represent goals for daily living that becomes more profoundly Christ centred the more one aspires to live them ever more fully.

(a) Children of the Cross aspire to follow Christ as proposed in the Gospel and so strive after holiness each and every day.

(b) Children of the Cross aspire every day to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

(c) Children of the Cross aspire every day to dedicate a minimum of one hour to Adoration.

(d) Children of the Cross aspire to be children of the woman clothed with the sun (Revelation 12:1; RM 47).

(e) Children of the Cross aspire to pray every mystery of the Rosary every day, but no less than five decades.

(f) Children of the Cross aspire every day to read Scripture and meditate on the Word of God.

(g) Children of the Cross aspire every month, or more regularly, to go to confession and receive Sacramental absolution.

(h) Children of the Cross aspire to bodily fasting every Wednesday and Friday except for solemn feasts. Friday fasting is considered more rigorous. Every day we fast from disordered attachments, evil, and sin.

(i) Children of the Cross aspire to heroic acts of love, not heroic penances. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's way of doing the smallest actions with great love is preferable to the most austere self-chosen penance. Penance is foremost the spiritual attitude of a contrite heart perpetually turned to God by the force of love.

(j) Children of the Cross aspire to look at their own faults and leave aside those of others (Saint Teresa of Jesus, *The Interior Castle* III:2,13).

(k) Children of the Cross tend to simplicity in prayer. Foremost, our prayer is of the heart and we aspire to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

(l) Children of the Cross aspire to avoid social media and television and are to abstain from TV, radio, and internet prior to morning prayer.

First note on our conduct. If unable to access the Sacraments: In your aspiration to please God through acts of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, participation at Mass, Reconciliation etc., find consolation in the Word of God. “*When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*” (Matthew 6:6).

Second note. If those not living in community want to pray with others belonging to our movement, or wish to invite possible new members, this intention is encouraged. Families are encouraged to become cenacles of prayer.

Final note. When a person who is not living in community aspires to live more perfectly conformed to Christ by (a) pursuing more rigorously a life of virtue particularly the virtues of charity, humility, purity, and obedience and by (b) embracing more perfectly the spirit of prayer, silence, and recollection of God, it is advised that this person seek the guidance of a spiritual director.

Disciplines within community. Children of the Cross may aspire to live together to share a life of prayer, meals, and spiritual formation and possibly collaborate in apostolic works if permitted by the local ordinary. The conduct of those living within community is ordered to fulfilling the objects of the movement of the Children of the Cross, but more perfectly. Sharing life in common to pursue a Eucharistic lifestyle and spirituality, and to achieve our objectives whilst in community, demands a greater commitment of ourselves to each other in our following of Christ. It means to embrace His Holy Cross more ardently, and to pursue more rigorously a life of virtue particularly charity, humility, purity, and obedience. It is stressed that *our will is never our own in community*, rather it is to be continuously sacrificed for love of God and neighbour.

Community life is a challenging yet beautiful lifestyle, ancient within the Church. In the Book of Acts “believers were united, heart and soul” (4:32). For our communities, as well as embracing ‘a common spirituality’ a simple daily routine is to be implemented to achieve structured living and group cohesion. Such groups living in community are to agree on mundane realities including chores, areas of personal responsibility, cleaning, and personal hygiene. However, this freedom does not extend to choices about community prayer, meals, or formation that are to be determined according to guidelines following below—the exception being families with young children. These families are free to set their own guidelines in these areas adhering in spirit to those of the community, but best suit the needs of their family.

If priests are living in a community that are not all adult males, the utmost care should be taken to provide accommodation for priests that is private and shares no communal bathroom. Priests are required to comply with Safeguarding standards.

Each person living in community is to contribute financially towards the costs of living including payment of bills, unless otherwise agreed. It is advisable to agree in writing to the method of payment for all foreseeable expenses such as food, electricity, water, shared vehicle expenses, rent, rates, and taxes etc.

Each member is to aspire to fulfill their daily disciplines, yet community life demands structured community prayer and common worship. The community should gather for a holy hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the early morning and in the evening of each day excepting Monday and Tuesday mornings, and Sunday and Monday evenings. At minimum, the dawn hour is to consist of silent adoration and morning prayer. At minimum, evening adoration consists of silent adoration and prayer of the rosary. The time of celebrating Eucharist is determined by the needs of the community including the Parish community, if applicable. For priests, concelebration is desirable. Private devotions are not to form a part of community prayer. See Appendix A for an example daily prayer schedule.

If there is no access to the Blessed Sacrament the community still gathers to pray together for where “two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20). If there is no Eucharistic celebration the Word of God may be celebrated, and spiritual communion made.

Meals should be taken in common (when it is practical) to foster a spirit of fraternity. Monday, being a day-off, is the exception.

Each person has need of ongoing formation. Appropriate and due formation may be subject to the approval of the local ordinary. Therefore, notwithstanding deference to lawful authority, our formation includes familiarity with the guidelines, Scripture, and the lives and teachings of the Saints.

The governance of any community house regarding liturgy, formation, discipline or any apostolic work is beyond the scope of these guidelines and should be addressed separately. However, the general rule regarding governance is that the person whose service is greater, has the greater authority. For example, a priest who prepares and presides over a liturgy has authority over that liturgy. Equally, a person who provides the food service/prepares music has authority over that service etc. Issues of governance must be resolved prior to taking residence at a particular community

house. Regarding mundane works (e.g., cleaning, cooking) and who prepares community prayer, a roster is recommended. The person responsible for allocating duties on the roster should rotate.

A spirit of silence, recollection, and prayer is to be fostered to deepen our relationship with Jesus whilst this guideline is not meant to stifle community life.

It is suggested that the community meet quarterly to discuss general business arising from community life and matters relating to these guidelines. In making suggestions to improve community life individuals should speak of what they, not another, may do. It may be helpful if individuals assess their struggles and joys arising from community life and their ongoing suitability. This assessment is not to be imposed on anyone, but freely given. Disputes over governance or discipline that cannot be settled by mutual agreement and with reference to the New Testament, may be settled by arbitration or mediation. At minimum, it is advised to discuss/agree upon the method of resolving impassable disputes and name arbitrators/mediators at the commencement of community living and annually thereafter.

Mondays are free of community obligation and considered a day-off. If this day is changed the above prayer schedule needs to be altered.

Particular rules of aspiration. Whilst in community Children of the Cross aspire (a) to maintain silence before breakfast, after nine-thirty in the evening and at other times decided by the community (b) to attend all daily community prayer and (c) to prepare and lead prayer as per the community roster.

Final recommendations for community living. Concerning suitability, a single family with children should not attempt to follow the disciplines intended for community life. The focus for individual families is to become cenacles of prayer. Second, living in community is not for those whose work commitments, or duties to their family, habitually take priority over the prayerful rhythm of community life.

Membership

Catholics join the movement of the Children of the Cross by consenting to follow the guidelines and making the prayer of consecration. The 'heart' of the consecration is of ourselves to Jesus through Our Lady, in the tradition of Saint Louis de Montfort's total consecration to Jesus through Mary.

The guidelines must be read in full at least annually, including the Appendices. The consecration is to be prayed daily, at least in its short form as shown in Figure 2.

CHILDREN OF THE CROSS



Mother Mary, I give myself totally to you,
my heart to yours, so that in your heart I
may belong only and always to
Jesus. Teach me dear Mother, to love as
Jesus loved as He died for me on the Cross.
Amen.

Figure 2. Daily consecration in its short form.
“Mother Mary, I give myself totally to you,
my heart to yours, so that in your heart I may
belong only and always to Jesus. Teach me
dear Mother, to love as Jesus loved as He died
for me on the Cross. Amen.”

Full prayer of consecration.

Introductory prayer. Heavenly Father I commit my life to you through belonging to the movement of the Children of the Cross and I aspire to live according to the Guidelines in their fullness. Father, I promise to obey you and to bear witness for Jesus, your only begotten Son. I promise at the very least to pray five decades of the Rosary every day. And when possible, I commit to confessing my sins at least once a month and to come to the table of the Eucharist as often as I can. Amen.

Act of consecration. Dear Father in heaven, I _____ offer my life to You out of love and surrender to your Holy Will. Make me an instrument of Your Love so my life testifies to my being your child. By immolating myself before you Father, and by my acts of self-giving towards others, may I make up for the love that is lacking in the Body of Christ.

Mother Mary, I give myself totally to you, my heart to yours, so that in your heart I may belong only and always to Jesus. Teach me dear Mother, to love as Jesus loved as He died for me on the Cross.

Further, I promise to live by the precepts of the Catholic Church and wholeheartedly abandon myself to the action of the Holy Spirit, Whom I intend impress upon my life the pattern of Our Lord’s death. Amen. Jesus I love you. Amen.

Appendix A

An example of daily prayer life in common.

Morning prayer: Morning prayer should include Lauds and is ideally followed by Mass. We commence with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament combined with song e.g., Adoramus Dei. Lauds is said followed by approximately 40 minutes of silent adoration. Particularly, if there is no morning Mass, the Gospel may be read aloud during adoration and even material from the life of a Saint, if commemorated on that day. The Blessed Sacrament is reposed at the conclusion of the hour.

Midday prayer: Meditation on two mysteries of the Rosary and prayer of the rosary led by the person scheduled to lead prayer. The meditative reflection may be replaced by material from the life of a Saint particular to that day. The Angelus is a perfect end to midday prayer.

Evening prayer: Exposition combined with song. Thirty minutes silent adoration. Then the person leading prayer meditates on the mysteries of the Rosary or on the life of a Saint of that day, using the format of the Rosary. Three ‘decades’ are prayed this way. Benediction is at the conclusion of the hour. The Salve Regina is a perfect end to evening prayer.

Our way of praying the Rosary: Each mystery may be prayed as follows. A song is sung prior to the formal reflection. Next, the mystery is introduced. For this example, we take a mystery of light saying: “The first mystery of light. The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan.” Next, a Scriptural reading follows, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1:6-12). Next, the intention is stated, “Let us pray that also today many people will open their hearts to Christ, the true light, for God did not send His Son to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him.” **Then the rosary is prayed SLOWLY, each person reciting the prayers at the same pace as one voice.** The above example reflection is taken from the International Day of Prayer in Amsterdam on the 28th of May 2022, produced by the Family of Mary (translated by Father Gabriele Maria White).

Notes. (a) The daily prayer schedule is a guide only. It can be adapted for both individual and community use. (b) Community prayer is ideally in a church or chapel, in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. (c) “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the Sacraments” (Saint Alphonsus Liguori quoted by JP II in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*). (d) A daily examination of conscience may be practised individually. (e) In community, conferences may be held once or twice a week for ongoing spiritual formation. (f) We do not practice devotions that are divisive due to promoting material not found in the deposit of faith and thus contested as belonging to the Truth revealed in Christ. And if a devotion promotes certain writings over the Word of God, we shun it. (g) The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are suitable, in part or in full, for retreats. (h) During Lent the Stations of the Cross should be made every Friday, possibly replacing elements of midday or evening prayer.

Appendix B

Towards a spirituality of the Cross.

Referring to the Lord’s passion and why Jesus had to suffer and die for us on the wood of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas gives two reasons. First, it is the remedy for sin. Second, it is an example of how to act. Thus, the Cross should fashion our lives and we should respond to the Lord’s unfathomable gift by following Him in being given up and offering the Father our lives in turn.

Teaching us every virtue we should embrace our cross after the Lord’s example of love. In our own way we are to lay down our lives for love of God and neighbour, learning to die to self. Thus, we speak figuratively of *embracing the Cross* to—according to the Angelic Doctor—gain patience during trials, to follow the path of humility and obedience, to despise earthly things and not be attached to anything other than heaven’s reward for a life of virtue. But what defines our cross? It is more refined than the example of the Christian virtues and unlikely to take the form of a piece of wood on which we will be crucified.

First, the Cross involves fidelity to God’s law and bearing witness to Jesus. Thus, our cross is defined by **making choices based on faith**. This doesn’t sound difficult, but as the world hated Jesus it would hate those who belong to Him (John 15:18,19). And so, our cross takes the form of sufferings that are a consequence of our fidelity to Him; meaning our witness to Jesus and our obedience to God’s commandments. History has many examples of the people of God refusing to be coerced to stand against such tyranny. For example, Christian martyrs chose not to

worship false God's at the cost of their lives. So, accepting the consequences of our faith choices is a measure of our trust in the Lord. But more so, embracing our cross and giving witness to our *faith* is a measure of our personal love for Jesus. Without that love we could not make such heroic faith decisions being "determined to do only what is right" (1 Peter 3:13).

There is more to our definition. Due to *original sin* effects not directly related to our faith decisions, cause suffering. Simply embracing sorrow with an open heart is carrying the Cross. Like marriage, we say yes to the Lord and to God's Will in good times and bad. Old age and sickness are examples of the passive acceptance of suffering and crosses we must bear, as well as events of betrayal, slander, or injustice which we carry (and, out of charity, make reparation for. We may even be called by God to expiate for the sins of people unknown to us). Equally, our passive acceptance of suffering includes enduring the consequences of past sins that we have not made adequate satisfaction for, particularly sins of concupiscence.

Therefore, our cross includes accepting the consequences of sin in general, and temporal punishment for our particular sins. But there is a third Cross we must resign ourselves to which is enduring trials inflicted by demons. These sufferings are permitted for the sake of humility and for the purification of our mind—that our heart may find rest in God alone, and our will be set free of human desire only to be moved by compulsion of the Holy Spirit. These three forms of crosses are purifying and sanctifying trials to be borne out of love, thus necessitating a **passive acceptance of suffering**: which defines the second aspect of our personal cross.

There is another consideration that defines the Cross we are to bear. Embracing a '*spirituality of the Cross*' makes little sense to people living for this world which may include people close to you. Our spirituality is to embrace the life of the world to come—heaven—and is a seeking after spiritual goods. But as Saint Paul wrote this way of life is a stumbling block and foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23) to non-believers. Seeking the next life opposes seeking the treasures of this world. Hence, 'the Cross' comprises sacrifices that make no sense to our loved ones who have no faith and are not living with heaven in mind.

The last consideration reveals the last point. This point is typified in the sometimes erring discipleship of Saint Peter. Just as he thought it foolish for Jesus to suffer and die and was rebuked (Mark 8:32-35), a disciple must renounce their old ways corrupted by following illusory desires (Ephesians 4:22-23) to instead offer God the sacrifice of a willing, trusting heart. Thus, the **willing sacrifice of a heart**

detached from the world to cleave to God, alone, is the third element of the spirituality of the Cross.

To sum up, the Cross is the remedy for the poison of sin because Jesus made atonement upon it. Second, the Cross is a model to fashion our lives after. The Cross comes to us when making *choices based on faith* and that incur suffering the consequences of our fidelity. The Cross also involves the *passive acceptance of suffering* to make satisfaction for our sins, to purify our mind, and to bring peace to our heart. Last, the Cross reflects a spiritual yearning for the next life leading to the *sacrifice of a loving heart* detached and free of the things belonging to this passing world. We embrace with love “the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

Definition: A Christian spirituality of the Cross is to embrace with all one’s mind and heart the gift of eternal life won for us by our Lord on the wood of the Cross. Children of the Cross choose this life of virtue and discipleship out of love for Jesus Christ notwithstanding the negative consequences arising from our decisions based on faith or when facing unavoidable spiritual or physical sufferings. This acceptable holocaust of a ‘heart’ open to God in all circumstances and to the point of sacrificing all self-love for love of Jesus, defines the spirituality of the Cross!

Children of the Cross: Retreats

To enquire about Perth retreats that prepare Catholics to make their General Confession, please email frchriswebbmail@gmail.com

Retreats are rich in Catholic spirituality and will teach participants how to live crucified to the world. Retreatants are to become aware of their sinfulness, are to discern and resolve interior conflicts in the light of God's grace and will have the opportunity to confess the sins of their whole life.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9am To conquer oneself • Read 1. <i>Foundations</i>, 2. <i>Daily Particular Examination</i>, 3. <i>Method of Making &</i> 4. <i>The General Examination of Conscience</i> • 10:30am coffee • 10:45am Thoughts that provoke us to sin • 11:30am Adoration & reading <i>Scriptural and homily helps for reflection</i> • 12 Mass • 12:45pm Lunch • 1:15pm <i>Reflection: Challenging your attitudes</i> • 1:45pm Rosary • 2-3pm General Confession: Rationale and examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9am Ignatian prayer and spiritual exercise • 9:45am-12 Adoration • 9:45am <i>First Exercise</i> • 10:45am coffee • 11am <i>Second Exercise</i> • 12 Mass • 12:45pm Lunch • 1:15pm <i>Reflection: Taught by demons</i> • 1:45pm Rosary • 2pm Personal accountability for sin • 2:30-3.30pm <i>Third Exercise</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9am Contrition • 9:45am-12 Adoration • 9:45am <i>Fourth exercise</i> • 10:45am coffee • 11am <i>Fifth exercise</i> • 12 Mass • 12:45pm Lunch • 1:15pm <i>Reflection: Are your minds closed? (cf. Mk 8:17)</i> • 1:45pm Rosary • 2pm Penance • 2:30-3:30pm Exercise: <i>The kingdom of Christ</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9am Reconciliation • 9:30am coffee • Exercises: <i>Making a Choice of a Way of Life & Three Kinds of Humility</i> • Adoration • Individual Rosary • Individual General Confession • Mass • Lunch

CHILDREN OF THE CROSS



**Mother Mary, I give myself totally to you,
my heart to yours, so that in your heart I
may belong only and always to Jesus.
Teach me dear Mother, to love as Jesus
loved as He died for me on the Cross.
Amen.**