85 Cross (*Crux*)

According to Gregory, *Homilia* 17,[[1]](#endnote-1) a cross (*crux*) is said to be from torment (*cruciatu*). And a cross is raised up in two ways, spiritually and bodily. Spiritually is certainly double because either through compassion of the mind, the heart which is weakened, and I am not lower, or through affliction of the body. Wherefore the Apostle, [1] Cor. [9:27]: “I chastise my body,” but bodily the cross is raised up in two ways, either as a sign of religion, as is evident in the Hospitallers, or in supplication of the passion, as is evident in the damned. According to this Gregory says, *Homily* 17,[[2]](#endnote-2) that we carry the cross of the Lord in two ways. Since either through abstinence we afflict our flesh, or through compassion for our neighbor we consider their necessity ours. The cross of Christ was shining white from the virgin members, made red from the drops of blood, decorated from the title of the passion. Wherefore, the blessed Andrew said,[[3]](#endnote-3) O good cross, you who have received beauty from the members of the Lord, etc. Wherefore, Chrysostom, *Homelia* 54,[[4]](#endnote-4) where there is the cross, no demon can stand seeing the sword by which he accepted the blow.

¶ If we are horrified by the places where men are killed, how much more the devil seeing the arms by which he was struck down.

¶ It is narrated in the *Historia super tripartita,* the first book,[[5]](#endnote-5) concerning Julian the Apostate that when he was snatching away the command, he was introduced by a certain magician in a place of idols so that devils were called through the magician being present. He consulted whether or when he would arrive at the command, so that he was shaking at the villain, at the sign of the cross the devils immediately were put to flight. Then he was blamed by the magician who said that at seeing the uprightness of the cross the demons fled, but because above all things they abominate that sign.

¶ Again, since the four parts of the cross come together at a single point it is signified that in the four parts of the world the diversity of peoples come together to the oneness of faith and the Church through the cross.

¶ Again, in a rational creature there are four affections which come together in the breast of one soul making the figure of the cross.

¶ Again, since every corporeal creature has longitude and latitude which intersect in the middle as right angles which result in the form of the cross. Wherefore, just as in the crucifixion every power is taken away by the crucifixion, for that reason that kind of pain has come as if at the last and the greatest. Thus whoever wished to serve God they ought to crucify their enemies and particularly the flesh which not only is imitated but is well disposed toward the enemies, Gal. 5[:24]: “They that are Christ’s, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences. Concerning another enemy, which is said to be the world, the Apostle says, Gal. 6[:14]: “The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.” In the figure of which, [2] Kings 21[:1-9], the Gabaonites sought from David seven men of the race of Saul who had oppressed them so that they might crucify them. So ought they do who wish to have an appeasement from God to crucify the seven capital vices which are of the race of the devil, so thus by they may take from them their power. Wherefore the Lord commanded the sons of Israel that they destroy the seven peoples before they would enter peacefully the promise land. Just as it is treated in Deut. 7[:1]. Wherefore, Bernard,[[6]](#endnote-6) in general we cry mercy from all the things which the world loves. They are as a cross to me, namely the delight of the flesh, riches, honors, the empty praises of men which the world reputes as the cross. I adhere to them totally which I embrace with affection.

¶ About these things it is to be further noticed that the Apostle says, Gal. 2[:19]: “With Christ I am nailed to the cross.” For one who imitates Christ ought to be likewise crucified to Christ. But Christ in his crucifixion had “two thieves” crucified with him, Matt. 27[:38]: “one on the right hand, and one on the left.” Through right is designated prosperity, through left adversity.

¶ Therefore, love of prosperity ought to be crucified on the right, and fear of adversity on the left. The first is the cheating thief. For just as the cheating thief gives a potion to a man so that he may sleep and then strip him, so our enemy the world, the flesh, and the devil destroys us buried in sleep. The second is the violent thief because fear of adversity as if violently overcomes a man. Just as it is said in the second book of *Declamations*,[[7]](#endnote-7) a sick lord sought from his slave that he would give him poison. The slave did not give it to him. The lord ordered in his will that the slave should be crucified by the heirs. The slave appealed to the tribunes who should bear him succor, according to the Cornelian law which prohibits poison. To which the tribune said, Behold the heir commands that you forbid it and follow the will. The slave did not want to be rewarded a cross. Thus the weakened reason through temptation sought from the flesh that poison be given to it, that is, that the material of sin be administered to it. It did not give it out of a better habit. By deliberation it ruled that it be crucified.

¶ In this material some distinguish thus, the cross is found to be fourfold: for it is the cross of innate concupiscence; it is the cross of the pre-eminent superior. Of which the first is powerfully to be repressed, because it is always stimulating and recalcitrant against reason. Concerning which figuratively it is said, Exod. 4[:21], Pharaoh which is interpreted as the naked man, that is, the devil after three days, that is, after the confession of wanting, through the effect of working, and after the contempt of repenting, he lifts up his head. He fears because he will blind his reason as he hangs on the cross.

¶ Because the cross, which is obstructing those brought in, that is, the hostility of the world, must constantly be supported. For, if we are the elect of God we cannot be lacking those things. For according to the Apostle, [2] Tim. 3[:12]: “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.” About which it is said, Gal. 4[:29], just as Ishmael “that was born according to the flesh, persecuted Isaac that was after the spirit; so also it is now.” The reason is, according to Chrysostom, in *Homilia de Innocentis*,[[8]](#endnote-8) because virtue is contrary to the vicious, etc. Wherefore also the ungodly cry against the just man, Crucify him, crucify him. Gregory says the same thing in his *Dialogues,[[9]](#endnote-9)* the life of the good is a heavy burden to those of deformed habits.

The third cross which is first, Carry it, it is to be taken up joyfully. For it is to this that we must be saved, who through sin lost the first way of salvation, namely, innocence. It must be taken hold of secondly, namely, for penance. For Luke says [13:3]: “Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish.”

¶ And justly it is said this penance is a cross (*crux*) from torturing (*cruciando*) because there are two that must be tortured, the flesh and the world, which is figured in Matt. 27[:38]: “Then were crucified with him two thieves.” Truly the flesh is a thief because it takes away from man grace in the spiritual life. Truly the world is a thief because it takes away earthly substance from man in death. But many are seen to carry this cross of penance, but not for merit. Just as it is figured in Luke 23[:26] and Matt. 27[:32] in Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross at the hour, but in service to the Lord, that is, in weariness and sadness.

¶ The fourth cross which is the pre-eminence of the superior. It is to be revered humbly because on it hung our salvation. Therefore, the Apostle said, Gal. 6[:14]: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord.”

Concerning this material of the cross, see more below, Chapter [204] Wood (*Lignum*).

1. Gregory, *Homiliarum in Evangelia* 32.3 Luc. 9:23-27 (PL 76.1234): Duobus etenim modis crux tollitur, cum aut per abstinentiam afficitur corpus, aut per compassionem proximi affligitur animus. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Homiliarum in Evangelia* 32.3 Luc. 9:23-27 (PL 76.1234): Duobus etenim modis crux tollitur, cum aut per abstinentiam afficitur corpus, aut per compassionem proximi affligitur animus. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Gregory, *Antiphonae et responsoria in vigilia sancti Andreae* (PL 78.814): O bona crux, quae decorem et pulchritudinem de membris Domini suscepisti. Accipe me ab hominibus, et redde me magistro meo, ut per te me recipiat, qui per te me redemit.

   Cf. James of Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* 2. Saint Andrew Apostle, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:17. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum Homil.* 54 al. 55.4 (PG 58:537): Si hoc modo illam in facie tua depinxeris, nullus impurorum daemonum contra te stare poterit, cum ensem vident quo vulnus accepit, cum gladium videat quo letali plaga perfossus est. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cassiodorus, *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* 6.1.282 (PL 69:1030): Coepit igitur Julianus imperialia sceptra desiderare. Quamobrem discurrens universam Helladam, vates quaerebat responsa reddentes: consulens si ad suum imperium perveniret; invenitque virum qui ei desiderata se dicere fateretur. Is eum perducens ad quemdam idolorum locum, et intromittens in adytum, seductores daemones evocavit. Quibus solemniter apparentibus, terrore compellitur Julianus in fronte sua crucis formare signaculum. Tunc daemones tropaei dominici figuram respicientes, et suae recordati devictionis, [Col.1030B] repente disparuerunt. Quod agnoscens magus, coepit culpare Julianum. At ille et terrorem significavit, et crucis se dixit obstupuisse virtutem, eo quod videntes hoc signum daemones evanuerint. Porro magus: Non hoc suspiceris, inquit, o bone vir, quia timuerunt, sicut ais: sed abominati hoc signum potius, abscesserunt. Et ita capiens miserum, odio replevit Christiani signaculi Julianum. THEODORETUS, lib. III, cap. 3, p. 126.

   Cf. *Historia tripartita*, as narrated in John of Salisbury, *Polycraticus* 8.21 (PL 199.799-800): Refert Theodoretus quod exinde discurrens omnem Helladam, vates quaerebat, consulens, an ad imperium perveniret. Inventoque viro qui se potentissimum in magica fateretur, introductus est ab eo in locum idolorum, ut in abdito evocatos a mago daemones praesens consuleret. Quibus solemniter apparentibus, compulsus est Iulianus frontem suam crucis munire signaculo. Quo facto, repente daemones disparuerunt. Magus itaque coepit culpare Iulianum. At ille praetendens metum, crucis se dixit obstupuisse virtutem, eo quod signum hoc daemones fugerint. «Non suspiceris hoc, bone vir, inquit magus, quia timuerint sicut ais, sed abominati hoc signum potius abscesserunt.» Et ita capiens miserum, odio Christiani signaculi replevit Iulianum. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Bernard, *Sermo* 7.3 (PL 183.184): Omnia quae mundus amat, crux mihi sunt: delectatio carnis, honores, divitiae, vanae hominum laudes. Quae vero mundus reputat crucem, illis affixus sum, illis adhaereo, illa toto amplector affectu. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Seneca the elder, *Declamations* 3.9 (LCL 463:418-420): Aeger dominus petit a servo, ut sibi venenum daret; non dedit. Cavit testamento ut ab heredibus crucifigeretur. Appellat servus tribunos.

   'Lex Cornelia, te appello: ecce erus iubet quod tu vetas.' Ne quis illum displicuisse domino putet, tunc huic parari iussit crucem, cum sibi venenum. Plura servi crimina confitemur: intempestivas

   potiones, inutiles cibos desideranti negavit; quid enim ille non voluit, qui venenum petivit? 'Malui crucem pati quam mereri.' S vi incitur, periturus est, si non vincitur, serviturus ei, a quo in crucem

   petitur. Ex altera parte lex est, ex altera testamentum, crux utrimque. Furiosus servum sine causa voluit occidere. quaeritis insaniae argumentum? et se voluit oecidere. 'Servo' inquit 'tribuni non

   possunt succurrere.' serva natum regem habuimus, servo indice patefacta est Bruti liberorum cum Tarquiniis coniuratio. Ergo nihil interest, venenum domino dederit aliquis an negaverit? Etiam ubi

   remedium est mori, scelus est occidere. Tam cito vos de vita domini servum desperare vultis quam heredem? Mortem si supplicium putas, quid rogas? si beneficium, quid minaris? Venenum quisquam obicit nisi datum? Vllum tu finem facies tribuniciae potestati, quam populus Romanus, ut

   ipse plurimum posset, plus valere quam se voluit? Venenum habere scelus est tam magnum quam dominum occidere.

   Pars altera. Mori volens elegit huic ministerio nequissimum servum, audacem, infestum sibi. Ille non saluti consuluit domini, quem videbat insanabili morbo tabescere, sed tormenta eius extendit. Servus erilis imperii non censor est sed minister. Agitur de iure testamentorum, quorum interiit omnis potestas, si (servi) vivorum imperia neglexerint, mortuorum tribuni. Itane, furcifer, tu non morieris domini arbitrio, morietur dominus tuo? [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. John Chrysostom [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Gregory, *Vita S. Benedicti* Prolegomena (Ex libro II Dialogorum) 3 (PL 66.136): sicut pravis moribus semper gravis est vita bonorum. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)