



The Holy Cross Rises Above Destruction

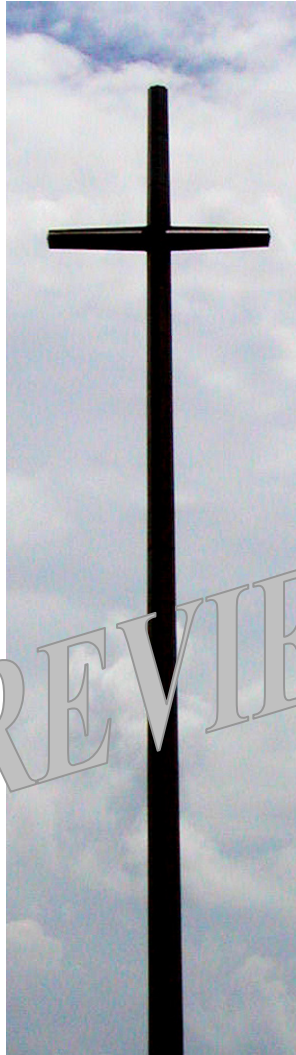
Read:
Numbers 21:4b-9
John 3:13-17

Faith is tested and strengthened in crises. Spiritual growth doesn't normally occur in easy, comfortable times. We cannot rise to higher realms if we don't first realize that there is something to climb away from.

We know too well the feeling of the first line in Numbers 21:4b-9; our patience has been worn out by the journey. The next line I don't like so much, but it's true. We do complain against God. While enduring trials, we complain that God should be answering our prayers faster or in a different way, because we don't like to suffer.

Complaints are based on hopelessness and lack of trust in God. Complaints are based on what we see with our eyes -- as if we can trust our eyes to see the whole picture. Faith tells us that there is a much bigger picture than what we could know or understand. Faith tells us that God has been working a plan—his own strategies—to turn our sufferings into a greater good.

As we're reminded in John 3:13-17, the cure for the disaster that befell the Israelites is our cure today. The very symbol of disaster turns out to be what saves us. Do we have eyes to see the Cross of Christ lifted above the disasters we witness or experience, above our fears and grief and anger?



In every crisis, we journey through a grieving process. Discovering the triumph of the Cross over evil requires time to cry and work through all five stages:

- 1) Denial: Could this really be happening? Not to me, Lord!
- 2) Bargaining: If I pray more rosaries, maybe I can make the bad things stop.
- 3) Depression: I feel so empty, despairing, alone, ignored by God.
- 4) Anger: Those who caused this suffering should be punished. You are wrong in saying I should love them.
- 5) Acceptance: It happened, but God is still God. He is still ultimately in charge. He is going to make good come from this tragedy, and I want to grow because of these hardships, becoming stronger in faith and in love.

The Father gave Jesus angels who ministered to him when he took up his Cross. The Father has given you angels, too, and his Son, as well.

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