

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

*From the Pastor's Desk*

## NO CROSS - NO CROWN!

A friend of mine once told me a story about when he *was* a little boy. He went to confession one Saturday afternoon in the Church and a very strict priest gave him his penance the whole Stations of the Cross to do- quite a lot for a little kid, but this was a long time ago! Well, my friend started "doing the stations" when he was stopped by a very kindly old women sitting in one of the pews. "Sonny," she asked him, "Did Father give you the stations as a penance?" He nodded yes. "Well," the lady said, "I have to tell you something; you're doing them backwards!" My friend never forgot that day!

Sometimes in life we can get things backwards at times. One thing that is "backwards" in our world today is the philosophy that we should experience no crosses or contradictions in this life. When difficulties and problems come, some people "cop out" or run away instead of sticking it out. Certainly we need God's grace to do His will and to endure the sometimes overwhelming problems that we face during this journey that is known as life.

One excellent spiritual practice that is highly recommended by the Church during Lent is to make the Stations of the Cross. As we stop at each station, we reflect on what it really cost Jesus to purchase our salvation. We could say that the "cost" was quite high- His very life! The point is that when we think a little about the sacrifice of Christ for our redemption, we gain courage and strength to bear our own "cross" our own share of hardships and difficulties whatever they might be.

I don't think that many of you ever heard of a priest by the name of Monsignor James Conlon. Monsignor Conlon, a priest of the Archdiocese, died several years ago. He was our Professor of Homiletics in St. Joseph's Seminary. "Homiletics" is the class on how to give a good homily which as you all know is very important for a future priest and the parishioners! In any event, Monsignor Conlon used to say, "You can't help the hand that you are dealt with in this life, but you can help how you play it."

This priest had been given a "bad hand", a heavy cross early on in life; he contracted polio and thereafter walked with a limp. He could not participate in athletics, games or dances. For a young man, it was terrible. One time a Jesuit priest at Fordham Prep where he went to school challenged him and said something extraordinary. Seeing him struggle he said, "Son, you will never amount to anything in this life until you can say, "Dear Lord, I am glad that I have polio."

Well, the young man really got angry at that and could not accept that advice at all. But eventually the future Monsignor Conlon learned to understand the priest's wisdom. It was the cross that he had to bear in this life. From then on, he bore his cross without complaint; he bore it cheerfully and patiently.

That is what we are called to do as well in our own lives. Each of us has our own particular cross in this life to bear. If we carry that cross well, we will gain eternal salvation. As the classic book, "The Imitation of Christ" put it: "In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from our enemies... there is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross of Jesus Christ."

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jerome