

INTRODUCTION

The teachings of Pope Benedict XVI show us a new light in which to contemplate the richness of the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate

Since his election into the See of Peter, and thanks to the proliferation of the editions of his writings, and also thanks to the mass media, we know Benedict XVI's thought better. In his *Introduction to Christianity* - which in the opinion of renowned theologians is "one of the best achievements of contemporary theology"¹ - we find new lights for the work at hand: to deepen in the fundamental truths of our faith, as they are contained in the Creed, in light of the teachings of Benedict XVI and the spiritual experience of the Venerable Servant of God Concepción Cabrera de Armida, as they are manifested in the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate².

In his *Introduction*, Pope³ Benedict XVI makes a brilliant analysis of the twelve articles of our faith contained in the Creed; the Creed is anchored in the event of Baptism, *a Sacrament where God stoops to meet us; and he also brings us closer to one another*. He presents, moreover, and very clearly, the reality of today's world and its challenges in understanding the truth about Jesus Christ.

One of the characteristics of this challenge, as described in his book, is the fact that we are living inside a reality that conditions and determines who we are: the narrowing of *the truth* to what is feasible and ascertainable, and leaves behind the truth of the invisible. The truth we can count on is no longer the truth of the being, but the truth that can be ascertained with methods of empirical sciences and history; a truth that refers to the future as its full verification.

¹ Olegario Gonzalez de Cardedal, *Prologue to Introduction to Christianity*. This work has been re-published thirteen times, with more than 50,000 copies sold in a very short period of time, and in the year 2000 with a new prologue, with an excellent analysis of the reality in which the Church is searching to spread the Gospel message.

² Concepcion Cabrera de Armida was born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, on December 8th, 1862. Wife and mother of nine, prolific writer, inspiration for two religious congregations and other apostolic works for laymen and priests. She became a widow at 39. She was characterized by her profound love for the Church. She dies in Mexico DF on March 3, 1937. She was declared Venerable in 1999 by Pope John Paul II.

³ Even when we call him Pope, in the notes we will be more precise and indicate whether a writing was done as Joseph Ratzinger before his pontificate, or as Pope Benedict XVI.

Translator's note: At the time this work is being translated, Benedict XVI is Pope Emeritus, so we have replaced most of the "Pope Benedict XVI" with "Benedict XVI"

Today, relativism, which is the fundamental feeling of the educated man and which extensively penetrates even theology, is the deepest problem of our times.⁴

The world has broken away from the fundamental values that sustain humankind, this world thrusts man into a meaningless vacuum. Even the Christian faith suffers a decisive change, especially in two very important aspects of its essence: the figure of Christ as *Logos*, Truth incarnate, and the concept of God, as the Supreme Being, creator of the whole universe.

From the Enlightenment on (18th century), science, at least in part, has applied itself to seeking an explanation of the world in which God would be unnecessary. And if this were so, he would also become unnecessary in our lives⁵.

We live in a *globalized* world which navigates the virtual ocean of the Internet, a world that has turned into a small global community thanks to the media; a world which, making the truth relative, lives only in the field of progress and the future; a world where the Church feels urged to give her contribution through service to humanity, enlightening the relationship that joins each man with the Creator of life and which is the foundation of every human being's dignity, from conception until natural death⁶.

In an effort to collaborate with that enlightenment that makes the relationship of man with God real, we have started this task of presenting the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate in light of the Symbol of the Apostles and the teachings of Benedict XVI.

The originality of this study emanates from the coming together of two reflections about the fundamental mysteries of our faith, expressed in the theological reflection of Benedict XVI about the Creed, and the mystical experience of Concepcion Cabrera, as it is symbolized by the Cross of the Apostolate; both of them coincide in the manifestation of God's love, Who comes close to human reality to transform it into Life.

This love of God is manifested in our days by the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, quoting St. John Evangelist's words "God is love" (1Jn 4:8), which refers us to the core of the faith, to the Christian image of God and the image of man and his journey. This gospel truth illuminates with new brilliance the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate, and this allows us to feel in our lives and with greater clarity, the image of the Holy Trinity present throughout creation, enveloping with Its love a mankind in need of love and salvation.

⁴ Cf. J Ratzinger, *Faith, truth and tolerance*, pg 65 Spanish edition

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Homily at Regensburg*, September 12, 2006

⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message on the XXV Anniversary of John Paul II's visit to UNESCO, June 10, 2006*

Why the Cross of the Apostolate? Since the Cross of the Apostolate is an existential expression of Venerable Servant of God Concepcion Cabrera de Armida's human and spiritual experience, it marks a journey of spiritual life which is in tune with the current teachings of Benedict XVI. It illumines the meaning of life of so many men and women submerged in the darkness of the current times we are living.

Just like with all other religious symbols, the Cross of the Apostolate is a means of revelation which communicates to us realities that are not normally accessible through conceptual thinking. No concept can substitute symbols, especially in their role of existential meaning. Nevertheless, the symbol needs the scriptural and theological foundations which will allow for a correct interpretation of it. All supernatural visions, be them internal or external, rely on a word that explains them.

Said word comes to us from Benedict XVI. Starting from the base of his reflection on the Christian faith as it is proclaimed in the Creed, we intend to delve in the teachings imprisoned in the image of the Cross of the Apostolate in a sort of journey which will bring us from living our Baptismal spirituality, to the intimacy of the Family of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our work talks about the topic of transformation of the faithful into Christ, through the sacrament of Baptism and participation in the Holy Eucharist. And Benedict XVI emphasizes that the Eucharist is the source and summit of a process of "transformations, whose ultimate goal is the transformation of the world until God is everything to everybody"⁷ (Cf. 1Cor 15:28).

In reference to the Eucharist, we try to understand the scope and meaning of the formula "*this is my body*" from the point of view of the paschal mystery, the way it is "interpreted" by the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate, joining together in a cosmic vision the truths about our faith as they are expressed in the Creed.

The method is the following: we will take as a starting point Benedict XVI's reflection about the profession of faith, the Creed, which is the explanation of the baptismal formula in Jesus' assignment: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). The light this reflection sheds, we project over the Trinitarian symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate, emphasizing the spiritual journey of transformation into Christ contained in the Cross.

⁷ Benedict XVI, *God's Revolution*, 9-11; Cf. J. Ratzinger, *On the way...127*

The internal Structure of this work is based in the articles of the Apostles' Creed.

The Creed	The Cross	Interpretation
I believe - Amen	Image full of light	The Holy Trinity
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator	Light – Clouds – Sky	Presence of the Father
I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord	The heart of Christ	Presence of the Son
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit	The dove	Presence of the Holy Spirit
born of the Virgin Mary	The brightness of the cloud	The Incarnation
was crucified, died and was buried	Cross – Spear – Crown of thorns – small crown	Passion and death
rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven	Cross surrounded by light	Resurrection
He, is seated at the right hand of God the Father	The fire of the Heart	Christ – eternal Priest
from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead	The big Wooden Cross	God is love
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting	Dove – heart – fire – glorious Cross	Church – sacraments – saints – communion – eternal life