

THE MYSTERY OF CROSS AND SUFFERING IN THE THOUGHT OF EDITH STEIN

(*Per Passionem et Crucem ad Resurrectionis Gloriam*)

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Abstract

Edith Stein melihat salib Kristus sebagai sebuah pengorbanan cinta Tuhan kepada manusia. Salib Kristus adalah satu-satunya kekuatan dan harapan bagi umat manusia. Edith Stein percaya bahwa benih salib berkembang dalam diri para pengikut Kristus. Oleh karena itu, adalah suatu keharusan bagi para pengikut Kristus untuk memanggul salib dan menghidupinya dalam hidup keseharian. Salib dan penderitaan yang dipenuhi dengan cinta Allah yang mendalam memiliki makna besar bagi umat manusia. Melalui salib dan penderitaan, Allah memurnikan manusia untuk berkembang ke arah kesempurnaan. Melalui salib dan penderitaan, manusia juga turut berpartisipasi dalam penderitaan Kristus. Salib dan penderitaan yang disatukan dengan penderitaan Kristus memiliki nilai penebusan. Pada akhirnya, salib dan penderitaan yang sungguh-sungguh diimani akan membawa manusia pada sukacita kebangkitan.

Keywords:

cross, suffering, union with God, dark night, detachment.

INTRODUCTION

The cross and suffering are parts of a Christian's life. During Christ life, He had to pass the way of the cross and suffering before His glorious risen. Christ has set an example for us in bearing the cross. Not only, He carried the cross, but He also was crucified to His death because of His great love for the Father and humanity. So, as His followers, we should follow His example. Followers of Christ must carry the cross in their daily life. In His words, Jesus clearly said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mat 16:24). It cannot be the opposite, the duty and consequence of being followers of Christ are to carry the cross and to follow in His footsteps.

Throughout His whole life, Christ carried out the will of His Father. Christ's death opens the way for us to achieve unity with God as the ultimate goal of our lives. The union with God does not happen instantly but it is achieved through difficult ways. The way of the cross and suffering are one of the ways that we have to pass before reaching union with God. There is joy behind every cross and suffering that we must endure. Through the cross and suffering, we are led to a liberating resurrection. *Per passionem et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam!*

Carrying the cross with patience and joy is not an easy matter, especially today. There are many challenges and struggles that must be faced when the cross and suffering came to our lives. Without relying on God's grace, it is not possible for us to bear it with joy and gratitude, especially, considering our weak nature. Today, there are not many Christians who can interpret the cross and the suffering that occurs in their lives. Often times, the cross and

suffering were just gone away without meaning. Even, there are people who doubt of God's existence and refuse Him because of their cross and suffering.

Edith Stein, a saint who lived in the 20th century, was someone who radically loved the cross in her life. Her love for the cross was contained in the religious name that she took, "Teresia Benedicta of the Cross." In some of her works, especially in *Kreuzeswissenschaft*¹ (The Science of the Cross), she wrote her views and love of the cross. Edith Stein's views are helpful for the faithful to learn the burden of the cross and suffering in daily life. How can the cross and suffering lead us to achieve union with God? How should the believers interpret every cross and suffering in their life? This paper attempts to address these questions from the perspective of Edith Stein.

THE SCIENCE OF THE CROSS AS THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Edith Stein's view on the cross is discussed specifically in her book, "The Science of the Cross". She examined the work of St. John of the Cross from the standpoint of phenomenology. She analysed the views of St. John of the Cross who had existential experiences and then interpreted the saint's experiences from her perspective. For Edith Stein, the cross is something that is united in St. John of the Cross. The cross symbolizes the life practice that the saint lived.²

The Science of the Cross was not intended by Edith Stein as a science in the general sense. The Science of the Cross is also not a theory composed of scientific propositions. Nor is it a structure built from ideas based on human ratios. This doctrine cannot be understood as a science of the cross in the modern sense which only emphasizes intellectual understanding. By the word "science", she meant a truth that was truly realized - a theology of the cross - truth that was lived, real, and effective.³ This knowledge only has meaning if it is practiced and lived in everyday life. *A science of the cross* can only be achieved when we truly live the cross in our life and have a deep knowledge of God and himself. For Edith Stein, "if the mystery of the cross becomes the inner form of this science, it turns into *a science of the cross*".⁴

The cross is a symbol of all burdens and difficult things, which are contrary to human nature. Edith Stein said, "The burden of the cross that Christ assumed is that of corrupted human nature, with all its consequence in sin and suffering to which fallen humanity is subject.

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¹ Edith Stein wrote *The Science of the Cross* in 1942 in commemoration of the four centuries of the birth of St. John of the Cross (1542). The Science of the Cross is an exposition of both John of the Cross and of her own personal life in the shadow of the Cross. In this work, he interprets and analyzes the work of St. John of the Cross using the method of phenomenology. The Science of the Cross was not quite completed when she was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the gas chamber at Auschwitz in August 1942. M.C. BASEHEART, *Person in the World: Introduction to the Philosophy of Edith Stein*, Springer Science + Business Media, Dordrecht 1997), 18, 28.

² Using the title of the cross, Edith Stein saw that the cross was superimposed on the life of St. John of the Cross as an emblem. Edith Stein revealed that there is no direct equality of perception between the cross and suffering. At first the cross was only a man-made instrument used for a specific purpose. The cross gets its full meaning through the history of Christianity. The form involved indicates the meaning associated with the suffering of Christ. E. STEIN, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein VI: The Science of the Cross*, Translated by Josephine Koepfel, ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 2002, 39.

³ M. MASKULAK, "Edith Stein and Simone Weil: Reflections for a Theology and Spirituality of the Cross, *Theology Today*, Volume 62 (2008), 446. Cfr. *Ibid*, 9.

⁴ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, xxvi.

The meaning of the way of the cross is to carry this burden out of the world.”⁵ Edith Stein also saw the cross as a seed that rooted and developed in the human soul. God planted the seed of the cross in the believers. The seed of the cross that develops well in a child’s life will bear the fruit of holiness.⁶ This is evident in St. John of the Cross’s life. Edith Stein likens the doctrine to the wide-spread branches of a tree that has sunk its roots in the greatest depth of a soul and has been nourished by the heart’s blood, and its fruits are seen in daily lives.⁷ To be able to develop, surely the seeds must get adequate nutrition.

The truth of the cross gives a different influence and guides the soul to determine the actions that must and should not be done.⁸ Theology of the Cross is a perspective of life, a picture that believers have of God and the world. Through a deep knowledge of God, people will realize what is God’s will for them. God’s will become their guide in thinking, speaking, and acting. Gradually, God’s will is united in their being. His whole life, his cross and his sufferings will resemble the life of the Crucified Christ.

THE CROSS AND SUFFERING AS A MEANS TO PURIFY THE SOUL

In *The Science of the Cross*, Edith Stein analysed the views of St. John of the Cross about the dark night. In a broad sense, the cross and the night can be said to be a symbol, where humans experience “darkness”.⁹ St. John of the Cross distinguishes between cosmic night and mystic night.¹⁰ Cosmic night has two forms, namely: a natural state in which there is no light and the night is illuminated by moonlight. Whereas mystic night is related to the state of the human soul and only affects the soul itself. In a mystic night, the soul feels lonely, desolated, and emptiness. These feelings are something that is uncomfortable and makes the soul suffered.

St. John of the Cross also distinguished between active and passive nights.¹¹ Humans were created to experience union with God. St. John of the Cross used the term “transformant union”, which is the union that changes everything.¹² An active night is an active effort made by the soul to achieve unity with God. The soul gave himself up to be crucified with Christ. The soul releases all pleasures and desires for everything for the love of God. The soul denies all the pleasures of the world, does physical death and all forms of asceticism, abstains and fasts, and releases everything that is not God. The soul “suffers” and stands in the dark of the night.¹³ Detachment is the surest way to achieve union with God.

⁵ E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein IV: The Hidden Life (Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts)*, Translated by Waltraut Stein, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 1992, 91.

⁶ Cfr. E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 10-11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46-55.

¹² St. John of the Cross distinguishes two types of union with God. The first is a natural union, also referred to as substantial or essential union. This union is a substantial presence of God in the soul, even in the sinner. The second is a supernatural union, a union of likeness that is achieved through the mercy and love of God. Not all souls can reach this union. See K. WOJTYLA, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, Ignatius Press, St. Francisco 1981, 48-49. Cfr. JOHN OF THE CROSS, “The Ascent of Mount Carmel II.5.3, on *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 1979, 115-116.

¹³ As we have discussed, in *The Science of the Cross*, Edith Stein distinguishes between the cross and the night. According to her, the cross depicts suffering and helplessness, while the night depicts suffering which leads to nothingness or emptiness. See A. A. D. MOI, “Teologi Salib dalam Hidup dan Karya Edith Stein”, on *Kenabian*

Detachment is related to outward and inner elements. To experience union with God, humans must be “free from all attachments to created things, free from itself and others, free even from all the consolation that God gives a soul”.¹⁴ Humans must have purity of heart and Jesus the Crucified must be the only object of our longings, our wishes, and our thoughts.¹⁵ Only a free heart can totally love God. Unity with God will be hampered if we still have attachment to everything that is not God. By giving up everything that is not God, “we can be attentive to divine grace”.¹⁶ Without love to God and divine grace, self-emptying would not be possible. As St. John of the Cross says,

A love of pleasure, and attachment to it, usually fires the will toward the enjoyment of things that give pleasure. A more intense enkindling of another, better love (love of one’s heavenly Bridegroom) is necessary for the vanquishing of the appetites and the denial of this pleasure. By finding his satisfaction and strength in this love, a man will have the courage and constancy to deny readily all other appetites.¹⁷

Even though a person can surrender himself to be crucified, he cannot crucify himself. Therefore, the active night must be completed with a passive night, in which God himself purifies the soul.¹⁸ Passive night can be said as the night where God brings the soul through various kinds of suffering. In the passive night, the soul is crucified and God withdraws all pleasure and comfort in the soul. The soul feels dry, empty and alone. The soul feels that God left her. This solitude was also experienced by Jesus when He was crucified. Jesus experienced a dark night and felt that God left Him. That is the greatest suffering experienced by the soul before reaching intimate union with God. The more perfect, active, and passive crucifixion were, the more intimate the union of the soul with the Crucified, the richer their participation in the divine life.¹⁹

The dark night is a journey of love, where the bride leaves everything. She is a free soul who meets the bridegroom and unites with her.²⁰ Dark nights deprive the soul of pleasure in everything. The dark night is a school of all virtues. This darkness trains the soul to rely on God and be patient even if there is no consolation. In the cross and suffering, the soul is purified and given strength.²¹ Through the cross, God purifies us to progress toward perfection. The cross is a way for us to practice virtues so that they are more perfect. As St. Thomas Aquinas said,

If you seek patience, you will find no better example than the cross. Great patience occurs in two ways: either when one patiently suffers much, or when one suffers things which one is able to avoid and yet does not avoid. Christ endured much on the cross, and did so patiently, because when he suffered he did not threaten; he was led like a sheep to the slaughter and he did not open his mouth. Therefore Christ’s patience on the cross was great. In patience

St. Edith Stein: Sebuah Studi, Refleksi dan Relevansinya bagi Gereja, A. A. PAWARTO (Ed.), Karmelindo, Malang 2013, 51.

¹⁴ Cfr. J. DE FABRÉGUES, *Edith Stein: Carmelite Nun, Philosopher, Holocaust Martyr*, St. Paul Books & Media, Boston 1993, 88.

¹⁵ Cfr. E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, 95.

¹⁶ Cfr. J. DE FABRÉGUES, *op. cit.*, 82.

¹⁷ JOHN OF THE CROSS, *op. cit.* I.14.2, 105.

¹⁸ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁰ W. JOHNSTON, *Teologi Mistik: Ilmu Cinta*, Kanisius, Yogyakarta 2001, 224.

²¹ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 139.

let us run for the prize set before us, looking upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who, for the joy set before him, bore his cross and despised the shame.²²

THE MYSTERY CONTAINED BEHIND THE CROSS AND SUFFERING

Edith Stein saw the cross as the main weapon used by followers of Christ when fighting against the temptations of the world.²³ The cross is something good and necessary for itself. The cross and suffering are God's gifts. As the Apostle Paul said, "For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29). God gives us strength to endure all suffering. "Through the power of the cross, you can endure suffering everywhere, you will face it by bringing love that blazes, love that comes from the Divine Heart."²⁴

Faith, hope, and love - which is three theological virtues - are the mysteries that contained in every cross and suffering to those that are faithful to God. Faith, hope and love are something dark.²⁵ Darkness must pass through the soul before seeing the light of dawn. "Cross and night are the way to heavenly light: this is the joyful message of the cross".²⁶ Faith is beyond human understanding. Instead of going through a wide and comfortable road, the soul must walk on a dark road. However, in the darkness of faith, the soul has a definite hope of going to God. With faith, we are sure that the dark night will pass. Faith gives certainty to the soul to arrive at its final destination. "The union of the soul with God is a goal for which she created, purchased through the cross, consummated on the cross and sealed for eternity with the cross."²⁷

Faith contains the hope that the fire of divine love will illuminate the relationship between God and the soul.²⁸ "Ave crux, spes unica", is the motto taken by Edith Stein.²⁹ The cross of Christ has been a source of strength and hope in bearing various kinds of crosses and sufferings. The cross is the only hope of human beings, "Hail, cross, our only hope", as she said.³⁰ In the cross there is a hope of victory and resurrection. In the dark night there is hope that the dawn's light will come. This hope gives strength and joy to the souls in carrying their cross and suffering.

²² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, Office of Readings for the *Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas on January 28*. <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/thecrosssexemplifieseveryvirtue/>, (accessed on December 5, 2019).

²³ Cfr. E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", *loc. cit.*

²⁴ See. A. A. D. MOI, *op. cit.*, 52. Cfr. E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 94.

²⁵ Faith, hope and love are called night because faith transcends the power of reason and cannot be understood. Hope means something that is not yet owned, it is also called dark or emptiness. Love releases a mere human affection and then enters into God's own love. Human affection must be released so that it will experience emptiness in human terms, namely night. Y. INDRAKUSUMA, *Menuju Persatuan Cinta Kasih dengan Allah, Pertapaan Shanti Bhuna*, Cipanas 2008, 62-63.

²⁶ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

²⁸ Cfr. J. DE FABRÉGUES, *loc. cit.*

²⁹ In the Catholic and Anglican Churches, the motto "Ave crux, spes unica" has a long history. This motto often used in many events by the bishops and church's institutions such as the Holy Cross Order and Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston. This motto is taken from a stanza that added the ancient Romans Hymn from the 10th century. True Cross of Christ, *Vexilla Regis*. "Ave Crux, Spes Unica". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ave_crux_spes_unica. (Accessed on December 5, 2019).

³⁰ Cfr. E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 94.

Hope is the means between faith and love.³¹ Through hope, we move towards faith and are supported in faith. Hope also moves us to love and love guides us to deeper faith.³² God is the final act of hope that is lived by love. Without a great love for God, it will not be possible for a soul to experience joy and gladness. Edith Stein's enormous love for the Crucified allowed her to endure the crosses and sufferings of her life. The passion for suffering becomes "a proof of love, a medium of solidarity and a threshold to depth and transformation".³³

In the cross also contained the spirit of prayer that gives strength to the soul to endure all forms of suffering.³⁴ Our encounter with the Crucified Christ creates a model of relationship of the Trinity within us, namely the will of Christ, ourselves, and those we serve.³⁵ It is in prayer that we can communicate with God in the person of the Crucified Christ.³⁶ In prayer, we look at the Crucified Jesus, feel the emptiness, pain, and helplessness that were experienced by Him. In prayer, we unite ourselves with His sufferings and let Jesus look at us, and talk with us without words, from heart to heart.³⁷ Without prayer and deep love for God, it is not possible for us to live amidst all kinds of crosses and suffering.

TAKE THE EXAMPLE OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Christ must go through the way of the cross and suffering before rising gloriously. He gives the example for us in carrying the cross. As His followers, we are called to follow in the footsteps of the Master. Carrying the cross is our duty as Christians.³⁸

Christ is the ideal model and the most ideal person (*gestalt*).³⁹ Through Christ and in Christ, we achieve the fullness of humanity and we learn the values of life.⁴⁰ Christ laid down His life on the cross to open the way to eternal life. Christ is a model and example for us in living this life (cf. GS 38). In His life, Jesus carried out His Father's will. His great love for the Father and mankind encouraged Him to be crucified. The whole life of Jesus, as early as His incarnation as the Son of Man, cannot be separated from the cross. "By his poverty he calls us

³¹ O. HENTZ, *Pengharapan Kristen*, Kanisius, Yogyakarta 2005, 27.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ C. FITZGERALD, "Passion in the Carmelite Tradition: Edith Stein", *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 2002, 218.

³⁴ Edith Stein recognized the two essential ideas of prayer. First, "The work of redemption is consummated in secret and in silence. The living prayers that help form the kingdom of God, the instruments he chooses to work with, are cut and honed in silent dialogue between souls and him." The second concept is that personal prayer, individual prayer and the prayer of the Church are one reality, one flowing stream: "The torrent of mystical graces running through the ages forms the source and deepest part of the stream of the Church's prayer, and there are no diverted branches of this stream." See J. DE FABRÉGUES, *op. cit.*, 83.

³⁵ Cfr. A. A. D. MOI, *op. cit.*, 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁸ Morally, carrying a cross has two meanings. First, it is an opportunity to follow Christ in all the bitter experiences in this world (which need not be sought, they come alone) and accept all challenges and sufferings both physiological and psychological and spiritual as a golden opportunity to become increasingly one with the Crucified Christ. Christ defeated the world and all ego and pride. Second, the human opportunity to be actively involved by Christ in His work of salvation. To participate in the sufferings of Christ. P. KLEIN, "Yesus Kristus sebagai Personifikasi Kasih Allah di Atas Kayu Salib", on *Seri Filsafat – Teologi Widya Sasana 2, Kami Mewartakan Kristus yang Disalibkan: Renungan tentang Rahasia Salib*, B.A. PAREIRA, dkk. (Eds), Dioma, Malang 1994, 149-150.

³⁹ F. M. OBEN, *Edith Stein: Scholar – Feminist – Saint*, Alba House, New York 1988, 21.

⁴⁰ Cfr. A. A. D. MOI, *op. cit.*, 48.

to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.” (Catechism 520). By His passion, He taught us how we must endure suffering with joy.

Christ also set our example in the path of deliverance. As God, He emptied Himself by becoming a weak human being. The Song of Philipians sang Christ’s self-emptying beautifully, “(Christ Jesus), Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8). As His followers, we should also empty and detach ourselves from everything that is not God. In His life on earth, Christ has set an example for us in thoughts, words, and deeds (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21). We are invited to emulate Christ’s attitude in daily life. The Apostle Paul advises us to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). Edith Stein in her life made Jesus Christ as her only example. To imitate Christ requires a firm commitment from us. A commitment based on love, “a covenant with the Crucified anew in all seriousness”.⁴¹ For Edith Stein, “Jesus, the Crucified, is to be the only object of your longings, your wishes, your thoughts”.⁴²

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST TO BE CRUCIFIED

Christ invites us “to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us” (Catechism 521). This is Christ’s invitation to His followers. For Edith Stein, the suffering and death of Christ continues in His mystical body and in every member of His body.⁴³ We are all called to take part in the whole mystery of Christ. As Peter the Apostle in his letter saying, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Pet. 2:21). It is not enough to just imitate the Crucified Christ, but more than that, we need to follow in His footsteps and carry the cross, even to the point of being crucified.⁴⁴ On His way to be crucified, Jesus was not alone. He was accompanied by several faithful followers. Edith Stein says,

The Savior is not alone on the way of the cross. Not only are there adversaries around him who oppress him, but also people who succor him. The archetype of followers of the cross for all time is the Mother of God. Typical of those who submit to the suffering inflicted on them and experience his blessing by bearing it is Simon of Cyrene. Representative of those who love him and yearn to serve the Lord is Veronica.⁴⁵

We are also invited to accompany, even participate, with Jesus in the way of the cross and the suffering he faces. All followers of Christ are called to participate in bearing the cross of Christ through the cross and the suffering they experience. In *Salvifici Doloris*, John Paul II also says,

Every man has *his own share in the Redemption*. Each one is also *called to share in that suffering* through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ *has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption*. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive

⁴¹ Cfr. E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, 91, 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴³ A. ARBORELIUS, *Edith Stein Biografi*, Dioma, Malang 1997, 141-142.

⁴⁴ Cfr. E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 22.

⁴⁵ Cfr. E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, 92.

suffering of Christ.⁴⁶ For Edith Stein, “Only in union with the divine Head does human suffering take on expiatory power”.⁴⁷ The cross and the suffering that we unite with the sufferings of Christ have redemptive value.⁴⁸

Following the cross also means presenting God’s love, especially Christ Crucified, in this world.⁴⁹ Carrying the cross as if it were a journey to death.⁵⁰ Only through the touch of divine love, we are given the courage to carry the cross and suffer. Through the cross and suffering, we are invited to become increasingly aware of our own frailty and rely on God’s grace. And God’s grace is sufficient! Without His grace, we would not be able to live this life. God’s grace gives us strength to endure all our helplessness. As St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12: 9-10)

SOLIDARITY IN CARRYING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

God created humans in His image and likeness (Cf. Gen. 1: 26-27). Edith Stein believes that by knowing, loving, and serving God, we can become a perfect person and increasingly similar to His image.⁵¹ The knowledge and love of God is a way of perfection, where we are enabled to have a deep understanding as *imago Dei*. “Love is the ground, centre and completion of each social action.”⁵² This understanding encourages us to take part in the cross and suffering of Christ. As His description, God invites us to participate in the divine nature. “By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.” (Catechism 505).

Faith in the cross means to participate in the powerlessness of God through the suffering of Christ which takes place in the suffering experienced by others. Christ is present in those who suffer, are oppressed, persecuted, poor, sick, weak, and alienated by others. Christ was crucified in them. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew very clearly illustrate this point, “For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in, Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.” (Matthew 25:35-36).

Christ is a form of God’s solidarity in the history of human suffering.⁵³ During His earthly life, Christ was very close to those who were poor, sick, and suffering. We are also invited to be in solidarity and to be involved in the suffering of others. As Catechism says, “His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.” (Catechism 1503). The call to participate in the suffering of others

⁴⁶ *Salvifici Doloris* 19.

⁴⁷ E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, 93.

⁴⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁴⁹ P. KLEIN, *op. cit.*, 151.

⁵⁰ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 17.

⁵¹ Cfr. A. A. D. MOI, *op. cit.*, 47.

⁵² C. M. WULF, “‘I Look at Him and He Looks at Me’: Stein’s Phenomenological Analysis of Love”, *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78:1-2, 2017, 140.

⁵³ A. A. D. MOI, *op. cit.*, 55.

belongs to all followers of Christ. We must empathize, respect, and love others, especially those who are poor, burdened, oppressed, sick, and lonely.

The Preamble to the Pastoral Constitution of *Gaudium et Spes* reveals beautifully, “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”⁵⁴ In Edith Stein words, “To suffer and to be happy although suffering, to have one’s feet on the earth, to walk on the dirty and rough paths of this earth and yet to be enthroned with Christ at the Father’s right hand, to laugh and to cry with the children of this world and ceaselessly sing the praises of God with the choirs of angels – this is the life of the Christian until the morning of eternity breaks forth.”⁵⁵ Living in solidarity with all those who suffer is a form of our participation in carrying the cross and suffering with Christ with a certainty of life and resurrection.⁵⁶ To be able to solidify the cross and the suffering of Christ in others, humans need to base themselves on the love of God. Without the grace of divine love, it is impossible for us to be able to be in solidarity with others who suffer. Human love is only participation in God’s love.⁵⁷

ENCOUNTER WITH GOD AS A BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CROSS AND SUFFERING

The way of the cross and suffering are the path that we have to pass to reach the union with God. By carrying our cross and suffering, we become closer intimately with God. Edith Stein saw the cross and suffering as a means by which humans can achieve union with God. Through the cross and suffering, God refines man to be more perfect. The cross and the sufferings of Christ are proof that there is great gift behind every suffering that occurs. The seed of the cross is planted in all followers of Christ.⁵⁸ But this seed often did not develop properly and it went away without any meaning. Indeed, it is not easy for us to see God’s beautiful work behind every pain, adversity, purification, and suffering that we had to experience. This was recognized by all subjects involved in the study.⁵⁹ In the beginning they rebelled against the cross and the suffering they had to endure. They protested God for the events that occurred in their life. The cross and the suffering that they had experienced didn’t have meaning, besides feelings of sadness, anger, disappointment, and other negative feelings.

Encounter with Christ Crucified is the basis for believers to be able to interpret the cross and the suffering that occurs in their lives. Encounter with God is a divine grace bestowed on us. Without the experience of meeting with God personally, it would be impossible to see God’s

⁵⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 1.

⁵⁵ Cfr. E. STEIN, “At the Foot of the Cross”, 92-93.

⁵⁶ A. A. D. MOI, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁷ P. KLEIN, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁸ Cfr. M. MASKULAK, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁹ The research used a “Phenomenological Research” method. The researchers contacted three individuals to find their views on cross and suffering. The first subject is a 52-year-old mother, named Steffi. The second subject is Maria, a religious nun from the diocese of Malang. The third subject is a young woman who is 32 years old, a person with a disability.

work and plan in the cross and the suffering they experienced. Steffi⁶⁰ and Maria⁶¹ are witnesses of their own experiences.⁶² Through prayers, they experience God's presence personally. Edith Stein in her teachings also emphasized the importance of prayer that brought people to union with God. It took Steffi about two years to "be able to meet God". During her practice prayer, God drew her to a quietness that produced peace and joy that she had never experienced before.⁶³ At that moment, all crosses and suffering she experienced suddenly disappeared. Instead, she felt enormous joyful. For Steffi, "There is joy in silence". The experience of encounter with God brings a change in the lives of believers. A personal relationship with God established through prayer turns the cross and suffering into blessings and joy. The cross and suffering are no longer burdens, but become enormous joy.

For Edith Stein, carrying a cross and suffering do not contradict our happiness. As she said, "But because being one with Christ is our sanctity, and progressively becoming one with him our happiness on earth, the love of the cross in no way contradicts being a joyful child of God".⁶⁴ It is great joy to carry the cross of Christ and suffer with Him, before rising and experiencing eternal happiness in the house of God! We believe that cross and suffering has a redeeming value and can bring salvation to many people. We can take our cross and suffering as a sacrifice for our own sins and the sins of the world.

The suffering experienced by the faithful is not just to remember the suffering of Christ, but also to participate with the suffering Christ.⁶⁵ Through the cross and suffering, we can feel the pain and suffering that Jesus experienced. Maria says, "When I felt lonely, I could feel that Jesus also felt alone and lonely on the cross. When I was sick, I could feel the pain that Jesus experienced when He was whipped and scourged." Christ's experience came true in us. As the Apostle Paul said, "And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me." (Galatian 2:20). Through an intimate encounter with God, we can unite our suffering with the suffering of Christ. We are willing to be crucified and suffered for the love of God. We can empathize and in solidarity with the suffering of others.⁶⁶

TOWARD THE UNION WITH GOD

⁶⁰ Steffi is a 52 years old woman. She endured many crosses and sufferings in her life. She did not have a peace and happy childhood. She was often beaten by her parents. She had to work to feed her sibling and herself even though her parents were well off. Her marriage was also not harmonious. Her husband did not care about her and their only child. He did not pay for her living expenses. The climax of her misery was when her only child died.

⁶¹ Maria is a religious nun from the Diocesan of Malang. Her father was a drinker and when he was so drunk, he often hit her when she was a young child. She lived a very simple life. She also experienced the cross and suffering after she entered a religious life. Her physical weakness is the cross that she must carry in her daily life, besides many other trials.

⁶² Encounter with God enabled Steffi and Maria to see God's beautiful work in their lives. During the time when Steffi did protested God of what happened in her life, she was guided by a spiritual guide who patiently invited her to realize God's love. Steffi was taught to establish a relationship with God in surrender and silent prayers.

⁶³As mystical experience, the words are not needed when the thing itself is present without mediation in the mystical experience. Cfr. O-P. VAINIO, "Dark Light: Mystical Theology of St. Edith Stein", *The Journal of Analytic Theology*, Volume 4, May 2016, Philosophy of Religion, University of Notre Dame, 362.

⁶⁴ E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 92-93.

⁶⁵ E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 92.

⁶⁶ "Stein's theology of the person is founded upon her phenomenological theory of empathy. The idea of empathy implies that the perceived other is given to consciousness and hence affected by the subjective conditions that govern consciousness." E. MCCLELLAN, "Edith Stein: Her Empathic Theology of the Human Person, *Pacifica*, Vol 30(1), 2017, 24. DOI: 10:1177/1030570X17725919.

God is the ultimate goal of human life. Only in God can we feel true happiness and joy. Union with God does not happen spontaneously. Humans, with their free will, must cooperate with God's grace. The journey to union with God cannot be reached by a toll road but a narrow road. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25). In Edith Stein's words, humans must pass the path of cross and suffering or the dark night.

Union with God can only happen if a man renounces all the will within him and carries out only the will of God. According to Edith Stein, "If you intend to be the bride of the Crucified, you too must completely renounce your own will and no longer have any desire except to fulfil your will".⁶⁷ Through total liberation of all things, man will feel emptiness. And with surrender in faith, man lets the will of God happen in him, just as Jesus did only the will of his Father.

Just as it happened to Jesus who had to suffer and be crucified before His gloriously risen, so do we as His creation. The cross is the only way to the glory.⁶⁸ *Per passionem et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam!* The cross and suffering lead man into union with God. By uniting our cross and suffering with Christ's suffering, our lives will become more like Jesus himself. The experience of the Apostle Paul can inspire us, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation: but are not distressed. We are straitened: but are not destitute. We suffer persecution: but are not forsaken. We are cast down: but we perish not. Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

The fruit of the cross is resurrection, union with God, and sanctification.⁶⁹ Death by suffering, self-denial, or gospel interpretation, leads us to rise with Christ. Our patience and devotion to bear the cross of Christ make us His true children. "And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: yet if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:17). For Edith Stein, it is only by taking the cross with joy that we can claim to be children of God.⁷⁰ The sufferings of the faithful will bring glory. In the future, we can sing: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go up to the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122: 1).⁷¹

CONCLUSION

Cross and suffering, in any forms, are part of human life. Edith Stein likens the cross as a seed that can grow and bear fruit in the life of Christ's followers. The well-known seed of cross and suffering can lead man into union with God. God bestows His grace, especially to those who are bearing the cross and suffering. However, in order to have a significance meaning on the cross and suffering, man have to respond to the grace of God bestowed upon him. The cross and suffering of man that united with Christ have the meaning of redemption.

⁶⁷ E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 95.

⁶⁸ E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 21.

⁶⁹ A. ARBORELIUS, *op. cit.*, 111.

⁷⁰ Cfr. E. STEIN, "At the Foot of the Cross", 93.

⁷¹ "Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus." St. John of the Cross quoted Psalm 122:1 in to respond to his colleague priest who was beside him during deathbed. He felt that his death was near. Cfr. E. STEIN, *The Science of the Cross*, 311.

Man can offer his cross and his suffering as a penance for his own sins, fellow men, and the world.

The cross and suffering contain faith, hope, and love. During her life, Edith Stein joyfully responded to the call of God in carrying the cross and suffering. Her willingness to bear the cross and suffering was based on her immense love for the Christ Crucified. The joy of carrying the cross is based on the hope that the dawn will come soon. We are also called to participate in the cross of Christ. We need to realize that the way of the cross and the suffering that we go through is actually the path to union with God. Only through the crossroads of suffering can we reach the glorious resurrection. *Per passionem et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam!*

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