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The Year of the Way of the Cross.

Pope Pius XI has proclaimed a Holy Year in commemoration of the Nineteenth Centenary of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The Holy Year will begin on April 2.

What does this mean to us? Few of you, probably, will be able to make the pilgrimage to Rome to gain the Jubilee Indulgences. Certain classes of the faithful, to whom the journey is physically impossible, may gain the indulgences at home, under conditions to be announced later. With a few exceptions, all other indulgences applicable to the living are suspended for the year. On the practical side, therefore, it will be well for us to remove such temporal punishment as is still due to our forgiven sins by gaining as many indulgences as we can while we may, and to be most careful not to pile up such punishment during the coming year.

What more does it mean? It can mean everything to us, spiritually.

We sign ourselves with the Sign of the Cross! For nineteen centuries we have looked upon that sign as our proudest heritage, as our sure salvation, as the supreme proof that God loves us in spite of our sins.

But what does it mean to us? Stretch out your arms and pray for your enemies - for three long hours. Thirst with a fever-racked body and refuse a drink. Spend a night and a day in silence before a jeering, blaspheming mob, which accuses you falsely of every crime under the sun, which will have your blood whether you are guilty or not. Stand that - and pray for your enemies.

Can you take it? "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me." Daily. How long can you restrain your tongue under false accusations? How long can you keep to a resolution of mortification? a pledge not to drink intoxicants? a determination to study hard? a rule of life to get up early in the morning?

The Son of Man had not "where to lay his head," although the foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests. We have everything - and we want more. We have comforts, luxuries - and we are never satisfied. "Griping" is the favorite pastime of men who call themselves Christians.

Are we Christians? We are baptized, we go through the forms, we observe the externals, some with good grace, some with bad. That is precisely what Christ condemned in the Pharisees of His day. They observed the letter of the Law, but its spirit was far from their calculations. "You tithe mint and anise and the smallest seeds, but let go the weightier things of the Law." How much of our time do we give to God ungrudgingly? Enough to make a decent preparation and a proper thanksgiving after Holy Communion? For many "devout Catholics" (their own designation), every minute over twenty at Mass on Sunday morning (or Sunday noon) is ages long.

Make this Holy Year the Year of the Way of the Cross. Make the Way of the Cross - make it every day - devoutly - thinking in your heart. It is no common battle we are girding for; this age will meet no common foe. Look at Mexico. Look at Russia. Look at Japan and China. Atheism is militant today as never before, and its onslaughts will show who are Christians and who are not. The attacks on Christianity must ultimately mean attacks on Christians. Christianity will never fail - we have the promise of Christ that it will not. But Christians will fail, and their crowns will go to others more worthy. Look out for yourself. No one else can save your soul.

The Devil hates the Sign of the Cross. Make it a hard year for the Devil.