



Daily Spiritual Joy



My Cross + My Life



Christoph Stückelberger



Globethics.net

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Impressum

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Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1 TREE OF LIFE	13
2 COMMUNITY.....	31
3 SUFFERING.....	47
4 DEVOTION	63
5 PROTECTION	97



I dedicate the book to this unknown Ukrainian woman on the Independence Square in Kiev, during Russian invasion, on 24 Feb 2022, the day when I finished this book. Photo Daniel Leal, AFP

Introduction

"My Cross - My Life" is a pocket booklet on personal spirituality. An invitation to meditate crosses and being energized by them for daily life.

Intimate, Joyful Spirituality

Personal, intimate spirituality is a lively reality for billions of people across the globe.

A little cross as a necklace, a rosary in the pocket, a candle with a religious symbol on the working table, a hallelujah song hummed endless times while walking on the street or cooking at home, a little house altar in a corner of the living room, a Bible verse on

the wall above the entry door of the house
or a cross on a pin on the shirt.

These everyday signs and symbols give
peace to the soul, orientation in difficult
decisions, security in moments of fear and
joy while feeling the proximity of the di-
vine.

I was privileged to travel around the world
for development projects, lectures, inter-
national cooperation and conferences. I
visited and prayed in Christian churches of
many denominations as well as in: Muslim
mosques, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Daoist
temples, and Jewish synagogues.

I was and I am especially touched by the
personal spirituality of people in daily life,
in addition to the official places of commu-
nity worship such as churches and temples.
During my encounters on all continents, I

often received a little gift in form of a cross as expression of friendship and shared faith. I also bought some in Christian devotion shops in churches or street markets.

Immense Diversity in Daily Life

A selection of 60 of these devotional crosses from across continents are presented in this collection. They are grouped around five themes: Tree of life, Community, Suffering, Devotion and Protection. They are very diverse: from precious silver or gold to a little one dollar second hand necklace from the street market, from carefully carved cedar wood to two paper-clips, from a centuries old family cross to a contemporary copy of a castle key with a

cross, from a hand-made batik T-shirt of an artist to a carved stone.

The cross is a sign for inner personal spirituality, guidance and encouragement. By showing it, it is also a confession of faith. In peaceful and tolerant times, this is comfortable.

Not a Magic Talisman

However, religious symbols like the cross on clothes, in the house, in the pocket etc. are often also used and abused like a magic power, a talisman, bringing good luck and protecting from evil. As a protestant Christian, I refuse this magic interpretation because it could equate the object to the divine, mixing God and the idol of the object. On the other hand, keeping the cross close to ourselves is undoubtedly for many

a sign for the presence of God. The objects, shown in this collection, are a source of hope, orientation, and energy as they direct our thoughts, emotions and energy towards the divine and serve to connect, not replace the divine.

Political Instrumentalization

In history, the cross was and is also a threat for political powers, as it expresses that the divine power of Jesus Christ is above the political power. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) was the answer of Peter and the apostles when they were threatened to be killed if they did not stop mentioning Jesus. Throughout two thousand years of history - from the early Roman Empire until today in some countries - the cross was banned by political authori-

ties (see below in the chapter on suffering: The fish symbol in the catacombs of Rome replaced the cross, when the cross was forbidden). In contemporary China, the cross is accepted on personal level in households, as a necklace or in the car, but some crosses on large churches have been removed by the local political authorities.

Other political powers and empires - from Constantin in the fourth century to countries today, embrace the church as a strong supporter and are almost united with political authorities and thus promote the cross as symbol of the united religious-political power.

This collection focusses on Christian crosses for private use (without denying the importance of large crosses in churches, public spaces or on top of mountains). The

selection is limited to three-dimensional objects, not including paintings or photos. I admire the diversity, cultural adaptation, different theologies and denominations expressed in these crosses.

'Cross Plus'

I am especially fascinated by the cross as tree of life (chapter 1). It is such a joyful, encouraging life-affirmation. I see also a deep meaning in the empty cross, where we see through it and the Holy Spirit in it (chapter 1 Tree of life, Trinity).

Many of the selected crosses are "Crosses Plus": the cross plus the Dove/Holy Spirit, the cross with the Community, the Cross with the leaves as symbol of life and creation, the cross in the diversity of denominational traditions.

Main Types

Many crosses in this collection, especially from Orthodox Middle East traditions, are based on the Byzantine cross mode, with enlarged four ends, leading also to manifold decorations with leaves etc. Others follow the Latin model with a simple horizontal and vertical piece, known in Catholic and Protestant traditions. Few follow the Celtic cross model with a nimbus or ring around the middle of the cross. It was widely used in Early Middle Ages especially in Ireland, France and Great Britain and spread to other continents by Irish missionaries.

This booklet aims at expressing four aspects:



The cultural and religious diversity:
Christians believe that Jesus Christ is

the incarnation of the triune God in our world. Incarnation means also enculturation: The fascinating diversity of expressions, rooted in cultures and denominations, is a testimonial for the abundant diversity of God's creation. May this booklet also contribute to ecumenical curiosity and increase mutual respect and understanding.



The faith-based unity: There is a profound unity as common ground in this diversity. The cross is symbol for Jesus Christ and the Christ-centred faith. In all denominational conflicts or cultural expressions of the cross, which may be strange to each other, it is the cross, which unites. The booklet expresses this diversity in unity and unity in diversity.

✚ *Energy of life and joy: the crosses I like most are the cross as tree of life. The cross is not symbol of the sad and tragic murder of an innocent person two thousand years ago. It is neither constantly reminding us that we are sinners and incapable losers. The cross for Christians represents the resurrected Christ, the energy of abundant new life every day. The cross as tree of life expresses and leads to immense joy.*

✚ *Glory to God alone - Soli Deo Gloria: This joy of the cross leads me to thankfulness. Health, relations, income, intelligence, creativity, prosperity, caring etc. are of course our effort, but it would be a failure and useless without the energy and wisdom of the divine,*

expressed in the symbol of the cross. This collection of the diversity of crosses leads me also to humility: not me and us, but God through me and us. Soli Deo Gloria - Glory to God alone.

Discover

- *Which of the crosses in this book attract me most?*
- *Why does a cross attract me: What does it express of my faith, my longing, my hope?*
- *How can it become "my cross"?*
- *Which crosses are strange for me? To which ones am I critical?*
- *What can I discover about the denominational expression? How can I appreciate it in an ecumenical and intercultural spirit of mutual respect?*

- *How can I contribute to ecumenical diversity in unity by meditating the diversity of these crosses?*

Enjoy reading and meditating.
SDG (Soli Deo Gloria)

*Christoph Stückelberger
Geneva/Zurich, Switzerland
For Good Friday/Easter 2022*

1

Tree of Life

The Cross is symbol of the death of the crucified Christ. It is transformed to a symbol of life by the resurrected Christ. Many crosses - I found them especially in families and churches in the Middle East, India, Ethiopia and South America - then become trees of life with leaves and blossoming flowers. The cross as tree of life gives energy, hope and joy.

Armenian Cross, with floral elements.
Cedar wood, Erevan/Armenia, 23 cm.

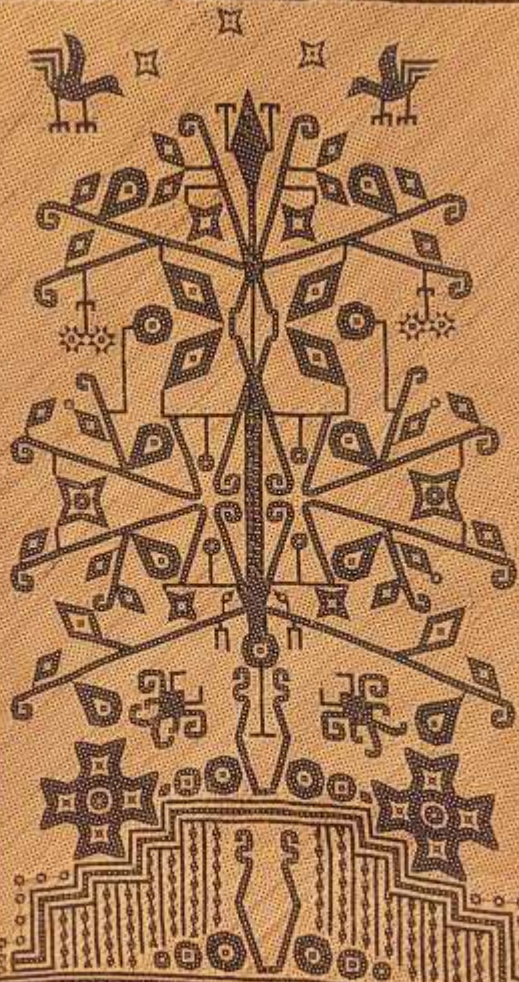


Ethiopian Cross, with leaves.
Woven, Addis Ababa, 40 cm.



Indonesian Indigenous Tree of Life.

Braided raffia, Wall hanging, from a hut
in the tropical forests, gift of the Protestant
Theological Seminary,
Banjarmasin/Kalimantan, 1.5 m high.



BATANG CARING BAJENANG TELU
NAEDAN RANYING PANDEREH RONIL

Candle Cross, Wood,
Switzerland, 20 cm high.



Armenian Cross. Wood, 40 cm high.



Armenian Cross, Stone, 6 cm high.



Creation Cross: soil, water, fire, air with cross/circle in the middle. Agate precious stones. Made by Christoph Stückelberger. In Church in Wuhan/China. Cut-out. Full window 5 m high.



*Trinity Cross: God Creator (tree),
Liberator (empty cross) and Innovator
(dove/Holy Spirit), Made by Christoph
Stückelberger, copper, 40 cm high.*



2

Community

The Cross is not only a sign for individual faith and spirituality, but a strong expression of uniting a community. Carrying the cross in Catholic and Orthodox processions is known, but also crosses in households and on necklaces express it. It is especially visible and powerful in the colourfully painted wooden crosses in Latin America.

Community Cross

Church as international community.

El Salvador. Owned by World Council of Churches. Geneva/Switzerland, 40 cm.



Community of Saints
Jesus Christ with Mary, Joseph
and Angels. Moscow/Russia,
7 cm high.



Community of Angels
Ethiopian, Addis Ababa,
42 cm high.



Community of Believers and Continents
Liaoning Agape Foundation,
Shenyang/China, 2018,
Pin, 2 cm.



Green Cross

Cross from two leaves, made by every
participant of the Palm Sunday procession
in Enugu/Nigeria,
18 cm.



Peace Cross:

Concluding an oral contract or peace finding
between tribes, one side of the cross held
by each party.

Rural North Kenya. Heavy brass, 22 cm.



Last Supper/Agape Meal

Jesus with the disciples. Jesus' body and
blessing arms form a cross. Painting on
Wood, El Salvador, 14x25 cm.



3

Suffering

The cross reminds Christians of the painful crucifixion of Jesus as the killing of a non-violent and non-guilty person. For many centuries of Christian history, the passion mysticism focussed on the suffering, symbolized in the cross. This is still valid: suffering of humans by violence, war, economic pressure or in the daily job and family. Suffering includes the whole creation in this environmental crisis.

Crucified Creation

A cut and broken piece of a tree. Made by
Christoph Stückelberger, owned by Obiora
Ike. Geneva/ Switzerland, 70 cm



War Cross

Made by Christians in Palestine
out of an empty shoot cartridge.
Brass, 3 cm high.



Classical Crucifix Cross.

House Altar. Burgundy/ France, 19th
century. Heavy brass, 52x23 cm.



African Tomb Cross

Carved from soapstone (steatite).

Harare/Zimbabwe, 19 cm high.



Office Cross
Suffering at work?
Handmade by Christoph Stückelberger
during a meeting. 3 cm high.



Fish instead of Cross

Fish as early symbol of the Cross, when the
Christian cross was forbidden in ancient
Rome. Catacombe S.Callisto/Rome,
copy for the household wall. 10 cm.



IXBYC
CATACOMBE S. CALLISTO

Leaving the tomb/prison of death

The dance of Christ Liberator as the way to
new life. Hand-made batik on a T-shirt.
Artist Nyoman Darsane, Bali/Indonesia.



4

Devotion

Billions of people practice personal prayers, worship, spiritual devotion and meditation within the four walls at home. The apartment or house is a safe place. A candle in a corner of a room, a little house altar on a table with burning incense and an icon or cross on the wall allow a regular, often daily ritual of orientation, thanks or cry. The cross in daily life at home.

House Blessing

"The humans plan and *God* leads" (in Romansch, the fourth national language in Switzerland). Front door of a traditional house in St. Moritz/ Switzerland.

L'hom propuona e Dieu dispuona



Apartment Blessing and Protection

Red door on Passover (passah) symbolizes
the blood on the door posts that the
Israelites were instructed to have on their
doorframes and two side posts so that the
Lord would pass over them and they
wouldn't be destroyed by the
angel of death. (Exodus 12:11f).

For contemporary Christians in China:
Horizontal: *Glory to God and Benefit for
People.*

Left: Blessings for long life and prosperity.
Right: God's grace in the abundance of food
and clothing

人益神榮

豐衣足食主施恩

益壽延年神賜

House Altar, burning incense inside.

Bulgaria, Bulgarian-orthodox,
gift of a student of theology, 19 cm high.



*House Altar, Triptychon
Biblical scenes and crucifixion.
Russia, Brasse, 8 cm high.*



House Cross
Soap Stone (steatite),
Harare/Zimbabwe, 15 cm high.



House Bible
Luther Bible in German
14x22 cm.

DIE BIBEL



DEUTSCHE BIBELGESELLSCHAFT

Adoration Cross
Hanging in a household
Fired clay, 12 cm.



Key Cross

Cappadocia/ Turkey (Byzantine/Armenian?).

Brass, 18 cm long.



Key Cross

Cappadocia/ Turkey (Byzantine/ Armenian?).

Brass, 18 cm long.



Key Cross
Lebanon, Scripture
on backside,
Brass, 16 cm long





Chinese Cross
With traditional ornaments
and Bible verse
Ceramic, 37 cm long.



我一生一世必有
恩惠慈愛隨着我

主賜平安

Handheld Cross

Ethiopia, Brass, 16 cm long.



Celtic Cross
Middle East. On the wall.
Wood and metal, 9 cm.



Russian-Orthodox Cross,

Handhold house cross

Face of Jesus scuffed from kissing.

Tomsk/Siberia, antiquity 18th century. Text
in Russian on back: "In front of this cross,
we praise and glorify you, Lord." Brass,
27 cm high.



Prayer Ribbon,
Russian-Orthodox, Tomsk/Siberia,
4x120cm

Знѣвъ, ѿнѣ гл҃гоу вѣкъ ѿ аѣа ѡгнѣ:
Радѣа, прѣвѣтнѣй ѿ жѣвѣвѣрѣцѣй
вѣаѣ. ѿ аѣвѣвѣаѣго нѣаѣ гл҃гоу кр҃ѣ вѣаѣ
вѣаѣ. ѿ со вѣаѣмѣ стѣаѣмѣ по вѣаѣ, аѣмѣаѣ.



ОФОРМЛ

Music Cross

Plus and minus for volume.

Contemporary music box, 18 cm high.



5

Protection

Millions of people - mainly women, sometimes also men - wear a cross as necklace, visible above or invisible under the cloth. Many wear it as a sign of protection, others as confession of faith, others as belonging to a tradition or in memory of the mother or relatives who held it over generations. For some it is just a fashion. There are strong geographic, cultural and denominational differences in wearing a religious necklace.

Huguenot Cross with dove
From pursued Protestants in France
My mother wore this lifelong.
Necklace, silver, 2cm.



Ebony Cross

Zimbabwe, necklace, 5 cm high.



*Double Cross Space for incense or secrets
inside. Necklace.*

*Cavusin/ Cappadocia Turkey
(origin Armenian?)*





Wire Cross
Handmade Street Art
Necklace. DR Congo, 4 cm high.



Armenian Cross
Beirut Lebanon, Necklace.
Ceramic, 4 cm.



Agape Cross
Beijing/China,
Bible verses on
Back and small sides.
Silver-plated.
Necklace, 4.5 cm.





Dove Cross
Metal, Necklace.
Country unknown. 4 cm.



Ethiopian Cross
Necklace. Metal. 2.5 cm.



Ethiopian Cross
Necklace, Addis Ababa.
Brass, 4.5 cm.



Ethiopian Crosses
Necklaces, Addis Ababa.
Brass, 4-6 cm.



One Dollar Cross



Necklace. Unknown place.
Mass Production. 3 cm high.



Russian Orthodox Cross
Moscow/ Russia,
Wood, with glass and bones, 5 cm.



Pocket Bible with Cross

Middle East. Text inside 1mm small,
readable with magnifying glass,
3.5x4.5 cm.



Filigree Cross

Middle East, Brooch
Silver plated, 3cm high.

Orthodox Cross

Sofia/Bulgaria. Adherent
Plastic on Wood, 6.5 cm high.



Cooperation of Humans
Liaoning Agape Foundation,
Shenyang/China, 2018, Pin, 2 cm.

Cross with Dove
Geneva Agape Foundation
Geneva/Switzerland, 2015, Pin, 2 cm.



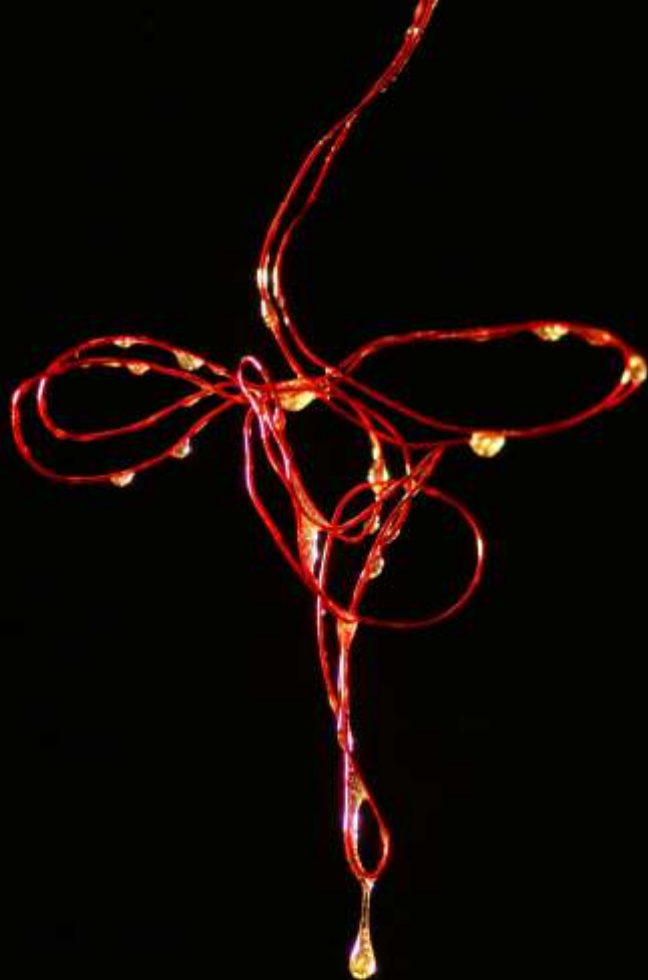
Holy Spirit as Dove
and like the blessing Christ
Kingdom Business College
Beijing/China, Pin, 3 cm large.



Honey Cross

"Come, Sweet Cross" (Johann Sebastian Bach). Red wire with honey drops. Made by Christoph Stückelberger, 30 cm.







My Cross + My Life

The cross in this collection is not a symbol of suffering and death, but one of joy, energy, life and community. The 60 crosses from across the globe - the private collection of the author - offer the possibility to discover the depth and diversity of the cross, in a spirit of ecumenical curiosity. They are organised around five themes: Tree of life; Community; Suffering; Devotion and Protection. The selection is limited to personal crosses found in households, worn as necklaces or bought in church shops. This booklet is an invitation to deepen personal spirituality, to choose from among the crosses and to meditate on them as a means to express personal hope and to find life energy as a source of ethical reflection and action.



Christoph Stückelberger is Founder and President of the Globethics.net Foundation, with its Head Office in Geneva, Switzerland, Professor of (theological) Ethics at Basel University (emeritus), visiting professor at universities in Nigeria, China, Russia, UK, and President of the Geneva Agape Foundation and of the OikosInvest Foundation.