

## The Cross, Revisited

In the title of this very brief essay I have inserted the word “revisited.” Obviously, the cross of Jesus Christ is familiar to people not only as a religious symbol but a cultural (and occasionally political) one as well. Here we have a new way of beholding the cross of Jesus Christ: new in its presentation yet ancient in its components.

From its very inception in Christian art and literature, people have represented the cross in innumerable ways. It may be divided into two general classes: one has a corpus (body) whereas the other does not. The former tends to convey the sufferings and humanity of Jesus and the latter is more abstract and can be suggestive that the crucifixion is to give way to the Resurrection.

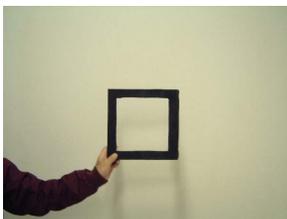
The following set of five photographs is intended to show yet another perspective on this central mystery of the Christian faith. This cross is unique in that it is three-dimensional, that is, it is comprised of two parts, a circle and a square. To realize the necessitates a sequence which will be outlined as follows.

### PHOTO ONE



The image of a circle which signifies perfection, infinity, completeness as well as divinity.

### PHOTO TWO



The image of a square which signifies the created realm. According to some ancient philosophies such as Stoicism, creation consists of four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Their combination and interaction produces everything we see about us as well as our own human nature. The square/creation mirrors God's transcendent perfection and can be taken as his presence within the world.

### PHOTO THREE



Here the circle and square are interlocked. Both have the same dimensions. At the same time this interlocking reveals their differences and similarities. They are inseparable from each other and cannot be parted.

### PHOTO FOUR



A true cruciform shape needs to be made from the circle and square. They can't be set up as an object out there much like a traditional crucifix. In order to effect this cross, a person must actually hold the circle and square in balance. It would make no sense if this cross were suspended as a mobile of sorts. To form the cross, one adopts in a literal yet different sense the words of Christ, "Let him take up his cross and follow me." A person carries out this command as follows:

- 1) Hold the circle in a vertical position with one hand. Since it represents the divinity, this vertical position shows that it fully transcends creation.
- 2) Hold the square in a horizontal position with the other hand. Along with being representative of the created realm, the position can show the linear passage of time.
- 3) As already noted, both circle and square are interlocked and are inseparable. In order to form a cross, these two objects must be held in perfect balance. You have to

line them up, otherwise the cross would not take shape.

How does this cross become visible? If you were to look at it from any angle other than straight-on as seen in the last photograph, all you'd see is the interlocking of circle and square.

#### PHOTOGRAPH FIVE



Now the person who holds the cross is crucial for its realization. Both circle and square can't hang there in space, otherwise they would fall to the ground. Also, if you hold the circle alone, the square would drop and visa versa. Thus two hands are required. We could almost name this cross a participatory one.

In conclusion, this cross can only be realized if you look at both circle and square head on with each balanced to produce a cruciform object. The idea lying behind this gesture is not so much to look upon the cross but to become an integral part of its formation. This may be expressed by saying that through the circle a person incorporates the divinity into oneself along with a transformed humanity. To put it theologically in terms of the Council of Chalcedon, Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, human and divine.

Thanks to Br. Matthew Joseph, fellow monk of St. Joseph's Abbey, who held the circle and square.