

*Take up your cross," the Savior said,
"if you would my disciple be;
take up your cross with willing heart,
and humbly follow after me."*

The words of our gradual hymn today, chosen by Christine for us to sing this morning, was written by a 19 year old named Charles William Everest. A little later in life he was ordained as an Episcopal priest and became a rector of a church right here in Connecticut! These words of his were published with other poems in 1833, fifty years before this church was built.ⁱ We're accustomed to hearing this hymn with a different tune, but the words stand powerfully to echo what Jesus said in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Take up your cross.

Young Charles must have been asking himself, as we ask ourselves, what is the cross that Jesus is asking us to take up? In other words, how can I be of value in this world? Or, what's the next right thing Jesus is asking us to do?

I want to tell you this morning about a woman named Barbara Boghetich. Well after middle age, when she was a widow and devout Episcopalian living in Houston, she heard these words of Jesus: "Those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it." And, it turns out she did nearly lose her life!



I first met Barbara back in 2006. That was the first time I led a short mission trip to Honduras. I had heard about her and the great work she was doing in a little mission station high above the city of San Pedro Sula. When my group and I arrived, about 10 of us, adults and teens, we stayed at a nice hotel in the city, the Copantl. It had comfortable rooms, a good restaurant and even a pool. It was a way to ease us pampered Americans in slowly to the very different world of Honduras.

The next day we boarded a couple of sturdy SUVs and headed up the mountains that rise sharply to the north above the city. The road rapidly went from congested and smoggy, to a deeply rutted and dusty dirt road. We bounced and rocked along and made our way very slowly up the hillside through tiny villages perched

precariously on the sides of the hills. Finally, after a hot, dusty hour plus ride we made it to the highest village, the end of the road, Delicias del Norte (translated The Delight of the North.) We left the vehicles in the little village center and the walked the last part of the way up a very steep dirt path to La Iglesia San Lucas.

And up there, in a little open-air church made of concrete block stood a diminutive white skinned, white haired woman surrounded by dark skinned young people who had been waiting for our arrival. Barbara came over to us limping a bit and leaning on her cane. She introduced herself and the children around her. We in turn introduced ourselves and felt pretty out of place.

Our job there that week was to help the parishioners construct a concrete stairway to get down to another little building that was to be the Sunday School and meeting rooms for the church. Barbara, and many others had a hard time negotiating the steep stony path that led to the building.



We had so many questions to ask Barbara; what brought you here to this place? How do you manage to walk up to the church? Where do you live? And how long have you been here in Honduras? But she

waved us off for then because there was a lot of work to do and we only had four days to complete it. The steps had to be measured out, forms had to be built, the concrete had to be mixed by hand and carried, bucket by bucket up to the site. Then the forms had to be filled and leveled off. It was at least a four day project for us. And that's about all the time we had.



Over those days we did learn Barbara's story. She had lived in Houston, Texas for many years. Her husband had died a few years back. Her parish in Houston had supported the Diocese of Honduras for a long time and she came to believe that God was calling her to go there to be of use to the people and to God's Church. So she went as a lay missionary and while there was ordained by Bishop

Lloyd Allen to the diaconate and later to the priesthood.

She bought herself a little house in San Pedro Sula, and occasionally returned to Houston to see family and to raise money for the Honduran Diocese. One day, however, when driving in San

Pedro Sula, she was in a terrible car accident that broke her hip and she almost lost her life. But she didn't quit. She hired a local young woman to take care of her and she slowly and steadily regained her health.

*Take up your cross; let not its weight
fill your weak spirit with alarm;
Christ's strength shall bear your spirit up
and brace your heart and nerve your arm.*

Meanwhile, Barbara's mission church of San Lucas in Delicias del Norte became a busy little place. She started a very successful scholarship program for the children and teens of the village there. You see, public school is free in Honduras, but the children must get there on their own. After the fourth grade many children drop out of school because their parents can't afford to buy books, uniforms, transportation and pay extra for courses such as English.

As her parish grew Barbara found some sewing machines. Most of the houses and shacks there had little or no electricity. But the church had some and the local women began to sew clothing and other items to earn a little money for their families.

Barbara is back in Houston now. She has had some health challenges, but her legacy continues in her beloved Honduras. Many Episcopal parishes in the United States including Trinity Lime Rock have continued to support the children there. And that young woman that Barbara first hired to help her out, Erlis, still runs the program there. Erlis also went to school for dentistry and now has a career thanks to Barbara's encouragement and support.

Most of us wouldn't want or be able to take the radical steps that Barbara did to take up her cross and follow Jesus. But it doesn't take a move to another country to do the work that Jesus calls each of us to.

During this Lenten season let us pray that God will put in front of us, each of us, an opportunity to lose our lives in service to others, to our Church, and to the one who saves us, heals us, and gives us strength.

*Take up your cross, then, in Christ's strength,
and calmly ev'ry danger brave:
it guides you to abundant life
and leads to vict'ry o'er the grave.ⁱⁱ*

ⁱ Raymond F. Glover, Editor, *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, Volume Three B, Church Hymnal Corp. Pg. 674.

ⁱⁱ *The Hymnal 1982*, Hymn 675, verses 1,2 4.