

A Short Way of the Cross

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I - Condemnation.

Pilate had no clear knowledge of the issues at stake; I have. Pilate did not believe the warning signs; I do. Pilate could not draw upon the Scriptures, the Church, the sacraments for help; I can.

II - Acceptance.

The cross was not forced upon Christ; He had offered Himself for it and was waiting for it. The nearer I can get to this attitude of willing cooperation with the Father's will, the truer my likeness to Christ.

III - First Fall.

If Christ had had any strength left, He would not have fallen. This was no make-believe fall. He allowed His physical powers to fail Him so as to be like me in all things, even in weakness.

IV - Mary.

If I want to know the place of suffering in the Father's scheme of human life, I can look at the souls to whom He sends it. The meeting between Christ and His Mother is the saddest meeting in history.

V - Simon.

The idle spectator is made to be an active participant. Reluctance would have turned away the grace and spoiled the whole thing. But because there was willingness, a series of graces followed.

VI - Veronica.

No idle watching here, but ardent compassion. The test of sympathy lies in the readiness to serve. Not only was Veronica's sympathy verified by her service, but her service was verified by its miraculous reward.

VII - Second Fall.

Christ fell twice so as to show us that by repeated failure our perseverance is proved. After one fall we can persuade ourselves that it was an accident. After two we are inclined to lose confidence. Christ fell twice to *give* us confidence.

VIII - The Women.

The teaching here is that of directed intention. Mourning must be supernaturalized. No sorrow, and least of all the sorrow that springs from charity, may be wasted. Tears of warm emotion can be turned to tears of true penitence.

IX - Third Fall.

Three times Christ exposed a physical inability to meet a demand. He allowed this limitation to be imposed upon His body so that we might contrast it with the unlimited reserves of His heart and will. It was only His sacred flesh that faltered; His love stood firm.

X - Stripping.

Christ has a right to everything. He owns the world. Especially He has a right to dignity. He is Himself perfect purity. But He was stripped of everything. He was left with nothing but shame.

XI - Nailing.

With Him the nailing was inevitable only because He willed it so. With us it is circumstance that keeps us to our cross. But though we cannot escape it, we too can will it so. And herein lies our sanctity: with Christ we are nailed to the cross in obedience to the Father's will.

XII - Death.

The consummation of His life is seen in the consummation of His death. Here is perfect obedience, perfect love. The Word has said all. Perfect soul leaves perfect body in a darkness which covers the whole earth, and in meekness and silence. It was the way in which he had come.

XIII - Deposition.

Mary's place in the nativity is reflected in the act of atonement. She has brought Christ into the world; she stands by while He takes His leave of it. If His own rejected Him, they have still His own Mother to plead on their behalf.

XIV - Burial.

Instead of being the symbol of finality, the tomb is for us the emblem of hope: out of it rises our only hold upon eternal life. Christ's passion is our merit; His death and resurrection are our trust.
