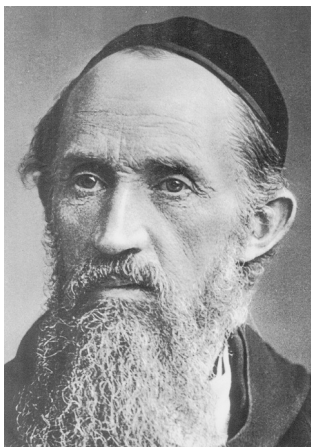

Stations of the Cross

Meditations on the Life of Abbot Francis



Introduction

We are about to walk the way of the Cross which our Lord walked on the day before he died, which Abbot Francis walked all his life and which he climbed every day during his last years in Emaus.

Walking the way of the Cross means to take part in the Cross of Christ.

It means to experience, in the Holy Spirit, the love hidden within the Cross of Christ.

It means to recognize, in the light of this love, our own cross.

It means to take up that cross once more and, strengthened by this love, to continue our journey.

First Station: **Jesus is condemned to death**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mt. 27:22-23)

Pilate said to them: "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said: "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked: "What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more: "Let him be crucified!"

Meditation:

Abbot Francis was also sentenced, sentenced to death of inactivity. He was suspended from his work of love, his missions and Mariannahill.

We experience the same "sentence" very often in our life. Sometimes even our best intentions are misjudged. We also feel from time to time sentenced to inactivity and chained to a bed of suffering.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you accepted an unjust judgment. Grant to us and to all the men and women of our time the grace to remain faithful to the truth.

Do not allow the weight of responsibility for the suffering of the innocent to fall upon us and upon those who come after us.

To you, O Jesus, just judge, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Second Station: **Jesus takes up his cross**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mk. 15:20)

After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

Meditation:

Abbot Francis courageously took upon his shoulder the cross which God had chosen for him. He knew he had to walk with it. Especially here at Emaus – as he could feel the end of his life approaching – he welcomed the cross of his life.

How do we take the cross upon ourselves? Timidly or courageously?

Do we not yet understand that through his cross and death Christ redeemed the world?

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you accepted the Cross at the hands of unjust people to make of it the sign of God's saving love for humanity.

Grant us and all the men and women of our time the grace of faith in this infinite love.

May we be authentic witnesses to the Redemption.

To you, O Jesus, Priest and Victim, be praise and glory for ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Is 53:4-5)

Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

Meditation:

Abbot Francis experienced such falls. His human nature at times revolted against injustice done to him. He complained and questioned. But he got up again and went on his way. The cross was there, he carried it further.

When we fall under the burden of the cross that God has placed upon our shoulders, we need not be ashamed or discouraged. Greater ones than we have fallen – but got up again. In trying and trying again lies our strength.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

O Christ, as you fall under the weight of our faults and rise again for our justification, we pray, help us and all who are weighed down by sin to stand up again and continue the journey. Give us the strength of Spirit to carry the cross of our weakness with you. To you, O Jesus, crushed under the weight of our faults, be our praise and love for ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Fourth Station: **Jesus meets his mother**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Lk. 2:34-35)

Simeon said to Mary, his mother: “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign of contradiction, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also...”

Meditation:

Abbot Francis met this Blessed Mother so often in his life: In his youth, at Mariawald, at Mariastern, at Dunbrody, at Mariannahill and at the many mission stations which he founded and named after Mary.

Mary was for him the help of Christians, the Mater Dei, the Immaculate Conception. At Tre Fontane he said: “To know and love Mary is wealth and wisdom.”

Do we meet our Blessed Mother along our way of life? She understands our sufferings and sorrows. She gave her “Yes” to the will of God.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we need women who can restore to our world the fair face of humanity.

Lord Jesus, we need Mary, the woman, the wife and the mother, who never cheapens or refuses love!

Lord Jesus, we pray to you for all the women of the world.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Fifth Station: **Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mk. 5:21-22)

They compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his Cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

Meditation:

There were many brothers and sisters along the way of life of Abbot Francis, his silent helpers who gradually learnt how to be a Simon of Cyrene as they carried the cross with him.

How many are there in our lives who carry the cross with us?

Let us be grateful for all these services that our brothers and sisters gave us in the past to carry our daily cross. Are we ourselves a Simon of Cyrene to others?

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

O Christ, you gave to Simon of Cyrene the dignity of carrying your Cross. Welcome us too under its weight, and grant to everyone the gift of readiness to serve.

Do not permit that we should turn away from those who are crushed by the cross of illness, loneliness, hunger or injustice.

As we carry each other's burdens, help us to become witnesses to the Gospel of the Cross and witnesses to you, who live and reign for ever and ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Sixth Station: **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Ps. 27:8-9)

You have said: "Seek my face." My heart says to you: "Your face, Lord, do I seek." Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

Meditation:

With Abbot Francis suffered many men and women – and from him they learnt how to carry the cross. Especially it were the first sisters of Mariannahill who wiped many faces and helped others in their need and sorrow. Even today they show us the true face of Jesus in the people around us.

How much of this imprint of the face of Christ, his true face, is within us?

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts which seek your face. Keep us from the blindness of heart which sees only the surface of things. Give us the simplicity and purity which allow us to recognize your presence in the world. When we are not able to accomplish great things, grant us the courage which is born of humility and goodness. Impress your face on our hearts. May we encounter you along the way and show your face to the world.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Seventh Station: **Jesus falls for the second time**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Lam. 3:1-2)

I am the man who has seen affliction from the rod of his anger. One whom he has led and forced to walk in darkness, not in the light.

Meditation:

Through constant self-discipline after each falling Abbot Francis climbed up the steep road of the Hill of Calvary. His silent murmurings, his loud letters of protest, they all became silent as he corrected himself more and more and climbed steadfastly up his hill of suffering.

When we find ourselves complaining and trying to get relief from our interior anxieties by grumbling and dissatisfaction, let us calm down and pause to think. For in Christ we have the strength to carry on.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you fall under the weight of human sin and you get up again in order to take it upon yourself and cancel it.

Give to us the strength to carry the cross of daily life and to get up again from our falls, so that we may bring the Gospel of your saving power to future generations.

To you, O Jesus, our support when we are weak, be praise and glory for ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Eighth Station: **Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Lk. 23:28-30)

Jesus said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us' and to the hills, 'Cover us'.

Meditation:

The first sisters of Mariannahill were with Abbot Francis and grieved with him in his sufferings. But instead of being consoled, he consoled them. He was the stronghold and the protection for the sisters. He could also rejoice with them, as when the community was approved by the Holy See.

Do we know how to work together in harmony, supporting each other in mutual charity, as even the Apostle demands of ordinary Christians?

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

O Christ, you came into this world to visit all those who await salvation.

Grant that we will recognize the time of its visitation and share in the fruits of your redemption.

To you, O Jesus, born of the Virgin Daughter of Zion, be honour and praise for ever and ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Lam. 3:27-32)

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when he has laid it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust – there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off for ever, but, though he causes grief, he will have compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Meditation

The number of falls is not important. What is important is to get up. In physical exhaustion Abbot Francis tried always to get up even when he needed help.

When through our bodily weakness we become so dependent on the help of others to carry on, when others must lift us up all the time, then let us draw strength from the example of Abbot Francis. The cross is not the end but the beginning.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you revealed to the world the price of its redemption.

Grant to us the light of faith, so that we may have the courage to follow the same path which, by way of the Cross and self-emptying, leads to life without end.

To you, O Jesus, our support when we are weak, be honour and glory for ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Tenth Station: **Jesus is stripped of his garments**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: Mt. 27:35-36)

And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

Meditation:

At last Abbot Francis was deprived of everything. He stood alone before his Master. Even his brothers and sisters had to leave him alone.

We also experience such desolations, such periods of being stripped of all that we loved and lived for. Do we understand that these are the hours which transform the cross into the light of Easter?

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you accepted the death on the Cross for our salvation.

Grant to us and to all the world's people a share in your sacrifice on the Cross, so that what we are and what we do may always be a free and conscious sharing in your work of salvation.

To you, O Jesus, Priest and Victim, be honour and glory for ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mt. 27:37-40)

And over his head they put the charge against him, which read: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right hand and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross."

Meditation:

Sickness tormented Abbot Francis in the last month of his life. He was as it were nailed to the cross. But he kept quiet in physical pain and in mental agony.

We also cannot get away from the cross any more. Christ was nailed to the cross to be released again in glory.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you let yourself be nailed to the Cross, accepting the terrible cruelty of this suffering, the destruction of your body and your dignity. You allowed yourself to be nailed fast; you did not try to escape or to lessen your suffering. May we never flee from what we are called to do. Help us to remain faithful to you. Help us to unmask the false freedom which would distance us from you. Help us to accept your "binding" freedom to discover our true freedom.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Twelfth Station: **Jesus dies on the cross**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mk. 15:34, 37)

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” Which means: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last.

Meditation:

Abbot Francis died in the silence of the night. In this loneliness he gave his life back to God. And also it was the beginning of life, just like the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and produces much fruit.

We can only meditate in silence the mystery of God in these words: “Had not Christ to suffer all these things and so enter his heavenly glory?”

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, in the moment of your agony you entrusted to the Father’s mercy all men and women of every age, with all their weaknesses and sins.

Fill us and the generations yet to come with your Spirit of love, so that our indifference will not render vain in us the fruits of your death.

To you, crucified Jesus, the wisdom and the power of God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Thirteenth Station: **Jesus is laid in the lap of his Mother**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mt. 27:54)

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said: "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Meditation:

What sorrow to have lost Abbot Francis in this life. He could have done so much more. Great was the grief of his faithful disciples: brothers, sisters and lay people, they all mourned their Father.

Can we say as Mary did: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me?"

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord, you descended into the darkness of death. In the hour of darkness, help us to know that you are still there. Do not abandon us when we are tempted to lose heart. Help us not to leave you alone. give us the fidelity to withstand moments of confusion and a love ready to embrace you in your utter helplessness, like your Mother, who once more holds you to her breast. Help us to look beyond all our fears and prejudices, and to offer you our abilities, our hearts and our time, and thus to prepare a garden for the Resurrection.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Fourteenth Station: **Jesus is laid in the tomb**

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading: (Mt. 27:59-61)

Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre.

Meditation:

Abbot Francis is laid into the earth. He will rest until Christ comes again. We sit around the graveside and mourn.

The hope of the Resurrection lies in the tomb for those who believe. The new life is in the earth even during winter before the first blossoms come up in spring.

Silence / Followed by Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you were drawn by the Father from the darkness of death to the light of a new life in glory.

Grant that the sign of the empty tomb may speak to us and to future generations and become a wellspring of living faith, generous love, and unshakeable hope.

To you, O Jesus, whose presence, hidden and victorious, fills the history of the world, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Conclusion: The Resurrection

Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

Good Friday is a day of darkness, a day of blind hatred,
a day when the Just One was put to death!

But Good Friday is not the final word: the final word is
Easter, the triumph of Life, the victory of Good over Evil.

Lord Jesus,

Holy Saturday is a day of emptiness,
a day of bewilderment and dread,
a day when everything seems over!

But Holy Saturday is not the final day,
the final day is Easter, the Light that is kindled anew,
the Love that conquers all hatred.

Lord Jesus, whenever we experience our own Good
Friday, and we feel the anguish of Holy Saturday,
give us Mary's unwavering faith,
so that we can believe in the reality of Easter.

Give us her clear-sighted gaze so that we can see the
brilliant dawn that announces the final day of history:
"new heavens and a new earth" already present in you,
Jesus, Crucified and Risen. Amen.

- Dying you destroyed our death,
- Rising you restored our lives,
Lord Jesus, come in glory.