

Way
of the
Cross
for
Legionaries



By a Legionary

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You ask me, Blessed Mary, to walk with you the road to Calvary. You have so much to teach me, a Legionary, about your dying Son and souls, about their close connection with one another. Help me to learn by living Calvary once again with you. Let your spirit pass into me so that time, space and I might disappear, you alone remaining to love the suffering Christ, the Christ that still lives in the most wretched and abject of souls. Let me lose self in living through and with you the Passion of your Son, Christ.

With you I can never forget that Calvary continues until the dawn of eternity, that the Way of the Cross can still be found in the heart of each discouraged and disheartened soul. The accidentals may change but essentially the situation is the same.

This historical person of Christ has been continued in the Mystical Christ. Each member of that Mystical Body with whom I rub shoulders today, carries with him his private share of the Passion. In filling up that which was wanting in the suffering of Christ, each soul continues to write God's unending serial of the Passion. As a Legionary it is my privilege to walk with Him, help Him with His Cross, pick Him up when He falls. A privilege always - because He is Christ.

So, Mary, since your Son suffers daily in His Mystical Body there is need for "other Marys" to tend the sorrowing Christ. Union with you will be my secret. My Legionary activity, my life will have success only when, through union with you, I reverence and love Christ in every soul whom I meet on my Legionary visits, in my fellow Legionaries, for that matter every individual who crosses my path. *Ave Christe!* (Hail Christ), must be my silent greeting to them all.



First Station

Jesus Is Condemned to Death.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

"The Legionary must not sit in judgment." (p. 279 – Handbook)*

*N.B. All references are from the Seventh American Edition of Legion Handbook.

Often during my visitation of souls I climb into Pilate's seat to sit in judgment. Let me never forget the words of the Handbook. *"They (the Legionaries) must always consider how Mary's soft eyes would look on all these circumstances and persons. Then let them try to act as she would act."*

Christ the Innocent is being condemned unjustly in this Station. Each of my visits from now on will be marked by a "delicate respect" for this "other Christ."

Don't let me act the part of Pilate toward anyone I meet during the day. That person too is Christ!

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Second Station

Jesus Receives His Cross.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“The movement of His Blood dilating their reluctant veins, gives pain; and this makes the sorrows of life The sense of suffering becomes the sense of Christ’s close presence.” (p. 183 – LHB)

I need to live with you Mary, at this Station, because Christ, suffering in His Mystical Body still receives the Cross. Only you can give me words to teach souls that the shadow of the Cross is the shadow cast by Christ drawing near them.

Show me how to lead souls to a joyful cherishing of their cross through love of Jesus. But I myself must learn it before I can teach.

By cheerful acceptance of my own crosses I can be a silent sermon - proving to myself and others that once you resolve to carry the cross, the Cross will carry you.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

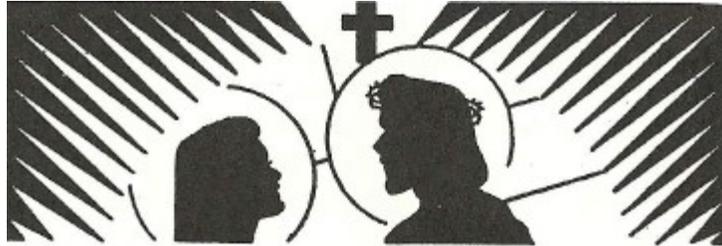
“The special attractiveness of the search for the sheep that is straying... should not blind the Legionary to the fact that a wider field lies to hand in the urging on of that vast multitude who, though called by God to sanctity, are contenting themselves with a life of mere performance of essential duties.” (p. 274 – LHB)

Jesus falling the first time makes me think of myself and the many souls satisfied with mediocrity and lukewarmness. Maybe I’m responsible through my own mediocrity - What have I said or done lately in my Legionary visitation and everyday life to fan a soul’s lukewarmness into zeal for personal sanctification?

With and by Mary I can help these “other Christs” in the Mystical Body grow and wax strong in age and grace before God and man.

I should share Mary's anxiety that all souls, my own especially, soon may come to the fullness of the Christian life.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

"In and through her Legionary, Mary participates in every Legionary duty and mothers souls so that in each of those worked for and of one's fellow-workers not only is the person of Our Lord seen and served, but seen and served by Mary, with the same exquisite love and nurturing care which she gave to the actual Body of her Divine Son." (p. 130 – LHB)

So staggering a privilege is mine that I often take it for granted. I waste my time idly wishing to return to the first road of Calvary - there to help Jesus. Slow of heart, I don't burn with love for the cross-laden, downtrodden individuals I meet each week, these "other Christs." When will I have not only an intellectual faith in these Christs, but a "faith animated by Charity" which will cherish them, respect them, love them as I would Christ, as did Mary at this Fourth Station.

This technique, the spirituality, the entire Handbook can be learned by long and deep reflection at this Station.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Fifth Station

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“ ... The laying aside of pleasure, the taking on of the anxieties which come in plenty with the work, the anguish which the contemplation of irreligion and depravity brings to the sensitive soul, sorrow from sorrows wholeheartedly shared....” (p. 6 – LHB)

If there were such a gadget, a spiritual X-ray machine would be ideal to record my reactions when I see Simon reluctantly helping Christ. I could see my own reluctance for the work of the Apostolate, my hesitancy to help the members of Christ's Mystical Body carry their cross of suffering, shame or poverty.

Like Simon, my attitude, is “Let George do it.” But the eyes of the abandoned soul, which sorrowfully watch me turn away from my Legionary duty, are those same eyes which pleaded silently with the Cyrenian for assistance.

O Jesus, I love You not only here in the peace of a quiet church, sheltered by the Tabernacle but in everyone, without exception, who fills my life.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes The Face of Jesus.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“Every impossibility is divisible into thirty-nine steps of which each step is possible Some active gesture (i.e., not merely a prayer) must be made, which, of no apparent practical value, at least tends toward or has some relation to the objective. This final challenging gesture is what the Legion has been calling “Symbolic Action.” (p. 304-305 – LHB)

Throughout the whole bloody reality of Calvary, help for Christ in any way certainly was “impossible.” Veronica’s wiping of the agonized countenance of Christ was like applying a sponge to the Atlantic. Strange, but Veronica never considered that. She saw only the suffering Christ and she took the first “Symbolic Action” in this Christian Age. Christ’s image was hers in payment for her sympathy and love.

And the Legionary, like Veronica, will possess the image of Christ stamped not only on a veil, but on his soul.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“If love is due to those least ones when one sets out to serve, it is due in higher degree to one’s brethren in organization.... The whole idea and spirit of the Legion is one of intense charity and sympathy, which before radiating its warmth outside, must first of all burn brightly and strongly on the domestic hearth of the Legion itself.” (pp. 325-326 – LHB)

I can defile the terms “Sister” and “Brother” by any lack of love toward a fellow Legionary, because it is in and through Christ that we share in God’s Divine Life. Should there be even the slightest shadow of criticism of one another, of an officer or of the Spiritual Director, and small back-biting and detraction, I am bringing failure into my work for souls. I have opened an artery that can only lead to death – the death of the Praesidium, the death of that life-giving force for members and clients alike.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“The secret of all success with others lies in the establishment of personal contact, the contact of love and sympathy.” (pp. 6-7 – LHB)

Moved by the sight of the Cross-laden, agonizing Christ, the women of Jerusalem wept for Him. Does the sight of a soul covered with the dirt of sin, who by Christ’s own words in Himself, bring forth the sympathy, love, understanding, unvarying gentleness which must be part and parcel of all Legion activity?

“Faith animated by charity,” which Mary can give will help me to possess the love and sympathy which the women of Jerusalem showed to the One whom public opinion rated even lower than Barabbas, the robber, murderer and seditious. Human respect will die in the heart of a Legionary who shares the love of Christ which Mary possesses.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“Work for the derelict or abandoned classes will always be a difficult, long, drawn-out one. Its keynote must be a supreme patience. A type is being dealt with which will only rise after many fallings.” (p. 241 – LHB)

Dear Jesus, as You fell for the third and last time on the Way of the Cross, did You think it impossible to rise? On our last visitation there was a soul saturated with sin who thought it impossible to rise, too. Yet, by patient prayer and sacrifices, by patient action in union with the Mediatrix of All Graces, he will rise by the grace You won during this fall.

If we can spread abroad the reign of the Sacraments and popular devotions, if we can apply the religious system of the Church, the Legion will succeed in helping Christ rise to a new life of glory and eternal joy.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Tenth Station

Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“Let thy power (Holy Spirit) overshadow me, and come into my soul with fire and love, ... so that I may be pure in her who was made Immaculate by Thee.” (p. 52, line 21 – Legionary Promise)

Jesus stripped of His garments is a silent sermon in that purity both of heart and intentions which must be found in every Legionary. Union with Mary to the point that it is Mary’s heart which loves other souls, Mary’s hands which serve mankind, and Mary’s eyes which view a sinful world, is the best guarantee of this purity.

A conviction that Christ alone is the one perfectly Unchanging Element of life, must dominate the spirituality of a Legionary.

As aids to this purity of intention, the Legionary will be careful to observe the Handbook’s admonition that there must be “no politics,” “no seeking of self,” “no jealousy,” within the Legion system.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Eleventh Station

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“Here is the motive for Legionary perseverance exquisitely put by Monsignor R.H. Benson: ‘If a sinner merely drove Christ away by his sins, we could let such a soul go. It is because - in St. Paul’s terrifying phrase - the sinful soul holds Christ, still crucifying Him and making Him a mockery (Heb. VI, 6) that we cannot bear to leave it to itself.’” (p. 297 – LHB)

Sin - the extension of the Crucifixion in the modern world, Calvary continued in the sinner perched on the brink of Hell. Truly the Church and the Blessed Sacrament have been called the extension of the Incarnation. Trying to be “another Mary” fits so beautifully into both these concepts - the Incarnation and Redemption.

With these thoughts, participation in the Apostolate ceases to be an optional task. If we are true Christians we must do our part to alleviate His Sufferings. Could we stand on Calvary and say, "I might help if I could find the time..."? Can we dismiss Christ so easily?

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

"That Motherhood of hers was proclaimed at the moment when it reached its complete expansion, that is, when Redemption was consummated. In the midst of the sorrows of Calvary Jesus said to her from the Cross: 'Woman, behold thy son,' and to St. John: 'Behold thy Mother.' ... Incessantly must the Legionary dwell upon the reality of Mary's Motherhood of us...." (p. 13-14 – LHB)

Mary's Motherhood has a twofold meaning to us. She is the Mother of Grace both for the sanctity I seek for myself and the salvation I seek for others. If the Trinity could entrust the Son of God to her I can put my poor self entirely into her care.

As for the souls I meet in my visitations, in my Praesidium, at home and at work - Mary will share with me her spirit to see, reverence, and love Christ in them all.

Mary, my Mother, is the secret of success in this twofold need.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Thirteenth Station

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross And Placed in the Arms of His Mother.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“In every person, in every place, in every circumstance and happening, the Legionary should meet Jesus.” (p. 357 – LHB)

This meeting with Christ in a Legionary’s daily life should reflect Mary completely. Her sweetness in suffering, her loving Fiat to the Cross, her cherishing of Christ even in death, show the way to heroic sanctity.

As a Legionary, one will find a semblance of the “dead Christ” many times - in the Catholic cut off from the life of grace, in the non-Catholic or pagan who is only a potential Christ, in himself when God removes all sensible consolation and joy, in fellow Catholics who fulfill only the essentials of their Faith.

In everything, “faith animated by charity” will help them to sing with Mary Magdalen, “I have seen the Lord.”

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.



Fourteenth Station

Jesus Is Laid in the Sepulchre.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

“Failure is a penance and an exercise of Faith - a higher joy to the thoughtful Legionary who sees therein merely a postponed and greater success.” (p. 286 – LHB)

Christ at this Station is failure personified to everyone - except Mary. Her heart could rejoice. In three days she would see Him - a radiant, glorified King.

For every Legionary, united with Mary, there can only be unbounded joy in the work of the Apostolate, because we have been guaranteed absolute success by God and Mary.

From Genesis to Fatima the words of triumphal success give joy in the midst of the failure and the disheartening deluge of sin and indifference which the Legionary must meet. Failure will turn to success with the magic wand of Mary's patient faith.

Think of it, Legionaries! Because we have chosen Mary in a unique way to be a part of our Apostolate, we cannot fail.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.

Concluding Prayer

Let us pray.

Confer, O Lord, on us, who serve beneath the standard of Mary, that fulness of faith in Thee and trust in her, to which it is given to conquer the world. Grant us a lively faith, animated by charity, which will enable us to perform all our actions from the motive of pure love of Thee, and ever to see Thee and serve Thee in our neighbor; a faith, firm and immovable as a rock, through which we shall rest tranquil and steadfast amid the crosses, toils, and disappointments of life; a courageous faith which will inspire us to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and for the salvation of souls; a faith which will be our Legion's Pillar of Fire - to lead us forth united - to kindle everywhere the fires of Divine Love - to enlighten those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death - to inflame those who are lukewarm - to bring back life to those who are dead in sin; and which will guide our own feet in the Way of Peace, so that - the battle of life over - our Legion may reassemble, without the loss of any one, in the Kingdom of Thy Love and Glory. Amen.

May the souls of our departed Legionaries and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.