

# *My Daily Way of the Cross*

*By: Jorge A. Román*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The way of the cross is one of the oldest devotions of Christianity, born from its beginnings by the same need that all have to remember and relive the events that have marked us most in our lives. That's why when we return to the land where we grew up, we walked the steps we made when we were kids: The park where we played, the school we attended, the shop where we ran errands for our mother, and so on. And as we moved on, we relived countless memories that marked us for life. In the same way the friends and disciples of Christ also walked the way that Jesus did from his trial before Pilate to Calvary where he died.

Mount Calvary or Golgotha had been designated by the Romans as the most suitable place for crucifixions, the mountain, which had the form of a skull, was outside the walls of Jerusalem and served as a warning to all who came to the city to be careful if they did not want to be crucified.

The tradition of making the journey to Calvary became more and more common and popular, to the degree that in the year 70, Romans destroyed any place or religious sign that could mean a focus of concentration for people and could give origin to some rebellion against the Roman Empire.

That is why the Temple of Jerusalem, which was the pride of the Jews and which Jesus had warned that the day would come when there would be no stone left on stone, was completely destroyed and its stones scattered in the most distant places so that no Jews would rebuild it. Since then, it has been a tradition for the Jews to visit a tomb, placing a stone on it, symbolizing that they are still waiting for the reconstruction of the new temple that will unify its people. For that reason, it often surprises pilgrims to the Holy Land, that instead of climbing the Mount Calvary, it is necessary to go down a series of narrow streets and several steps to reach the Temple of the Holy Sepulcher and meet the Place of the Crucifixion. With the passage of time and so many occupations, battles, destruction and reconstructions of Jerusalem, Calvary is inside the walls of Jerusalem, which had to be extended over time for the growing City.

The prayer of the Way of the Cross can be done in different ways with results as different as the ways in which it is done.

One way of doing this may be to meditate in each station on the immense suffering of Christ in each step that he carried the heavy cross, every whiplash that opened his flesh and hurt to the depths of his soul, the shame caused by ridicule, insults

and spitting, to the pain of the nails and the constant torment of the cramped muscles, the difficulty of breathing, the flies on his wounds, the heat of the burning sun on his skin and the cold of death. All this meditation will make us share the suffering of Jesus to the tears and will make us appreciate everything that he suffered to save us from a punishment that we deserve with greater reason as an atonement for our sins.

Another way of praying the Way of the Cross, would be to assume the role of Christ and meditate on how much suffering we have experienced in our lives, as well as Our Savior, being victims of ruthless enemies (i.e. husband, incomprehensible children, leaders, authorities, etc.) who cruelly cause us so much mortal pain. Probably as a result of this meditation, we would end up with tears of sorrow that would make us feel like victims and feel less guilty by blaming our misfortunes on others. However, it would not be so bad to identify with the suffering of Christ, if we are also able to identify ourselves with his charity, mercy, justice, will, love and faith. This will lead us to know how to suffer like Him in order to overcome like Him.

Finally, although there may be many more ways, praying the Way of the Cross this way allows us to identify with this same Christ who continues to suffer today because of situations and circumstances very similar to those that led Christ to his crucifixion. That is to say, abuse of authority, injustice, intrigue, betrayal, political interests, bad religion, etc., continue today as they did in Jesus' time.

My childhood dreams made me think that if I had been there, I would have done my best to keep Jesus from being crucified. No, I was not there, but today I am here and I can do something for those who, like Christ, continue to suffer from discrimination, exploitation, illness, abandonment, abusive marriage, loneliness, poverty, hunger, unemployment, migration, etc.

***“Whoever wants to be my disciple, must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mat. 16,24)***

Taking up the cross does not mean “resigning” to carry it, but to be responsible for the obligations of each day, as a citizen, as a patriot, as a worker, as a student, as a parent, as a husband or wife, as a Son of God!

If we are not part of the solution, then, we are part of the problem. May these meditations of the Way of the Cross allow us to become more like Jesus.

## **I**

# **JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH**

***“Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified”***

***Matthew 27:26***

You were handed over to the authorities by a dear friend in whom you trusted and from whom you had no secrets. He knew very well of your activities and for that reason knew how to accurately give details for you to be apprehended. You were Rabbi and you had taught openly in the temple with authority. You have spoken publicly, without hiding, but now it is the religious authorities themselves who condemn you and conjure you in the name of God to reveal your identity. They, in the name of

God condemn you to death. Since they are not allowed to execute anyone during the occasion of the religious festivals, now the game of politics begins and they give you to the civil authorities of the Empire who rule over them to carry out their death sentence. Pilate himself realizes their plan and wants to let you go, but it is those who purport to know God and his Law, who insist on your condemnation. Finally, madness, petty interests, envy, jealousy, resentment triumphs. You have been condemned to death.

Today, friends continue to betray, sneaky cowardice leads to evil. Accusatory letters are written. You are betrayed by being handed over to the police or the immigration authorities. You are falsely accused and slandered.

It is political interests that continue to kill you in war, it is vanity and promiscuity that condemn you to die even before you are born, it is selfishness that kills you of hunger, it is hatred that condemns you to death. But today I am here to raise my voice, to defend you to make a difference. Help me not to be afraid to defend life with my own life.

## II

# JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up his daily cross and follow me”*  
*Luke 9:23*

You did not have a cross, Lord. We gave it to you and you accepted it. You hugged it and carried it all the way to the top of Calvary. Incorrectly, we have come to the idea that we too have a cross like yours. Some complain of how heavy it is, others curse it, others prefer to throw it off and go without it. We "resign" to carry it as a curse, because we have no other choice... *"I cannot stand the life my husband gives me, but it is my cross and I have to endure it."*

Truly, we have not understood that You do not ask us to "resign ourselves," nor to "endure," but to take up our cross daily and follow you. That is to say, that we walk with the cross in pursuit of you, taking charge with responsibility of our daily duties.

If You had "resigned" to your cross, you would not have reached Calvary and there would have been no redemption. But You assumed the responsibility to fulfill your mission.

Lord Jesus, you have already given us the example and taught us the way to go. Give us the strength we need to be able to fulfill our day-to-day duties, as workers, as husbands, as parents, as students, as patriots, as Christians. But allow us to do so not with a face of pain, complaints and reproach, but with love and joy, by following you to the pit, we can share not only your suffering, but also the joy of redemption.

## III

# JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

*“If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit”*  
*Matthew. 15:14*

We left home early in our life. We have gone out of the way to ignore the annoying

warnings given by our old-fashioned parents and by the absurd religious impositions that do not let us be free and do what everybody else does. We were confident that we were prepared and knew what we wanted and sadly, we have fallen.

We have fallen victims of our own inexperience and petulant attitude of believing that we know everything and can do anything.

We have fallen victims to alcohol and drugs because it is the way to get in with the most popular friends.

We have fallen victims to an irresponsible sexuality that has not given value to the true commitment of real love and has led us to loneliness, unwanted pregnancy, crime of abortion, mortal disease. We have come to consider evil as normal.

We have fallen victims of fashion that takes away basic common sense, sense of modesty and decency.

We have fallen victims of delinquency and violence because we thought we were protectors of the barrio or because we were loyal to a gang, believing that crime is the solution to our loneliness and problems.

We have fallen, but we don't want to remain on the ground. You, Lord Jesus, have given us the example. We can stand up and continue. There are more paths to walk. There is faith to make our life better. Give us the strength to lift ourselves up and the courage to continue, believing that you are with us and you are guiding us.

## IV

# JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

*“Why were you looking for me? He asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be at my Father’s house?”*

*Luke 2:49*

Who will have felt more pain? Your poor Mother who has given her whole life for you from the moment of your incarnation and who watched over your well-being from birth until you became a man? Or you, that you would have preferred that your Mother did not see how we mistreat and offend you?

Who suffers the most? The son who is dying in the hospital of an incurable disease, or injured by the bullets of a gang, or by enemy shrapnel? The daughter who is beaten by the abusive husband, or abandoned to her fate as a single mother, or who has been raped? The son who has been imprisoned, the one who has been the victim of injustice or abuse? Or the mother who keeps everything in her heart with bitter tears and powerless to remedy the suffering of the fruit of her womb?

Mary, your mother, is a true mother and like every mother, with strength, she confronts everything with braveness that only a mother can have. She knows you are doing your job, and although it hurts, she lets you work. She respects you and feels proud of you because you do it like a real man. Finally, her care and sleepless nights have borne fruit and she feels proud of you.

Mary, our Mother. Help our mothers who suffer and show them to fulfill their roles with courage and responsibility like you have done.

May our Mothers feel proud because what we do, we are doing well.

## V

### **SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS**

*“A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross”*

*Mark 15:21*

In the film “The Passion of the Christ” by Mel Gibson, Simon of Cyrene not only carries the cross, but Christ as well, who can hardly stand. To follow Christ without a cross is impossible. A cross without Christ is heavy. If we accept Christ, we also accept the cross. In our life many Cyrenians come to meet us, ready to help us, although we often reject them because they hurt our pride and self-sufficiency. But more often, most of the time there are Christs who need Cyrenians to help them carry their heavy crosses. The temptation to which we fall is to turn our backs to them or pretend we are distracted or we complain when we are forced to help.

Jesus was grateful for the help from this man who came home tired from his work in the field. Maybe it was not the kind gesture of a friend who was willing to help his friend in disgrace, but it was a relief to have his help.

Grant me Lord not to be tempted to be distracted when I find you in need of my help. Help me not to protest or be moody, but always be willing to help you with pleasure when I am asked. Help me to be willing to relieve someone overwhelmed by their problems, their tiredness, their financial needs or need for affection. May I always be willing to say: "I am at your service."

## VI

### **VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

*“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”*

*Galatians 2:20*

Although it does not appear in the Gospels, there is mention of a brave woman who has been called Veronica, from the Latin *Verum*: true, and from the Greek *ikon*: image. It is said that moved by compassion, she breaks the security barrier of the soldiers who took Jesus

and runs to Him, removing her veil, wiping the blood and sweat that fell on his eyes from his Divine Face. Surely Jesus thanked this act of mercy leaving his face impressed on the veil of the woman.

Is this tradition true? Does not matter. If his image did not remain in the veil, it surely remained in her heart.

There are so many faces covered with makeup, hospital bandages, masks of pretension pretending to be something other than who we truly are, that is difficult to discover Christ on those faces covered with vice and sins. An innocent and fearful child puts on a mask of bravery or rudeness to cover his fear. So many faces are covered with shame because their dignity has been trampled.

Grant me Lord, to discover your true face despite the thick masks that hide it and to be willing to come to your aid to offer a handkerchief to wipe the tears of suffering even if it is in silence. But also imprint your face in my heart and in my life, so that like Saint Paul, I can say that it is not I who lives, but you, who lives in me.

## **VII**

# **JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME**

*“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’*

*Jesus answered ‘ I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’*

*Matthew. 18:21-22*

Man is the the only animal that stumbles over the same stone twice and we do not learn from past mistakes. The horrors of the World Wars, the Atomic Bombs, the crimes of genocide, the tyrannies, the totalitarian governments that have scandalized us with their cruelty have not changed. We continue to create absurd wars, we continue legalizing genocide, we continue to support corrupt governments, and we are part of them. But also in our own lives, after suffering the pain of a first fall, we lament and are sure we will not to fall back into the same sin again but later we do.

We know Lord that you don’t stop forgiving us, we are the ones who stop asking for forgiveness. We become accustomed to sin, oppression and slavery because it is more comfortable to adapt to the ground, even if we complain of the weight of our faults, than to decide to stand and walk responsibly.

Give us Lord the strength to overcome ourselves, the courage to make good decisions and free us from slavery. Give us the determination to keep walking the only way that lead us to victory, even if we end up nailed to the cross we carry. And you Lord, don’t stop forgiving us, even if we stop asking for your forgiveness.

## **VIII**

# JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

*Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children”*

*Luke 23,28*

There is no real man that can resist the tears of a woman. There is no man worthy for a woman to cry for. If there was, he would not make her cry.

What might be considered woman’s weakness, is really a virtue, since they are capable of sensitizing themselves and feeling sorry for the suffering of others. Jesus, true God, but at the same time true man, does not prevent these women of Jerusalem from crying, but invites them to see the true reason why he sacrifices himself... for them and for their children. He, being innocent is loaded with our faults. We must be aware of our own faults that deserve worse punishment.

Lord, when we fall into the temptation of thinking that empathizing for the suffering of others is enough, give us the courage to be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem. Give us the ability to recognize our own limitations and sins that make us worthy of worse punishments. But at the same time, give us the serenity and strength to be able to correct them and not be the cause of tears, but the happiness of those who deal with us.

## IX

# JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

*As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another: Every one of them will be thrown down”*

*Luke 21:6*

*This is what the Lord Says: Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord*

*Jeremiah 17:5*

Our heroes collapse, the idols we admire fall. The strengths in which we put our faith turn into dust. Our friends betray us and our loved ones disappoint us. But is not just them who collapse, but us along with them and we remain on the ground defeated. We don’t want to get up, we can’t trust anyone, we don’t trust in ourselves. We are afraid of being hurt again, or betrayed, and to live without ideals. We prefer to stay on the ground, sullen and distrustful.

The constant blows of the whip, the weariness, the weakness, the weight of the cross, make you fall exhausted. You have reached the limit of strength and you cannot take a breath. The soldiers strike harder and force you to continue and despite your weakness, you overcome the pain and you draw strength to get up and go. A few more steps, a few meters more and you will reach the summit of Calvary.

Lord, let us not be comfortably defeated and without the strength to continue. May

we overcome our pain and continue to the goal without giving up, even if little by little, step by step Help us to reach the end because You are the Way, the Truth and the Life.

## X

### JESUS'S CLOTHES STRIPPED OFF

*And he said, I Heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*

*Genesis 3:10*

Natural modesty in every person leads us to safeguard our own dignity, saving our private selves to be revealed only to those who have earned our full confidence to accept us as we are. When we are stripped of that right it is humiliating and embarrassing.

The shame of Adam and Eve in their nudity came from their realization that they wanted to be like God, but they had nothing without Him. Like St Francis of Assis who discovers that his possessions are a hindrance to following Jesus, we are invited to leave everything and take our cross each day.

The most shameful nudity is when we are deprived of all dignity, when we are humiliated, when we are mocked, when our rights are violated or we are bought like livestock without our humanity.

Lord Jesus, you went through all that. You were deprived of all dignity, you were humiliated and exposed to the ridicule of all, without giving you the opportunity to cover yourself modestly with your hands.

Today, Lord, we continue to strip you of your dignity and your clothes in the night clubs where you are shown without shame, in the movies, television, magazines and the internet. But even worse, when we rob you of all authority, respect and dignity by mocking the weakest, our parents, our teachers or colleagues. Let us know how to respect and treat you worthily in every person who was created in the image and likeness of you.

## XI

### JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

*“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”. Jesus answered him,  
“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”*

*Luke 23:42-43*

Your hands were nailed to the cross by strong nails so that you could not continue caressing the children, nor continue to heal the sick, nor continue to raise the fallen. With your feet nailed to the cross, you could no longer walk to help the needy, nor to continue to bring the good news of salvation to the oppressed. It seems like you are on the cross unable to do anything.

This is how we feel before the misfortune of others and do not believe we have the

means, the power or the strength to help them. We too feel hindered and useless. However, You, on the cross, physically impeded from moving did so many things: forgave those who crucified you, gave us your mother as our mother, saved the repentant thief and paid for our sins with your blood.

Lord Jesus, may your example give us the strength not to be insensitive to the needs of others, to realize that if we want, we can do it. Even if we are persecuted or are forbidden by an unjust law, or if we are lacking resources, we never give up and think we cannot. Like You, let us know that the greatest strength is faith, trust in our Divine Father and prayer.

Love conquers all.

## **XII**

# **JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*  
*John 15:13*

The greatest certainty we have at birth is knowing that sooner or later we will die. The how, we do not know. Perhaps in a moment of heroism, we would be willing to die for the Fatherland, or to save someone we love, but the difficult thing is to give up our lives each day and every moment.

Giving one's life for others is an act of love, of giving. Dying to our personal conveniences, comfort or vices and giving ourselves in service, helping, accompanying, listening, serving.

Death can be terrifying when it is not our choice. It's not that we should choose death, but that we should live until death for what we know to be true and valuable.

There are those who die day by day without actually living and there are also those who are condemned to die daily by neglect and oblivion.

You Lord, you have taught us to live and to live fully, not for this life alone, but for eternity, trusting that your Heavenly Father, who gave us life in this World will give us life with him in Eternal Glory.

We must not fear the one who takes our lives from this world, but the one who puts our eternal life at risk. "Before you die you lose your life."

Therefore, like You, we want to trust in the Lord and giver of life and say with you confidently:

*"I leave my spirit in your hands".*

## **XIII**

# **THE BODY OF JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

*"Now you can sleep and rest."*  
*Matthew 26:45*

There is no greater pain for a mother than to see the child she carried in her womb, carried lovingly in her arms and watched grow, now shattered and lifeless.

Mary, Our Mother, you accepted the great responsibility of being the Mother of Our Savior, you cared for Him, nourished Him and prepared him for us. He loves you so much that he always sought to please you and even modified his plans to make his first miracle at your request in Cana of Galilee. There you introduced him and his mission to all of us when you told us: "Do what He tells you" (John 2, 5).

Jesus told us so many things. He did so many things and worked so hard, that now is the time for him to rest. He deserves it. He's dead tired.

But ... Wait! How is he being returned to you? He has been taken down from the cross and you, Mary, receive his broken body in your arms. He is in your arms like when He was a child and you sang to him to sleep. Now he sleeps and the world is in chaos. We have done the impossible ... We have killed God!

The world without God is cruel, violent and confused. If evil reigns, there is no hope. Death reigns! There is no faith!

But you, full of pain, trusted. Your faith is what made you say to the angel at the Annunciation "Let it be done to me according to your words". Even when your husband Joseph was worried about where you would give birth to your child, you trusted in God. Even with your dead son in your lap, you still trusted in him. Perhaps you were the only one who still did.

Mary, Our Mother, give us the strength in our faith that we may follow in your example and trust in and follow Jesus as you did.

## **XIV**

# **JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB**

*Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated opposite the tomb.*

*Matthew 27:59-61*

It's all over. He is dead and buried. There is nothing more to do. With his death, all our hopes, dreams and illusions are buried and forgotten. Resignation. What else can be done?...

**LIVE!**

That's what you can do! That is what we must do! ... Live!

If we resign ourselves, we are overcome. If we do not fight, we are lost.

We cannot forget his teachings; he came that we may have life and life in abundance.

Jesus is dead so that we may live. He has paid the price of blood to save us from our own death. He has given his life for us to live.

Let us not bury his teachings and with them our hope.

We have to live and live in plenty every day.

# XV

## RESURRECTION OF JESUS!

*Jesus said to them, "come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared asked him, "Who are you? They knew it was the Lord  
John 21:12*

Mary Magdalene saw you risen and did not recognize you. She thought you were the gardener. Two of your disciples walked with you for seven miles and did not recognize you. Sometime later, the Apostles ate breakfast with you on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias and did not dare to ask who you were, for they knew that it was you, Our Lord.

After your resurrection, no one recognizes you. Is it because the blows you received, the lashes and the crucifixion left you deformed and disfigured? Or was it because once Resurrected your appearance was fully Divine and Celestial?

I believe, Lord, that you want to be recognized alive, in every gardener, walker, fisherman, worker, prostitute, indigent, criminal, nun, political leader, priest, bricklayer and in each one of our brothers and sisters. Who are you? I recognize you alive in each one of these. But how nice it would be if others could recognize you alive in me! And he could say as Saint Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:20).

Two men in bright clothes told the brave women who had come to anoint your body and found the empty tomb: "Why seek the living among the dead? He is not here, for he is risen!" (24.5). Lord, let us not seek you in cold images made by man that remind us of your love, but distract our attention, to find you alive at our side. Give us the ability to love you in every human being, even if your face deformed by pain, vice, disease or sin, making it difficult to recognize you. Teach us to love you fully in others, without asking questions, knowing that you are you. Amen.



