

 **Ekstremalna**
Droga Krzyżowa

The way of forgiveness

From hurt to healing



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The Way of the Cross is the way of wounds. Jesus knew this all too well, which is why He prayed *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me”* (Luke 22:42). None of us want to be hurt or wounded. Jesus didn’t want this either. Through His prayer, He pulled together all His inner strength so as to help Him open up to the world that He was so afraid of; *“Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine”* (Luke 22:42). Being hurt or wounded means suffering pain, and everyone dreams of a perfect world where there is no pain or evil. Everyone longs for that perfect love where relationships are imbued with pure goodness and tenderness. Unfortunately, such a world does not exist. Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane is a struggle to accept this brutal reality.

For some strange reason, people have a propensity for hurting others. And although Jesus did nothing wrong to anyone, He still came across many people who wanted to hurt him. Jesus understood his mission: to go on the way of the cross, to take on hurt, and to face up to pain. His mission was to experience evil but without it infecting him: *“When they reached the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the two criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.’”* (Luke 23:33-34). This is the whole point of the way of the cross: to experience evil, hurt and pain but not allow oneself to get infected by evil! Despite the pain, not to let it change you for the worse. We can’t stop other people from doing evil, but we can save ourselves.

I’d like to invite you to live out and experience the Extreme Way of the Cross. This time, our wounds and hurts will be at the centre of our deliberations. It goes without saying that every one of us has been hurt and wounded in the past. The fact that every one of us will get hurt and wounded in the future, that we will experience pain and meet bad people is as sure as certain. It’s difficult to understand and come to terms with this. This is the world we live in. Thus, life is not about avoiding pain and being hurt or wounded because this simply is not possible. The point is for me not to allow myself to be infected by evil, for me not to be overcome by evil thoughts, and for me not to turn into a walking disaster fate’s victim filled with self-pity who can’t live a normal life because of past hurts and wounds. The whole point is for me to do no wrong, for me to have a healthy mind and spirit. This is about me.

The way of forgiveness means working on my own heart. We can’t avoid suffering but we can still continue to love. The reflections that will accompany you on your way are to help you discover ways of working through your hurts and wounds. One night is not enough to change everything. This night may, however, help you enter the path of forgiveness. This may become an initiation into a true healing process. This may be a new beginning of your life. I’d like to welcome every one of you and invite you to set out on the path of inner transformation.

Rev. Jacek WIOSNA Stryczek



Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death

So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him (Matthew 27:17-18).

Jesus had enemies, people who wanted to hurt him or maybe even had an internal compulsion to do so. The High Priests were also among them. Their task was to serve God but they actually also wanted to make some money on it. The Jesus who overturned bankers' tables in the temple (see John 2:13-25) is impacting their 'business activities'. Jews were also prohibited from worshipping idols or other gods. Roman coins bore the image of Caesar who received divine worship. Such coins could not be used in the temple as a means of payment for sacrificial animals, for instance. Bankers had to exchange the Roman coins with the idolatrous image into temple coins. These exchange bureaus were managed by the High Priests who made a profit on the exchange rate differences. When Jesus kicked up a fuss at the temple, He was fully aware of the fact that He was putting himself in jeopardy. Nevertheless, He put God's work first, before His own life. He was fighting for ideals in the temple.

This mechanism repeats itself. Some people who only look out for themselves are ready to hurt and wound others. Their own well-being and profit grow to such dimensions for them that they obscure the good of others and take away their sensitivity.

Jesus was sentenced to death. There were people who felt the need to hurt Him. Let's not delude ourselves! Every one of us, even unknowingly, provokes our enemies to act. It's a fact. What we should be driven by, however, is to never become enemies of other people, for us not to become people who do evil. After all, if this happened to the High Priests, this may very well also happen to us.

Jesus, help me not to give in to the temptation to hurt others and for my concern for my person gains to not change me into a bad person.

Station 2: Jesus carries his cross

For the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost (Luke 19:10).

The Cross in the Gospel has a precise function. Jesus came to save sinners, in other words, to save bad people. The salvation of a sinner means offering help to a bad person to make them good. The Gospel, that is, the Good News, is the message that a bad person can become good.



They can be converted. The Good News may be good for us once we discover that we can change for the better. That is why we are setting off on the Extreme Way of the Cross to change our lives for the better, to be converted.

It is also Good News for the bad people we meet in our lives. They too can change, give up evil, and choose to do good. Sometimes they need some help to do this. And this help is the Cross. By helping a sinner, a bad person to change, we are within reach of their evil. They can change for the better but they can also attack you. There were two villains hanging alongside Jesus—one of them converted yet the other one continued blaspheming.

Every one of us, as Jesus' disciples, has been given a mission to save sinners, helping bad people become good. However, unfortunately this is often a painful process. One can get badly hurt and even lose one's life. Just like Jesus on the Cross. And yet... What would this world be like if bad people ruled it? If there were no idealists who help the bad people become good? If we weren't there? Maybe you are now thinking about someone you know who has lost their way and started doing bad things? Think about how you can help them... become good again.

Jesus, give me the courage of the Cross. Lead and direct me so that I can help bad people become good again. Help me become a good person myself.

Station 3: Jesus falls the first time

Then Peter went up to him and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.' (Matthew 18:21-22).

We can be absolutely certain that if we try changing this world for the better, we will suffer many failures along the way and experience numerous falls. If we intend to do any good, we will certainly come up against countless difficulties. However, the problem is not failure—the problem is the hurt that comes after failure. The temptation to give up and look at the world through the distorted looking glass of failure...

There are definitely people for whom everything goes well and who have never failed, but I personally don't know any. Writing these reflections, I ponder upon the countless failures that I myself have suffered. What makes me different is that after my ninety-ninth failure, I give it a hundredth try. Failure doesn't mean that we can't do something. It simply give us feedback on approaching it the right way, on doing things differently. Failure broadens our perception of the world. Thanks to failures, we not only discover how we can succeed but also find out what we should avoid.



What would have happened if Jesus had given up after his first fall? This is hard to guess but probably nothing good. He would have just died. On the path of forgiveness, we have to deal with our failures. Work them out and transform them into more insightful knowledge of the world, into wisdom, and not into discouragement. Failure is nothing, however giving in to discouragement and getting in a rut are big problems.

Jesus, I'm worried and hurt by my failures. Help me learn from my mistakes.

Station 4: Jesus meets His Mother

However, I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of man will suffer similarly at their hands. (Matthew 17:12).

Jesus is one great wound on his Way of the Cross. How must have his mother's heart bled then?! If we reduce this meeting only to this, we would be taking the path to insanity. After all, how can we talk of compassion if something so very bad is happening? With compassion, passively sharing this experience? How can you bear the pain of seeing a loved one hurt? This is pure madness!

Let's look at this meeting differently. Mary gives birth to Jesus. She knows that she has an enormous task to do. She has a mission to which not only her Son, but also she herself must devote her life. It's obvious that this will be very difficult. Adversities will undoubtedly appear, and enemies too. Mary, as a good mother, has to bring Jesus up so that He can face all challenges. Deal with both good and bad people. And just as she gave birth to him in pain, so too she has to teach him how to deal with pain and suffering. Can we prepare anyone for life without helping them come to terms with suffering? A certain parallel comes to mind: over time, a mother turns the pain of giving birth into the joy of motherhood, participation in the development of her child ... Pain and suffering appear at the beginning of our lives. Is it reasonable then to assume that it will hurt just once and then everything will only be okay?

Dear parents, children should be brought up so that they are prepared for real life. Life will hurt! Dear Participants of the Extreme Way of the Cross, you should be brought up to face real life. Train yourself to cope with pain, to cope with suffering. You should put yourself in difficult situations over and over again, where it will hurt, so that you can become accustomed to this experience. If you fail to do this, even the slightest pain will blind you and paralyze you. The slightest suffering will lead to your breakdown.

How good it is that you are now on the Extreme Way of the Cross. Remember: it will hurt! But what is this pain in the context of transformation and betterment which are genuine



opportunity for you? You can become better, or first, simply become good. You can remain on this path. What about pain and suffering? Yes, they will definitely be there, too. Forgive them for coming to you. Accept them, and you will find inner peace.

Jesus, give me the courage to raise my pain and suffering threshold so that I can overcome adversity in the hour of trial.

Station 5: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His Cross

At this, Peter said to him, ‘Even if all fall away from you, I will never fall away.’ Jesus answered him, ‘In truth I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will have disowned me three times.’ (Matthew 26:33-34).

Friends in need are friends indeed. A wise adage. But why are so few of them with us when we’re in need? During these reflections, don’t think about whether you have friends who will be with you when you’re in need. Instead, think about whether you will be a good friend to your loved ones in their need. After all, you are on a way which is to transform you. You are to become a better person. Remind yourself exactly why it is that you are venturing out today in the darkness of the night, suffering these discomforts, getting tired. What can you do to change yourself for the better?

Friends leave us when we’re in need because they think about themselves. Pain and suffering make us focus on ourselves, because this hurts us. I’ve noticed a strange thing that when someone talks about their problems, fear appears in the eyes of the listener. They are not empathetic with the difficult fate of their interlocutors but are rather focused on themselves, wondering if they too are not in danger. The strength of this selfish response is great. I will say more: despite engaging in spiritual training all my life, I too get these thoughts in these situations—Will I too get hurt? This is a very natural reaction.

Let’s recall the situation where Jesus was arrested and his friends and disciples ran off. They saw what was happening to Jesus yet they themselves didn’t want to be in such a situation. Even Peter, Jesus’ closest friend, was a coward. Such is the survival instinct. But is this always so? Are we doomed by our nature to be cowards? Not really. With time, by undertaking spiritual endeavours, the apostles prepared themselves for martyrdom. And they did not disappoint when their final test came. Earlier, living out their mission, they had become accustomed to difficulties, failures, pain, and suffering. They were maturing.

That’s the way it is. It is the ones who are immature in their friendship that stay as



cowards. The High Priests are examples of immaturity. They focused their thoughts on their personal gains. They only cared for themselves, so they started doing bad things: sending soldiers to capture Jesus, and stirring up the crowd. The High Priests became bad people.

We can and should be trained in friendships—in putting ideals above our own gains, patiently enduring pain and suffering, rather than running away from them as this is futile. We can live with them. By running away from our problems, however, friendship is impossible, making us incapable of loving.

May we be true friends to our friends when they are in need.

Jesus, be with me so that I never let my friends down.

Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who had come with her, Jesus was greatly distressed, and with a profound sigh he said, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. (John 11:33-35).

Pain and suffering are inevitable. However, when we find ourselves in such a situation, it is good to have someone who is with us when you are struggling to cope with them. Reflections on Veronica's gesture should take us in two directions. First of all, towards sensitivity, towards our own attempts of becoming sensitive and delicate, as we have to be gentle and compassionate when we want to be with someone who is hurting. We can't simply barge into another person's life giving them good advice, imposing our own solutions, stigmatizing and making remarks like "I told you so!"

I must admit that when things were really hard for me, those who helped me the most were those who were simply with me, by my side. We would spend time together. They couldn't solve my problems, which were too difficult for all of us. Their presence did not change much in that respect. It wasn't much better but it was good when we were together. It's like exposing wounds to the sun to make them heal faster. But the vast majority of these people had their own ideas for me. They wanted to change me by force. Whenever I opened up and decided to meet, I felt as if they were trampling on my wounds. Looking at countless similar cases of many people, it is clear just how difficult it is to be sensitive. Sensitivity is a unique characteristic.

I myself, whenever I see someone who is suffering, just try to be there for them. I don't run away, I don't pretend to not know or to not see. I turn up. I am there for them. I can't do much, but I am there: just that or as much as that.

And the second direction where reflections on Veronica's gesture take us, is to find



friends who are like her, so as not to be alone when we're in need. But how can we do this? I believe we should choose our friends wisely. But this is probably not enough. We also need a stroke of luck. Or perhaps the courage to take on difficult situations? People who train themselves daily to endure hardships and adversities are more resistant to life's adversities and struggles. You can count on them more, that's why it's worth taking the Extreme Way of the Cross with such people. It's worth experiencing something difficult together. It really is worth taking on serious challenges together. To win but also to lose.

Who knows if Veronica will appear in our life when things get tough? Too many people go through their tragedies alone. What can we do? Change ourselves. Open up to God and to other people.

Jesus, please make me sensitive so that those close to me will never have to suffer alone.

Station 7: Jesus falls the second time

And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him. (Luke 24:15-16).

The second fall is a kind of symbol of the problems and adversities that appear all the time. Despite subsequent attempts, they are insurmountable barriers. They discourage. How can we be hurt by ordinary, everyday, and recurring problems! By life, which becomes a rut, a repetitive, tragic cycle of misfortunes of an unbearably mundane existence?

How many people are suffering because of this! Maybe you too are among them? Maybe you have set out on the Extreme Way of the Cross today to finally break free from the vicious circle of a miserable existence? If so, you are very right to do so. You don't have to continue living as you have been so far. You are not doomed to eternal failure.

Now I am calling on you to wake up! If you are a prisoner, you are a prisoner of yourself. Just like the disciples who were on their way to Emmaus but were as if blind (see Luke 24:16).

You may think that you are forced to live a life you don't want to live by the reality and people surrounding you. If this is the case, this is only because you yourself have given in to this, that you are a coward, and you don't have the courage to change.

Surely you can exert a tremendous impact on your own life! You can start off on the wrong or the right foot. You can have breakfast or not. You can choose the way to work or school by going more to the right or more to the left. A small change may initiate a major change. What's important is not to carry on doing things the way you have been so far because these patterns are just in our mind. Even if we're not happy with our own life, we are more afraid of



the unknown. We choose the tragedy of everyday life so as not to risk encountering something different.

Fortunately, you have found yourself on the Extreme Way of the Cross. Things are different. You've behaved differently than usual. This is a breakthrough. This may be a good start. Now, in the still of the night, instead of sleeping in the comfort of your own bed, you've taken on a challenge. Instead of getting a rest, you're exposing yourself to hardships and struggles. Great! Perhaps you will decide to do this again tomorrow? You will take yet another, different step.

I've been putting the method I've just described to you into practice for many years. I simply can't imagine that my life could still look the same. Why should it? I know how it is, but I don't know how it could be. At least I want to try. Maybe you too have this desire? Your life is in your hands.

Jesus, I want to change. Be with me!

Station 8: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Seek good and not evil so that you may survive, and the Lord, the God of hosts, be with you as you claim he is. (Amos 5:14)

You are who you meet. If you spend your time with grumblers, you yourself will become a grumbler. If you like to complain and spend your time with people who complain, you will always feel bad about life.

This is the terrible truth about life. People who complain look for similar companions. People who they can share their problems with. In practice, however, one complainer never listens to another complainer. The complainer only seeks confirmation from their listener that, by complaining, they are indeed on the right track. Because nothing will work out. It just can't. The whole world is against them. And if you succeed, then you must have done some bad things along the way. Good people are trapped. They can't do anything. They are condemned to being passive. For survival. They carry the cross. The world as seen by complainers truly is terrifying. It is dominated by the evil of defeat. Emptiness. Pointlessness.

The Cross in Jesus' teaching means that the sinner becomes a good person. The Cross means a change for the better. We Christians, disciples of Jesus, specialize in changing for the better. In bringing good out of evil. That is why we, Jesus' disciples, don't complain. We see how it is, we see evil, we understand that there are bad people in the world, but we intend to change whatever we can for the better. This is thanks to our idealism. We look for good and not for evil.



We look for change, not a justification of passivity. We transcend ourselves, instead of getting stuck. We are idealists. Are you with us?

Jesus, I don't want to complain. Now, following the Extreme Way of the Cross, I don't want to complain either. I want to look for good and not for evil.

Station 9: Jesus falls a third time

The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will (John 10:17-18).

I believe that every parent should someday have a talk with their child and say, “Dear child, only two things are certain in your life - that you will die and that you will meet bad people. Prosperity, success, friendship, and love may happen. It’s good when you experience them but don’t take them for granted. Dear child, get ready for real life!”

Imagine a situation where a teenager learns that he or she has cancer and that they will soon die. What can they do about it? Were they ready for this? Did they know they would die?

We have a mechanism that makes us push back the fact of our mortality into our subconscious. We know this, but we certainly don’t want to acknowledge this. We see this in films and in games. We attend funerals from time to time. Most of us, however, once we are faced with disease and the spectre of imminent death, don’t know what to do with this fact.

Is death a tragedy for a teenager? I don’t know. It certainly must be in a world where we pretend that there is no death. However, every one of us is mortal. We can die any day, get killed in an accident. We have no guarantee of living, only the certainty of death.

Often, all too often in fact, people are taken aback by death. Great tragedies occur: a sick child, premature death, an incurable disease. This is difficult, extremely difficult. But it is much more difficult for people who pretend that death doesn’t apply to them. The situation is very similar when we meet bad people, people who would want to hurt us. We are usually surprised by this, yet millions of people still experience this. This is the case now and this is what it has always been like.

Hence, we should meditate on our own mortality. I believe that the fact that I’m alive is more of a coincidence. Every morning I wake up surprised that I’m still alive. After all, when I go to bed I can never be sure that I will get up the next morning.

The awareness of one’s own mortality as well as the fact that there are bad people around us makes life so much easier. There are no disappointments. This offers a chance to



undertake effective self-defence. An opportunity to win life. There is no equality in how long our lives will last. But there is absolute democracy in the fact that everyone can win their life. Every single person can win their life. So why deceive ourselves pretending that misfortunes will not happen to us? They do and will.

I hope that this meditation will bring you peace and help you maintain a healthy get some distance from yourself. You won't be the first to die. You won't be the first to be hurt by someone. But you can win your own life!

Jesus, help me win my life!

Station 10: Jesus' clothes are taken away

He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' he asked, and the answer came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.' (Acts of the Apostles 9:4-5).

Wounds hurt the most when someone touches or pokes them. Not only do we have a wound and it hurts, but there is someone else poking it. Barging into our wounded life. Oblivious of our pain, and even making it worse. I think every one of us can recall such situations from our own life. I would say this is just life...

This is usually the case when we part with someone particularly dear to us. The parting itself is difficult. And there is this closeness that puts us within reach, making us vulnerable to getting hurt. Very often hurting each other.

Jesus stripped of his clothes—this Station should be meditated on by people who are parting, were parting, or will be parting their own separate ways. Sometimes we read about a couple who broke up in style, meaning that they didn't spread things about each other's weaknesses and they didn't wash their dirty linen in public. But this is usually not the case. Why not?

Putting wounds and closeness together means that it hurts a lot. And pain changes the way the world is perceived. Then, the whole world is pain because all that we feel is pain. People who give in to the pressure of pain feel nothing else apart from it. They lose their sensitivity and attentiveness. They become malicious and cruel. They also start looking for someone to blame for their pain. They accuse each other, and even become revengeful. But the truth is that destruction brought about by pain doesn't bring any relief. Revenge is sweet only in TV series. In reality, it superimposes two types of evil: the evil of pain and the evil done to another person.

What I usually see in such breakups is a kind of pursuit for popularity. Who else can I tell



about my misfortunes, before whom else can I accuse them? How else can I hurt them? However, I have not yet met anyone who would find relief on this path. All they achieve is that they themselves become a badperson.

I think that if someone is hurting, instead of looking for the guilty party, it's best that they start tending to their own well-being. Healing. It's best that they to take care of their own heart rather than looking for someone to blame. The temptation to let pain guide you is there and it's very strong, but it changes people into monsters.

Jesus, save me, don't let me not say bad things about others.

Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Examine yourself before judgement comes, and on the day of visitation you will be acquitted. Humble yourself before you fall ill, repent as soon as the sin is committed. (Ecclesiasticus/Sirach 18:20-21).

Hurts and wounds are like a prison: we're hurting all over. Whatever I do, I still manage to come across something that hurts my wounds. Jesus was imprisoned on the Cross, but He was moving toward forgiveness: "*Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.*" (Luke 23:34). A person who doesn't work on their ability to forgive, imprisons themselves in the net of their own wounds. The worst thing in the life of a person who can't forgive is that they think everyone's in the same boat, that everyone lives with this pain, that this is the truth about the world, while in fact they are the ones who have made themselves so miserable and unhappy.

How to embark on the process of forgiveness? By not by looking for others to blame as this will not change anything. Forgiveness has only one name: transforming what is bad into something good. So if you get a bad grade at school, don't accuse the teacher but change the way you study. If you were betrayed, try to forge a more mature relationship with another person. If someone close to you has passed away, look for friends with whom you can make even better use of the scraps of time that have been given to you. Every time we ask ourselves about what direction my life is heading in, the good direction, we are starting to bring about the process of forgiveness. What lessons can I learn from this wound, how can I be smarter, how can I love more, be more confident at winning?

It's obvious that as long as we feel the pain and loss resulting from being hurt, we will not feel well. Once we see the chance of things getting better, our hope and optimism will win.

Forgiveness is true art. We are actually born with the tendency to put the blame on others but we can change this by choosing to continually work on yourselves. After all, we can't



change the world around us but we can change ourselves.

A person who can forgive goes through life becoming a better person all the time. Perhaps life feeds them with evil but they digest it, transform it, and turn it into something good.

Christians, disciples of Christ, are true evil-guzzlers. Whatever happens to us, we continue to become better persons.

Jesus, help me turn evil into good and overcome evil with good.

Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross

For many are invited but not all are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

Death is a paradox of life. If we are to die anyway what is the point of trying? Perhaps this is the temptation of suicide victims: what is the point of trying? We will all die anyway. Jesus didn't live to die, but died to rise from the dead. He says, *No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own free will* (see John 10:17-18). He turns the inevitability of death into a choice. What does it mean?

More or less that our life is not about how successful we are. It's more about who we become. Our life is a series of subsequent decisions that shape us, through which it is as though we are being created. And it matters not if we are rich or poor, but what does matter is whether we are valuable. What matters is not what we have but who we are.

I like to say that God is good at choosing His friends for all eternity. Every single day of our life is a chance to become somebody. A chance for development. Not of what we know but who you are.

Jesus did not allow other people to take His life away from Him. He decided to lay it down of His own accord. This was the next stage in His process of becoming Somebody. One could say that the Resurrection is about becoming somebody. The resurrection is not the resurrection of your body, of atoms of which we are made, but it is the natural continuity of who we have become. This is our value resulting from the decisions that have shaped our life.

That is why it's not so important whether we win or lose. What is important is that we emerge victorious from each experience, that we change for the better.

There is no greater value in life than WHO WE HAVE BECOME.

What about love? Love stems from who we are. A great love is the work of great people. If someone is of great stature, their love will be exceptional too. But if they are a miserable, lost person, then they will be destroying others through the very fact that they are destroying themselves in their relationships and in love.



Jesus, I want to grow. I want to become Somebody. Stay with me.

Station 13: The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross

So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are lost!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you who have so little faith?' And then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:25-26).

The end of hope is one of the most terrible experiences that can happen to us. At times like these we feel that all that is left is the past and the painful present—that there is no future. This pain affects everyone. When we feel hopeless, it seems to us that we are the only ones to be experiencing this. Lack of hope means terrible loneliness. In practice, however, it happens to a lot of people, time and time again.

It really is not worth judging people by appearances. Smiling, well-dressed, loaded—well, then they must be doing well. Nothing could be more deceptive. Maybe this person does indeed have everything but they may very well be experiencing a terrifying emptiness? Perhaps that is how we are perceived by others? We were at the end of our tether, lost and wounded, howling in pain, yet the people around us may have understood nothing of this. Hopeless.

What can we do about this? I'm just thinking to myself, that it is quite probable that most of the people who are now walking the Extreme Way of the Cross have this very problem. Or at least they certainly must have had it, or will have to face it someday. So what can we do about this?

There is only one way and it's completely unintuitive. This is the moment where we have to stop. Pain often makes us run away from ourselves. This is when we have to stop and not reach for things that will stifle our hurt and pain. We have to get used to this. And—what is key—to abandon and entrust everything to God in a frenzied, fervent prayer, holding our misfortunes in your hands, offering them to God.

The worst thing then is the wait. Sometimes we have to wait, regardless. Usually, the longer it lasts, the more a person runs away from their pain. And then hope re-emerges. This is the story of Elijah:

Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before Yahweh.' For at that moment Yahweh was going by. A mighty hurricane split the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But Yahweh was not in the hurricane. And after the hurricane, an earthquake. But Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, fire. But Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a light murmuring sound. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face



with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him, which said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' (1 Kings 19:11-13).

And now you open up to the silence where you can meet God and, with Him, hope... hope, meaning the future.

I know that this idea of coping with emptiness is completely unintuitive. We rather feel the need to escape from suffering, just like Elijah who hid in a cave, running away from those who wanted to kill him. And yet, through trial and error, I discovered that this is the only thing that works: stopping in your tracks. Enduring the pain and attempting to look at what is happening around us. Offering this up to God. The powerful authority backs this up as Elijah is considered one of the greatest mystics of all times. That is how he went through this.

Jesus, I want to look for my future, look for hope with you.

Station 14: Jesus is laid in the tomb

They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts stirring in your hearts? See by my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and his feet (Luke 24:36-40).

You are approaching the end of your Extreme Way of the Cross. It's time to sum up this night trip, regardless of whether you are in pain or if you are a hero used to strenuous effort.

Jesus was laid into the tomb as if it were the end. But this was only the beginning. The course of the whole world was shortly to change. The dead rose from their graves, the apostles went to the ends of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. From the grave to the ends of the world they were to spread the Good News: *Overcome evil with good!* (see Romans 12:21). Save sinners, help them become good people. But above all, save yourself.

After the Resurrection, Jesus goes through the walls of the Upper Room. The first time He does this, St Thomas is not among the apostles:

So the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' (John 20:25).

And what was Jesus' reaction to this?

Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he



spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.' (John 20:26-27).

Eureka! The Risen One has wounds. But He is not afraid of being hurt when someone puts their finger or hand in them. Surely Jesus could rise from the dead completely in tact and complete. It seems that, despite this, He must consider perfection as involving being hurt. It is love that allows our wounds and hurts to be healed. If you acknowledge that the Risen Jesus is the most perfect form of a human being, then hurt and healing are an intrinsic part of this perfection.

So, head up, all will be well. Are you hurting all over today? Can you see the wounds and hurts inside you? Do you have problems forgiving? Your fate is similar to Jesus' life. Jesus changed all this evil into a greater good. He wasn't discouraged.

Just think, should not have Jesus automatically avoided Thomas who wanted to put his fingers into his wounds? He very well should have, to protect Himself. And yet, He didn't. Our wounds and hurts should not lead to us losing our faith. They shouldn't lead to not opening up to love or friendship. Hurts are normal on the way to building maturity, building greatness.

That's why I'm telling you now: Become a great person despite your tiredness and pain!
Amen.

May the Lord bless you! May you find healing! And may you grow to a true, great love!
May the Lord see you as such a cool person that He may wish to spend all eternity with you.

Amen. Alleluia!

Jesus, help me become a cool person. Amen. Alleluia!