

The way of reconciliation

The art of fostering relationships

The Word became flesh, he lived among us (John 1:14)

When the Son of God was living among us, he became immediately involved in various relationships. He didn't just appear and do His thing i.e. preach the Gospel, heal, and finally die and come back to life. He also had a family, both immediate and extended, neighbours, friends... As a child He played with His peers, and as a teenager He probably had many adventures with them. He travelled. He had enemies. He became a carpenter - He worked with some people and sold His products to others. He bought food and many other services and things He needed. He had friends and acquaintances. He lived among us - it actually meant entering a very complex system of interpersonal relationships. Relationships - closer and more distant ones. Fascinations and betrayals. People who helped Him but also those who wanted to destroy Him. He went through everything we experience nowadays.

I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you. (John 13:34).

"Loving one another" means that we should become expert at relationships which mean interactions with others. Life is the art of fostering relationships. It may be said that Jesus first learnt this art when He was growing up, encountering new situations every day. Then He taught the art of forging relationships. He created the commandment to love one another. Importantly, God is Trinity, meaning Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity stands for a relationship and is the source of the commandment to love one another. As in heaven, so also on earth.

When talking about relationships, there are three aspects to take into account:

Who one person is and how they are experiencing a relationship.

Who the other person is and how they are experiencing this relationship.

What is really going on between them.

Yes, there are three dimensions to a relationship: what one person is going through, what the other is going through, and what is really happening. It is because we take things personally that most misunderstandings and problems occur. Obviously, sometimes someone does something wrong. Most of the time, however, relationships are ruled by interpretations, emotions, and taking things personally, which is why keeping a perspective on your own emotions helps in building relationships. Internal chaos, on the other hand, fosters conflicts, misunderstandings and divisions.

Reconciliation is part of the art of building relationships. You must learn how to do it. You must practice it. Reconciliation is primarily about working on yourself, and only secondly on the relationship itself. Messy people also have messy relationships.

Reconciliation is not the same as forgiveness. Forgiveness is connected with hurting: something bad has happened to me, I feel hurt as a result and I suffer. While reason demands that you find the person who caused the pain, forgiveness is actually a process of healing. Imagine that someone broke their arm. They don't go chasing after whoever pushed them so that they fell down but they instead rather look for a doctor who can attend to the fracture. A wound hurts but it will heal, and that is forgiveness. Jesus tells us to forgive as many as seventy-seven times (cf. Matthew 18:22), which actually means we should heal all wounds as soon as possible.

What is reconciliation? A natural element of a relationship. Disagreements always appear and divide us. Then, there are also evil deeds which cause destruction and damage. But you can't run away from everyone in order to live in your own world. The very fact that there are so many different relationships means that you must work on them. Misunderstandings and overinterpretations are very common. Although everything is usually in the head, it must nevertheless be worked through. Despite the fact that nothing wrong has actually happened, someone simply thought and interpreted the events their own way, in practice it blocks, hurts and separates people.

There are also real wrongs that need to be fixed.

Like in the examination of conscience:

Repentance for sins, that is, noticing evil in what you do.

A resolve not to sin again, i.e. building a recovery plan.

Atonement to God and your neighbour, that is making amends for what has been destroyed.

If evil has been actually committed, we should expect it from ourselves and from the perpetrator. Otherwise, reconciliation is not possible. You may be kind to the other person internally, but you should keep away from them.

It is reconciliation understood as an element of the art of building relationships, that we will take a look at in this year's EWC. Fourteen Stations of the Cross provide an opportunity to rethink your skills and understanding of the art of building relationships.

In a moment, Jesus' wisdom about building relationships will be inscribed into the stations of the Cross. And you should open up to the unknown. In these reflections, I use stories mostly told by women, because women naturally talk more about it. However, there should be a balance, so let this be an example and an encouragement for the guys. For everyone.

The EWC rules:

1. EWC means walking 40 km at night, alone or deeply focused on what you are doing.
2. There are also 30-km routes with appropriate elevation gains.
3. We encourage you to make sacrifices, but of course you may decide to return home without completing the whole route. We respect every person who takes up the EWC challenge.
4. There are many things people do to pamper themselves. EWC is completely the opposite: its aim is not to pamper, but to make demands. It is not on human scale but it helps people overcome their own limitations.
5. We require your full focus while you are on route. We say a firm "no" to chatting, picnics and having fun on EWC.
6. The purpose of taking up the EWC challenge is to change for the better. The current EWC slogan is "Walk 40 km at night to become a beautiful person".

7. EWC is not only measured by the effort made - we expect it to bear fruit in the form of a change for the better. A beautiful person is someone who it is easier to live with.

8. We encourage you to take up the challenge that Jesus presented to us: *Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.* (Matthew 16:25)

Rev. father Jacek WIOSNA Stryczek and the EWC team

First station: Jesus is condemned to death

'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the standard you use will be the standard used for you. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own?' (Matthew 7:1-3)

Jesus was judged. Why? Because people... because we give ourselves the right to judge others, to decide about their life and death. Was Jesus judged fairly? It seems that one argument was enough to condemn Him. Any random argument, it didn't matter what it was. However, no mention was made of His whole life, there was no desire to understand His words and deeds. There was no analysis of the good fruits of His actions. One argument was all that was needed: He crossed the boundaries which existed in their head. He was different. Maybe this was the reason why the accusers felt threatened, why they thought they could lose something?

It seems that giving yourself the right to judge others is the root of all conflicts, and of misdeeds to the other person; at first you somehow don't like a someone – they are not what you think they should be. If so, they must be bad. If they are bad, you should be afraid of them, or maybe just eliminate them? Get rid of them?

As a result of the judgment that you pass in your mind and of the fact that you see the other as a bad person, you feel entitled to destroy them in accordance with your sense of justice (a twisted one). It justifies evil.

This is what the judgment of Jesus was like. It had nothing to do with truth; it only entailed fear of the other which is therefore threatening.

The problem is that someone gives themselves the right to judge people. Such a person has the potential to do evil.

The reflections on the first station are over. You should now take a look at yourself. If you hear and see yourself in situations when you judges others, if you are angry at a specific person, if you give yourself the right to judge and administer justice...

You should start this Extreme Way of the Cross by judging yourself.

Jesus, I want to discover goodness and beauty in people. I want to understand them. Help me not to judge them, but to look for goodness in them.

Second station: Jesus carries His cross

Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves. (Matthew 10:16)

A shocking but true story of anger, inflicting pain, love of enemies and finally of reconciliation.

The early 1990s. Anna and Krzysztof are in a long-distance relationship. He works in Germany, she looks after her son and herself. They are expecting a second child. They rarely see each other, but his work in Germany means that they can afford a house. Their neighbours think they are lucky: they have a garden, wall panelling at home, and a car - a Polish baby Fiat. To the outside world, they are wealthy and this makes people jealous. Anna begins to receive anonymous letters with threats that the house has been built without permission, that the person will report everything... After some time, she discovers that the author of the letters is her brother-in-law, who lives next door. Her sister's husband!

She meets him and confronts him. He first denies everything, and then - in a fit of anger - he pushes her against the wall and starts choking her. His sister-in-law! And a pregnant woman at that! The whole situation affects her health and that of her son. But Anna has a big soft heart. She stops her husband, who, after returning from Germany, wants to kill his brother-in-law. She forgives. Gradually, they start saying hello to each other again over the fence, then they start talking and meeting. 25 years later, Krzysztof dies of cancer. Anna becomes a widow with a big house and garden that need a man's helping hand. The bully from the past now mows her grass, repairs the leaking tap, unloads coal into the basement. Three of her other brothers-in-law live in the neighbourhood, but none of them show that much willingness and commitment. Anna frequently talks about her brother-in-law, emphasizing the support that he provides after her husband's death.

Conclusions: a grandmother once said to her grandchildren "Whoever throws a stone at you, give them bread in return." Kindness pays off, though not immediately. Probably in life you will come across many people who will hurt you. You can treat it as an evangelical cross: endure evil to give others a chance to become good, not thoughtlessly, but cleverly, so that whoever is a bad person today may become good in the future.

Jesus, give me the courage of the cross. Guide me to help bad people become good. Help me become a good person.

Third station: Jesus falls the first time

'Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will come forward against their parents and have them put to death. You will be universally hated on account of my name; but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:21-22)

A blow from the immediate family? From the people you know, respect and even like? This is what Jesus said, and it really does happen. Here is an example:

“When I got married, we didn't have our own place to live and my godmother came up with an offer that we should move in with her. She was living alone, in a house with a separate apartment upstairs, in a big city. Such a move is an opportunity for young people who are starting to become independent. However, I didn't want to accept. I knew that my aunt was difficult and, most of all, that she often lied. But she insisted, she promised "heaven on earth," and we eventually agreed. It turned out that our fears were not unfounded. She needed us so that she could do some renovations, and she herself no longer had the strength to redo the garden in the time she wanted and the way she wanted to have it done. She organized our lives on an everyday bases. She checked up on what we did - in our absence, she would search our apartment (leaving some tell-tale signs). At first we pretended to ourselves that it wasn't that bad, but then it became unbearable. She interfered with our lives in every aspect, and we didn't have the strength to talk to her openly. For three years, we lived according to her plan but we finally decided to get a mortgage and buy an apartment in another city, so as not to have to meet her. When I told her about our intentions, she got furious. She then started calling other members of our family complaining that we were stealing from her. She changed the locks on the doors, locked the gate with a padlock. As a result, we moved out under police escort. We stopped contacting her altogether. This was a huge trauma for me. I was afraid of her. I was afraid that I would meet her and that she would do something to my children. I avoided her, for instance on All Saints Day. The whole thing was over, but the situation was bothering me. I prayed that I would be able to forgive her. I have forgiven, but I don't have the strength, the courage to see her, to be the first to contact her. I don't have the courage or the will to call her and apologize, because I feel hurt and I think she is the one who should apologize to us.

We are a happy family, but I keep asking myself how I can put an end to this thing. I'm still waiting for a call from her, something like “Why don't you visit me so that we can talk...”

An unfinished story. And what would you do in her place?

The insidious mechanism of transforming into a bad person can affect anyone who is not working on themselves and their emotions. Emotions, including bad ones, wind you up. As a result, they can take over a person and change their character. This is why people we have known for years can change so rapidly as they let themselves be dominated by negative emotions.

Conclusion: The couple did a great job in this situation. First they distanced themselves, then they worked on negative feelings, and eventually they adopted an attitude of kindness. And a get-together with the aunt? It is possible but not a must. In such situations, it is usually better to do less not more.

Jesus, give me wisdom in building relationships with my loved ones, especially with my family - wisdom that I can use in good times and in bad times.

Fourth station: Jesus meets His Mother

They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' He replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2:48-49)

Mary has a slight grudge against Jesus to say the least. Did Jesus do something wrong? A twelve-year-old boy is still a child, but from the cultural point of view he is already an adult man. Probably before visiting the temple, he underwent an adulthood initiation ritual. Jesus has the right to feel grown up. This is why in the temple he talks with adults as if they were His equals. Mary and Joseph enter the temple. And so does Jesus. They go in together, but in their mind's eye they see two very different realities. Mary and Joseph remember the first twelve years of Jesus' life, beginning with his infancy. They remember the toil, the sleepless nights, the joy when Jesus first learnt how to walk and the fear of infant diseases. They remember the excitement when He started school, and later when Jesus learnt to read and then speak in public. They are full of anxiety and pride. They closely watch who He gets to know, who He is friends with. In other words their minds are filled with His childhood.

Jesus enters the temple with the belief that He has just begun His adult life. There is no past for Him. Not now - now there is only the future. As an adult, He has the right to decide about Himself. He enters and immerses himself in His vocation on which He has pondered so much in the silence of His heart. He entered the temple and became a different person!

This is what has led to the collision of the two worlds. Who was right? They all were. This is a classic case of misunderstanding. Each side understood the situation in a different way. Mary and Joseph wanted it to continue as before, and Jesus had already started a new life.

Misunderstandings are the most common cause of conflicts because everyone sees a given situation differently. Therefore, disagreements should be resolved quickly and lovingly. All it takes is to ask the other person "How do you see it?" "Oh, and I see it this way." The existence of two different opinions on the same subject should be seen as normal, and acceptance of this state should be natural.

It is wrong when people obstinately stick to their beliefs or when they let misunderstandings hurt them.

The rule is simple: don't get overtly emotional about misunderstandings. Don't waste your life or that of your loved ones.

Mary and Joseph say their thing while Jesus says His. No one's hurt, they have arranged their further life. So it may be done.

Jesus, I am begging You for a perspective on myself and my whims. I want to understand the others rather than argue with them. I am asking for the gift of understanding.

Fifth station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross

Brothers, even if one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way. Carry each other's burdens; that is how to keep the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

Simon of Cyrene helped. An what if people don't? The ones who really ought to... Here's a sad story...

“For as long as I can remember, peace in my family was something that we enjoyed only occasionally, it was a long-awaited and rare state. I lived with my parents and grandparents for 18 years and never heard my dad talk with my grandpa. They would pass each other in the hall. They could sit at one table at dinner and never say a word to each other. The only contact they had was when they argued. They would then unload their deposits of anger and aggression. And caught between a rock and a hard place were the four of us: my brother, my mother my grandmother and I. As a child, I had learned to be watchful, to spot potential conflict situations and to defuse them. When a storm was about to start, I was ready to go to any length to save and ease difficult moments as to avoid conflict. I thought I was tough and I could stop evil, but I couldn't. The story of the relationship between dad and grandpa did not have a happy end. After many years, my dad moved out and they never met again. Now I look at those events and I can see how many things this lack of reconciliation has destroyed, how much it has influenced the life of our family. The echo of the past is still in me, but today I look at my father and grandfather differently - as at tragic characters who lacked love. I forgive them and I move on.”

A tragedy. Two people who could not reconcile, probably hurt and wounded themselves, which is why they are so unreceptive. Unreceptive to change, to transformation. Unreceptive to finding solutions. Enslaved by their experiences. Two tragic characters.

What pain must the father and his son have borne to lose sensitivity to the wrongs suffered by the other members of the household? It's not that easy to become insensitive. After all, you must stop seeing and hearing things. You must cheat yourself.

Many similar stories immerse while examining this one. In some families, there was no acceptance for emotions, for sensitivity, for weakness. Only the struggle for survival was important, passed down from generation to generation. Did fewer people have psychological problems in the past? No, it just wasn't discussed then. There was no consent to display weakness of any sort. Even if it used to be that way, it shouldn't be so now.

How to get out of this terrible situation? All you have to do is to initiate change, start working on yourself, put yourself in order. You have to stop pretending like you don't feel anything. You should manage your feelings - it is not enough to smother them.

Simon of Cyrene must have been working on himself. Instead of being afraid, caring just for himself, he helped.

Jesus, I'm ready for change. Now, on the way, I will start planning myself anew to become a better me...

Sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

So then, as long as we have the opportunity let all our actions be for the good of everybody, and especially of those who belong to the household of the faith. (Galatians 6:10)

Veronica stretched out her hands towards Jesus. She helped him. She was close by.

Closeness, however, is not so simple. Each of us is different, and we change along the way. Therefore, there is an important rule: you may have a relationship with someone, but you don't have to. Don't force anything. It's not enough for one party to will it. It's also not enough that things used to be good. You should manage your relationships. Keep up those that bear good fruit

and where there is mutual commitment. However, you'd better run away from the ones that become damaging, destructive and one-sided. Don't force anything.

Here is a true story of the art of separation.

"I started secondary school and at first I didn't know anyone there. However, I made friends with one girl straight away. In the first year, we sat in the same desk and became very good friends. We spent a lot of time together after class. After a year of friendship, I began to notice that something was wrong. I used to be a positive person, but I had less energy when I was with her. I could feel how envious she was of each better mark I got or each success I had. I think she was the so-called psychic vampire, she manipulated me so that I would concentrate on her. I had no strength to do my own things. We were going to be in the same class until the end of secondary school, so I decided that I didn't want to break up with her in an emotional way. However, I didn't know how to talk to her openly, so instead I started to see other friends more often, I would move to a different desk explaining to her that I wanted to be a little further from the blackboard. I must say however that I didn't notice any negative emotions on her part. After school, I spent less and less time with her, until our relationship naturally petered out. We didn't have a talk - she didn't seem to need it, and I didn't either. I just decided to end my toxic relationship. However, today, if we meet somewhere, we are cordial to each other and we don't go back to those times."

The girl in this story applied an important principle: you are not condemned to be with the people you know. You should meet new people and open up. You know who you know, but you don't know who else you will meet. Openness gives more freedom in relationships. Freedom, sensitivity and commitment are the three key values in building relationships.

You should rethink your relationships while you're walking. Sort them out to identify which are good and which are toxic. Or maybe you have already changed and you should look for something else? You can be in relationships, but don't force anything.

Jesus, I want to love and be loved. I'd like to enrol in your school of mutual love.

Seventh station: Jesus falls the second time

But everyone is to examine his own achievements, and then he will confine his boasting to his own achievements, not comparing them with anybody else's. Each one has his own load to carry. (Galatians 6:4-5)

Some people are lucky - they grew up in a friendly, loving environment. Others are less fortunate. However, both groups have to work on their past in order to be able to build a successful future. Negative patterns from the past can make a person a monster, or at least they can make them touchy, cranky and destructive to others, even if they don't want to be like that. Here is another true story.

"I am a firm, resourceful and tough person. I had to learn to be like that in my early childhood in order to survive in a home with an alcohol problem. Life has taught me to be tough and emotionally unavailable. There was no time at home to reflect on my emotions or feelings. I had to develop defence mechanisms in order to survive. I started my adult life emotionally wounded. I didn't know how to get in touch with myself. I never wondered what self-love meant. I made a

lot of mistakes because I got to know the world mainly by learning from them. Serious mistakes I'd made eventually landed me in therapy sessions. These were years of hard work and learning to get in touch with myself. Today I know that we must never stop working on ourselves, which I forgot at the time. I started repeating the familiar patterns in my life and was going around in circles. I made the same mistakes in relationships with people, mostly with men. At some point, after another relationship broke up, I started to think that there must be a deeper reason... I realized that I can't really love others because I don't love myself. I tried to save the whole world, and repeatedly engaged in all possible relationships to evade contact with myself, to fill the void that I had in my heart. And then, gradually, I stopped looking into my heart at all. I had no contact with my own emotions, feelings - I didn't show them outside, I carefully concealed them. I put on various masks and didn't let anyone into my heart. It was sad for me to discover the fact that I didn't love myself, that I couldn't accept my past and present, and that deep in my heart there was mainly fear and very low self-esteem. It was very difficult for me to discover the truth that in order to love others I must love myself, because I didn't know how to do it, but at the same time I wanted it very much.

I want to love and be loved, therefore I'm trying to learn to love myself, to reconcile with myself, to forgive myself for my mistakes and failures and to look at myself with understanding and patience. I know that only reconciliation with myself and a journey into my soul will make me happy regardless of the reality that surrounds me. I'm learning how to relate to myself. "

In this story, the phrases "relationship with yourself", "loving yourself" are often repeated... The point is that we can either look at our emotions from the side and manage them, or else they will rule us if they are squashed under the thick hide of insensitivity, hidden in your subconscious. Whether your emotions are pushed deep inside, invisible and incomprehensible to yourself may be seen when you do stupid things that you don't want to do. So it may be easily diagnosed. Think about it for a while in order to get closer to the truth about yourself.

Without working on yourself and your emotions, you cannot truly love. The responsibility for this is on your side.

Jesus, I want to change. Be with me!

Eighth station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:38-39)

Weeping women. Very emotional and that's all. Very emotional - this is what our relationships usually look like. First come emotions and the ideas we have about the other person. We don't simply meet them - we usually try to sense them. We frequently don't even hear what they say to us. We prefer to rely on our intuition and our own interpretations. That is why sometimes one person cares about the another, but the feeling is not reciprocated. For those who care, it is hard to believe that the other person doesn't think the same way. How many unhappy "loves" this leads to! How many broken hearts! A relationship is always a two-sided desire to meet, so you shouldn't get into a relationship just by yourself, envisaging it, your expectations growing,

making plans. This attitude will overwhelm the other person who usually doesn't think about it that way. In most cases, this pressure leads to a cooling down of the relationship.

“I was in a relationship a few years ago. He wanted it to become more serious but I wasn't ready or else I didn't want such a relationship with him (it's hard to say which). For me, he was just a good friend. When he started to get more and more involved, I told him that I wanted to split up. I felt that I wouldn't be able to get involved. However, he couldn't come to terms with it. He tried to make me change my mind for a long time. He hurt me rather than convinced me. I stuck to my decision. I was proud of being so decisive. I missed talking to him a bit, but I knew I couldn't "use" him when I was feeling blue. Several years passed. We had no contact at all. One day I received a message from him in which he apologized to me for not being able to understand my decision at the time. What's more, he thanked me for doing so then. We met to talk. During the meeting, I felt a great relief, as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I started believing then that you should stick to your values.

A few weeks after this meeting, I met a boy. I'm in a relationship with him that we both wanted. I think this 'reconciliation' opened up my heart to a new one.”

As you can see, you shouldn't force anything. It's good to check frequently whether both parties still want to go on. There is a very positive element in this story about keeping your distance. She didn't see him though she needed him a little. It probably saved her from a twisted relationship, maybe a failed marriage. Selfishness can complicate life a lot.

However, it takes two willing people to have a relationship.

Jesus, I am looking for love, friendship. Save me from selfishness. Give me sensitivity and openness to notice differences in the other person.

Ninth station: Jesus falls a third 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)

Just think how much determination to heal wounds and overcome resentments you must have! It's not enough to do it once or twice. And how much patience you must have with your own stupidity, immaturity, and with repeated mistakes? Life provides a constant opportunity to repair what you have spoilt. You can sometimes do it by yourself, sometimes together with others. Here is a story.

A new life appears in a six-month-long relationship. Young, immature parents decide to get a registry office wedding. When the child is one year old, a crisis comes - the conflict between them grows and they cannot solve their problems. They let go quickly. They had not formed a proper bond with each other beforehand, but only made an attempt to take on the responsibility. They split up and want to prove to each other that each of them can do just fine. The father loses touch with the child completely, and the only contact with the mother is in the courtroom. Due to

negligence, the court deprives the father of parental care. Several years pass. There is a change in the parents' lives. They mature and become religious again. The father of the child wants to pay off the debt to the child and start a new life. The mother is worried about her daughter's health and wants to learn more about diseases in the man's family. She feels that she should forgive and allow her daughter's relationship with her father. She writes down the good things that happened thanks to him and, step by step, she prepares for the meeting. After a year of talks, the father meets his daughter for the first time (in 14 years!). The story ends with forgiveness and reconciliation. Although contacts are rare, there is now peace in their lives.

This story is a perfect example of the way of reconciliation. You should always keep your distance first. Then comes the time to work on yourselves - to start getting along again, you must change for the better. Finally, the time comes to take that one step, obviously giving complete liberty to the other party. This should be a copy and paste story. Including the rule that you must make amends for your mistakes.

Jesus, I'd love to become cooler, better to others. I'd love to become a beautiful person...

Tenth station: Jesus' clothes are taken away

Then the master sent for the man and said to him, "You wicked servant, I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow-servant just as I had pity on you?" (Matthew 18:32-33)

Sensitivity. In case of conflict there is usually something wrong with it. Conflict breeds a lot of emotions, most of all self-pity. Such an emotion distances people from others, to the point of actually ignoring them, and the key to resolving such conflict is empathy, trying to look at the problem from their perspective. Therefore, it is good to ask the other person what is important to them, instead of concentrating on yourself and feeling sorry for yourself.

Here are some reflections made by Tomek, a member of our Forge of Personalities:

"I think the most difficult part of reconciliation is admitting that something has actually happened. When we ourselves feel hurt but also when we have hurt someone. However, it is usually easier to disappear from a relationship, end it on some pretext or pretend that nothing has happened. Keep it hidden deep inside or start gossiping. In order to admit that something has hurt us, you have to acknowledge that you possess your own sensitivity, admit that you have your weaknesses which someone may want to target again. Being aware of your own weaknesses may lead to fear and trying to escape from people. It may make you want to put up walls around yourself.

It is difficult to admit to your own weaknesses, and probably even harder to your mistakes and faults. I think everyone wants to be a good person in their own eyes. It is difficult to accept that you are capable of inflicting pain and suffering. It is easier to cultivate a good image of yourself. The key moment is when you shed the mask and face the truth. This also provides an opportunity for a real meeting, and even reconciliation. Keeping away from each other paradoxically brings you closer to the other person, increases your chances of finding love or friendship. *You will*

know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32), that is the truth about yourself, the other person and why your story happened in a particular way and not in any other”.

Tomek did a great job. He thought many things over. Now it's your turn to do it...

Jesus, I want to know and understand more. I want to understand myself and others. Help me in my quest for wisdom...

Eleventh station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

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.' Then they cast lots to share out his clothing. (Luke 23:33-34)

Forgive them; for they know not what they do. How much stupidity there is in the lives of many people such as misjudgements, reasoning errors, unbalanced decisions. People frequently become slaves to patterns, immaturity. To illustrate it, here's another story.

“I was in a (non-sacramental) relationship for several years. Among our friends, we were considered to be a couple who would be together for the rest of our lives. I also heard such declarations from him. Everything seemed to be going very well, we travelled together, we had a good time. A relationship of two hedonists. However, after three years, things started to go wrong. We were drifting apart at the speed of light until I found out from a friend that he was regularly betraying me with a woman I knew. I had a row with him, but I didn't move out right away. I remember these next several months as probably the worst time in my life - anxiety mixed with hope, a sense of hopelessness, emptiness, distrust of everyone. In short, I didn't feel like living anymore. An emotional roller coaster but mostly mud crawling. Finally, I managed to move out. Unfortunately, I kept in touch with him. I was unable to definitively end this relationship. Finally he did. In the meantime, I got back on my feet, but I kept on thinking about him. Although he was not physically present, he was there in my mind not letting me move on. I couldn't forgive him. I started praying for it. I begged for a perspective on the whole situation, so that I could forgive myself, him, her. It looks like God has heard me. I regained control of myself and acquired the feeling that I was not alone, that Jesus would help me and would always be there to help me carry this cross. In fact, I feel sorry for my ex-boyfriend now. I am in the process of writing a letter to him because I know how much he is enslaved by his ego. I wish him all the best, but I know that I wouldn't like to be with a man with such a personality anymore. In retrospect, I can see that this parting was necessary for me to break free from the snares of the Evil One. I'd like to point out that until recently I declared myself an atheist, but God has led me to Him along a lengthy, winding path. Forgiveness is the best gift you can give another person, but mainly it's the best you can give yourself.”

A twisted story. They know not what they do, but if they finally manage to get things straight, they should be given another chance. Jesus prayed on the cross for such a chance for the two thieves.

Jesus, give me another chance. Please...

Twelfth station: Jesus dies on the cross

And finding that he came under Herod's jurisdiction, he passed him over to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; moreover, he was hoping to see some miracle worked by him. So he questioned him at some length, but without getting any reply.

Meanwhile the chief priests and the scribes were there, vigorously pressing their accusations. Then Herod, together with his guards, treated him with contempt and made fun of him; he put a rich cloak on him and sent him back to Pilate. (Luke 23:7-11)

Why didn't Jesus want to talk to Herod? Perhaps this talk might have given Him a chance to avoid suffering, to ease the conflict. It might have been a chance for things to work out after all.

It is undoubtedly one of the most expressive situations in Jesus' life. He preaches love, but in this case, He chooses not to start a relationship. He does not interact. So you can love, but you are not obliged to build a relationship with everyone? As you can see, this is so.

Why? Because it often doesn't make sense. If there's evil in someone, if they are crazy about themselves and care only about their own comfort - and this is the case of Herod - it's not worth it.

There is a simple rule that says you should choose your friends well. You may sometimes have problems even with cool, good and open-minded people, let alone with egocentrics!

It's good to make a list of important and key relationships. And then group them. You should do what is worth doing.

Obviously, various things happen between friends. Judas appeared in Jesus' life. However, if toxic relationships can be avoided, it's worth it. This is what Jesus did on His way of the cross.

Jesus, teach me the art of building relationships. Help me be good to others like a Samaritan.

Thirteenth station: the body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

The parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father.

Then he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. (...). Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing (,,). He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property -- he and his loose women -- you kill the calf we had been fattening" (...). (Luke 15:11-32)

A father and two sons. In this parable, two sons mean two big problems. This parable is made even more significant by the fact that Jesus clearly shows in it who His Father is, who God is.

So, does God suffer such educational setbacks? One son sins, but fortunately repents, and the other, though faithful, cannot forgive his father for reconciling with the prodigal one. What are we to think about it?

Yes, it is a story about God our Father, but it is also a story about freedom. You cannot live someone's life for them, you cannot make decisions for another person. You cannot plan someone's life. Even God doesn't and can't do it. In the name of love, in the name of relationship and mutual openness.

If this is the case with God, then we should respect the freedom of another person all the more. Nobody is forced to remain in a relationship. You cannot and should not impose yourself on others.

Here, the grave becomes a symbol of helplessness - nothing can be done anymore.

You can give freedom to another person. Following this principle, by drawing back, giving space, we create an opportunity to foster good, beautiful, healthy relationships.

This helplessness is also true about the fact that sometimes we see someone destroying their own and others' lives, and there is nothing we can do about it. Nothing at all? We can only work to make ourselves beautiful people. We will not change others by force. But we can do it if we start building beautiful relationships with them, filled with freedom and sensitivity.

Jesus, in my freedom I want to learn love from You. Will You agree to come with me?

Fourteenth station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

The apostles re-joined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat. So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. (Mark 6:30-32)

Seclusion and the grave stand for being outside relationships. Seclusion is important. It is frequently the only way to save relationships. Just like with the Apostles, who returned from their evangelizing mission full of impressions and emotions, probably also proud of themselves. As a result, their minds were more preoccupied with what they had been going through than with who

was next to them and what was happening, so Jesus offers them seclusion to cool down and distance themselves from their experiences.

How important it is to calm down, and get a perspective when you're building relationships. And even more so when a relationship is breaking down, when something wrong is happening to it. How much it occupies your mind then, how it separates you from others. What usually happens in such situations is you can only think about yourself, worrying about what you are losing, even if the loss gives hope that you can get something better.

The most difficult relationships are those that are most important to us: with your family, in a couple, with a friend, and probably also with your boss at work. It is obvious that you would always like it to be the way it used to be, that is, as it was when it was fine, because you usually prefer to remember only those moments.

What if it all collapses? You should seek seclusion, try to get a perspective and to calm down. Things have been going in a certain way so far, but it doesn't have to be like that forever. Perhaps it will also work out differently. An alternative has to be invented. Other ideas for life are needed. Being enslaved in a relationship is never good. Love is freedom and sensitivity.

Freedom is not experienced by those who are always on the run, because they do not have time to get a perspective, to come up with new versions of their lives. Being bound by your habits is also a form of enslavement. Relationships are alive with freshness, hope and change. The fossilized ones die. Therefore, seclusion is needed.

Hence, hours spent walking the Extreme Way of the Cross are needed, when alone and focused you give yourself time to think without getting worked up about the physical effort that it requires. EWC is not a sport - it is a time to profoundly analyse your own life with both body and soul. It's isolation. It is necessary loneliness, as if in death or dying, but at the onset of a new life.

Your EWC is ending. Tired? Exhausted? It is also important. But most of all, have you had time to think? To you rethink yourself? Do you have new ideas for yourself and your life? Have you opened up to God?

I wish you good luck with all my heart. I don't mean that everything will be better for you, but that you become better.

Jesus, it's time for me to go. I'm starting a new life. Come with me. Amen. Alleluia!