

## Good Friday

### Meditations on the Via Dolorosa<sup>1</sup>

#### *Introduction*

Frances Ann, my wife, and I were on an RV trip from Vancouver into the Province of Quebec in the fall of 2007. We were traveling north-east along Route 138, called the “Royal Road,” to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre (population +/- 3,000). We climbed a steep road to a huge basilica-type church, so steep that the RV had a hard time with it and we felt uncomfortable pushing it so hard. After we reached the top, we saw a sign warning of a 19% decline! We promised ourselves that we would never again subject the RV to such steep inclines.

St. Anne is said to be Mary’s mother, and, according to a guidebook, the patron saint of Quebec. In another place in the same book, it says that John the Baptist is the patron saint of all French Canadians. We camped for free in a huge pilgrims’ campground right across from the Basilica. Though a small town, its basilica is huge, befitting a large city, but in Quebec that’s the normal.

The next day—the 21<sup>st</sup> of May—we spent much time touring the awe-inspiring chapel and main sanctuary/shrine at the Basilica. Noticed row upon row of confession booths. Some history: churches were built at this location since the mid-1600s but were frequently destroyed by fire. A crippled stonemason was “suddenly cured” while he was laying stones. Now “legions of believers swear they have been cured after their pilgrimages here.” Over 1.5 million people do the trip each year. So, there was need for many such booths.

There is much to describe in this Basilica, so many wonderful sculptures of Jesus in various poses and of other Biblical characters. There is one where someone in Catholic clerical garb on tiptoe reaches out to Jesus, whose right hand is somehow released from the cross and then bends down to embrace the other. This sculpture is all white. Another in full deep colours portrays Pontius Pilate with one hand on Jesus’ shoulder and the other pointing at Him. The subscription is in both French and English “*Voici l’Homme* (John 19.5)” and “Behold the Man,” both translations of the better-known original Latin phrase, “*Ecce Homo.*” Find websites named “St. Anne de Beaupre” and you will find many pictures depicting its full beauty. When entering the church you can see two pillars filled with racks of crutches, canes, braces, and other signs of disabilities left there by people who claim to have been healed due to the healing power of St. Anne.

There is a further steep hill behind the church with a zigzagging trail leading towards the top. As you climb it, you come to depictions of the *Via Dolorosa*, “THE WAY OF THE CROSS,” a series of fifteen stations, each containing on average five bronzed cast-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 5, pp. 133-138.

iron statues that were prepared in the workshops of Vaucouleurs in France. This Way of the Cross was built over a period of 32 years, from 1913 to 1945, depicting the various stages of the way of the cross Jesus followed to Golgotha through His crucifixion to His death, except for the fifteenth; it has signage but no sculpture. If you give yourself time, you will find it a very moving experience to follow these stations one by one, following the instructions given at the beginning of the tour and praying the prayers given in the brochure. We urge you to actively participate in these deeply meaningful prayers.

## **The Meditational Pilgrimage**

### **Preparatory Prayer**

**Lord Jesus, look upon your children gathered near the cross. We come to offer a gesture of love and reconciliation.**

**This gesture of love is similar to what you, our Redeemer, made during the days of your passion. You gave yourself up to the Father's will out of love for us, and freely and courageously you followed the path which led you to Calvary. Following your example, we would like to walk this same path of love by meditating on the different episodes of your passion. We want to respond to your love by offering you this same affection.**

*Good Saint Anne, accompany us on this Way of the Cross. Open our hearts to the infinite love which our Saviour poured out for the salvation of the world by his passion, death, and resurrection. Amen.*

**A beautiful meditation—if you can forget it is a prayer to a human being, though recognized as a saint.**

**Between each station: “Our Father...”**

**Before each station you may say:**

**We adore You, O Christ,  
And we praise You.  
Because by Your holy cross  
You have redeemed the world.**

**A brochure accompanies you along the way and suggests an appropriate prayer at each station. In spite of the space this requires, I herewith reproduce all these prayers, including the one to the Virgin Mary; you already know my objection to that one. Though we did not follow all the instructions, doing the entire series of stations was a spiritual highlight for us that we want to share with you. You can use them for any**

Easter weekend or even at any time for your edification. This exhibit represents Christian spirituality at its best. It is the gift of the Church of Christ to you.

**1<sup>st</sup> Station: *Jesus is condemned to death***

Lord Jesus, I desire to receive your Holy Spirit. May it transform my heart into the image of yours. Fill it with your love so as to disperse the violence and hatred that surround me.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Station: *Jesus accepts his cross***

Lord Jesus, place in my heart your love for each of my brothers and sisters. Help me to be of service to them, even when they are at odds with me. You told us "Come to me, all you who find life burdensome, and I shall give your rest." I come to you with confidence; come to my aid.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Station: *Jesus falls the first time***

Lord Jesus, I am sorry for having fallen so often. I ask forgiveness for my offenses: for being selfish, for preferring my own interests over those of others. Help me never to be discouraged, but to continue on my way with confidence, and to love as you love us.

**4<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus meets his mother***

Blessed Virgin Mary, you are my mother. You are my Perpetual Help. I implore you to help me at all times, in every place, after my falls, in times of temptation, and at the hour of death. Take me by the hand and lead me to Jesus.

**5<sup>th</sup> Station: *Simon Of Cyrene helps Jesus***

Lord Jesus, I thank you for appreciating each of my good actions as a gesture of love for you. May you be praised. I want to see your face in each one of my brothers and sisters. I want to love them as you do.

**6<sup>th</sup> Station: *Veronica wipes the face of Jesus***

Lord Jesus, lend me your eyes so full of love, so I may see people as you see them, see beyond their external appearances, and see only the good in each person. Clothe me in your goodness.

**7<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus falls the second time***

Lord Jesus, send me your Spirit. May it bring me your wisdom, so that I may make the best decisions; your strength, to pick myself up from my falls; and your serene joy, to accept your will at all times.

**8<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem***

Lord Jesus, I beg pardon for my faults, for the times when I have failed to love, and for my sin. I bitterly regret my lack. I am sure of your forgiveness. On the occasion of my pilgrimage, accept my repentance. You are my Redeemer. Grant me a heart that burns with an ardent desire and thirst for love and justice. Grant me a new heart, O Lord.

**9<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus falls for the last time***

**Lord Jesus, I want to love you with all my strength, with all my being, but I know that I am weak. I want to love my brothers and sisters as you love them. Give me a new heart; recreate in me your own Spirit.**

**10<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is stripped of his clothing***

**Lord Jesus, I desire to do your will at all times. I want to strip myself of all false affections, so that I may love as you love. Come into my life and give me courage, generosity and self control.**

**11<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is nailed to the cross***

**Lord Jesus, give me your merciful heart; I want to forgive all who have done me wrong. And, I offer you the Our Father for the person whom I find the most difficult to pardon.**

**12<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus dies on the cross***

**Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, blessed are you for having delivered us from sin, for reconciling us with the Father, and for bringing salvation to the entire world. We praise you, splendour of the Father, Jesus, Son of God.**

**13<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is taken down from the cross***

**Lord Jesus, we thank you for having conquered death and allowing us to share in your own life.**

**14<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is laid in the tomb***

**Lord Jesus, we want to accept your invitation with joy and shine with your love. Jesus is living; we are his witnesses.**

**15<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is living***

**Alleluia! The Lord is risen. Alleluia! He is risen among the dead. The creator of life has conquered death. The darkness of death has changed into light. He, who so often said "Arise and walk," has opened our hearts to the way of hope. The final word is life. The Lord sends us out on a mission: "Peace be with you! You are my witnesses... I am with you always, even to the end of time.**