



EXTREME WAY OF THE CROSS 2023 - ONLY FOR ROMANTIC SOULS

Only for romantic souls - I'm setting off to look for hope.

Christians are not so afraid of death. This is why they sometimes become martyrs. They do not become suicidal. They are not about ending their lives.

They become martyrs because for them death is only a path to a new life. They are driven by hope.

They never, ever lock themselves in defeat.

Let us analyze the crucifixion scene.

The people stayed there watching. As for the leaders, they jeered at him with the words, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' The soldiers mocked him too, coming up to him, offering him vinegar, and saying, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'. One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case, we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.' (Luke 23:35-43)

Crucifixion. In the Christian world, the cross is omnipresent.

Firstly: the cross is not simply a way of inflicting death but also disgrace.

Crucifixion is a kind of Roman capital punishment with an additional message: you were a nobody in your life and you will die like a crap. The intention was to rob the convict of more than his life. Also, of hope for the future: you are nobody and you remain nobody. In people's memories as well. What is left of you is your disgrace. Crucifixion was to be the ultimate punishment: your life was meaningless and so will be your death. The End.

Secondly, what is Jesus doing on the cross?

Jesus said:

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

Jesus lays down His life to regain it. Death on the cross is not the end for Him, but the beginning.



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Although He was afraid of martyrdom and death itself, He saw the meaning of following this path. By crucifying Him, they wanted to make the Earth disgusting to Him and make Him believe that people are evil by nature. They wanted Him to recognize that His life had no meaning whatsoever. Jesus, however, understood the meaning of His life differently and had a different vision of His mission. He was an idealist.

He didn't want to waste His life. His aim was to get it back. From the future which did not exist on the cross He returned resurrected. Meaning alive again. Resurrected means born from death.

Thirdly: the villain – the bad villain thief.

One of the criminals hanging there taunted him.

He was a truly hateful person. A person who would gladly offend someone or hurt them if an opportunity arouses. There was little he could do on the cross, but he repeated something that he used to do. He did a bad thing. He was in death as he had been in life: a villain.

Fourthly: the good villain.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

In his death the good villain is made equal with Jesus and the evil villain. Does he have any choice? Yes, he does, he could have behaved like the other villain, and he might have done something bad again. He doesn't have much of a chance to do any good, he's already on the cross. There's no time to change his life. But something amazing happens. The good villain stares at the two convicts next to him. In one of them he sees what he is well-acquainted with. But the other one behaves differently. There was no longer time to talk. He can only watch Jesus's body language. He sees how Jesus deals with punishment and death. He sees that this is not the end for Jesus. He sees His freedom and independence. He sees Him as the King, and he wants to be in His kingdom. And he sees another thing: since he wants to be with Him, it means that he likes Him. He feels good around Him. With his attitude, the good villain tells us things about Jesus what we can only presume.

Fifthly: our way.

There are two kinds of lives.

The first one is life which begins at birth.

The second one is born out of death.

Life which begins at birth is biological and will end in death. However, the life born out of death – lives on.



Death should be understood in a broader sense of withering away. Dramatic failures. Moments of doubt.

Death should be understood as the loss of life. An experience of trauma that takes away what we know. According to the words of Jesus.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

(Matthew 16:25)

I'm setting off to look for hope. These reflections are dedicated to all those who are experiencing hopelessness. For those who are losing hope. For those who can't see any future for themselves.

We are living in difficult times of the pandemic, the war and crisis. We need hope.

Let me invite you to EWC 2023.

RULES:

Let me remind you of the EWC rules:

1. The EWC means walking 40 km at night, alone or focused.
2. There are also 30 km routes, however with an appropriate amount of elevation gain.
3. We encourage you to make sacrifices, but of course everyone can decide to go home early. We respect every person who takes up the EWC challenge.
4. There are many events which are meant to coddle people. EWC is different from them: it does not pamper you; it sets demands on you. It's not on human measure, but it helps people to exceed their own limitations.
5. Reflection is required on the way. There must be no chit-chats, picnics nor amenities.
6. The purpose of taking up the EWC challenge is to change for the better. The current motto of EWC is: "Walk 40 km at night and become a beautiful person."
7. EWC is not measured only by the effort made - we expect fruit, change for the better. A beautiful person is the one it is better to live with.
8. We encourage you to take up the challenge that Jesus gave us: *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever 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.

You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. (Matthew 7:16-17)

We are judged all the time. People often get upset about being judged. And even more so about how they are perceived in others' judgments. In fact, we most often judge ourselves by our intentions: we meant well. And others judge us by their expectations, which we usually disappoint.

Judgment over Jesus is the resultant of various people's benefits. The high priests were afraid of a new prophet who would expose their hypocrisy. Herod was worried about riots which his Roman masters would see as his defeat. The peddlers in the temple feared for their commissions. Synagogue leaders, Pharisees and many others did not want to lose their influence. Those who were well-off were afraid that a war would break out. And many others wanted to fool around, have fun. They wanted entertainment.

We shouldn't have any illusions. We are judged likewise. For many people, we are just a new toy. To gossip about, to use to slander. And to forget in a short time. Don't delude yourselves. Few people care about you.

People, including us, care mostly about themselves. We are no better than others.

So, you mustn't measure your life by what other people think about you. When you strive to do something, you will always, always go against some people.

This truth is re-experienced by many people all the time, but some still refuse to believe it.

There is only one reliable judgment of a human being: the fruit they bear. They accomplished things and you can now see the results.

A true story

After I graduated from secondary school, my parents said that they couldn't afford to pay for me if I went to study in a big city and suggested that I continue my education closer to my hometown. I had always been interested in mathematics and commerce, so the choice of university was quite simple - the university of economics. At the same time, I fell in love with the most beautiful and wonderful woman on earth, who, however, was going to a university in Krakow.

Like an obedient son, I went to a nearby town to take the entrance examination with the intention of



passing it as well as possible. And then a strange thing happened. In the math exam, I couldn't solve any of the five problems. I thought hard for an hour and a half without any success. I crossed everything out and tried solving each problem again, but I just couldn't do it - a complete flop. It wasn't stress which I find rather motivating. To this day, I don't know why I couldn't solve the problems in the exam, especially since right after it was over, I solved them all on a park bench in 20 minutes! I didn't get into the university that seemed to be my dream at the time - a total setback. Go back to my hometown and explain to every person I meet why I didn't get admitted to university? - daunting. I found out that in September there was an additional exam for the university of technology in Krakow. I passed it.

Today, from the perspective of over 20 years, everything looks completely different. Every morning I wake up next to the most beautiful woman in the world who became my wife. After studying at a university of technology, I supplemented my education with a postgraduate course at a university of economics. I found a niche in the industry where the knowledge I acquired at both of these universities turned out to be very valuable. I work in what is called a high managerial position, and everyday work gives me great satisfaction. People say I'm successful. I know I owe it to my failure.

How not to behave:

You should never, ever live to meet other people's expectations of you.

How you could behave:

By taking up challenges, by trial and error, you learn about yourself. You should do what you are good at not what others expect of you. This is how you build your position in life.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"Authors are judged by their works."

This means that if you wanted to listen to others, you would never create anything. Jesus, teach me to see good fruit, not flatterers.

Second station: Jesus carries His cross

'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

We dream of paradise, but we experience hell.



We all have dreams. We dream of a beautiful and comfortable life. We try to make them come true, but we encounter obstacles. We gladly listen to the prophets of success. We even pay to get their promises, for example at training courses or by buying books. We pay because we feel good about their foresights. Everyone would like to win a lottery and have a great life right away.

Usually, however, those who hit the bull's eye end up going broke. There is no such thing as success without daily problems. The less success you have, the fewer problems you face. The greater the success, the greater the burden of life. Everyone has to pay an appropriate price for their life.

Therefore, instead of being deluded, you should take up challenges. Hardships are a daily element of life. This is how it has been and will continue to be.

Instead of coping with unwanted difficulties, it is better to take up challenges. In practice, it is the same, but we experience it completely differently. We do not get depressed while struggling with hardships, but we have satisfaction from the challenges we undertake. Paradise stands for overcome difficulties, not for carelessness.

A true story

My husband and I were not getting on for a long time. Especially in the pandemic. Tired of parental and household chores, we had no time to nurture love. At some point, I went to work abroad. After 3 months, I reluctantly returned to my husband and children. We had grown so far apart that lying in bed next to my husband, I was surprised that he had such a wide chest, as if I didn't know his body at all. We were on the verge of splitting up, resigned and tired of the situation with no way out. Then I decided to take up the challenge to revive our marriage. I'm not a very religious person, but I decided to try the biggest caliber: Novena to our Lady of Pompeii. I had prayed it twice before for other intentions - to no avail. This time, on the 5th day of the novena, I fell in love with my husband for the second time in my life... So suddenly, out of the blue, head over heels, infatuated as at the very beginning of our relationship. Completely denying all the heartaches we had given each other over the years. Our marriage revived, and for a few months' things were good, not fantastic, but good. And then it got worse... and another crisis came.

How not to behave:

Why did the novena help? Because the very effort of prayer, focus on change - managed to open the mind. By pure effort powered by a will and sexual drive. If we loved someone once, it means that this person has something in them that we like. As a result of this effort, emotions changed. But life didn't.



How to behave:

Love in a relationship requires work on yourself. People are never suited to each other. They must work to be together. A successful relationship always starts with working on yourself. On your habits, behavior, commitment. On your listening skills. Without it, no prayer can help. In this story lack of work on yourself portends misfortune.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"Not behind yourself with the Savior's cross, but behind the Savior with your own cross, this is the principle of all social harmony in Christianity."

Which means: Instead of expressing your grievances to Jesus, learn from Him how to solve problems. Jesus, I am asking for zeal in overcoming everyday problems.

Third station: Jesus falls the first time.

And suddenly out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Lord, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil. [...] But the woman had come up and was bowing low before him. [...] Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again. (Matthew 15: 22-28)

There is this affliction: people for whom everything comes easy don't know who they are. They don't know their limitations. And it is these limitations that allow us to place ourselves in time and space. This may be seen in the process of raising children. The ones who are brought up without any limitations cannot cope with themselves. Children need rules, specific boundaries. Only then their identities can develop properly.

If that's how children are, then we too were children. We are the same. Limitations only inform that not everything is possible. The fact that we cannot do something today means that we can approach it differently. Limitations provide information about aspects of our personality that we should develop.

The woman in the Gospel – a woman from Canaan – knelt before Jesus. Because she had reached her limits and was helpless. But she faced the situation and found a solution.

A true story

There was this immigrant girl, rather dull, French speaking so it was hard for us to communicate. We



went out for a coffee. What I heard was like a bucket of cold water and brought tears to my eyes. As a child, she had lost her family during the riots and genocide in Rwanda, and barely escaped with her own life. She currently runs a foundation which teaches Rwandan women farming in rural areas. She showed me videos of her work. And ideas on how to modernize agriculture in Rwanda to the highest standards. I felt ashamed that I had wrongly judged her as uninteresting, that I had been looking for some inspiration far away and failed to see diamonds within reach. In addition, it turned out that we live in the same area. She invited me for coffee. We got much closer.

How not to behave:

You shouldn't treat people who have problems as worse than you.

How to behave:

You should always be interested in people. Today, someone may be at the bottom. But tomorrow, the fortune may reverse.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"One must not put oneself in central place. Not to inadvertently become a disgrace."

Which means: You are not the center of the universe. Learn about yourself by getting to know your limitations.

Jesus, I think about myself far too much. Please help me acquire a healthy distance to myself.

Fourth station: Jesus meets His Mother

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)

Family looks best in pictures. It may not be appropriate for this station, but it's true. Let's start with a true story:

My mother... loves animals, she is a great cook, grows vegetables, takes care of flowers around her house, reads books in her free time, listens to songs by Irena Santor, Eleni, Anna German... My mother is a lovely and good woman, even though she has not necessarily experienced love and goodness in her life.



She has several siblings, but her father (who drank) did not love all of them equally, some were neglected - including her. To this day, her legs still hurt after they were frostbitten because her father didn't want to waste money to buy her tights. At the age of 18, she tried to commit suicide for the first time: she swallowed pills that her mother took (for cancer). Luckily, she vomited them and survived. Later, she moved in with her aunt, who introduced her to my future father. Then they got married. Did they have a happy marriage? Hard to say. I remember that before I was 13, my father also drank, he often came back home intoxicated, sometimes he was aggressive and authoritarian towards me and my mother. The last two years before his death he did not drink, and it was a beautiful time. Which ended suddenly one day when he committed suicide during the holidays.

Then, over the course of a year or two, my mother (and I) suffered a few more misfortunes that affected her health. My mother suffered and still suffers from bipolar disorder.

I will say that it was difficult for me, more than once I felt hatred towards her as well as anger and negative thoughts. But she is my mother, I did not reject her, I did not leave her, I wanted to understand, help, support, partly giving up myself. I don't hold any grudges, regrets, or resentments against her. My mother is a lovely, good woman...

How not to behave:

We usually look at our parents from the perspective of the present and the future. We take them as they are: we like some things about them, some things we don't. We get angry because of something; we see good in something else. In all of this, however, we are focused on our own future. We want to be fine. We are interested in our own history. They are part of it. This attitude makes no sense.

How to behave:

We can clearly see how our parents affect our history. But we are not interested in their history. And they had parents too. They too had good and bad times in their lives. Sometimes someone hurt them, sometimes they hurt someone. After all, we are largely shaped by our parents, but we don't know them. We don't know their history.

History is a subject in school. The history of parents, family - this is a subject in life. To live your normal life, you must learn it. You must understand. It is impossible to understand yourself without knowing the history of your parents.

Every family has its stories. Long stories which last a lifetime. And various things happen. It doesn't have to be always right, but the point is to always find the best solution.



A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"One must not bow to circumstances and keep the truth standing at the door."

Which means: It is not up to you to choose where and why you are born. There is neither justice nor order nor anything special about it. The point is that you need to know the Truth not only about yourself, but also about your family. To be able to do something meaningful with yourself.

Jesus, I want to understand myself and my loved ones. Give me the courage to seek the truth.

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

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

Not only do we depend on ourselves, not only do others depend on us, but we also depend on others. We are so interconnected. It seems we usually don't realize it. We do many things unconsciously, without thinking. We say something because it just popped out. We do something because it just happened. Too often we are stupidly thoughtless. And then we are surprised at the outcomes of such behavior.

A true story

I am a mature woman, reformed for over 10 years, I have been in the Church since I was a child, and yet for a very long time in my life every word of my mother made me gnash my teeth and hurt me deeply. My mother was the only woman who could say something that knocked me to the ground and clipped my wings right away. She was insecure, as if

she was afraid, as if she doubted everything, including us, her children. Apparently out of concern. It marked me... it marked me with insecurity. Insecurity about everything that is around, in what I do and, despite my clear and obvious predispositions, I did not find my way on the road of life for a long time and walked in the dark.

Meanwhile, life tried us both - as if with a double-edged sword...

Me - with imprudent decisions, single motherhood, everyday hardship, getting angry with myself and the people around. Her - because the desire for God's life for me came to naught... We reached the bottom.

It took me years to work on my entire self, I learnt to live life and live in truth, I regained my feminine



dignity, joy, peace, and inner freedom. I saw that it does not depend on any external conditions or even my parents, but it is something that flows from my relationship with God. The sources of my shortcomings, conflicts, impotence, unhealthy emotions, lack of boundaries, self-distrust, doubts - it all had to be named, straightened, locked up so that it had no power over me... I was coping with this muddle bit by bit...

I also learnt to love my mother again. I realized that her orphanhood permeated my life as well as my child's. I want to stop it in the Spirit of God, set my healthy boundaries and keep them.

I feel like I'm just starting my life "again" and I'm looking forward to it ;)

How not to behave:

Don't do things you feel like doing. It makes no sense. Our feelings are pure brain chemistry. We get various thoughts. Our thoughts are affected by our genes, hormones, current experiences or uncontrollable memories. People who live according to how they feel, live in chaos. People who say what they feel like, create chaos. Thoughts and words can build or destroy like a tornado. And this story is proof of that. The chaos of the mother's thoughts and words caused chaos in her daughter's life.

How to behave:

We can have different thoughts in our head. However, we need to learn to distance ourselves from them. We are not our thoughts, but we get them. Quite unconsciously. We are committed to wisdom. We should live according to what is good, not what we feel like now.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"May we not know evil; may we do good."

Which means: You shouldn't do evil. In Norwid's words - know the evil that we do ourselves. It's the simplest rule in life: Never do bad things. It's better to do nothing. And when you do something, do good things.

Jesus, help me to distinguish evil from good. Because I don't want to do evil.

Sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment



and wiped his feet with her hair. (John 11:2)

Mary appears in Jesus' world. She gives closeness and experiences closeness. So does Veronica.

These scenes are very intimate.

Veronica emerges from the crowd. Maybe anyone could have helped Jesus like that, but she was the one who did it. Jesus is in a sorry state. He has no future. She cannot benefit from this gesture.

Veronica takes the risk. Probably for love. Perhaps for love, which is only a momentary inspiration. Or had she already "had Jesus on her mind" and wanted to get closer to Him? What can be the price of closeness in such dramatic circumstances?

Here is a true story:

When my baby sister was born, it was seemingly the happiest moment of my life. However, our joy about this wonderful event was immediately marred by illness. The world turned upside down. Our parents were distraught. They went from doctor to doctor, from hospital to hospital. Our little one was unaware of anything and, interestingly, very calm, despite what was happening around her. Each day was harder than the previous one. There was a chance for a partial solution, but not a cure. Two major surgeries, year after year, and there was a small breakthrough. Continuous rehabilitation and overcoming various problems were necessary to give the child the possibility of a better life. All of this had a huge impact on my life. The life of a person who seemed to be standing on the side-lines and watching. However, I lost the sense of life and reasons to smile. I lived in constant fear of the next day. Until a certain day. During one holiday I decided to leave my family nest and get away somewhere. My choice fell on the Oasis Movement in the *Beskid Wyspowy* mountains. After a few days of retreat, I went to confession. I felt the need to simply talk and describe, not my sins, but my life. I had to get things off my chest. And I was lucky to meet a wonderful monk. During a long talk, I had time to cry and laugh like never before in my life. We all have our burdens, some more than others.

How not to behave:

When expecting a baby, the parents' imagination starts working. We might not have the best life ourselves, but our baby will be extraordinary. Because it will be our baby. This is the original sin of parenthood. How many parents imagine how extraordinary their child will be. And then they are quickly disappointed when life confronts them with other children. For example, in kindergarten, it turns out that our "child is ordinary."

And what if it becomes obvious from the moment of birth that our child is "sort of" worse. As the



author of the text writes, they fought, "to give the child the possibility of a better life." Question: Who knows, who has the right to know what life is better for this child?

This story is as tragic as many other similar ones. The power of disappointment pushes loved ones to take crazy measures. Measures at any cost. Better life. Health, treatment, surgery. Usually, and quite quickly, victims appear devastated parents, neglected and abandoned older, healthy children. Frustrated family. For the author of the story, closeness became a source of tragedy. There are many such stories.

How to behave:

A child is also human. They have the right to live and the right to die. We should look after them in a normal way. But never at any cost.

Always start by getting the perspective. You must not get carried away by emotions. The principle of a wise aid applies. Could a house we would build under the influence of our emotions give us shelter? Treatment, upbringing, building relationships - all this requires reason and thought. Sometimes older people don't want to have surgery because "it is not worth it". It's the same thing with children. Respect for a child is also respect for his ability. The ability to survive.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"It is sad to abandon life and withdraw. Live with your own feelings, with your own dreams."

Which means: People who focus on their thoughts distance themselves from life. Their unbridled emotions, which they may sometimes call dreams, lead to tragedy in the end. Detached from reality, they understand nothing of it. They crash against it like a rock. Locked up, not alive, but on their way to annihilation.

Jesus, give me common sense and wisdom in every situation.

Seventh station: Jesus falls the second time.

You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Being perfect is a kind of neurosis: you want to have everything under control. Depend on yourself. If only so as not to be disappointed. By opening to others, you must take risks. In this opening, you become defenseless - you may hear: "yes" or "no". You may experience "yes" or "no". Mostly "no".



And yet - you can't live without others. Alone, you are too limited to win life. You win - when at least two people open to each other. Mutual love with emphasis on mutual, is the most important commandment of the Christians.

A true story

My first serious relationship was at university. For over three years I was in a relationship with a not-so-perfect girl who was what I needed one at the time, I needed something permanent. The girl gave me a lot of love, beautiful moments, trips, but something was still missing from my life. One day, taking advantage of a quarrel (which there were many), I decided to end our relationship, we parted on neutral ground (or so I thought). I felt relieved, I felt that something was finally changing. Months passed, I felt free, dependent on myself, I was enjoying life, having fun, but still, when I was alone, deep down I felt that something was wrong, I felt dissatisfied, empty. It wasn't until several years later that I realized that most of my life I had been afraid to truly open up to people. I preferred to pretend to be someone I was not, to have everything under control. Despite acceptance and understanding, I was afraid to open even to my girlfriend. I was a coward, running away from conversations, from feelings, and I preferred to run away from her than to work on something that was beautiful and permanent (not perfect, of course, but are any of us perfect? Only God is perfect). This relationship taught me how to love others. She taught me to treat every human being as a human being, and only later to look at their role in my life - that is to treat every person with respect and love. Many years have passed, and I still immensely regret not treating that girl as I should have, even though it is thanks to her that I am where I am now. Take care of all the people around you, they are not perfect, but they care about you, you should care about them too. If you are now with your loved ones, friends, acquaintances, or strangers - thank them and love them. I would like to thank everyone who loved me with mutual love.

How not to behave:

Life is not about profiting. Nor it should not be. Because obviously there are ups and downs in a relationship. They cannot be calculated beforehand. Or rather they may, but then there is no love. The man from this story first fell in love. He was open and involved. And then he started calculating. And it turned out that it was not worth it. This relationship was not perfect, he felt that another one could give him more. Developing a benefit system in yourself is the greatest killer of love.

How to behave:

Openness is difficult because its consequences are unpredictable. Until I open up - I don't know, I don't understand. And I get nothing out of it. If I open up, I may be surprised both positively and negatively. I



can benefit from the good and I can draw conclusions from what is bad. If someone is smart about being open, they will always benefit from it. Because without openness there is no love, there is no friendship. There no one thing that makes a person happy.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

“Hell is just inability to love.”

Which means: You want to, but you can't. Not that you really can't. You just don't want to do it, you don't open, you don't try. And as a result, you can't. Not opening up and wanting openness is hell.

Jesus, I'm looking for love and I want to take the risk.

Eighth station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

Do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children! (Luke 23:28)

Feeling sorry for yourself. That's the easiest way to waste your life.

Feeling sorry for yourself is saying that you are experiencing something unfair. That something is happening to you. Something you don't want to happen.

It must be emphasized that things often happen to you, even when you don't want them to. You don't have complete self-control, and no one ever will. You can only control yourself a little. Manage your life a little.

Feeling sorry for yourself means surrender. Putting your life at the mercy of chance. Degradation.

If something happens to us, we must do something about it. There's always something you can do about it.

A true story:

My illness - although invisible - limits me physically and mentally. Running away from pain, running away from life - into stillness, fantasies, other pleasures, as if I wanted to compensate for my losses. The hardest part was accepting that it was incurable. It seemed to me that as long as I was fighting, I was a winner, but those falls when I ran out ideas for treatment... I was desperately looking for hope. Finally, after many attempts, I surrendered... to His will. I gave up my dream of health. After what it had cost me, I saw what value it had for me. I'm redefining happiness. I want to believe that I can do it, that I have my path to follow. I've become more tolerant to life that isn't going my way. I've calmed



down. I trust this way only because God sees some sense in it, otherwise He would not have led me there. Maybe someday He will reveal to me the beauty of such a way, I allow Him to do so. Let me not be disappointed.

How not to behave:

I understand this woman: her heart is aching for challenges, but her body imprisons her. It's not that she can do nothing. However, compared to others, she seems to be immobilized. If everyone had an illness like hers, you could learn from them how to live.

You can't escape comparisons. However, if you do not perform well as compared to others, you should not give up. In any comparison, the result will be the same: we differ from one another.

How to behave:

"I have become more tolerant of life that is not going my way", these are some of the most beautiful words showing self-acceptance. There is a note of disappointment in herself (as compared to others) and hope in this sentence. It could be better, but I'll do my best.

People who build their lives only on feeling sorry for themselves become like a swamp. The swamp, as you know, immobilizes you.

Those who have very little compared to others, but still develop who they are - become Someone.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"Whoever speaks the truth causes anxiety."

Which means: What am I really like? I need feedback to find out. Real feedback. Most people like to have their own false vision of themselves. And they are afraid to hear what other people think about them. They are afraid of anxiety. There is nothing to be afraid of. For the price of a moment of anxiety, you can understand yourself much better and live better.

Jesus, give me the courage to know myself. Listening to what others think about me. Give me the courage to live in truth.

Ninth station: Jesus falls a third time.

For power is at full stretch in weakness. (Corinthians 2 12:9)



Wasted life. Have you experienced it? Have you seen someone who has wasted their life?

Two villains on the cross and Jesus between them. Nothing awaits them anymore. However, Jesus still has hope, He sees a future ahead of Him.

Jesus recovers after the fall, although this only brings Him closer to death. The good villain on the cross dreams of heaven, even though he is about to die. Maybe we should recognize that there is no life wasted once and for all? That it's always worth getting up, even a second before your death.

A true story

All my life I wanted to be an athlete - I wanted to play football professionally. At the age of 15 I broke my leg. I returned to the game, but at 17 I broke my leg again. I managed to get back on the field once more. In the meantime, I passed my final exams, got into a good university from which I was expelled after half a year. A few months later, just before starting another university, I tore the ligaments in my knee. I went to classes while rehabilitating myself and waiting for the next surgery. At university, I devoted two years to an ultimately unsuccessful relationship. I became addicted to alcohol, which led to my first suicide attempt at the age of 21. It's a miracle I didn't drown trying to swim across a lake. When I returned home healthy, I thought that nothing worse could happen to me in my life. A few days after my suicide attempt, I went back to playing football at a sports club, only to tear the ligaments in my knee again four months later.

In October 2021, I went back to university, alcoholism returned, and over time I got into gambling. In February 2022, during a two-week drinking spree, I lost all my money in sports betting. Since then, I have managed to change a lot for the better, but I still encounter smaller or larger crises in my life. I started working with a trainer over a year ago to help me recover physically. Every day I try to be better, I have a plan that I follow. I gave up twice, but got a third chance.

How not to behave:

Soccer. It is watched by billions but played only by thousands who make money out of it. Wanting to become a *soccer player*, a youtuber, someone like that - can become a missed investment, a temptation that ruins your life. One of my close friends had talent. At the age of 20, he played in First League. In addition, he scored three goals in his first match. It's just that he became a threat for his older colleagues, and they kicked him mercilessly. After his first major injury, he abandoned sport. Today he is an outstanding professor. That's why you shouldn't stick to one thing too much.

How to behave:



Instead of sticking to one thing, it's worth trying different things. The above story is typical of athletes: someone has talent, but no health. To be successful, you must have both. Professional athletes, musicians, youtubers - there are not many of them. But those who make music, play football, or make films – these are innumerable. Hobbies are one thing, but first you must make a living, earn money. Nothing wrong with it. Better to be a winner on a small scale than a big loser. We should play many games, compete in many areas. Competition shows who we are compared to others. It reveals what we have a knack for.

There is another important message in this story. The head. Someone may have everything, but if their head is messed up - they will lose anyway. That is why you should always start with yourself, with working on yourself, on your head.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"Fighting is normal for Humanity - battling is not."

That is: struggling with everyday problems – big and small - is normal. It can be said that it "does us well". Starting battles one against the other is not a good idea.

Jesus, help me learn from my failures and allow me to finally win my life.

Tenth station: Jesus' clothes are taken away.

[The Lord] has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness.' It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions, and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong. (Corinthians 2 12:9-10)

There are people who commit self-mutilation. Why do they do that? Because internal pain, the one caused by the head and heart, is greater than physical pain. Paradoxically, this action is aimed at reducing psychological pain. To be able to get away from "what's on your mind" for a while.

Obviously, that doesn't solve anything. But it just shows how much we can suffer.

Exposed - like the one who cannot cope with what is hidden inside, what hurts. Such an experience is one of the greatest traumas a person can experience.

There seems to be nothing that can be done about it. For the pain is all-encompassing, incapacitating.



True conversions are a situation of experiencing such pain and seeing a ray of hope in this hell. Seemingly the same, but a completely different life.

A true story

There was a certain boy. Handsome, young, in love. He was very involved in the life of his local Church – his parish, he helped organize WYD 2016. He enjoyed every moment of his life, he smiled often and everywhere he appeared, he introduced a positive atmosphere. His girlfriend, also beautiful, young, loved him, but... at some point this relationship ceased to matter to her. She no longer wanted to see him, talk to him, spend time with him, even in silence, but together. There were other, more important things. She decided to break up with him to have more freedom and liberty. It didn't mean anything to her anymore. For him, however, it was a powerful blow... There was nothing left of the charismatic, active, and smiling boy - we have not seen him... for two years. He closed himself at home and in himself. He disengaged from life. This event overcame him, it was difficult for him, he loved her and made plans for their future together. He hadn't expected it. He survived difficult times thanks to faith and friends. Today, the boy from the story is happy, although still a bit lonely...

How not to behave:

You should certainly open. Build relationships. Risk. And even suffer. Be defenseless at times. It is well known that love brings as much happiness as suffering. The only thing you shouldn't do it is to fixate on your emotions. Insist that what you feel is most important.

How to behave:

What is love? First, our impression of the other person, and only then an encounter. In the initial phase of a relationship, projections usually dominate about who this person is. It seems that this is exactly the case: he fell in love with her. He thought she was extraordinary. And she was a little extraordinary, she pretended a little to be extraordinary and she was a little different, but he never noticed it. She probably left when the game she was playing started to tire her. She wasn't the person he had thought she was.

Therefore, after a period of mourning, he should open again. He will never meet another girl like the one he met. Because she never was there. Love is the desire to know, to understand.

The fruit of a well-lived relationship, even a failed one, should be greater skill in getting to know new people. And that's it.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:



“Slaves will remain slaves everywhere and always – give them wings at their shoulders and they will sweep streets with them.”

Which means: If you are wrong in the head, you will ruin everything. Even love. Do you keep failing? Look for the source in your head.

Jesus, my thoughts... I'd like to work on what's in my head. Help me get my thoughts sorted out.

Eleventh station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

It is for us who are strong [in faith] to bear with the susceptibilities of the weaker ones, and not please ourselves. Each of us must consider his neighbor's good, so that we support one another.

(Romans 15:1-2)

What can people who can do nothing do?

People often go on a kind of pilgrimage - those who can do nothing go to the ones who think they can. Someone is successful. While others fail. Those who lack something go to those who have it because the latter have succeeded.

Anyone who succeeds - this must be remembered - will eventually become the destination of pilgrimages.

One problem remains: if someone has been successful, why can't I? Is it better to live your life asking for things, or coping well?

I have never been able to understand why those who can do nothing seek help from those who can. Instead of accepting that they themselves can learn to be able to do things. Lack of agency is not destiny, but sheer laziness. “Non-causative” people are people who do not draw conclusions, do not learn from mistakes. Anyone who tries will eventually learn.

The truth is that most often if you don't learn from mistakes this is due to unworked emotions. And emotions don't learn, they don't think. They just get emotional.

A true story

My life yesterday: work, home, TV, Sunday dinner at my parents' and then the same again... Just to make it to the weekend, Christmas, holidays. Routine, boredom, greyness, loneliness. The feeling that the best and most interesting things are already passing me. That my life will be so monotonous forever. People tell me that something can happen any day that will completely change my life. I don't



really believe it. After so many disappointments, I don't want to try anything new anymore. However, one day, something happens that cannot be described in words ... Suddenly and unexpectedly, someone appeared in my life who is completely different from me (actually, probably in every way). He is from Zakopane in the mountains, and I come Szczecin on the coast. The distance seems considerable. We are very different, but these differences seem to unite us more than divide us. Every day we are both surprised anew by the closeness and bond that has developed between us. This relationship has changed and continues to change both of us. Differences only make the one more and more curious of the other.

How not to behave:

The same old ruts, routine. Everything is easy, commonplace, there is no risk. This is the result of neglect. Each new day brings challenges and opportunities. Apparently, however, it is easier not to get involved, not to take risks. Not to try. If any of you live like this, I feel sorry for you. Because gradually the feeling of "nothing is going on" turns into "nothing makes sense".

How to behave:

There are no situations when nothing can be done. You just must try. The story of unexpected love is an example of this. A chance appeared- and it worked.

As a rule, however, opportunities only appear when we look for them. I mean, they keep coming, but if we're not looking for them, we don't see them.

And one more rule: you need to practice. When an opportunity comes up, you have to be ready: have the knowledge, strength, ideas and experience.

The future of this relationship? It will only succeed if both of them work hard on themselves. A successful relationship is not a fleeting impression, but hard work on yourself.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"The future is today, but somewhat further off."

Which means: You should draw conclusions for today from yesterday. Today you should be slightly wiser than you were yesterday.

Jesus, I would like to become a seeker of wisdom. I am planning to pray daily and to draw conclusions for the future.



Twelfth station: Jesus dies on the cross.

I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. (John 15:11)

A true story

I miss talking to people. I miss a community close to home. I miss not visiting someone for coffee in the afternoon, not having someone look after my children for a moment when I have to go out. And most of all, I miss inspiring people who do great things.

Only for romantic souls: hope above grey reality.

Golgotha. Two or formally three villains. They can hardly do anything anymore. Their hands and feet are bound. What's left? The mind. What they have in it.

Because in the case of a person, everything is in the head. Even if you can't do anything, you can always come up with something.

Even if you can't do anything, you can always come up with something. Even if you can't do anything, you can always come up with something. The sentence has been repeated three times. You should learn it.

Before Jesus was nailed to the cross, He had an idea of what He would do then. This idea was discovered by the villain called the good villain. He saw the plan that Jesus had: We go on, to paradise.

Faith is an idea. There is paradise, heaven, the Kingdom of Heaven. Hope is a way. I want to get there.

Hope is an opportunity, but by nature it is remote. What you need is not here, but there. You have to follow this opportunity. You won't get anywhere by just standing there.

For me writing these reflections it is a very familiar and personal experience. I have been in a no-win situation many times. However, I knew from experience that since I couldn't see the road from that point, I had to take at least one step forward - to see if there was an opportunity from another place. But I always sensed an opportunity. A hunch of the existence of an opportunity is the definition of hope. Hope does not mean that things will be as they are now. Hope means looking for an opportunity for "something better". And most often "something better" means "something completely different". Let's see what expectations a child and a teenager have. When you give a teenager what they enjoyed as a child, they will be disappointed. They already want something else.

Therefore, here, and now is never enough. Hope is looking for "something better" - and "something better" by nature means - different. That is why hope drives a person to set out into the unknown.

ONLY FOR ROMANTIC SOULS



Jesus sends his disciples to "the ends of the world". That is, to a world they do not know. To another world. The only limits the world has, are our experiences. It is we who limit the "world" because it is unlimited by itself.

What if the disciples of Jesus, in the spirit of defeat, remained in the grey reality? There would be no them, no us.

It is interesting that Christians are so expansive, searching. I would say - adventurous. They never have enough.

Therefore, people who complain that it is not the way it used to be lose spirit. Or rather - they lose Spirit!!!

A romantic soul is a person of hope. They may not have anything, but they do have an idea. They don't know yet, but they are setting off.

The Extreme Way of the Cross is the spirituality of the cross. A spirituality of hope in a hopeless, grey reality. People go on this road, and they don't know how it will end. There is a risk, there is the unknown.

And the best thing is that walking the EWC is not about reaching the final destination, but about finding hope. The real fruit of the EWC are new ideas and determination to follow them.

The EWC is not a form of sport. The EWC is spirituality of hope. It is the formation of true romantic souls. Creative and brave people. Thinking outside the box. Measuring their lives by the dreams, not by limitations.

The opposite of romanticism is not realism, but the need for control. The three wise men who set off on their way to Bethlehem were romantic souls. I mean, they didn't know where they were going. They only sensed what they were looking for. But if they got to Bethlehem, that means they were quite fit. They left their possessions, the world they knew. There must have been many dangers and obstacles along the way. They must have realistically assessed the situation because they got there in the end. In contrast, people with a strong need for control would stay home. Because in the world they know, they feel in control.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"For those who love the small grows, and any ray heightens hope."

Which means: "A ray heightens hope " - those who love, live their hopes rather than worry about



problems. “And most of all, I miss inspiring people who do great things.” There's only one way to do that: get out of your world and do great things.

Jesus, those three wise men were cool. I would like to follow in their footsteps.

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

'In all truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. (John 16: 20)

What if something ends? Then everything becomes the past.

Slaves of hurts. Hurts are part of our lives. And it's in their nature to hurt. And the pain fills your mind, it doesn't let you think about anything else. Pain encompasses you and drains your energy. Therefore, even when you don't want to, you must think about it. Even when you don't realize it, somewhere underneath - we think pain.

A true story

My dad drank, there were fights at home, we were poor. Of course, it wasn't all bad. However, when I moved out, I saw that life may look different, and I don't necessarily know how to find myself in this new reality. I felt worse. The defenses I had to put up at home to survive didn't work outside. Then I got married and had children. In my marriage, I blamed my husband for many things. I always blamed him. When it got bad, I started therapy. I discovered a lot about myself there. A lot has changed. I also met good people along the way. I discovered that I am responsible for my own life and my happiness. I don't want to give that responsibility to anyone else.

How not to behave:

If I hurt, I look for someone to blame.

That's what many people do. That is why there are quarrels, attacks, insults, and other such behaviors. Quarrelling normally requires some effort. You need a drive for that.

You see someone quarrelling and you know they're feeling bad, so they're looking for someone to blame.

In addition, there is this feeling in the process that a quarrel will bring relief. As if by hurting the one



by whom we feel wronged - we could reverse our hurts. Unfortunately, the more we take it out on others, the more hurt we cause. The new people, hurt by us, will eventually come up with a similar idea and attack us. This is how we create hell on earth. Nothing appears to be happening, but suddenly someone feels that they are in pain. They look for the first person they come across, associate their pain with that person and that's it. Most often, of course, they associate the people around with their pain, because they are the closest.

How to deal with pain:

It is obvious that we all experience pain. We all have hurts. And we all have the temptation to pass them on to others.

Let's think: even if someone hurts us, for example, breaks our arm, is it better to chase that person and take revenge or go to a doctor? So what if we retaliate and cause pain if it will hurt us even more?

You can say that everyone has their pain. It has different sources. But it is ours, only ours. It's very personal. You must learn to live with it and treat it.

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

The only love that will never betray you is self-love.

It means that no one will take care of you as much as you take care of yourself. This is especially true where hurts go. If you don't help yourself, there's not much that can be done about it.

Aching Jesus, I don't want to burden others with my pain, help me on the way to healing.

Fourteenth station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.

No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. (John 15: 13)

A whispered quote from the poet Norwid:

"Heroism is not on battlefields, but in all fields of life and must be practiced constantly. In fact, battles happen only because heroism is not first practiced in fields of life."

Heroism practiced in fields of life - this is the definition of the EWC. Where did this idea come from?

Well, I had this question in me (the person writing this text) "What am I really like?" Sometimes it seemed to me that I was great, at other times that I was the worst, the worst ... Of course, I preferred to feel better than others. But if anything happened, any failure at all, my statuesque "I" would crumble into dust. After a few, probably a dozen, such emotional swings, I began to put my impressions



together. I drew a sort of table in my head: in one column the instances when I thought I was great, in the other - when I was mediocre. Analyzing it mathematically, I concluded that I was probably neither so good nor so bad.

Observing myself, I also concluded that I base my assessment of myself too much on my emotions. And these kept changing.

You will know them by their fruits - Jesus inspired me. If I do something and it works, it means I'm good at it. If not, then I'm not good at it yet. Perhaps I can learn how to improve. My emotions gradually toned down; the swings were less frequent. Still, I was knocked out of my good mood by surprising events: a road accident and how I behaved (for me, inadequately). Or a meeting where I couldn't behave properly. Or someone's request. Or, or...

I was reading a book about behaviors in borderline situations at the time. Because borderline situations are very difficult, it is not known how we will behave. And I wanted to know if I would still be a capable idealist in such situations.

An idea was born I would get into unusual, difficult situations. And I'd see how I coped. The first attempts were mostly disastrous. But then I drew conclusions, I knew what I had to learn. I was developing.

I started a whole new phase in my development process: growing up to borderline situations. What are the outcomes? I've certainly learnt a lot, but my big advantage is my coolness. I don't panic. I have practiced how to react to difficult situations.

The Extreme Way of the Cross is one of the ideas for practicing borderline situations. I walked in the woods at night, I walked in the mountains. To tell the truth, also because I didn't have time during the day, I had to work.

Heroism in the fields of everyday life - this is the same idea, it's just that Norwid discovered it earlier. Many, many have discovered it. Because you don't become a hero just like that. You must practice when there is time. And when the challenge come, you know how to handle it.

Heroism in the fields of everyday life - that's why I keep asking you not to change the EWC into an easy adventure for everyone. It's not for everyone. It is not just an adventure, an impression. It is an important part of working on yourself. In times of peace, it prepares you for war. The EWC is heroism in the fields of everyday life.

Jesus, you gave your life up for your friends. I would like to risk mine too.