

The Power of the Cross

When I was preparing for this meeting, our President asked me to prepare a small talk on the **Cross** in our lives. So I looked to see what would give me the direction to share these few words with you as we begin our meeting. I thought of the **Stations of the Cross**. They are a direction for us - so I chose **four** of them to high light and give us some insight into what this might mean for us, as leaders in the Catholic Women's league.

The first station I chose was **number two - Jesus is made to bear his cross**. *"Consider how Jesus, in making this journey with the cross on his shoulders, thought of us, and offered for us to His father, the death he was about to undergo"*.

Jesus is **carrying** his cross. We all have to carry a cross of some kind or other in our lives. We know that our faith teaches us that we **share** in the cross of Jesus, and it is that sharing that bring us **redemption** and eternal life. **What** are the crosses we bear? Some are **heavy** and some are not so heavy, but they are all crosses the same. It might be a **silent** kind of cross, an illness, a weakness, fatigue due to age, forgetfulness, anxiety for our family members, or it might be a cross of **relationship**, difficulties in marriage and in relationship with our family or extended family. It could be a cross of **worry** and **frustration** over finances, uncertainty for the future, loneliness and fear of abandonment. There are many crosses in our lives and each of us has **one or more**. As we share this weekend let us just briefly think of the crosses that touch our lives personally and let us remember that **we each have crosses**, and that they affect us in different

ways and we carry them in different ways - and we must be sensitive to the fact that we are all like Jesus - called to carry a cross and in our interaction with one another, may our **sensitivity** to each other's crosses help us to **listen**, show concern and be **patient** and compassionate with one another.

“My most beloved Jesus, I embrace all the tribulations you have destined for me until death. I beseech you, by the merits of the pain you did suffer in carrying your cross, to give me the necessary help to carry mine with perfect patience and resignation.”

The second station I have chosen is **number seven: Jesus Falls the second time**. *“Consider the second fall of Jesus under the cross, a fall which renews the pain of all the wounds of his head and members.”*

The fall of Jesus a **second** time. We all know that sometimes we fall under our crosses. Sometimes we think they are **too heavy to bear** and we want to give up. We think the burden is **too** much and the suffering too much for us. We fall....but we also **pick ourselves up again** after the first time. But if there is a **second** fall - where is the strength then? Sometimes this is the time when we want to really abandon it all. I tried to do this job, I tried to lead this committee and I failed. They did not listen, even when I struggled after the first disappointment - I continued but now - **I want to give up**. I don't want **any** part of it. It takes **too much time** and energy and I cannot see a positive outcome.

What did Jesus do? Did he give up? Or did he pick himself up again and continue his journey? This second fall.....when most of us would be willing to throw in the towel - is a **reminder** for us that the journey will

have **failures**, that we will not accomplish everything we might want to do with the precision and desire we have. We need to move **forward** and to think of the second fall of Jesus. He did **not** give up - he continued on despite the pain, the ridicule and the taunting. We might get that too. She is no good in that position. She can't do that. She doesn't know how to lead. There will be tauntings at times. Sometimes we are the persons who make them. But like the Lord, we must continue on and do not give up for the sake of the task or project, for the good of the **league**, and for the good of all its members.

“My beloved Jesus, how many times have you pardoned me, and how many times have I fallen again, and begun again to offend you. But the merits of this second fall, give me the necessary helps to persevere in your grace until death. Grant that in all temptations which assail me, I may always commend myself to you.”

The third station I have chosen is **number five: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross**. *“Consider how the Jews, seeing that at each step Jesus was at the point of expiring, and fearing that he would die along the way, when they wished him to die the ignominious death of the cross, constrained Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross behind our Lord”*

Constrained Simon of Cyrene - who wasn't all that willing to help. They had to **force** him. And yet he helped Jesus. I think of the scene in the movie the Passion of the Christ, where Simon looks into the bloodied face of Jesus, and in some way, in the midst of all the pain, noise and suffering was **touched** by the love of the Lord. He was somehow

transformed by Jesus in his pain, and in the movie he starts to defend Jesus against his persecutors.

Helping someone to carry their cross. We know that we are called to reach out and help others. We at least are called to **make an effort**. Sometimes the assistance is not wanted or desired. Sometimes we are told to 'mind our own business'. And Sometimes we are welcomed and appreciated for the gesture. We cannot always carry someone else's cross - but we can at times **help** or at least help them to realize our compassion and understanding of their situation. Sometimes like Simon, we are **transformed** by sharing our love and concern.

As members of the league, and as **leaders** we ask others to take on tasks that are important for the good of the league and its councils. We must be like Simon - a helper, but we must be **ready** to help those who seem to be struggling with their tasks. We must be **ready** and sensitive to the burdens or crosses these people might have - so we can know when it is **appropriate** and necessary to reach in and help. We must recognize that helping, especially new members, to experience the support of the league begins with **us** - the **leadership**.

“Most beloved Jesus, I will not refuse the cross, I accept it, I embrace it, I accept in particular, the death you have destined for me, with all the pains that may accompany it, I unite it to your death, I offer it to you. You have died for love of me, I will die for love of You, help me by your grace.”

The fourth station I have chosen is **number ten: Jesus is stripped of his garments**. *“Consider the violence with which the executioners*

stripped Jesus. His inner garments adhered to his torn flesh, and they dragged them off so roughly, that the skin came with them. Feel compassion for your saviour thus cruelly treated”

Why did I choose this station? I chose it because it speaks not only of cruelty but also of **shame**. It was shameful for Jesus as he stood before the crowd exposed and alone. This image is for us to use as a reflection, because we **can do the same** in our relationships with one another through our talk, our criticism, our **gossip**. Pope Francis notes that this kind of behaviour does not build up the community of the Church, but tears it down. As members of the league, we must also be most attentive to how we **speak of one another** and how we speak about the **league**, our members, our leadership teams, and our spiritual advisors. We know that an **unkind** word can spread like feathers in the wind....and we cannot bring it back. We know and we all have been **hurt** in some way by gossip or words said without kindness. This brings shame and embarrassment and we do not want to be a part of this - for it does not help build our league or our church. Jesus was **stripped** before others, we can do that too to one another by poor or **uncharitable** talk, and unhealthy criticism. This station gives us pause to make sure in our **words and action**, we do much to build up. to support and strengthen one another and not to shame or tear down.

“My innocent Jesus, by the merits of the torment you felt, help me to strip myself of all affection of things of this earth, in order that I may place all my love in you, who are so worthy of my love.”

And for my last station, I am picking one from the **mediations** of Pope St. John Paul II. After the 14th Station he has one called “**On the Third Day**”. He says: *“this is the day the Lord has made. God had already made this day his own, in the wonderful work of creation. On that day God rested and he commended mankind to do likewise. Then once death had entered the world through man’s disobedience, God again made that day his own, through his victory over death. He is not God of the dead but of the living. So this is the day made by God, the creator and the Lord of life. This is the day the Lord has made.”*

This short mediation by Pope St. John Paul II reminds us that in the midst of any cross or suffering there is the **resurrection** and **new life** of God which is for us. **Jesus** made that possible in his suffering and death, and we know that in uniting any of our crosses, our sufferings and little deaths to that of the Lord, they become **beneficial** for us and for others in our salvation journey. I guess what I want to emphasize here is that as members of the Catholic Women’s League, we are people of **life** and people of **hope**.

We are people of **life**, because we know that life is what God wants for us. Even though we really are surrounded by a culture of death in our world, most notably lately though physician assisted death, we are people of life - and life gives us **energy**, life gives us **determination**, life gives us **enthusiasm**, life gives us strength and power.....life gives us **HOPE** for a better future for ourselves and those who will come after us. That is what we do as members of the league. We **challenge** the temptations to life and seek to change society for the better in our work and actions even

though there are **crosses**. We do so because we know that even though **crosses** are involved and there is some **suffering**, some setback, some confusion and frustration, there is always **life at the end of the struggle**, because that is how God made it and put it together for us. We are people of **HOPE** because hope **sustains** us in our journey. The hope of the new life Jesus has won for us.....and demonstrated to his apostles after his resurrection. *“Look a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have”* he said to his disciples after he rose from the dead. *“Put your finger here and see my hands, Bring your hand closer and place it in my side”* He said to Thomas.

We too put our **fingers** into the hands of Jesus when we reach out to others with this **compassion** and hope that we share in our faith and in our conviction in the work of the league. **Our** hands touch others and in turn they touch Jesus, who is in others. Our hands are not the hands of a doubter like Thomas, but hands of compassion and love - like those of Jesus himself.

As we share this weekend together. let us in our **prayers**, remember those who **carry crosses** in their lives, including **ourselves**, let us think of the burdens that are carried and shared by our members, our spiritual advisors and by many in our councils and church communities. Let us remember that there will be times when we will **fall**, but the Lord will give us the strength to carry on - and to help those who fall around us. Let us **never shame others** in our words or talk, and let us help to **lift** the crosses that we see before us as Simon helped Jesus. We remember that the

cross has **transformed** our lives.....has become a strength for us....because it is united to the cross of Jesus the Lord.

“I love you my beloved Jesus, I love you more than myself. I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always....and then do with me what you will.”

That is what it means to be a member of the League - for God and Canada.

AMEN.