

Stepping Stones On The Journey

By a Religious of the Good Shepherd.
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Dedicated to the Heart that Suffered for me, as a Love-Gift of Reparation.

FOREWORD.

‘All creatures are to be used by us as stepping stones to God.’

Certain treasured ‘stepping-stones’ have been very carefully gathered by the compiler in the Summer-time of life, and later, when help and courage were needed on the journey.

Down the years these Sunbeams – the golden memories of retreats, conferences and instructions, have brought many a joy and consolation in dark days.

It would seem selfish not to share with others the many graces to be found hidden in this harvest of notes and extracts.

May the effort to console the loving Compassionate Heart of The Master be crowned with success by helping souls so dear to Him

“to follow Him more nearly and love Him more dearly.”

Feast of the Good Shepherd, April 30, 1933.

God bless the Readers
With blessings beyond hope or thought
With blessings that no words can find.
– Alfred Lord Tennyson.

The Friendship of Christ is not a luxury – something we can do without – it is a dire necessity in the lives of thinking men and women.

Happiness here means holiness – and holiness means the union of our will with the Will of God.

Wonder not that Providence should sanction Pain. Wonder not, for the world has been brought back to holiness by the blessing of the Cross.

Pain and pleasure both are useful in our life. Do not rail in silly thought or sinful speech against the wisdom of the tenderness of Providence.

Often think of the last words you say in your Creed, 'Life Everlasting' – You may be sure that all the joys of this world will be united in Heaven – to last for all Eternity.

It is personal friendship of the Good Shepherd for each one that decides His opinion of us – He knows how to excuse many of our faults, because He knows that our thought was not quite clear and that our will was not quite free.

What others have would not suit us –

What we have we do not value –

What we have not we desire.

Ask Jesus to give us His Love and His grace, all else is naught.

Submission to God's Will sweetens life, and no sorrow seems too difficult to bear when we love God's Will.

In full a hundred places in Scripture, God's Love for those who love the truth is referred to – Many do not care to see the truth, but hug their delusions with affection, though perhaps unconsciously.

Let the Heart of Christ be the first to hear our sorrows and the first to hear the accents of our loving thanks when joy fills our souls.

Look ever upward and onward towards the goal of Eternal happiness, and nothing will rob you of the Peace that the Friendship of Christ bestows.

'Not my will but Yours be done', our Divine Lord teaches us devotion to our Father's Will.

Bear sorrow unselfishly and your sorrow will be turned into joy.

Praise is the creature's answer to the beauty and kindness of the Creator – Our relations with God as His creatures, are the nearest and dearest and sweetest claims to the mercy of Him Who knows the frailty of those He has made.

Labour in His Cause Who alone can reward your toil. Time spent in the service of any but the Divine Master is time lost.

There is only one love worth seeking, One friendship worth prizing, one judgement worth fearing.

Look from beneath the cross of today to the sunshine of tomorrow, and cultivate a grateful heart in storm and in calm.

Be kind to the poor and miserable.
Be kind to the sick and sad.
Be kind to the weak and wayward
Be kind to the rough and cynical.
And Oh, be kind to the poor sinner.

To brood over our sufferings is poison to the soul – So also is pondering over the faults of others.

Let your conscience be sincere and upright during life. It will be your consolation in death and your advocate at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Calvary is the Master's school of suffering – learn from Christ Crucified to bear life's trials patiently in sympathy with Him Who died to win our love.

A few years of labour – then eternal rest. A few years of struggle – then everlasting Peace.

Peace is the field in which all virtues play. The best thoughts to keep us in peace are of our Lord's mercies to us, which give us joy – and our sins to keep us humble.

Christ will be my Judge and I may disarm His Judgments by never passing a severe judgment on anyone.

Suffer with joy – the reward is not far in the distance. A few short years of patient labour here, on earth; and then a crown of everlasting bliss – in Heaven.

It matters not what we HAVE BEEN but what we ARE. Even in the few years that may remain to us, we may become the beloved friends of God and heirs to His Kingdom.

Creatures are the veil, which hide God; they are good angels to help us, or evil ones to turn us away from God.

They only are brave who rely on the infinite forgiveness of God and after each fall ask pardon and again begin with renewed sorrow... renewed trust in the inexhaustible loving kindness of our God.

Ask our Lord very earnestly to show you what He wants of you and to give you the strength and courage to give it to Him.

Thoughts and feelings do not matter. We shall be judged only by our will.

‘There was one Heart that loved us to the end – to the end of love, and to the end of suffering. Let us remember this and we can very well afford to do without human love.’

God has too much respect for our free-will to interfere with us and force us – our free-will is God’s special gift.

It is not an easy thing to reform our character in such a manner that we preserve only what is good, and succeed in correcting what is defective.

True devotion is never a melancholy thing for our selves or for others. God loves to see His children happy even in the midst of varied anxieties.

Suffering borne for the sake of Christ purifies the soul from the dross of earth and is the prelude of true super natural joy of heart.

Forget self, and be one of those to whom any one can come for assistance and will be sure of a kind word at least – Listen gently, and let those who have troubles of their own be the more ready to ease the trouble of others.

We can often give a great deal of help by putting in a word of sympathy now and then.

Here we have misunderstanding and loneliness, toil and suffering. In Heaven the Father is waiting to bid us welcome to eternal happiness.

If we are always excusing ourselves in our hearts, in our thoughts and in our works, we are full of pride. Our simple prayer should be: ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’

Beware of anger and bitterness when resisting a false accusation lest you should be led into actual sin, and thus displease Our Lord instead of bearing the trial for His dear sake.

We cannot have too much devotion to our guardian angel. He never leaves us. He is given us to guide us in the way of holiness.

Ask the grace to have lowly reverent hearts, that will trust Our Lord in the midst of worries; and will never murmur against God's Providence.

If we fall a hundred times a day we should not despair, but stretch out our hands lovingly to God and beg Him to lift us up and have pity on us.

What is called the voice of conscience is in reality the voice of God Himself Who thus warns, enlightens and directs us.

Dark days come to all of us in turn. We are on a long journey and should be prepared for storm and rain. Behind the clouds of today, God's beautiful sunshine is waiting to warm our frozen hearts.

God does not care for me one day and hate me the next, He is not inconstant and capricious like man – above everything, God wants my love in return for His.

Our Lord tries those who are generous – He is so often disappointed in our trust that He eagerly seeks for a soul whom He can try.

We should read to improve our minds and to widen our thoughts. Reading suitable books helps our poor weak nature to understand all we need to become the friends of God.

We must be intensely holy if we wish to be fit instruments in the hands of the Master to aid Him in His work for souls.

Our life work should be the fixing of our happiness in the accomplishment of God's Will.

We meet the same God in death Whom we have so often met in life. Why do we fear our best friend?

Do we ever consider the character of Saint Peter? His vanity, presumption and love of notice. He always felt sure he knew best, bringing on himself many humiliations – But he never failed in his loyalty to our Lord – He was ever ready to submit after his faults; and this always touched the Heart of Christ.

Every time we go before the Tabernacle weighted down by any difficulty or care we come away enlightened in mind and strengthened to bear all for Jesus.

The Eucharist is the Sacrament of light, of life, of love. Frequently drink at this fountain of grace and you will come away replenished with a God-like strength ready to triumph over every little difficulty that lies across your path to holiness.

They who enter on the path of sanctity need no equipment of soul so much as confidence in God. Perfect trust and perfect conformity to His Will.

If we could but realise our own weakness, and the need we have of God's help, and His readiness to help us in all our difficulties, we should look to Him with so much more confidence.

SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
You know all,
You can do all,
I trust all to You.
MAY YOUR HOLY WILL BE DONE.

Help your brother's boat across, and lo! Your own has reached the shore.

Go on each morning as you rise, Receive the gift that angels prize.

Keep on good terms with everyone you meet, till you climb the hill of Heaven's elect.

Do we pray and intercede for others, specially for poor sinners? If we could but know how much depends on our prayers, we would not be so selfish and forgetful of others – They will help us in return. We cannot afford to do without each other.

Bear a little chaff for the precious grain He gives you.

The more we love Mary, the greater will be our love for Jesus.

The spirit of Joy is the only spirit in which we can do any good either for ourselves or others.

No two beings are created to give God the same glory – but a particular character, a particular place for each one – Whatever else I may seek, I shall be uneasy and restless, out of my place.

When overwhelmed with some anxious care or disturbed by annoyance let us remember and be consoled at the thought of the Joys of Paradise.

If we trust God, there can be no failure in the Spiritual life. Pray for confidence in God. Suffering is the prelude of future joy and happiness.

Drive sadness far from you. It has ruined many and done good to none.

We are saved by hope and confidence in God.

Our greatest need is want of light. There is but little light in us, and this we quickly lose through negligence.

Dear Lord, by the gentle touch of Your Almighty grace, impart to my weak will a firm purpose to seek You alone.

My God, give me something of that Peace and Joy of soul, which Your Holy Sacrament bestows on all who seek You as the One True Friend.

We ought to ask for great graces not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world. Ask for grace to overcome our faults so that we may console His heart.

God tells us we are to ‘Delight in the Lord’ and He never tells us to do what is impossible.

No one ever despises his own work – an author loves his book, an artist his picture. God is our Author, our Artist, and He cannot bear to see anything done to spoil us.

There are few things the sanctity of human sorrow cannot do. God seems to treat it as a power almost co-equal with Himself.

It is we who weigh upon ourselves. Self is the irksome weight. All things look always straight to those who can themselves see straight.

It is worth while to have lived, if it were only to have known the delight of Trusting God.

Ah! Never is our love so pure as when refined by pain, Or when God's glory upon earth finds in our loss – His gain.

We must have the large-hearted, large-minded, tender, compassionate, patient liberty of spirit that characterised Our Lord.

The wisest wisdom in the world is the wisdom that comes from suffering.

We are all children of our Heavenly Father. He loved us as none other can, and loves each one with an ever lasting Love.

There is a greater greatness than the greatness of success, and that is the greatness of failure.

God wants us to let trouble come and go, no matter what it is, and to trust Him.

We have all to learn our lesson at the cost of experience.

The humble, meek acceptance of failure, is the deep foundation of great holiness – Failure is good for every one but necessary for some.

God is always ready to forgive us after we have sinned if we will only humble ourselves and make an act of trust in Him.

Tell Jesus after Holy Communion that you trust in Him – that you believe He loves you. Thus, we may hope that lasting good will come to our souls.

We should have a great desire in our hearts to be the friend of God. What an honour to desire the friendship of our King.

Why am I, after so many years, still so cold, weak and miserable? Because an infinite God can only give me according to the capacity of my heart to receive His gifts.

Let us make good use of our failures and not be down cast. One day of humble acceptance of failure is better than a month of triumphant victory.

It is not the conquest that is so pleasing to Our Lord – but the struggle.

Our work may seem but a discord,
Though we do the best we can,
But others will hear the music
If we carry out God's plan.

True knowledge of the good that is in us aids in carrying on good works. It leads us to do more for God.

The life that has been spent in industry and striving and which is yet a failure is the nearest approach to that of Christ, for what was His life viewed only with external eyes, but a great failure.

The Sacred Heart's craving for us is so great that He threatens us with Hell only if we do not trust Him.

All discouragement comes from pride. Those who fail, through no fault of their own, ought to rejoice in suffering as reparation for past faults.

When in doubt, do what you believe to be right, and leave the consequence to God.

A good way to test our self-love is to examine ourselves well as to our feelings of indignation. How can one so vile as I am, dare to be indignant?

God loves truth. The half-conscious errors, which we cherish and fear to bring to the light lest we should see their untruth, are displeasing to God.

Pride and contrition cannot dwell in the same heart. We sometimes forget the enormous capability for sin which exists in our hearts.

Blessed are those who overlook the faults of others, remembering how liable they are to fail themselves.

When we want to please God, and cause joy to His Heart, let us practise humility – This is what God cannot resist.

Desires – even if never put into action – are very pleasing to Our Lord, give Him great glory and prepare crowns for us.

In God's service, desires, if it is not our fault that we do not put them into action, are gladly accepted by God, and it is well to remember this, because we have so very little else we can give to God.

We must be patient, first with ourselves, or we shall never acquire habitual calmness, which is the mark of true sanctity.

We must have patience with others, patience with their whims, their fancies and humours. Not a dry, hard patience, but a kind, loving one – never showing we are bored.

The world promises joys and pleasures and when we have satiated ourselves, we find their utter worthlessness – We must learn our lessons.

They do enough who do the Will of God.

Our Lord asked specially for Reparation and for Communions of Reparation. The more the thought of Reparation grows in our hearts the more we will long to comfort and console our best Friend.

Whatever is done out of love for Jesus and with a pure intention always bears fruit. It may not be of a kind visible in this world, but it surely does its work springing into life eternal.

Among all the hearts of men, not one can be found as grateful as the Heart of Jesus for the least service we render Him, the least little thing we do for His sake.

Be satisfied with your present life, and lead it to the full. Be content with things as they are and make the best of them.

Art is a vocation, and fine art, whether the artist wills it or not, wields a strange power of fascinating the fancy, and of conquering the heart.

We all make mistakes. What we ought to do is to try to profit by them. How am I to find out what God wants me to do? We need never be afraid – if we really want to please God, we shall do so.

All joy comes from God – What did He promise to His followers? Peace, and peace is a more tranquil form of joy.

Never give way to that false persuasion that the service of God means pain and difficulty – We never serve Him so well as in Joy.

Children of the Celtic Catholic race, think of what Saint Patrick gave us and what we must guard – the honour of Ireland.

Great character is a growth that springs from motives as hidden, yet as firm and as hardy as the oak-tree's roots.

Least of all is great work done for God at haphazard or in a hurry, but is perfected with the immolation of each unnoticed fruitful hour.

The Saint lives neither in the past nor in the future, but tries to be always at work to perfect the present.

We offer You, dear Sacred Heart,
The anguish and the pain of mind
Poor Mortals feel when first they find
The hearts grown cold that once were kind.

Why should we shrink from shame and humiliation? Did not the Master suffer public humiliations and scorn – and for me. Could we but know the value of suffering for Him.

Our 'darkness' is so deplorable, and we never ask for it to be removed. Lord that I may see.

There is greatness in sacrifice – of which others less great may reap the fruit.

What holds us back from being happy, is want of hope and confidence. All can be happy if they believe that God wants to fill their hearts with peace and happiness.

Our Mother Mary will, if we ask her, help us to check the waste of such a precious thing as sorrow.

Those who keep a corner of their hearts consecrated to sadness will never advance in holiness.

The Holy Ghost comes to give us, in all its plenitude, the gift of fortitude to make us strong to suffer.

Which of us makes everything turn to the honour and glory of God? Are we not fools, in a world of fools, to forget this duty?

From God alone I came. To God alone I go – His one purpose to save me – His one desire to help me – Hence His unconquerable patience – Hence my, unfailing hope.

God's Providence put me in this world and in this place, all weak, that I might lean on Him and never doubt the forgiveness of One who knows me through and through.

God will do anything to save a soul that loves His Mother, or that has loved her.

‘Teach me dear Lord to love You and loving You, to serve You without counting the cost.’

The praises of men pass. Let us seek only to glorify God in our work, taking cheerfully success or failure as He chooses to send it.

To pray, to toil, to suffer, make up life, and from none of these can God obtain glory unless Peace is in the heart. What are the obstacles to Peace? Chiefly – unworthy fears of God.

When there is storm in our hearts how often we forget to have recourse to God. There is no cry that comes from any human heart, that does not go straight to Our Lord's human heart, and find sympathy there – and it is always heard. Every cry, every word of ours is treasured in the Sacred Heart.

Among all the hearts of men not one can be found as grateful as the Heart of Jesus for the least service we render Him, the least thing we do for His sake.

Magdalen obtained for herself and for those who ask it of her the grace of true distrust of self and trust in God. This is why those who ever offended Christ, love Magdalen so much and find such powerful help in her intercession.

One of the sweetest graces Our Lord gave us was at the very close of His life when in the person of Saint John He made Mary our Mother.

What we are in God's sight, that is our worth – and no more.

Darkness comes from God as well as light, and that, as a poet of our own day, has put it, ‘Our gloom is after all, only Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly.’

Acting up to Grace means doing the easy things that come our way, doing them well and doing them humbly because they are His Will. Thus do we become saints.

You will find in Jesus the Friend you want so badly and one that will not change with the weather. A Friend that will protect you in all your hidden trials, Who will be always patient with you, Who will never tire of you when you are so tired of yourself.

The shortest way to the Heart of God is to take Him at His word. A saint is one who believes God's promises and trusts Him entirely, and always.

Take comfort for your soul from the written word of those who were saints and who suffered and prayed that they might help souls to know and love Jesus better.

FOR RELIGIOUS.

'Beati qui habitant in Domo tua Domine.' ('Blessed are they who dwell in Your House. O Lord.'

Our value and worth in our Community is simply what we are in God's sight.

There is no preparation for death like a good Religious life.

There is nothing so sanctifying in the religious life as the frequent renewal of our Purity of Intention.

Never rest satisfied until you have made yourself the last in the house, and God will make you great in your Eternal Home.

Be joyous and light-hearted. It is only the soul that works for Jesus that will taste the sweets of the Religious life and the precious gifts of the Sacred Heart.

How we shall rejoice for all eternity that our life and our love were spent in the service of Our Lord and Master.

Look ever upward and onward towards the goal of eternal happiness and nothing will rob you of the peace bestowed on the faithful Spouse of Christ.

It was to help Christ in His combat for souls, and our own in particular, we entered religion.

We can often make it a religious duty to laugh and be cheerful, especially when our heart is many degrees lower than its right place.

In religion, Obedience is our most precious treasure. By it, every act is changed into gold.

We must understand that our life in religion is our Crucifixion and we need no other cross than that of forcing ourselves to model our lives on our rules and to observe them to the letter, but always without scrupulosity.

We can always make religious life joyous and bright. Even when sorrow comes, let us bear it unselfishly.

If you keep Christ before you as the object of your love, LOVE then will be your only rule and you will care nothing for anyone's opinion but God's.

The exact observance of religious discipline is our highest claim to holiness. To be ever ready to keep our Rules in the spirit and in the letter is the daily cross of the soul vowed to a Crucified Redeemer.

They who enter on the path of sanctity need no equipment of soul so much as confidence in God. Trust in God wards off all failure in the Spiritual life.

To prepare for Holy Communion we must watch over our hearts and keep them from every strain. We must yield nothing to self but do all and suffer all for Jesus, in preparation for His loving entry into the soul of His child.

Nazareth is the school of labour where Christ teaches devotion to work and duty. The God-Man working at a humble trade is a solemn condemnation of the "Gospel of idleness" practised by the do-nothings of the world.

The soul that loves God needs no other love. Friendship between the Father and His Child is Divine and will bear no admixture of earthly affection.

Let the one predominating desire of my life be the salvation of my own soul.

Purity of intention is the touch-stone of a perfect religious life. If God be the only aim of our life on earth, we will possess Him for all eternity.

Ever seek the lowest place without seeming to do so. If you make yourself the least in the Community, God will make you great in His Kingdom.

Sorrow is by no means a sickness of soul – it is a health and strength and vigour.

Sorrow is a sanctuary as long as self is kept outside. Self is the desecrating principle. If a time of sorrow is not the harvest-time of grace, it is sure to be the harvest-time of Self.

In religion we often come near to rest and then are cheated of it, and after that we reach a better rest through disappointment, better because it was not our own choice and better, as it proves in its very self.

Sorrow is the tool with which God finishes the statue and animates it with its beautiful expression.

There is a peculiar service, a distinct glory, which God desires to have from every religious different from the service and the glory of any other soul.

What comfort for us all to know that God knows everything. There is light for every darkness in that simple truth.

Sorrow is a condition of time, but joy is the condition of eternity. All sorrow lies in exile from God, all joy in union with Him.

We have espoused Our Lord for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, but not, till death part us – only until death shall join us to Him for evermore.

The hidden life teaches us a life of hidden obscurity. This exacts a repression of the most indomitable passion of the heart, which is a craving to be loved, to be esteemed.

The work that God gives us to do to help Him is a real work, which we cannot do unless we overcome ourselves.

Like the Samaritan, give of your little. A kind word goes a long way. Listen gently, and let those who have troubles of their own be the more ready to ease the troubles of others.

Noble independence is the lesson we should learn in Religion. Creatures of themselves can do nothing: why fear or fret about what is going to happen to us through their means. It is all in the hands of God. We may be in peace.

We are created for perfection. It is the Will of God that our lives be spent in the pursuit of Virtue. How we should love our vocation and do it honour!

Look at Our Lord calling us to follow Him. Look at His manner, the expression of His eyes, listen to the sound of His voice. How do we resemble Him when engaged in our duties?

We should never neglect our spiritual duties on account of our work – we are not serving God by doing so.

We honour God by trusting Him. He only wants us to be sorry if we fail, and never doubt His love. To doubt His love pains Him.

Let us never be cast down. God's grace can do all things. Nothing is impossible to those who believe.

It is worth while to suffer! Those who love suffering cannot sin. Ask for courage.

Try to fulfil very perfectly all the designs of God, endeavouring to please Him in everything you do. Often tell Our Lord you want only Him.

You are very silly and very young in the spiritual life if you are discouraged by the ups and downs that come.

God does not want our spiritual life to be a constant strain, uneasy, foggy, thorny. He loves peace and joy and spiritual gaiety.

The beginning of wisdom is fear. When once we get close to God, away with fear. Perfect love and perfect trust.

Neither sadness, darkness nor sorrow can drive Jesus from my heart, if it be not by my own will.

Detachment brings peace to the heart. To attach ourselves to any creature is to embrace decay. All things pass away with time.

Why do we doubt? Why are we not sure of the sympathy of the Heart of Jesus? No one can know us as Our Lord does because He alone created us.

If we are scrupulous and doubt after having made our act of contrition we are insulting God and are placing perfection almost beyond our reach.

Distrust is the one thing Jesus hates. He can turn every other fault to His glory and our sanctification but not this one. Let us be done with it now and for ever.

Well may we appreciate our vocation! Is there anything greater than this wearing out one's life for Him? Only awaiting that blessed time when we shall see Him in the fullness of His beauty.
