

Mary's "Holy Way of the Cross" Near Ephesus. She Visits Jerusalem

In the neighborhood of her dwelling, the Blessed Virgin had herself erected the Stations of the Holy Way of the Cross. I saw her at first going alone and measuring off all the special points of the bitter Passion according to the number of steps which, after the death of her Son, she had so often counted. At the end of each definite



number, she raised a memorial stone in remembrance of the special suffering there endured by her Divine Son. I saw her with a sharp instrument, a stylus, recording what there had taken place and how many steps it was to it. If a tree happened to be standing on that particular spot, she marked it as one of the Stations, of which there were twelve. The way led to a grove, and there was the Holy Sepulcher represented by a cave in the side of a hill. After all the Stations were definitively marked, the Blessed Virgin made the Holy Way with her maid in silent meditation. When they reached a Station, they sat down, meditated upon the mystery and its signification, and prayed. By degrees, the whole route was improved and more beautifully arranged. John gave orders for regular monuments to be set up. I saw also the cave representing the Sepulcher being cleared out and made more suitable for prayer. The memorial stones lay in hollows of greater or less depth, which were covered with grass and flowers and surrounded by a hedge. They were of polished white marble. The thickness of the underlying surface could not be seen, on account of the grass. The Faithful, when performing this devotion, carried a cross about a foot in length with a support which they placed in the little hollow on the upper surface of the stone while they were meditating, either kneeling or prostrate on their face. The path that ran in a hollow around the stone was wide enough for two persons to walk side by side. There were twelve such stones. When the devotion was ended, each was covered with a mat. The sides and base of all bore similar inscriptions in Hebrew characters, but the hollow places in which they rested differed, some being larger, others smaller. The First Station, or that of the Mount of Olives, was in a little vale. There was a small cave in it, in which several could kneel together. The Mount Calvary Station was the only one not in a hollow. It was on a hill. For that of the Holy Sepulcher, one had to cross another hill on

whose opposite side stood the memorial stone in a hollow. Thence one descended to the foot of the hill and into the tomb itself, in which later on Mary's remains rested. I think this tomb is still in existence under the surface of the earth, and that it will come to light someday.

Whenever I saw Mary making the Holy Way of the Cross, she wore an over garment that fell in folds down the back as far as the feet. It was laid over the shoulders and was fastened under the collar by a button. It was girded round the waist, thus taking in the brownish under dress. It appeared to be a festal robe, for in accordance with ancient Jewish customs, a similar one had been worn also by Anne. Her hair was concealed under a yellowish cap, which was pointed on the forehead and gathered together in folds at the back of the head. A black veil of soft material hung down far below the waist. In this dress I saw her making the Way of the Cross. She had worn it at the Crucifixion under the mantle of prayer, or mourning, which entirely enveloped her, and she wore it now only when performing this devotion. When at work in the house, she laid it aside.

The Blessed Virgin was now very advanced in years, but she had in her appearance no other mark of age than that of a great longing, which at length effectuated her glorification. She was inexpressibly grave. I never saw her laugh. The older she grew, the whiter and more transparent became her face. She was thin, but I saw no wrinkle, no sign of decay in her. She was like a spirit.

Once I saw the Blessed Virgin and five other women making the Holy Way, along which she went first. She was perfectly white and transparent, indescribably touching to look upon. It seemed to me that she was now making the devotion for the last time. Among the holy women who were praying with her, there were several that had become acquainted with her in the first year of Jesus' teaching. One was a relative of the Prophetess Anna, and another was the granddaughter of a maternal aunt of Elizabeth. I saw two of the women making the Way of the Cross by turns every morning and evening.

After Mary had lived three years in the settlement near Ephesus, she conceived a great desire to visit Jerusalem, so John and Peter escorted her thither. Several Apostles were there assembled, of whom I remember Thomas. I think it was a Council, and Mary assisted the Apostles with her advice. On her arrival, I saw her in the evening twilight visiting, before she entered the city, the Mount of Olives, Mount Calvary, the Holy Sepulcher, and all the Holy Places around Jerusalem. The Mother of God was so sad, so moved by compassion, that she could scarcely walk. Peter and John supported her under the arms.

A year and a half before her death, she made one more journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem, and I saw her again visiting the Holy Places. She was unspeakably sorrowful, and she continually sighed: "O my Son! My Son!" When she came to the back gate of that palace where she had first seen Jesus passing with the cross and where He fell, she was so agitated by the painful remembrance that she too sank to the ground. Her companions thought her dying. They removed her to Sion, upon which the Coenaculum was still standing, and in one of whose buildings she took up her abode. For several days she appeared to be so weak and so near death that her friends began to think of preparing her a tomb. She herself made choice of a cave on Mount Olivet, and the Apostles had a beautiful tomb built there by a Christian stonecutter. Many were of the opinion that she would really die; and so the report of her death spread abroad. But she recovered sufficient strength to journey back to Ephesus where, a year and a half later, she did indeed die. The tomb prepared for her on Mount Olivet was ever after held in reverence, and at a later period a church was built over it. John Damascene, as I was told in vision, wrote from hearsay that the Blessed Virgin died in Jerusalem and was buried there. Her death, her Assumption into Heaven, and the site of her tomb, as I believe, God has allowed to be subjects of uncertain tradition that the pagan sentiments of the time might not penetrate Christianity, for the Blessed Virgin might otherwise have been adored as a goddess.