



# Clothed in the Insignia of a Sorrowful Penitent: My path to the Black Scapular of Our Lord's Holy Cross and Passion

*By Megan Silas*

When I was received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 2012, I remember feeling excited to dive into the many devotions and prayers of the Faith but also daunted by the sheer magnitude of options. Among chaplets, rosaries, novenas, and the Liturgy of the Hours to name just a few of the myriad of pious Catholic practices, where was a convert to begin?! One devotion I knew would play a role in my spiritual life, however, was the Stations of the Cross.

I was introduced to the Stations as I observed my first Lent before entering the Church. Each Friday during that Lent, I went to the Adoration chapel at my church to pray the Stations alone, walking from window to window contemplating the Passion of my Savior depicted there in color and glass. On more than one occasion, I was moved to tears by the realization of the depth of Christ's love and sacrifice. When Lent was over, I couldn't imagine simply setting aside the Stations until the next year, and so I continued my practice of walking the Way of the Cross each Friday. Time and again, I would find that it was this devotion that drew me closest to the Heart of Jesus. I began to see all of human experience in Christ's Passion, and, in meditating on it, I came to know Him and myself better.



After a year and a half of these weekly trips down the Via Dolorosa with Jesus, I found myself at Holy Name Passionist Retreat Center for a [retreat](#). I was unfamiliar with the Passionist order prior to coming there. My retreat was not being run by the Holy Name staff, however, I remember

that when I saw the Passionist insignia with the words JESU XPI PASSIO on it, I felt immediately drawn to it in an inexplicable kind of way. It inspired feelings of deep affection and a strange sense of longing in me that would only be fully understood 3 years later.

While I was on that retreat, there was a picture of St. Francis of Assisi hanging in my bedroom. This was not one of the typical birds and fauns type of image of the Saint, but rather one that clearly showed the stigmata that St. Francis bore. After staring at that image for a time, I was struck by the idea that the most intimate gift Christ gives to those who draw nearest to Him is a share in His suffering, and that suffering was truly an invitation from Christ to be united to Him, the Suffering Servant, in the most profound way. This realization took my practice of praying the Stations of the Cross from a contemplation to a deeper level as I sought not merely to observe His Passion but to participate in it in whatever way Christ invited.

In the years that followed, Christ did allow me to taste a little of the bitter gall of suffering, most notably in the death of a dear friend to ovarian cancer and a move that took me away from many



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people and activities that I loved. In those experiences, however, He was so faithful. He drew me closer to His Sacred Heart and helped me to rely on Him more completely. During this time, I found myself at Holy Name two more times for retreats, and the consolations and insights the Lord gave me during those weekends were powerful.

Also during this period, I was drawing closer to the Blessed Mother, and, in the end, I think it is she who led me to the Black Scapular. After completing a 33 day consecration to Mary, I began to think it was time to seriously consider being invested in a scapular. I had been familiar with Marian scapulars from the time of my conversion, particularly the Brown and Green Scapulars, but until about 5 years after becoming Catholic, I had not felt called to wear one. When I did feel that tug on

my heart, I decided to research the options. It happened to be Lent at the time, and one of my Lenten commitments was to pray the Stations of the Cross every day except Sunday. Again, this devotion was bearing much fruit as daily I united myself to Christ in His Passion and endeavored to console Him in His suffering. It was through this lens that I examined the various scapulars that exist not knowing there was one devoted to Christ's Passion. However, once I saw the Black Scapular of Our Lord's Sacred Cross and Passion, the realization that this was what I was being called to was immediate and profound. There was a peaceful and exuberant certainty. I felt as if Mary was saying to me, "You have honored me with your consecration, now unite yourself further to my Son."

As I write this, it has been two weeks since I was invested in the Black Scapular, and the blessing it already has been to me is beyond what I could have imagined. Truly, I feel a palpable intimacy with Jesus that infuses my entire day. I am finding a beautiful paradox that the more I unite myself to Christ in His suffering, the more joy I find in my spiritual life, a joy that transcends the circumstances of daily life. More and more, I find my faith in God's will increasing and any desires of my will that oppose His decreasing. In this way, I feel myself moving toward greater surrender, toward a greater capacity to say with Christ, "Father, Thy will be done. " I pray that that He Who has begun a good work in me will continue to perform it as I keep the Passion of Christ always in my heart.

