

The Stations of the Cross

The Journey of Jesus to His death and Resurrection

Prayer at the start of each Station:

Leader:

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All:

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

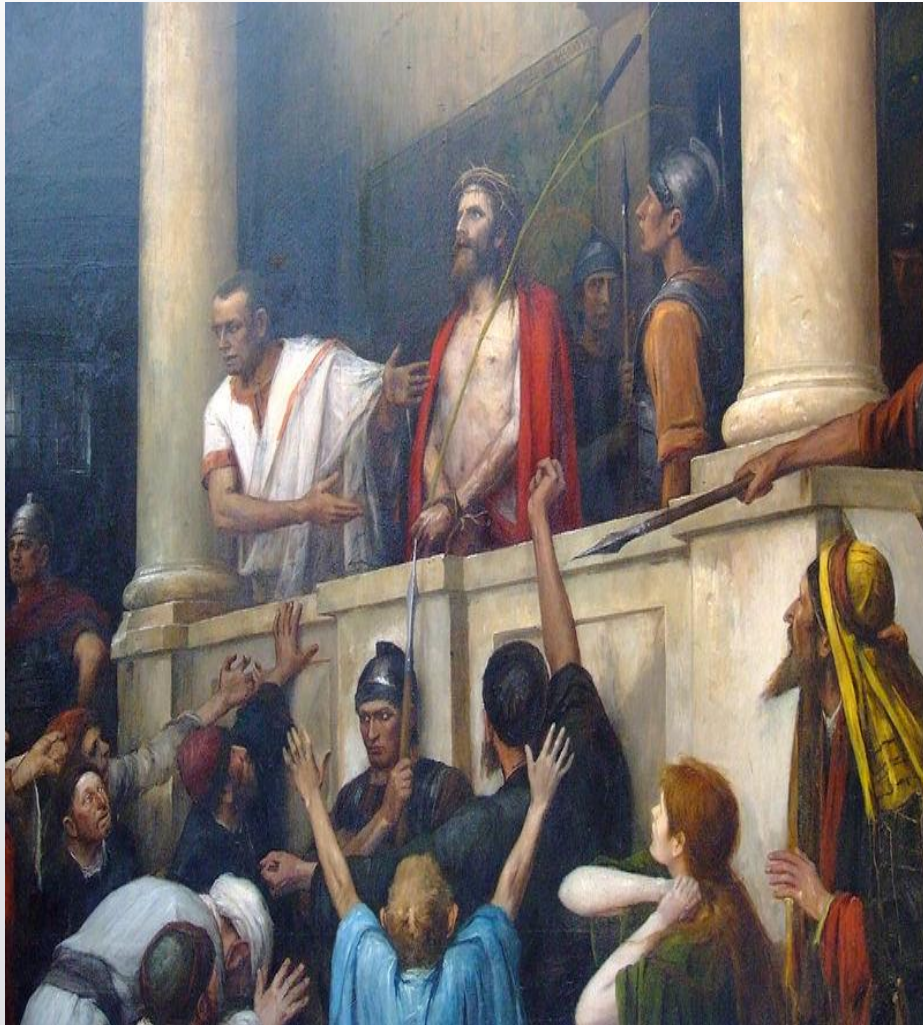
Prayer at the end of each station:

Our Father... Hail Mary...

Leader: Have mercy on us, O Lord

All: Have mercy on us.

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death



It is after ten in the morning. The trial is moving to its close. There has been no conclusive evidence. The judge knows that his enemies have handed Jesus over to him out of envy, and he tries an absurd move: a choice between Barabbas, a criminal accused of robbery and murder, and Jesus, who says he is Christ. The people choose Barabbas!

Pilate is frightened by the growing uproar. So he sends for water, and washes his hands in the sight of the people, saying as he does so: **“I am innocent of the blood of this just man; it is your affair.”** And having had Jesus scourged, he hands him over to them to be crucified. Their frenzied and possessed throats fall silent. As if God had already been vanquished... If only you and I had recognised the day of the Lord!

2nd Station: Jesus takes up His cross



Offering no resistance, Jesus gives himself up to the execution of the sentence.

He is to be spared nothing, and upon his shoulders falls the weight of the ignominious cross.

But, through love, the Cross is to become the throne from which he reigns.

3rd Station: Jesus falls for the first time

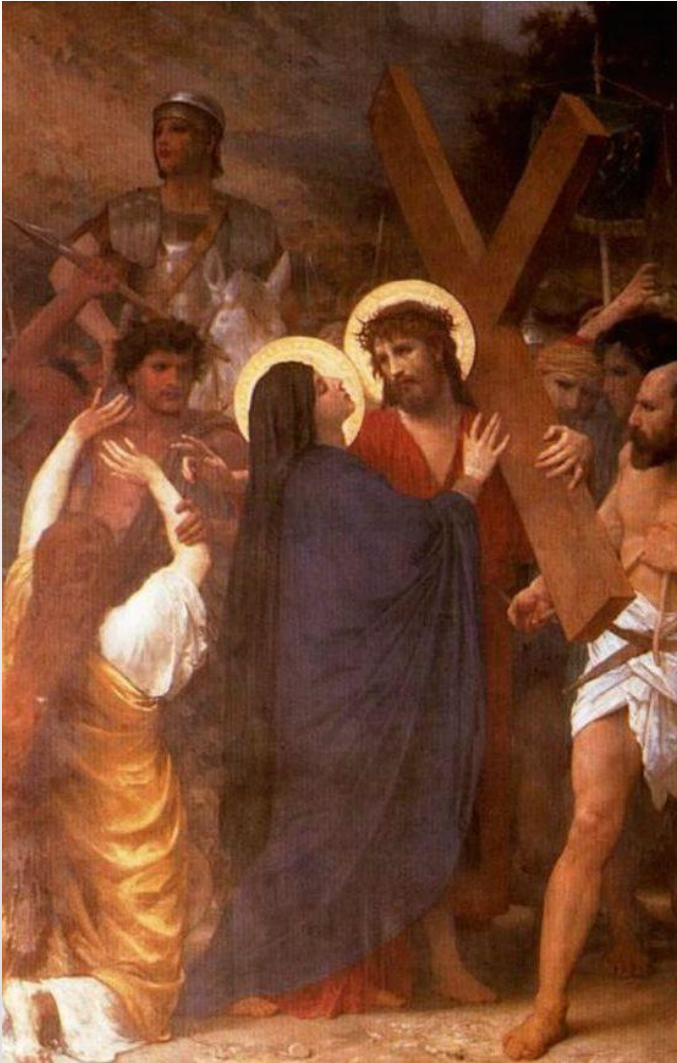


The worn out body of Jesus staggers now beneath the huge Cross... Our Lord falls to the ground exhausted.

Is it not true that as soon as you cease to be afraid of the Cross, of what people call the cross, when you set your will to accept the Will of God, then you find happiness, and all your worries, all your sufferings, physical or moral, pass away?

Truly the Cross of Jesus is gentle and lovable. There, sorrows cease to count; there is only the joy of knowing that we are co-redeemers with Him.

4th Station: Jesus meets His Mother, Mary



Hand in hand with Mary, you and I also want to console Jesus, by accepting always and in everything the Will of his Father, of our Father.

Look at the details in the picture and observe the facial expressions of the people in the painting.

How much must Our Lord have suffered from them?
How much does He love them?
How much does He love us?

5th Station: Simon helps Jesus carry the cross



Look at Simon watching Our Lord very closely.

Do you notice how red Our Lord's eyes are?
Do you see the tears falling from his eyes?
Not only is He a strong, grown man. He is God, King of the Universe. And yet He weeps! Why do you think He is crying?
Do you see how sharp are the thorns in his head?
Do you see how heavy his cross is?
Jesus is looking right at you. Gaze into His eyes. What do you suppose He is thinking?

In the whole context of the Passion, this help does not add up to very much. But for Jesus, a smile, a word, a gesture, a little bit of love is enough for him to pour out his grace bountifully on the soul of his friend... At times the Cross appears without our looking for it: it is Christ who is seeking us out. And if by chance, before this unexpected Cross which, perhaps, is therefore more difficult to understand, your heart were to show repugnance... don't give it consolations. And, filled with a noble compassion, when it asks for them, say to it slowly, as one speaking in confidence: 'Heart: heart on the Cross! Heart on the Cross!'

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



The beloved face of Jesus, that smiled upon children and was transfigured with glory on Mount Tabor, is now, as it were, concealed by suffering. But this suffering is our purification; the sweat and the blood, which disfigure and tarnish his features, serve to cleanse us.

7th Station: Jesus falls a second time



A fall that renews the pain to the wounds already endured by Our Lord and yet He does not give up so that no one may despair, again he wearily raises himself, embracing the Cross and He perseveres.

Liken it to our falling again and again into evil, Jesus responds with his determination to redeem us, with an abundance of forgiveness.

8th Station: Jesus consoles the weeping women of Jerusalem



A number of women are unable to restrain their compassion and break into tears...

But Our Lord wishes to channel their weeping towards a more supernatural motive, and he invites them to weep for sins... Your sins, my sins, the sins of all men, rise up. All the evil we have done and the good that we have neglected to do.

9th Station: Jesus falls a third time



My God!
May I hate sin, and unite myself to You,
embracing the Holy Cross,
so that I too may fulfil your most lovable Will.
Stripped of every earthly attachment,
with no other goal but your glory....
generously,
offering myself with you in a perfect holocaust.

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of His clothes



The executioners take his garments and divide them into four parts. But the cloak is without seam, so they say: 'It would be better not to tear it, but let us cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.'

So Scripture is again fulfilled: 'They divided my garments among them, for my vesture they cast lots.'

Despoiled, left in the most absolute poverty: our Lord is left with nothing save the wooden Cross.

To reach God, Christ is the way; but Christ is on the Cross, and to climb up to the Cross we must have our hearts free.

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross



Now they are crucifying Our Lord, and with him two thieves, one on his right and one on his left.

Meanwhile, Jesus says: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'

It is Love that has brought Jesus to Calvary. And once on the Cross, all his gestures and all his words are of love, a love both calm and strong. With a gesture befitting an Eternal Priest, he opens his arms to the whole human race...

And we, our souls rent with sorrow, say to Jesus sincerely: 'I am yours, and I give my whole self to You; gladly do I nail myself to your Cross, ready to be in the cross-roads of this world a soul dedicated to You, to your glory, to the work of Redemption, the co-redemption of all mankind.'

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross



At the foot of the Cross stands his Mother, Mary, with other holy women. Jesus looks at her; then he looks at the disciple whom he loves.

He says to his Mother: 'Woman, behold thy son.' Then he says to the disciple: 'Behold thy mother.'

It is close on three o'clock, when Jesus cries out: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' ... 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' And he expires.

Love sacrifice; it is a fountain of interior life. Love the Cross, which is an altar of sacrifice. Love pain, until you drink, as Christ did, the very dregs of the chalice.



13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross



Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not known publicly as disciples of the Master...

But now, when things have turned bad, when the others have fled, they are not afraid to stand up for their Lord. Between the two of them they take down the body of Jesus and place it in the arms of his most holy Mother.

Mary's grief is renewed... The Blessed Virgin is our Mother, and we do not wish to, we cannot, leave her alone.

14th Station: Jesus is placed in the tomb



Now it is all over.

The work of our Redemption has been accomplished.

We are now children of God, because Jesus has died for us and his death has ransomed us.

You and I have been bought at a great price. We must make our own the life and death of Christ.

We must die through mortification and penance, so that Christ may live in us through Love. And then follow in the footsteps of Christ, with zeal to co-redeem all mankind.

Yet the greatest triumph was still to come ... Jesus would defeat sin and death when He rose again ... His resurrection! He is Alive! Rejoice and be glad.

