

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus Christ, for our sake you became like the grain of wheat that falls to the earth and dies, so that it may bear much fruit (John 12:24). You invited us to follow you along this path when you told us that “the one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25). Yet we are attached to our life. We do not want to abandon it; we want to keep it all for ourselves. We want to hold on to it, not to give it away. But you go before us, showing us that it is only by giving away our life that we can save it.

As we walk with you on the Way of the Cross, you lead us along the way of the grain of wheat, the way of a fruitfulness which leads to eternity. The cross — our self-offering — weighs heavily upon us. Along your own Way of the Cross you also carried my cross. Nor did you carry it just at one distant moment in the past, for your love continues to accompany every moment of my life. Today you carry that cross with me and for me, and, amazingly, you want me, like Simon of Cyrene, to join you in carrying your Cross; you want me to walk at your side and place myself with you at the service of the world’s redemption.

Grant that my Way of the Cross may not be just a moment of passing piety. Help all of us to accompany you not only with noble thoughts, but with all our hearts and in every step we take each day of our lives. Help us resolutely to set out on the Way of the Cross and to persevere on your path. Free us from the fear of the Cross, from the fear of mockery, from the fear that our life may escape our grasp unless we cling possessively to everything it has to offer.

Help us to unmask all those temptations that promise life, but whose enticements in the end leave us only empty and deluded. Help us not to take life, but to give it. As you accompany us on the path of the grain of wheat, help us to discover, in “losing our lives,” the path of love, the path which gives us true life, and life in abundance (John 10:10).

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

FIRST STATION: Jesus is condemned to death

Lord, you were condemned to death because fear of what other people may think suppressed the voice of conscience. So too, throughout history, the innocent have always been maltreated, condemned and killed. How many times have we ourselves preferred success to the truth, our reputation to justice? Strengthen the quiet voice of our conscience, your own voice, in our lives. Look at me as you looked at Peter after his denial. Let your gaze penetrate our hearts and indicate the direction our lives must take. On the day of Pentecost, you stirred the hearts of those who, on Good Friday, clamoured for your death, and you brought them to conversion. In this way you gave hope to all. Grant us, ever anew, the grace of conversion.

SECOND STATION: Jesus takes up his Cross

Lord, you willingly subjected yourself to mockery and scorn. Help us not to ally ourselves with those who look down on the weak and suffering. Help us to acknowledge your face in the lowly and the outcast. May we never lose heart when faced with the contempt of this world, which ridicules our obedience to your will. You carried your own Cross and you ask us to follow you on this path (cf. Matthew 10:38). Help us to take up the Cross, and not to shun it. May we never complain or become discouraged by life's trials. Help us to follow the path of love and, in submitting to its demands, to find true joy.

THIRD STATION: Jesus falls for the first time

Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross made you fall to the ground. The weight of our sin, the weight of our pride, brought you down. But your fall is not a tragedy, or mere human weakness. You came to us when, in our pride, we were laid low. The arrogance that makes us think that we ourselves can create human beings has turned man into a kind of merchandise, to be bought and sold, or stored to provide parts for experimentation. In doing this, we hope to conquer death by our own efforts, yet in reality we are profoundly debasing human dignity. Lord help us; we have fallen. Help us to abandon our destructive pride and, by learning from your humility, to rise again.

FOURTH STATION: Jesus meets his Mother

Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord, you remained faithful when the disciples fled. Just as you believed the angels' incredible message — that you would become the Mother of the Most High, so too you believed at the hour of his greatest abasement. In this way, at the hour of the Cross, at the hour of the world's darkest night, you became the Mother of all believers, the Mother of the Church. We beg you: teach us to believe, and grant that our faith may bear fruit in courageous service and be the sign of a love ever ready to share suffering and to offer assistance.

FIFTH STATION: The Cyrenian helps Jesus carry the Cross

Lord, you opened the eyes and heart of Simon of Cyrene, and you gave him, by his share in your Cross, the grace of faith. Help us to aid our neighbours in need, even when this interferes with our own plans and desires. Help us to realize that it is a grace to be able to share the cross of others and, in this way, know that we are walking with you along the way. Help us to appreciate with joy that, when we share in your suffering and the sufferings of this world, we become servants of salvation and are able to help build up your Body, the Church.

SIXTH STATION: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts which seek your face. Keep us from the blindness of heart which sees only the surface of things. Give us the simplicity and purity which allow us to recognize your presence in the world. When we are not able to accomplish great things, grant us the courage which is born of humility and goodness. Impress your face on our hearts. May we encounter you along the way and show your image to the world.

SEVENTH STATION: Jesus falls for the second time

Lord Jesus Christ, you have borne all our burdens and you continue to carry us. Our weight has made you fall. Lift us up, for by ourselves we cannot rise from the dust. Free us from the bonds of lust. In place of a heart of stone, give us a heart of flesh, a heart capable of seeing. Lay low the power of ideologies, so that all may see that they are a web of lies. Do not let the wall of materialism become insurmountable. Make us aware of your presence. Keep us sober and vigilant, capable of resisting the forces of evil. Help us to recognize the spiritual and material needs of others, and to give them the help they need. Lift us up, so that we may lift others up. Give us hope at every moment of darkness, so that we may bring your hope to the world.

EIGHTH STATION: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem who weep for him

Lord, to the weeping women you spoke of repentance and the Day of Judgment, when all of us will stand before your face: before you, the Judge of the world. You call us to leave behind the trivialization of evil, which salves our consciences and allows us to carry on as before. You show us the seriousness of our responsibility, the danger of our being found guilty and without excuse on the Day of Judgment. Grant that we may not simply walk at your side, with nothing to offer other than compassionate words. Convert us and give us new life. Grant that in the end we will not be dry wood, but living branches in you, the true vine, bearing fruit for eternal life (cf. John 15:1-10).

NINTH STATION: Jesus falls for the third time

Lord, your Church often seems like a boat about to sink, a boat taking in water on every side. In your field we see more weeds than wheat. The soiled garments and face of your Church throw us into confusion. Yet it is we ourselves who have soiled them! It is we who betray you time and time again, after all our lofty words and grand gestures. Have mercy on your Church; within her too, Adam continues to fall. When we fall, we drag you down to earth, and Satan laughs, for he hopes that you will not be able to rise from that fall; he hopes that being dragged down in the fall of your Church, you will remain prostrate and overpowered. But you will rise again. You stood up, you arose and you can also raise us up. Save and sanctify your Church. Save and sanctify us all.

TENTH STATION: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Lord Jesus, you were stripped of your garments, exposed to shame, cast out of society. You took upon yourself the shame of Adam, and you healed it. You also take upon yourself the sufferings and the needs of the poor, the outcasts of our world. And in this very way you fulfil the words of the prophets. This is how you bring meaning into apparent meaninglessness. This is how you make us realize that your Father holds you, us, and the whole world in his hands. Give us a profound respect for man at every stage of his existence, and in all the situations in which we encounter him. Clothe us in the light of your grace.

ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Lord Jesus Christ, you let yourself be nailed to the Cross, accepting the terrible cruelty of this suffering, the destruction of your body and your dignity. You allowed yourself to be nailed fast; you did not try to escape or to lessen your suffering. May we never flee from what we are called to do. Help us to remain faithful to you. Help us to unmask the false freedom which would distance us from you. Help us to accept your “binding” freedom, and, “bound” fast to you, to discover true freedom.

TWELFTH STATION: Jesus dies on the Cross

Lord Jesus Christ, at the hour of your death the sun was darkened. Ever anew you are being nailed to the Cross. At this present hour of history, we are living in God’s darkness. Through your great sufferings and the wickedness of men, the face of God, your face, seems obscured, unrecognizable. And yet, on the Cross, you have revealed yourself. Precisely by being the one who suffers and loves, you are exalted. From the Cross on high you have triumphed. Help us to recognize your face at this hour of darkness and tribulation. Help us to believe in you and to follow you in our hour of darkness and need. Show yourself once more to the world at this hour. Reveal to us your salvation.

THIRTEENTH STATION: Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given to his Mother

Lord, you descended into the darkness of death. But your body is placed in good hands and wrapped in a white shroud (Matthew 27:59). Faith has not completely died; the sun has not completely set. How often does it appear that you are asleep? How easy it is for us to step back and say to ourselves: “God is dead.” In the hour of darkness, help us to know that you are still there. Do not abandon us when we are tempted to lose heart. Help us not to leave you alone. Give us the fidelity to withstand moments of confusion and a love ready to embrace you in your utter helplessness, like your Mother, who once more holds you to her breast. Help us, the poor and rich, simple and learned, to look beyond all our fears and prejudices, and to offer you our abilities, our hearts and our time, and thus to prepare a garden for the Resurrection.

FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Lord Jesus Christ, in your burial you have taken on the death of the grain of wheat. You have become the lifeless grain of wheat which produces abundant fruit for every age and for all eternity. From the tomb shines forth in every generation the promise of the grain of wheat which gives rise to the true manna, the Bread of Life, in which you offer us your very self.

The eternal Word, through his Incarnation and death, has become a Word which is close to us: you put yourself into our hands and into our hearts, so that your word can grow within us and bear fruit. Through the death of the grain of wheat you give us yourself, so that we too can dare to lose our life in order to find it, so that we too can trust the promise of the grain of wheat.

Help us grow in love and veneration for your Eucharistic mystery — to make you, the Bread of heaven, the source of our life. Help us to become your “fragrance,” and to make known in this world the mysterious traces of your life. Like the grain of wheat which rises from the earth, putting forth its stalk and then its ear, you could not remain enclosed in the tomb: the tomb is empty because he — the Father — “did not abandon you to the nether world, nor let your flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31; Ps 16:10 LXX). No, you did not see corruption. You have risen, and have made a place for our transfigured flesh in the very heart of God. Help us to rejoice in this hope and bring it joyfully to the world. Help us to become witnesses of your Resurrection.

For the intentions of the Holy Father: Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be...

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