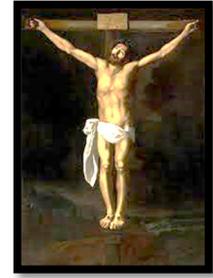


STATIONS OF THE CROSS

for a time of pandemic



Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as we walk with you on your Way of the Cross, help us to see how your sacrifice gives meaning to our own difficult times as we suffer in so many ways from this worldwide pandemic. Your cross stands in the centre of history, a towering sign that the God who created our world out of love understands our pain and shares it with us. Amen.

FIRST STATION

Jesus Is Condemned by Pilate

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "Just as you say, I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth." (Jn 18:37)

For a while, it looked like Pilate might save Jesus. He sent signals like he would. But ultimately, we see what Jesus already knew: There is no salvation on earth. That adoring crowd from a week ago now shouts "Crucify him!" His friends abandon him. Worldly power, in the person of Pontius Pilate, will choose the crowd over what is right.

Lord Jesus, the pandemic has taught us all the lesson you already knew: The world may be beautiful and exciting, but it is fallen and dangerous, too. May we learn from you that there is only one who does not disappoint; the ground of being, God himself.

SECOND STATION

Jesus Accepts His Cross

Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" But they cried out, "Away with him! Crucify him!" Then he handed them over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying his cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull. (Jn 19:14-16)

Jesus Christ submitted entirely to the will of the Father, and so when he was given a rough cross to carry to his own execution, he embraced it. In some depictions he even kisses the cross. He knew that the cross meant suffering, torture, and death, but he trusted his Father and knew that God brings good from every evil, even an evil as terrible as the cross.

Lord Jesus, pandemic is a hard cross to accept. Who will get sick? Who will die? Who will lose their job? How will this reshape the future? The only way to accept it is to trust, as you did, that the Father's care will never end. Give us this trust!

THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls for the First Time

He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed (Is 53:5)

Jesus fell under the weight of the cross — under the weight of our sins — and we are horrified to see it. We repent what we did that led to this. First, we repent the way we sinned with our pride and greed. We lived a complacent life filled with selfishness. We ran up debts to please ourselves and impress the world instead of saving for an uncertain future. We put other gods in the centre of our lives instead of the one God.

Lord Jesus, you do not directly cause suffering, but you allow it for our good. Help us remember in this pandemic, that we are not the centre of the universe. You are. We repent of our pride and greed. May we put our time, effort and resources where our heart truly is, with you.

FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Mother

Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary – and a sword will pierce your own soul too. (Lk 2:34-35)

Here is Jesus, face to face with his mother. When he was a baby, she was told that a sword would pierce her heart. From the cross, he will make her our mother. In between, she has had to walk a rough road with her son. But as they gaze at each other, the love the two have is so deep and sweet all of that is forgotten.

Lord Jesus, if we did not know before, the pandemic reveals what your mother knew so well: This world is “a vale of tears.” Thank you for the gift of your mother, and thank you for your fidelity to the loving concern for us she brings to you.

FIFTH STATION

Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

On the way they met a man from Cyrene named Simon; they forced him to carry the cross of Jesus. (Mt 27:32)

A passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, is compelled by the Romans to help Jesus carry his cross. He stands for the corporal works of mercy, serving the physical needs of others: Feeding the hungry, clothing the sick, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, burying the dead — and above all right now, visiting prisoners (and shut-ins!), and visiting the sick.

Lord Jesus, show us opportunities to directly help those who are suffering from the pandemic. Sometimes, like Simon, we have little choice but to help. Sometimes we must seek out those who need our assistance. Send us out, an army of Simons, to lighten the burdens around us.

SIXTH STATION

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

He had no majesty that we should look at him, nothing attractive in his appearance. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering acquainted with infirmity. (Is 53:2-3)

Ignoring the complaints of the Roman guards, Veronica reaches out to comfort Jesus, using her veil to wipe his face, and receiving his image there in return. She stands for the spiritual works of mercy: instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, forgiving offenses, counselling the doubtful, bearing wrongs patiently — and above all right now, comforting the afflicted and praying for the living and the dead.

Lord Jesus, when we reach out to the suffering, our efforts restore your image in others, and imprint your face on our lives. Give us the words we need to say to give faith to the shaken and hope to the hurting.

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Second Time

I offered my back to those who strike me. I did not hide my face from insults and spittle. But, I have not been disgraced, for the Lord God comes to my help. He who vindicates me is near (Is 50:6-8)

The weight of our sins forces Jesus to the ground again. This time, it's our sins of anger and envy that weigh him down. Like the crowds that were tantalized then scandalized by Jesus, we have allowed ourselves to become petty and superficial, feeding off the anger of the like-minded and rejecting the humanity of those with whom we disagree. We have walled ourselves off into halls of mirrors reflecting our own image, where your truth can no longer penetrate.

Lord Jesus, it took a pandemic for us to see that we are all your creatures, struggling to find our way in the world. We repent of our habits of anger and envy. Teach us to see the dignity of everyone we meet, and to listen and respond to their lives with your love.

EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." (Lk 23:28)

Jesus faces the crowd of women who are weeping in sadness for his plight. But he says "do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." The ultimate tragedy of Jesus's suffering is not the pain he endures, but the many people who will refuse to accept the offer of salvation that is the reason for his pain.

Lord Jesus, help us see in this pandemic not just a tragedy of human suffering, but a tragedy of human souls. Help us to weep not just for the difficulties the world faces, but for the sins the world commits. We offer you the only consolation you want: Our lives offered back to you.

NINTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Third Time

By his suffering my righteous servant will justify many and he will take away their sins. (Is 53:11)

One last time — even as the end is in sight — Jesus falls once again into the dirt. This time he is knocked down by our sins of sloth and lust. Here he struggles up Calvary for us, but we so often cannot be bothered to do even the minimum for him. He calls us to greatness; we want only comfort. He offers his body to the Father; we pamper our bodies. We realize in horror that he died for the very people whose bodies we have treated as objects for our use.

Lord Jesus, in this pandemic, we repent of our sloth and lust. As those around us suffer sickness, economic hardship, and death, give us the purity of heart to see the true worth of everyone we meet, to repent of our past sins, and to honour and defend your image in others.

TENTH STATION

Jesus is Stripped

When they reached the place called Golgotha, there they divided his clothes among themselves, casting lots to decide what each should take. (Mt 27:33.35)

Jesus goes to his Father as he came into the world. He has no fine clothes, no mighty airs — he is stripped bare before God and man, with nothing to hide his scars and pain, showing the whole world that that while, yes, Jesus Christ is fully God, he is also fully human. He is one of us.

Lord Jesus, this pandemic has stripped us of our illusions. We were like the Emperor With No Clothes, putting on airs and ignoring our real predicament, imagining we were invincible. May we learn from you to see ourselves humbly and honestly, stripped of preconceptions, and to see that our true worth is that we are loved by one as great as you.

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

There they crucified him. The statement of his offence was displayed above his head and it read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." (Mt 27:35.37)

Here is the last torture of the mighty king: He is pinned, helpless, to a cross. The hands that created the universe clutch at the heads of nails. The feet that walked on water stream blood onto a wooden block.

Lord Jesus, the pandemic has left us feeling helpless in front of the awful reality of suffering and pain. We are helpless to avoid the suffering that keeps coming, pinned to the cross of circumstance. But when we are most helpless, we find you, embracing us.

TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

At about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me. Then Jesus cried out again and gave up his spirit (Mt 27:46.50)

And then it happens. The unthinkable. The last cries of anguish, the commission of his spirit to God, and then the mighty head that spoke such beautiful words falls silent and limp. The King has died. This is a greater fear than any we could have imagined, and it is suddenly all too real: Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, is dead on a cross.

Lord Jesus, none of us knows what we face in this pandemic. We fear the worst. We fear death. And for some of us, that fear will be realized. But you have yourself suffered the thing which is our greatest fear to reassure us that that even if you call us there, we will find you waiting, filled with love.

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”. (Mt 27:54)

The pain stops at last when Jesus Christ has given the full measure of love. He has carried the burden, he has been pushed and prodded and driven to his death. There, at the end of the road, his body ends where it began, in the loving embrace of his mother.

Lord Jesus, we have a long road ahead of us in this pandemic. We will walk it to the end and though we do not know what we will find, we will walk it with faith and we will never give up, knowing that every road leads to you.

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb

Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb. (Mt 27:59)

In the end, Jesus is buried in a cave, and a rock is pushed across the mouth of the tomb. He is left to rot. So often, the world has done the same thing: Hidden Jesus away, sealed him off from polite society, and given up on his love. But our Lord will not decompose in the tomb. He will rise again and will make himself present in the sacraments of the Church: baptism, confession, the Eucharist, confirmation, our marriages, holy orders and the sacrament of the sick.

Lord Jesus, so often the world has counted you down and out. But you always rise again. In this time of pandemic, we pray for the physical cure our bodies need, but thank you with all our heart for the spiritual cure that you gave us on Easter. May our present suffering lead us to love you even more in your sacraments.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, these are such difficult and painful times. We have walked your Way of the Cross with you, remembering your sacrifice. Now we ask that you walk our Way of the Cross with us, filling our lives with your love. We know that whatever comes, the future is safe in your hands. Amen.

By Tom Hoopes, March 24, 2020

<https://www.thegregorian.org/2020/stations-of-the-cross-for-a-time-of-pandemic>

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