

The Way of the Cross

Following Jesus Christ on his way to Calvary, a traditional devotion helps us to meditate on the mysteries of salvation.

Opening Prayer

Leader: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

All: *Amen.*

Leader: **The journey we are about to make is a special one. It is a journey that has already been made for us by Jesus. However, this is not simply a journey that Jesus made, but rather a journey that we all continue to make each day of our lives. Every step, every stumble and every victory that we experience each day, has already been experienced by Jesus himself. Together with Jesus, we shall walk the steps that lead to a death, for we all face little deaths each day. But even more, together with Jesus, we will rejoice in the resurrection that follows these deaths, because the cross is not a sign of defeat. It is a sign of victory. Together, let us deny our very selves, take up our crosses and follow in the way of Jesus. May we always glory in the cross of Christ, assured of the victory found in his glorious resurrection.**

All: Lord Jesus, I have many difficulties and fears to face each day, and I don't know what to do or who to turn to in my times of need. So often, I feel alone on my journey through life, and at times feel that even you are not with me when I need you most. Open my mind and heart now, as I spend these moments praying and meditating on your immense love for me. Help me to see that I am not alone, that you are with me, and that all my brothers and sisters have problems, needs and dreams that await your action. Keep me from all harm, and guide me in your everlasting ways.

At the cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful Mother weeping
Close to Jesus to the last.

FIRST STATION

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” But he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder “Let him be crucified!” Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.** Matthew 27:22-23, 26

All: 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 heart of those who, on Good Friday, clamored 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing
All His bitter anguish bearing
Now at length the sword has passed

SECOND STATION

Jesus takes up his cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **And the whole people said in reply, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. Matthew 27:25-31**

All: 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 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. Mt. 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

O, how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother highly blessed
Of the sole Begotten One

THIRD STATION

Jesus falls for the first time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed by our sin. Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all.** Isaiah 53:4-6

All: 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Christ above in torment hangs
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son

FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his mother

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: . . . **And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother “Behold this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man. Luke: 2:34-35,51**

All: 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 become 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Is there one who would not weep,
Overwhelmed in miseries so deep
Christ’s dear Mother to behold?

FIFTH STATION

The Cyrenian helps Jesus carry the Cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, “Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus called Messiah?” For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, “Have nothing to do with this righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him. The chief priest and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They answered, “Barabbas!” Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus? Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Let him be crucified!” When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.” Matthew 27:32, 16-24**

All: 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain
In that Mother’s pain untold?

SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth; there was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him. He was spurned, and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held him of no esteem.** Isaiah 53:2-3; Psalms 27:8-9

All: Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts that seek your face. Keep us from the blindness of heart that sees only the surface of things. Give us the simplicity and purity that allow us to recognize your presence in the world. When we are not able to accomplish great things, grant us the courage that 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent.

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls for the second time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **I am a man who knows affliction from the rod of his anger, one whom he has led and forced to walk in darkness, not in the light; . . . He has blocked my ways with fitted stones and turned my paths aside. . . He has broken my teeth with gravel, pressed my face in the dust.**

Lamentations 3:1-2,9,16

All: 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. Helps 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

For the sins of His own nation
Saw Him hang in desolation
Till His Spirit forth He sent.

EIGHTH STATION

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem who weep for him

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **Jesus turned to them and said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and your children, for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, “Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed. At that time people will say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and the hills, ‘Cover us!’ for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?”**

Luke 23:28-31

All: 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 Judgement. Grant that we may not simply walk at your side, with nothing to offer but 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. Jn 15:1-10)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

O sweet Mother! Found of love
Touch my spirit from above.
Make my heart with yours accord.

NINTH STATION

Jesus falls for the third time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **It is good for a man to bear the yoke from his youth. Let him sit alone and in silence, when it is laid upon him. Let him put his mouth to the dust; there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to be struck, let him be filled with disgrace. For the Lord's rejection does not last forever.**

Lamentations 3:27-32

All: 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Make me feel as You have felt.
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.

TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull) they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. Matthew 27:33-36**

All: 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 fulfill 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Holy Mother, pierce me through
In my heart each would renew
Of my Savior crucified.

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the son of God, (and) come down from the cross!” Likewise, the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.”** Matthew 27:37-42

All: 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Let me share with you His pain,
Who for all our sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.

TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the Cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, “Jesus, the Nazarean, the King of the Jews.” Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek.**

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.” But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. . . . (*period of silence while kneeling*). The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, “Truly, this was the son of God.” John 19:19-20; Matthew 27:45-50,54

All: 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Let me mingle tears with thee
Mourning Him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.

THIRTEENTH STATION

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

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, “Truly, this was the son of God.” There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him.** Matthew 27:54-55

All: Lord, you descend into the darkness of death. But your body is placed in good hands and wrapped in a white shroud (Mt 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

By the cross with you to stay
There with you to weep and pray
All I ask of you to give.

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

All: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world*

Leader: **Taking the body, Joseph wrapped (it) in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.** Matthew 27:59-61

All: 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 that 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.

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 that 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) 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.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .

Virgin of all virgins blest,
Listen to my fond request,
Let me share your grief divine.

Closing Prayer

Leader: We have journeyed these steps in a spirit of prayerful hope. When we unite our sufferings and difficulties to those of our Lord Jesus Christ, our sadness and distress will eventually change into joy, vindication, healing and peace. Though we may bear the scars of our hurts, we will no longer be prisoners of fear, for we have triumphed through the victory of the cross and resurrection. Let us always be about our Lord's work. May we accomplish this work patiently and carefully, trusting in the power of the risen Christ, who dwells among us and will bring us everlasting life forever and ever.

All: AMEN

For the intentions of the Holy Father we pray:

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be . . .



Knights of Columbus – Columbia Magazine, March 2013
with prayers by Pope Benedict XVI