

THE WAY OF THE CROSS 2021 – SENIOR CITIZENS

(You may adapt the Way of the Cross as per your Parish requirements)



Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Hymn no. 144 – God of Mercy and Compassion

Opening Prayer:

Walking with Jesus on his way to Calvary can take on special meaning for us as we face the pain and challenges that come with advancing years. Jesus' passion and death reveal that fullness of life is attained not so much by the number of years as by its intensity and faithfulness. As I walk this way to Calvary, I believe that every Station with Jesus will give me a stronger understanding of what it means to age with grace, faith, patience, cheerfulness, optimism, wisdom and hope. As Abraham and Sarah, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Eli, Simeon and Anna the prophetess learned, old age is not just a time of decline but a time of fulfillment and an opportunity for continuing growth into the life and love of God. Lord Jesus, teach us to walk together with you in this world so that we may understand the power of your Resurrection. Amen.

THE FIRST STATION - JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

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

"Then the chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Jesus was presented before Pilate like a criminal, all alone, humiliated and condemned. He took the blame for a crime he did not commit.

We must realize the suffering and pain that Jesus went through for our sins. When we are rebuked or teased for our clumsiness, lack of comprehension or our failing memory, we feel hurt and ashamed. We long for compassion and consideration. We see advancing age as a fate we are sentenced to and we become bitter instead of embracing it joyfully as a part of life. On the other hand, we too may attempt to be judgmental and dishonour the good name of another human being through gossip, lies or slander. Jesus stands with those who suffer alone. He died to bring us out of darkness to walk in the fullness of life which he offers us.

Abba Father, we pray that the Holy Spirit may guide us to acknowledge and embrace our advancing age and its difficulties, to always seek the truth, resist injustice, defend the innocent and walk in the light. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us.

THE SECOND STATION - JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

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

"So, they took Jesus; and carrying the Cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha". Struggling under the weight of the heavy cross, Jesus began his painful walk to Calvary. Though mocked and ridiculed, he accepted his fate and continued his journey because he loved us with an everlasting love and wanted to fulfill his Father's will. The cross bore the burden of our sins.

Our advancing years bring on the signs of slowing down - aches and pains, illness, disabilities, diminished energy etc. We may hear snatches of conversations about our infirmities that we are not

supposed to hear. They hurt our self-esteem and our dignity. The cross Jesus bids us to take up includes our ordinary, everyday sufferings especially those associated with aging. We must keep our hearts and minds open to new challenges and continue living our lives fruitfully.

Dear Lord, we remember the times when Jesus carried our Cross with patience in times of sickness, pain, despair, loneliness, loss of loved ones, financial problems etc. Give us the strength of purpose to carry our insecurities and trials patiently and cheerfully knowing that we are doing it for you. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us.

THE THIRD STATION - JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his wounds we are healed”. The weight of the Cross was getting unbearable. Jesus fell to the ground, experiencing powerlessness and weakness. But his determination and his love for us outweighed his physical suffering and he got back to his feet.

As we age, we feel the physical and mental weakness which often makes us say or do things that cause embarrassment. We feel we are going downhill and falling from strength and confidence. But Jesus stands with all who collapse under the weight of pain and suffering. He asks us to stay strong and not to give up; to get back on our feet and continue living productively.

Heavenly Father, help us to accept with humility and simplicity all the setbacks that come our way because Your grace is sufficient for us. Let us use our advancing age as a time for renewal – new relationships, creative activities, stronger spirituality. Let us remember that there is much more to each day than we imagine and when we fall, let not our frailties hinder us from lifting ourselves up and fulfilling our dreams.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

Hymn: Hymn no. 33 – All to Jesus I surrender

THE FOURTH STATION - JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

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

“As the mother of all, Mary is a sign of hope for peoples.... who accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God’s love” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 286). The anguish that Mary felt when she saw her innocent son tormented and struggling could not be measured. As they gazed into each other’s eyes, they communicated love and support and they drew strength from each other’s misery. They had both accepted the Will of God.

Let us remember those sorrowing mothers today whose children are seriously ill, those who have lost a child due to accidents, violence, drug abuse, addictions, suicide etc. Let us also remember all aged parents who are experiencing the “generation gap” or the “communication gap” within their families. They feel lonely and abandoned and a burden to their children. Even with advanced age, we can support them by reaching out to them – a listening ear, a compassionate gesture, a written note, a phone call or home visit. We cannot erase the pain but we can offer consolation.

Mary’s grace-filled presence is always with us to comfort and strengthen us. She knows our suffering better than anyone else does. She is a symbol of hope for us. May our Heavenly Mother intercede for us to obtain the graces we need during life’s journey. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE FIFTH STATION - SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

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

“They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene”. Simon did not know Jesus. But in that moment of need, Simon was able to lend his shoulders to help carry the cross of Jesus. That became a decisive and unforgettable moment in his life.

As we grow older, our faculties weaken and our energy diminishes, our memory fails, our speech falters, our eyesight dims, our feet shuffle, our hands tremble... we are on a go-slow. We begin to lose our independence. We need the help of our family and friends to perform simple daily tasks and to support us. This makes us resentful and bad tempered. We are rude to our family members and caretakers; we flare up at the slightest provocation. Jesus asks us to acknowledge our dependence on others as one of the challenges which come with age and face it with cheerfulness and acceptance.

Abba Father, when we understand that Christianity is all about being dependent throughout our life on our Creator, it becomes easier to accept our increasing dependence on others as we grow older. Help us to accept with humility and gratitude, the assistance of all those Simons who care for us, support us and give us hope in our moments of need— our family members, community members, neighbours, friends and care-givers. Even with our advanced age, we can be a Simon in the world today by offering our wisdom and expertise to the younger generation and others. We can also reach out and support those who are struggling or coping with illness or financial difficulties. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE SIXTH STATION - VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

“He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not”. Veronica, a courageous woman was filled with compassion on seeing the plight of Jesus. She made her way through the crowd and tenderly wiped Jesus' bleeding and sweat-stained face. As a reward, the impression of His sacred countenance was miraculously imprinted upon her veil.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought about a massive change especially in the lives of Senior Citizens and sometimes, it can be frustrating. We are almost under house arrest, not able to go to Church, to the Doctor, to the market, for daily walks, unable to do our routine outdoor jobs. Our families are worried about our health and our safety. Life is more difficult for those aged couples or elderly people who live by themselves. Then, we notice the Veronicas who have rallied around us to buy our groceries, medicines and other essentials, checking on us regularly, providing for our needs and helping out in whatever way they can.

Lord, we thank you for the Veronicas in our lives; for those working tirelessly to create a vaccine, for the Doctors, nurses, paramedics, healthcare workers, the various NGOs and all the frontline workers who are selflessly caring for Covid patients and aged patients. Let us not take their services for granted. Help us to be appreciative and not make things difficult for them by being stubborn and grouchy. May we also be Veronicas to other people in pain and bringing comfort and healing to a bruised world. Even if we are home-bound, we can still radiate Jesus to others by being an intercessor or a prayer warrior. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

**Hymn no.451: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people
THE SEVENTH STATION - JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME**

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

Totally exhausted, Jesus stumbled and fell to the ground once more, staring at the earth beneath him. *"Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return."* His weakened body could stand it no longer. He felt helpless and drained. And yet, with supreme effort, he hauled himself to his feet once more. He just had to carry on...

Today, life can be a real struggle for many of us whose addiction to alcohol or other vices may have taken over our lives. Our dark days never seem to end. We keep falling again and again into the same bad habits, the same irritabilities. Old age can be challenging because we are not ready to accept the changes. We may become egoistic, stubborn and self-centred, cranky, annoying and difficult to live with. Instead of appreciating the presence and help from our loved ones, we find fault with them and make life unbearable for them.

Lord, help us to remember that you walk with us on our journey through life. Just as you were able to resist temptations, you provide us with strength and hope to get over our bad habits. Instead of bemoaning our fate and using our afflictions as an excuse to dodge our family and social responsibilities, let us instead, use our time and talents to bring light and hope to others less fortunate than ourselves. Help us to rise and live productively.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE EIGHTH STATION - JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

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

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children". The women and children of Jerusalem had come out to support Jesus because he had always considered them worthy and respected them. Jesus consoled them, asking for their solidarity in his suffering and to be more concerned about their own children.

Today, let us remember all those mothers who have been disrespected and abused either physically, emotionally or verbally by their spouse or children. Likewise, there are many fathers too in the same situation. In their old age, they are so helpless; they are considered useless and a burden. Some have no peace of mind, some have been neglected or abandoned or left at the mercy of their children. Sometimes, they are bundled into old age homes and left to fend for themselves.

Lord, have mercy on all helpless, disrespected and neglected parents. We long for love, compassion, respect and companionship. Help us to overcome our bitterness, to forgive grudges and forget the hurts. Give us the wisdom to recognize that our personal value does not lie in how others perceive us but in what we are in God's eyes. Even in advanced age, You can call us to do wonderful things, even strengthening our spiritual vigour to reach out to those who do not know Jesus. With Your grace, we can be beacons of light to others in distress, comforting them and giving them hope. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE NINTH STATION - JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

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

“Our steps are made firm by the Lord, when he delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand”. Exhausted, in excruciating pain and weighed down by the heavy cross, Jesus crashed to the ground a third time. But he did not give up. His goal was Calvary and he was almost there. Obedience to his Father’s will and his love for us spurred him on to continue his painful journey.

Like Jesus’ heavy Cross, the daily burdens that senior citizens face overwhelm us and weigh us down. We feel exhausted and crushed. Sickness, mental turmoil, financial insecurity, unresolved property issues, family disputes, loneliness, neglect, isolation etc. lead to depression. At such times, we are tempted to wallow in self-pity and withdraw from family, friends and society. But Jesus urges us to stay on track and keep going even when hope is dim.

Jesus said, *“I am the Light of the World. He who follows me will have the Light of Life”*. Let these words help us to overcome the darkest moments of our lives and follow Jesus on his journey with optimism and hope. Lord, help us to interact socially with like-minded people, with children and youth, to develop hobbies to occupy our time and our mind, to exercise our bodies and take care of our health. Instead of falling into the rut of misery, help us to open our hearts to the suffering of others, to comfort and support them. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

Hymn no. 183: I am the Light

THE TENTH STATION - JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

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

Because by your Holy cross you have redeemed the world.

“...they divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take”. This was the height of degradation and humiliation that Jesus had to undergo. Not satisfied with the scourging and indignity already meted out, Jesus’ garments were wrenched off from His blood-soaked body. What agony. what shame!!

Advancing age and sickness makes us more and more dependent on others even for simple, everyday tasks. We feel humiliated and embarrassed when someone else needs to dress us and bathe us. Sometimes we are bed-ridden and totally dependent on others. We feel stripped of our dignity. Sometimes, we are humiliated and insulted because we are clumsy or slow, hard of hearing, forgetful and withdrawn.

Lord Jesus, help us to surrender to you all these moments of humiliation, shame, embarrassment, insults and hurt and to accept with humility and gratitude the loving care with which our needs are taken care of by others. May we Give us the grace to value the dignity and beauty of every human being, never to be judgmental or strip another person of their self-respect. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE ELEVENTH STATION - JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

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

Because by your Holy cross you have redeemed the world.

“...And with him, they crucified two thieves, one on his right and one on his left”. When they reached the place called the Skull, the soldiers stretched Jesus’ body on the Cross and hammered long, rusty nails into his hands and feet. What agony he must have suffered but he accepted it all to show his love for his Father and for each one of us.

Jesus is crucified again and again each time someone is abused physically, emotionally or verbally. Advanced age makes us helpless and vulnerable and puts us at the mercy of others. When we are mistreated and disrespected and bogged down by the troubles of old age, we become restless, irritable, violent and resentful. This kind of attitude makes forgiveness difficult for us. However, as Jesus hangs on the Cross, he challenges us to let go of the resentment and forgive those who have hurt us.

Lord Jesus, teach us to be like you; to let go of our defeatist “I am useless” attitude and use these golden years to serve you more sincerely. Let us show love and mercy to those who have hurt, disrespected and mistreated us. In times of despair, heal our brokenness and renew us so that we can look beyond our own problems and be a blessing to others who are suffering. Amen

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE TWELFTH STATION - JESUS DIES UPON THE CROSS

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

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And having said this, he breathed his last. **(Pause)** As we gaze at Jesus crucified on the Cross, his head bowed, we see the humility of our Lord whose love will conquer death. This final act of obedience and total surrender to His Father's will brings his mission to completion. Now he is truly '*lifted up*' and his mission of Redemption can be accomplished.

As we advance in age, we feel we are getting closer to death. Sometimes, we are at the end of our tether, having no strength or patience left and nothing to look forward to; we just want to give up and die. Then we remember our friends who have died and realize we are still alive for a purpose. Jesus wants us to understand the value of life and live every moment to its fullest.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of life and for Your abundant blessings upon us. We thank you for keeping us safe especially during this Pandemic. We pray for all those who have died, particularly those who have died due to the Pandemic, those who have died alone and those who have died with no one to pray for them. Jesus brought reconciliation and redemption to all humanity through his life and especially through his death. We pray that we may reconcile with our loved ones and with all those with whom we have a strained relationship. Let your death not be in vain O Lord. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

Hymn no. 431: We Hail Thee, Saviour and Lord...

THE THIRTEENTH STATION - JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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

"Truly, this was the son of God..." The lifeless body of Jesus was placed into the arms of his sorrowful Mother. What anguish it must have been for her. For 33 years she had cared for and supported her son and now he was no more. Surely, a "*sword had pierced her heart*". She didn't understand God's ways but with faith, she surrendered all her suffering and pain to Him.

So great is the grief and emptiness for those who have lost their children or spouse, for those whose children have grown up and moved away to faraway lands. Let us remember widows and widowers, separated and divorced people, single parents, those who long for children but have none. How often have we been so caught up in our own misery that we fail to understand the suffering of others? Jesus' death teaches us to reach out to those who are grieving. May we never fail to see God's light through the darkness of our despair and grief.

Merciful Father, when we are overwhelmed with grief at the loss of our loved ones, be our strength, consolation and refuge. Let our faith in You never waver knowing that even in our darkest hour, You will never abandon us. Mary, our Mother, intercede for us, that like you, we may have implicit faith and trust to surrender our lives into God's hands especially when everything seems hopeless. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

THE FOURTEENTH STATION - JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

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

Because by your Holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden, there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid". Together, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus gave Jesus a decent burial. He was born with nothing and he died detached from everything. The greatest act of love and sacrifice had been accomplished and yet, it was made without fanfare.

As we move towards the end of our life's journey, can we look back and be contented at a life well lived or do we have regrets? Can I say I have lived a life pleasing to God, a life of humility and contentment, a life detached from material possessions and wealth? Would I be remembered as a good Christian, a compassionate human being, a loving spouse, a caring parent? It is never too late to make a change, to mend relationships.

Jesus, you loved us and gave your life for us. Your death brought new meaning to life. Even today, with your grace, we can turn our lives around and live more joyfully, radiating the light of your Resurrection to everyone around. Give us the gift of humility to make peace with our loved ones, our relatives, our friends and all those we hold dear; to voice our love and appreciation towards all those who touch our lives, not waiting till they are gone forever. Amen.

Have mercy on us O Lord..... Have mercy on us

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we have walked with Your Son Jesus on his journey to Calvary. Every Station has given us something new to appreciate and reflect on. On our journey through life, we have crossed many bridges and passed many crossroads, hit some roadblocks and sailed through calm and stormy weather. But Jesus has always accompanied us on our journey. In these golden years of our lives, cleanse us of our pride, selfishness and self-pity and help us to feel good about ourselves. May we focus on the sufferings of others rather than our own and use our time, wealth of knowledge and our expertise to help others and serve You. Help us to live joyfully and fruitfully. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Concluding Hymn no. 370 – Take my life, O Lord

Hymn no. 19 – Abide with me