



WAY OF THE CROSS 2021 - CHILDREN

Introduction

As I walk the Way of the Cross with Jesus and Mother Mary, I want to understand and feel the depth of pain and suffering that Jesus went through for my sake. Let each Station remind me of children all over the world who are suffering in one way or another. During this Lenten season, let me make an effort to adopt small changes in my life and sacrifice some of my comforts to give to the poor and needy.

First Station - Jesus is condemned to death

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus, stood all alone before Pilate, falsely accused and condemned for a crime he did not commit. But he accepted it with dignity because he knew it was the will of his Father and he loved us so much that he was ready to die for our sins.

Today, so many children are condemned to death by poverty, malnutrition and starvation. Some are abandoned or neglected and left to fend for themselves. They never know when they will get their next meal. Some children are humiliated and condemned by us because we made fun of them, said mean, hurtful things or told lies about them.

Prayer: Lord, how differently I would have reacted if I had been falsely condemned, if the very people who lived around me humiliated me or did not recognise my worth. Help me to never condemn another person again. Help me to make sacrifices during this Lenten season, to share my food, clothing, toys and other possessions with the poor and the less privileged.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Second Station - Jesus carries His Cross

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus was given a big and heavy cross to carry and he knew that the path to Calvary would be long and difficult. Yet, he didn't complain because he knew that his Father would be with him on this painful journey.

Today, so many children carry heavy burdens, struggle and work so hard without having anyone to turn to for help - children of migrant workers, refugees, the homeless, the child beggars, those living on the streets.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I complain at every little discomfort or hardship that comes my way. Help me to realize that my burdens are light compared to those of others. When my school work gets tough or my house chores seem difficult, help me to remember that the weight that you carried is far greater than my burdens. Help me to sympathize with the child beggars and those selling trinkets at the signals and in the trains.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Third Station - Jesus falls the first time

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

The Cross was getting heavier and Jesus stumbled to the ground. Nobody rushed to help Him. Instead, they yelled and mocked him and the soldiers whipped him, shouting at him to get going.

We come across children who are physically or mentally disabled - the blind, the deaf and mute, the crippled, the autistic and intellectually challenged, for whom the simple, everyday tasks are so difficult.

When they fall, they find it difficult to get on their feet again. They are often left out and have no friends because they are different. They too want to feel loved.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes I feel caught up in a difficult situation and I'm looking for someone to help me but everyone seems busy or preoccupied, they don't realise that I'm struggling. I can now understand what you felt. Instead of being selfish, help me to be compassionate and a friend to those children who are disabled and yet managing to smile through their pain.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Fourth Station - Jesus meets his Mother

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

What agony it must have been for Mama Mary to see her beloved Son Jesus covered in blood and sweat and suffering so much. And yet, when they met, even though no words were exchanged, there was so much love and compassion in each other's eyes that they were both able to bear this suffering and offer it to God.

Like Mother Mary, most of us have our earthly mothers who shower us with love and affection, care for us, tend to all our needs and sacrifice their comforts for our sake. But there are many children whose mothers have passed away due to illness, accidents or other calamities or who have abandoned them. Such children crave for a mother's presence, love and attention.

Prayer: Lord, help me to realise how precious my mother and the other women in my family are to me. Sometimes, when I'm angry or I do not get my way, I behave rudely and I disrespect and hurt them. At such times, help me to remember those children who have no mothers, those who are orphans or those who have been abandoned.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Fifth Station - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus was tired, bleeding and struggling under the weight of the Cross. The soldiers looked around and seeing Simon in the crowd, pushed him towards Jesus. Simon felt sorry for Jesus and helped him carry the Cross.

Simon is like a Father figure for us. He was there when Jesus needed help. There are many children who have no father figure in their lives, no Dad to support or guide them, no Dad to ease their discomfort or protect them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to appreciate my Father, my Grandfather, my teachers, all the Simons of the world and all the helpful and caring people who go out of their way to see to my comforts. Help me to realise how blessed I am and never to take them for granted and to be sympathetic and caring towards those children who have no one to support them and care for them.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Sixth Station - Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

As Jesus stumbled along, weary and helpless, Veronica pushed her way through the crowd towards Jesus, unafraid of the soldiers. She lovingly wiped his bleeding face with her veil. Jesus was so grateful at her kind gesture that he gifted her with an imprint of his face on her veil.

There are so many Veronicas in the world today who reach out with tenderness and heal the wounds of a suffering world – Doctors, nurses, paramedics, medical staff, caregivers. Let us remember the children all over the world who have been abused, exploited and cast aside and the various medical associations and NGOs who rescue such children and ease their suffering.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, like Veronica, I can be a source of comfort to others. I can do household chores or run errands for my parents and grandparents, help my siblings with their studies, visit my lonely neighbour, copy notes for a sick friend, be sensitive to the poor and exploited children I see around. These tasks don't take much time and effort but it can bring some happiness into someone's life.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us

Seventh Station - Jesus falls the second time

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus was weak and tired due to the loss of blood. The weight of the Cross was unbearable and the stones on the road hurt his feet. Jesus fell to the ground once more. But he gathered his strength, got back on his feet and continued his journey.

Today, let us remember all those children who, due to frequent failure, have given up their studies, let go of their dreams, who have fallen into such a rut that they cannot get out again. They feel so discouraged that nothing is working out, they can see no way forward. Instead of rising up and trying again, they have accepted defeat.

Prayer: Lord, you too faced rejection and failure but instead of giving up, you rose above it and carried on. When I do badly in studies, sports or other activities, people may laugh at me or call me a failure. Or something serious may happen in my life which destroys my happiness. At times like these, help me to draw strength from you in the midst of weakness, to pick up the pieces and begin afresh with confidence.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Eighth Station - Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

The women of Jerusalem came out to support and thank Jesus because he had always shown love and respect for them. But even in the midst of his suffering, he consoled them asking them to not weep for him but to be more concerned about their own children.

Right through his life, Jesus had a special concern for women, especially the less fortunate and the sinners. Today, there is so much discrimination and exploitation of women and the girl child. Many girls are considered a burden, ill-treated and not given the opportunity to study. Others are exploited and abused and forced to do degrading jobs. Child trafficking is also a threat.

Prayer: Lord, help me always to appreciate, respect and treat women with dignity. Let me begin at home by treating the women in my family, my friends, my neighbours and those around me with love and respect. Let me never be the cause of discrimination or harassment of women but rather, to stand up for their rights and equality.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Ninth Station - Jesus falls the third time

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus was exhausted and every bone in his body ached. Every step ahead was torture and once again he fell to the ground. But knowing that his journey's end was near and his Father was with him, he struggled to his feet with sheer determination and carried on.

Let us remember the many children who have been forced to drop out of school due to financial problems, parent's death, family debts, bad company or vices. Due to the Covid pandemic, parents have lost their jobs so children are forced to work to support the family. Often children work in hazardous industries, in mines, factories, restaurants and as domestic workers. They work for long hours in an unsafe environment, are ill-treated and exploited but cannot raise their voice against such injustice.

Prayer: Lord, I understand how helpless and desperate you were when you fell the third time. I feel the same way sometimes when I experience constant failure and ridicule. I feel like giving up and locking myself in. Then I remember your determination and I feel strengthened to overcome the obstacles and move on.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Tenth Station - Jesus is stripped of his garments

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

When Jesus finally reached Calvary, there was more torture and humiliation awaiting him. The soldiers ripped off his garments, forcing him to stand naked in front of a jeering crowd. How insulting it must have been for Jesus but he offered it all to his Father.

Today, many children and minors are stripped of their childhood and innocence, by drunken fathers, employers, sexual predators, those with money and power. Many are forced to work in dumping grounds, in the filth and muck because no one else wants to do the job. We have forgotten the dignity, beauty and strength of humanity.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see your face in every humiliated and exploited child. I know how ashamed I feel when I am humiliated in front of the whole class. These children are so helpless and do not have the opportunities I have. When I shun them and call them 'dirty' or 'dumb', I am stripping them of dignity and respect. Never let me be the cause of humiliation of someone else.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Eleventh Station - Jesus is nailed to the Cross

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus was about to collapse... but there was still more horror to come. The soldiers stretched out his hands and feet on the Cross and hammered huge nails through them. How agonizing the pain must have been but all Jesus said was: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*"

Today, many children are nailed to a cross by our apathy and indifference. Do we spare a thought for the children of our domestic workers, drivers, garbage collectors or watchmen? What about the little rag pickers or the children living on the streets? Some children have been taken away from their homes, disfigured and forced to beg for a living.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I cannot even imagine the pain you endured. But your pain becomes real for those who are in agony. Give me eyes to see and a heart to feel the suffering of all those who, even today, are nailed to a cross by my indifference.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Twelfth Station - Jesus dies on the Cross

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus hung on the Cross for three painful hours before finally giving up his spirit. Now, this part of his life was over; his mission was accomplished. Jesus had made the ultimate sacrifice, stretched out his arms and given his life for us. He had nothing more to give.

So many poor children die every day of starvation, neglect, battering or abuse, illness or accidents and no one cares. Some parents helplessly watch their children die because they cannot afford food or medicine. Some children are abused and battered on a regular basis and they wish they would die.

Prayer: Lord, what can I do to ease the suffering of these poor children around me? They suffer so much while my life is so comfortable. I know that even if everyone rejects and abandons them, You will never forsake them. Help me never to take advantage of their helplessness or look down on them.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Thirteenth Station - Jesus is taken down from the cross

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jesus' lifeless body was gently taken down from the Cross and placed in his mother's arms; now, all the suffering was over. He gave everything, yet received nothing in return. What sorrow Mary must have felt as she gazed at her Son!

Let us remember all those grieving mothers who have lost their children due to starvation, sickness, accidents, war and other calamities, drug or alcohol abuse, suicide etc. We entrust all these mothers and children to the mercy of God our Father.

Prayer: Lord, I cannot imagine the grief these mothers go through at the loss of their children. May the love of your Mother Mary bring them comfort and consolation. Let me never be the cause of my mother's grief or suffering. Help me to show compassion and solidarity to those who are grieving.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

Fourteenth Station - Jesus is laid in the tomb

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

"It is finished." Along with Mother Mary, Jesus' friends were sad too. They lovingly washed and wrapped his body and took it to its final resting place and rolled a large stone over the entrance of the tomb. He was born with nothing of this world's goods and he died detached from everything. Their lives would never be the same again.

Lord, we know how sad we feel when someone we loved has died. How we miss that person! If only we had shown our love, gratitude and appreciation while they were still alive. Many people stand at the graveside of their loved ones, totally shattered, wondering how they will carry on. At times like these, our faith can be tested to the full.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, by your death, help me to understand that our loved one did not die in vain. Help me to see and appreciate the good in people and to make an effort this Lenten season to be more loving, caring and sensitive towards them.

Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us.

CONCLUDING PRAYER: God our Father, thank you for the opportunity and the experience of walking the path of suffering Jesus walked. It has made me realise how much he sacrificed for my sake. Help me to be more like Jesus, to share my love with those around me and to strive to make my life more meaningful. May the Cross always remind me of Jesus' love and sacrifice for me. Amen.