



26TH MARCH, 2021

WAY OF THE CROSS – ADULTS

Opening Prayer: Jesus, Our Lord and Saviour, we have gathered here today to contemplate the passion of Our Lord. As we contemplate the pain, suffering and the misery of all humankind, which you took upon yourself so willingly, help us to understand that the suffering in our lives is only a continuation of Your passion. We pray to you today for all those who search for meaning in life and for all those who have lost hope, that they may have faith in your victory over sin and death. Amen.

Hymn: God of mercy and compassion

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Jesus was taken to Pilate and accused with false charges... Pilate couldn't find any charges against him. He washed his hands off the matter and condemned Jesus to death. He handed Jesus over to the crowd. Pilate was concerned only about his own power. Jesus didn't utter a word in justification to the charges made against him and silently accepted the death sentence.

Sometimes, we too pass judgement or unjustly condemn others including our family members without realising how much pain and humiliation we have caused them. Do we realise what we are doing by our actions? Can we acknowledge our own sins and weaknesses instead of pointing out the faults in others? How many times have we broken the peace with others including our own families by erroneously passing judgement on others?

Prayer: Lord, many times we are like Pilate; we conveniently wash our hands off when we are supposed to make the right decision against some injustice done. Sometimes we are like the people accusing You for all the wrong things happening in our lives. Help us Lord to be courageous and stand up for what is right and face the challenges that we come across in our day to day lives and also help us to accept them.

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

2nd Station: Jesus carries His cross.

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

After severely beating Jesus, soldiers dressed Him in a purple robe, placed a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him saying "Hail King of the Jews". Then He was given a wooden cross to carry to the place where He would be crucified.

The Cross is a symbol of shame, pain and suffering. Jesus shoulders it himself and teaches us to reject injustice and to learn with his help, build the Kingdom of God. We need to build bridges of solidarity and of hope, lest we be like sheep who have lost our way amid this crisis. By taking up His cross, Jesus renounced pleasure and took up pain, not because pain is good but because it was necessary to accomplish His mission - The Salvation of humankind.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we too have a goal to achieve, to be beacons of love. You have redeemed us from sin and shame and elevated us to a higher calling. Help us to offer ourselves in love and service, without counting the cost and willingly accept our Cross and follow You.

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

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time.

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Already fatigued with the torture inflicted on him; with the scourging at the pillar and the mental anguish of the trial and condemnation, Jesus fell the first time. The weight of the cross was unbearable, the road ahead seemed impossible. He felt the powerlessness of wondering if he would ever be able to continue. Jesus is pulled up and made to continue.

When we look back, we see the many painful moments in our past when we gave up in life. It seemed that failure was the final word. Thoughts of despair and self-pity overwhelmed us and the only way out was to walk away from life's commitments, relationships, challenges and responsibilities. Turning to Jesus in such moments of weakness and defeat is our only answer and consolation.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, looking at you staggering, falling and struggling to stand up again with the heavy Cross digging into your shoulder reminds us that your strong arms are ready to support us whenever we lack the strength and courage to go forward or when we are ready to give up. With You being our pillar of strength and support, we know that You will never let us fall.

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

Hymn: What a friend we have in Jesus

4th Station: Jesus meets his Mother

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

What anguish Jesus felt when He met his mother. He could see the pain in her eyes as she saw her beloved son suffering at the hands of sinful man. Mary our Mother, even at this terrifying moment, said 'Yes' to God's plan. How pained he must have been to see her tears. Her grace filled smile blesses his mission.

What happens to my mother when she sees me struggle or fail in life's quest? Like Mary, does she direct me to rely on God alone to see me through? Do I as a mother encourage my child to trust in God's plan and purpose for his life? Let us follow Jesus' example of being obedient to His earthly mother and love our Mothers the way He loved Mary.

Prayer: O Jesus, give us the grace to love and respect our earthly parents who you have entrusted to be our mother. Thank You also for the gift of your mother to us. Mary our Mother be with us and lead us to your son Jesus.

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

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Jesus had become extremely weak and exhausted from the loss of blood at the scourging and crowning with thorns. The Roman soldiers feared that He would die on the way and so forced a passer-by Simon of Cyrene, to help carry the Cross of Jesus, who was condemned to a shameful death.

Many a times, we come across people who need our help. What is our response? Are we willing to reach out to broken families, the poor and the suffering? In every needy person we help, we help Jesus carry His Cross. Jesus himself tells us: "*Just as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me*".

Prayer: Lord Jesus, very often my heart melts when I see people suffer. But I am afraid to lend a helping hand for fear that I may get into trouble. Give me the grace not to hesitate to reach out to people in need. Give me a sensitive heart to respond positively.

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

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Suddenly a woman by the name of Veronica came out of the crowd. She cared for Jesus, took a cloth and began to wipe the blood and sweat from Jesus' face. She could not do much, but she offered what little help she could. Jesus encountered a compassionate, loving disciple who wiped the spit and blood from his face. On her veil, she discovered the image of Jesus' face – His gift to her; and for us to contemplate forever.

Do we also offer to others from the little that we have? Sometimes our family members crave our attention, and we don't even seem to notice. Do we stand by them in their suffering and need? Jesus shows us His love by His passion, death and resurrection. Veronica showed her love for Jesus believing Him to be a part of her own family; she stood by Him and courageously wiped His face.

Prayer: Lord Jesus you are always there for us in our times of need even though we have sinned. You forgive us and love us unconditionally. Help us Lord Jesus to do the same for our family members and all those who need our help.

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

Hymn: What so ever you do to the least of my brothers

7th Station: Jesus falls the second time

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

And so, Jesus, prodded by the soldiers, stumbled, overcome by fatigue, surrounded by violence, utterly exhausted. His flesh was torn, his bones were weary. Even with help Jesus stumbled and fell to the ground. He was being weighed down by the heavy Cross due to the excessive loss of blood and His weary body crumbled to the ground once again. In deep exhaustion he stared at the earth beneath him.

Today we have lost our sense of unity and our attitudes and actions are far from being united, as members of the body of Christ. Strained relationships among family members, neighbours, friends etc due to lack of understanding, selfishness, greed, ego, jealousy, hatred etc often cause us to fail and we fall time and again in the eyes of God. Seeing the courage and determination of Jesus, we are encouraged to make an introspection of our lifestyles, leading us to reconciliation with God, family, neighbours and friends and unity once again in our lives.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we ask you to help us to love one another like the love exhibited in the Holy Trinity. Send the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide us so that we may turn away from sin. Help us to love others, like our heavenly Father loves us.

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

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

The women of Jerusalem and their children came out to comfort and thank Jesus. These women of fidelity and courage were neither intimidated by the soldiers nor cringing before the wounds of the Good Master. They were prepared to approach him and to comfort him. In spite of His sufferings, Jesus never lost compassion for the women of Jerusalem. The women bewailed and lamented Jesus but Jesus consoled them saying "Women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children."

The women saw the cross as a sign of curse but our Lord saw it as a means of redemption and salvation. Even in His pain and agony, He thought of others instead of Himself. Our world is full of afflicted mothers, of women whose dignity has been wounded, abused by discrimination, injustice and suffering. Let us pray that the suffering of Christ, be their peace and be a balm to their wounds.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, most often our attention is focussed on our own needs and our own sufferings. We find it difficult to understand the needs of others when we ourselves are hurting. Help us to be more compassionate and selfless like you and let our path of suffering always be a path of hope with you, who are our refuge.

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

9th Station: Jesus falls the third time

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

This last fall was devastating. Jesus could barely proceed to the end. Almost at the foot of Calvary, Jesus' weakness was extreme and the cruelty of his executioners excessive; He stumbled and fell the third time. Jesus, however, got up and continued on His journey. He had a mission to accomplish.

Life today including family life is stressful. Addictions, broken relationships, failures, loss of job, work from home, death of a loved one, humiliation in public, bad habits, bad company, etc. are some of the

situations in life that drive one to experience guilt, depression and even despondency. Help us Lord that at such times, we will not fall into the temptation to wallow in self-pity; but like you will have the determination to rise and carry on.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are our refuge and our strength. May Your Body broken and Blood shed at every Eucharist be the source of strength to lift us up and help us to move on in life despite the setbacks we face.

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

Hymn: Yes, I shall arise

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Due to the scourging, the blood and the sweat, the clothing of Jesus stuck to His Body. But the soldiers did not care. Ruthlessly, they ripped the garment off His Body, thus exposing Him to the vulgar gaze of the multitude, leaving Him in immense pain and humiliation. He was covered by the blood which flowed from his wounds. As they stared at him, his eyes turned to heaven.

Each time I back off from standing for Justice, each time I speak harshly to my spouse, family members or any person, I re-enact the attitude of those soldiers. Can I then still say that I love Jesus? In today's world we also see the outraged dignity of the innocent. God did not prevent his naked body from being exposed on the cross. He did this in order to redeem every abuse wrongly concealed, and to show that he, God, is irrevocably and unreservedly on the side of victims.

Prayer: Merciful Jesus, pardon my insensitivity. May my daily participation in the Liturgy give me strength to emulate your example?

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

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

And they crucified him! The punishment reserved for the despicable, for traitors and rebellious slaves. They subjected Jesus to human degradation. He was now subjected to more intense pain. Big, long, rusty nails were hammered into the hands and feet of Jesus. The sound of the hammer hitting the nails makes our body shudder. What then must have been the impact on Jesus and his Body?

The question that comes to our mind at this moment is "Why Jesus, why did You have to suffer so much?" And we can hear His words resounding in our ears, *'That's how much I love you. I just want to show you the extent of my love for you.'* Hearing this answer makes us ask ourselves... How have we responded to this love of Jesus for us? Are we true disciples of Jesus in the way we live our lives, or do we continue to nail Him even today through our words and actions? How can we live the Liturgy in our lives by not just paying lip service but mean what we say and do?

Prayer: Lord Jesus we are truly sorry for being Christians in name only. Give us the courage to make the right choices and decisions even though it would involve undergoing suffering as a result of such choices and decisions.

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

12th Station: Jesus Dies on the cross

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Jesus was placed between two criminals, a mocking title above his head with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him. Jesus after three long, painful hours of agony on the Cross knew His end was near. *"It is finished"* he said and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. **(Pause)**

This final act of Jesus' death – an act of obedience and total surrender to His Father's will - brought His mission to completion. Through His life and especially through His death, He brought reconciliation and redemption to all humanity. Even today, do we recognise His divine presence in our lives and the people around us? Can we, by His example allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives into lives of holiness, our selfish tendencies into acts of selflessness?

Prayer: Lord Jesus may we imitate Your love by reaching out and touching those in need, those in despair and those who are forgotten, those in broken homes and broken relationships. Let us not be bystanders but help us to contribute our time and talent and make a difference in the lives of others.

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

Hymn: We Hail Thee, Saviour and Lord...

13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

What tender mourning! The ragged and torn body of our Lord was gently taken down from the Cross and received by the trembling hands of His Mother Mary. All had deserted him except for a few of his loved ones. But Mary stood by her son's body accepting each pain without a murmur of complaint.

Imagine the pain tearing through Mary as she raises her arms to receive the dead body of her beloved Son – those same arms which had cuddled Him and nurtured Him through His early years. How do we face the loss of our loved ones?

It is an act of love to care for those suffering from bodily wounds, mental depression and from a despairing heart. To love to the very end is the example Jesus and Mary have left us.

Prayer: Merciful Father, be our strength in times of loss of our dear ones. Let us never waver in trusting in your love.

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

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the Tomb.

Leader: We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee,

Response: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

They took the body of Jesus to its resting place. Jesus was laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. The scriptures tell us "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". Jesus was born with nothing of this world's goods and he died detached from everything.

This final journey of his life has shown me the meaning of his gift of himself for me. Death disarms us; it makes us realize that we are subject here on earth to a life that will come to an end. And yet, before the body of Jesus, laid in the tomb, we come to realize who we really are. We are creatures who, in order to escape death, need our Creator. Thus we need to live faith filled lives, detached from worldly things.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, like the grain of wheat which sprouts to life only after it dies, your death sprouted forth into the Bread of Life to satisfy our hunger and nourish our lives; you continue to do so through the Liturgy today. Strengthen our faith so that we may be able to go forth into the world to be Your witnesses.

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

Concluding Hymn: In His Time