



## **JOURNEYING TOGETHER ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS** *-Synodal Stations of the Cross.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

*“Synodality is the constituent dimension of the church: this is what God expects of the church of the new millennium”.* These words of Pope Francis underscore how seriously he believes it to be the answer to the what St Francis of Assisi heard Jesus ask him from the crucifix in San Damiano – Francis, re-build my church which is in ruins. Today we too come before the Crucified Lord – broken and in ruins. Everywhere we look things seem to be crumbling – the devastating wars and violence, the crumbling economy post-pandemic, the polarisation in politics, the fragmentation of society, the breaking-up of marriages and families, and the brokenness within – in the human heart, mind, conscience and spirit.

As the church journeys on the Synodal path – of communion, participation and mission - we journey together with one another bringing our own ruins and suffering and add them to Christ’s suffering on the cross, so in and through our wounds and brokenness, the power of the Risen Christ will heal and restore.

**OPENING HYMN:** 431. We hail thee (*Joyful Celebration*)

**FIRST STATION: JESUS is condemned to death.**

**LECTIO: John 18: 37-38**

Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’

**MEDITATIO:**

Everyone who belongs to the truth LISTENS to my voice. Do I really listen. With my heart, intently. Or am I quick to judge, pass my comments, gossip and slander. The entire Synodal process is based on the foundational principle to LISTEN without judging... to LISTEN in truth. How revealing that the very letters used to spell the word ‘listen’ are the same used to spell the word ‘SILENT’. Jesus used silence effectively; may we too resist the terrorism of gossip.

**ORATIO:** *Holy Spirit, grant me the grace of appropriate silence.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Spend a moment in silent reflection.

**ACTIO:**

- apologize to someone I have slandered
- resolve not to participate in gossip
- decide to keep daily a time of silence (recommended 30 minutes)
- actively reach out and listen to people on the periphery, those who are not normally asked to give their opinion about the church

**SECOND STATION: JESUS takes up his cross.**

**LECTIO: John 19:16, 17**

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. 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.

**MEDITATIO:**

The road to Calvary – a short journey, which won for us our eternity. One road-trip could make such a difference. The road to Damascus turned the sadistic Saul into the proclaiming Paul. The road to Emmaus turned the two despondent disciples into enthusiastic evangelists. The journey becomes the destination when we encounter Jesus. In our daily journeys, are we attentive to encounter Jesus in those around us... filling us with hope and enthusiasm. And more importantly are we becoming Jesus to those we meet.

**ORATIO:** *Jesus, thank you for your excruciating way of the cross. Thank you for journeying with me along my own way of my cross.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Spend a moment reflecting on our own cross (es).

**ACTIO:**

- Carry a pocket Bible/downloaded Bible to read while travelling / commuting to work
- Be attentive to those around me and look for a way to be Jesus to them

**THIRD STATION: JESUS falls the first time.**

**LECTIO: Isaiah 53:5**

But 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.

**MEDITATIO:**

The 3 falls of Jesus, upon which we traditionally reflect, appear to be stepping stones in the way of the Cross. In our own Synodal path – these 3 stepping stones are communion, participation and mission. The bruises of Christ and his broken body becomes healing and food for us. How often we have we treated the Eucharistic Presence with disrespect and sacrilege – with inadequate preparation, not being in a state of grace. The Eucharistic Presence is also in our sisters and brothers – especially the least, the last and the lost –those with whom we are called to journey together.

**ORATIO:** *Jesus, I repent for the times I have approached the Eucharist unworthily; for the times I have rejected you in the least of my sisters and brothers.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Bring to mind someone who needs you in your home or surrounding – an aged or sick or a needy person. How is the Lord calling me to ‘communion’ with that person.

**ACTIO:** -Prepare my heart for receiving the Eucharist through a meaningful Sacrament of Reconciliation.  
-Reach out to Christ ‘hidden’ within someone in need.

**FOURTH STATION: JESUS meets His Blessed Mother.**

**LECTIO: John 2:3-5**

When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

**MEDITATIO:**

Mary is by his side. At the start of his earthly journey, at the start of his public ministry and at the very end. The faithful one – from the womb to the tomb. How can a mother desert her son, she’ll also stand by us. She stands by each one of us: however distressed or unaware that the wine has run out of our lives, however far we have wandered. She is there – at the periphery, in the field hospital, to ensure no one is left behind.

**ORATIO:** *Be with us Mary along the way, as we journey together.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Bring to mind a seemingly hopeless or helpless situation you are in; can we imitate Mary’s faith when faced with such a time and say ‘Let it be done to me according to your word’.

**ACTIO:** -Reach out to an orphan or jobless person.  
-Make a pilgrimage to a Marian shrine.

**FIFTH STATION: JESUS is helped by Simon of Cyrene.**

**LECTIO: Luke 23:26**

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

**MEDITATIO:**

A Synodal church journeys together, has the smell of the sheep, carries the crosses of those in struggling. The Cyrenean Simon must have initially never realised the enormity of his task. You and I too – called the ‘middle class of holiness’ – may never realise the heroic holiness we display in staying awake to care for a loved one, reaching out to console a grieving

neighbour or texting or calling or visiting a lonely person – when we go the extra mile for Jesus.

**ORATIO:** *Thank you Lord, for all those who have been a source of encouragement and support to me by word or deed.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Bring to mind and pray for those silent workers who support us – watchmen, the delivery persons, the storekeepers, healthcare and sanitation workers, volunteers, the social workers... all these who never appear on the television sets and newspaper headlines.

**ACTIO:** -Thank those silent workers in your neighbourhood  
-Reach out in help to someone who is struggling

**SIXTH STATION: Jesus' face is wiped by Veronica.**

**LECTIO: Matthew 25:34-36**

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

**MEDITATIO:**

Tradition tells us that Veronica disregarded the possible threat to her own image and safety. She responded with parrhesia – boldness and courage. In the face of opposition she was resolute. In a world where popularity seems to be all that matters she reminds of the need to be prophetic. You and I have been baptised 'priest, prophet and king'. Let us, and the church, step out in boldness and be rewarded with His image imprinted on us and the abiding grace to radiate Christ.

**ORATIO:** *Holy Spirit, chief agent of evangelization, thank you for the brave women and men who proclaim the Gospel to hostile hearts and lands with boldness; strengthen them by the Holy Face of Jesus.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Ponder the Holy Face of Jesus. Seek opportunities to proclaim the Good News – either by word or by acts of mercy.

**ACTIO:** Take a stand where Truth is being compromised

**SEVENTH STATION: Jesus falls the second time.**

**LECTIO: John 6:5 -9**

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother,

said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’

**MEDITATIO:**

Five thousand. Two fish. Five loaves. One boy. And Jesus. The rest is history. Great things indeed happen when God mixes with us: great and beautiful, wonderful things. In this second fall we reflect on the second of the three sub-themes of the Synodal journey – **participation**. How do I contribute to being church, to building church, to bringing church to the world. Do I fall short?

**ORATIO:** *Merciful Saviour, show me where I have fallen short in playing my part in building the church. Grant me the grace to rise up.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Recall any area where I am holding back – either in time, talent or treasure. Count your blessings; thanking God for our many graces.

**ACTIO:** -Commit a specific time/talent/treasure to build the church  
- Give a meal to a hungry person

**EIGHT STATION: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.**

**LECTIO: Matthew 2:18**

‘A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.’

**MEDITATIO:**

Imagine the weeping women; at the time of Jesus - those on the road to Calvary - and now - those raped, those running away from war torn regions, those abused by power, those silenced merely because of their gender. Jesus’ response to them to weep for themselves and their children seems to prophetically caution them, and us, about the impending culture of death, beginning with the butchering of unborn children in the most precious and secure of all environments – the womb of their mother.

**ORATIO:** *For the times I have abused power & position, Lord have mercy. For all those who are weak and exploited, Lord send your power.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** How do I treat the other gender and aspects of gender identity and fluidity? Is my moral compass the Word or the World?

**ACTIO:** -Study the Word of God and church teaching on gender-related matters  
-Fast / make suitable reparation for those who have aborted children; that they receive the grace of repentance and the embrace of the Lord’s consolation

**NINETH STATION: Jesus falls the third time.**

**LECTIO: Mark 16:15 -18**

And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

**MEDITATIO:**

The fall and rise of the Church is intrinsically linked to proclamation of the Good News. The third step in the Synodal theme is **Mission** ... being what Christ wants us to be; salt and light in the world, pointing the Light of the Risen Christ. But complacency, counter-witness or sheer lack of courage prevent us from proclaiming the Gospel. The world, the flesh and the devil will not make it any easier for us to be evangelists and will cause us to stumble and fall. But the grace of God is sufficient.

**ORATIO:** *Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand.*

**CONTEMPLATIO:** The Holy Spirit is the chief agent of evangelisation. Spend a few moments breathing in and welcoming the power of God.

**ACTIO:**

- Carry a pocket Bible or rosary to pray when I travel
- Daily pray for opportunities to encounter people whom you can share Jesus with.

**TENTH STATION: Jesus is stripped of His garments.**

**LECTIO: Psalm 22:16-18**

For dogs are all around me; a group of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shrivelled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.

**MEDITATIO:**

The king of the universe lying naked; writhing in pain – exposed and vulnerable. The Truth is exposed... it makes us vulnerable. How often I have hidden behind lies and half-truths. Am I ready to be truly open – to speak boldly, to share truthfully my feedback which is what the synod expects of me. And more importantly do I have the ability to listen – in humility.

**ORATIO:** Jesus – my Way, my Truth, my Life.

**CONTEMPLATIO:** What lie have I shrouded myself in – what is my secret sin? Which is the truth that I cannot face? In what way am I called to be vulnerable so I can help the church be truly church, and help others to encounter Jesus?

**ACTIO:**

- Write down areas in my life where I am wearing a mask / living a lie
- Provide honest and open feedback to people in my church – lovingly and respectfully
- Resolve to seek God's pardon and grace in dealing with my secret sin

**ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus is crucified.**

**LECTIO: John 19:18, 19**

There they crucified Jesus, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

**MEDITATIO:**

The root of the word excruciating is crux /Cross... the pain of crucifixion...the shame of crucifixion... the curse of crucifixion. The broken body of Jesus is lifted up in full glare. So many of us are broken... the pain, the shame, the curses are unbearable... often leaving us shattered, alone, isolated, desolate. If only there was someone else to journey together with me, to share my pain, to hear my cry.

**ORATIO:** My God, my God why have you forsaken me.

**CONTEMPLATIO:**

Who have I left out; excluded because they didn't dress like me, speak my language or agree with my views. Who is suffering loneliness, mental agony, emotional hurt because I refuse to forgive, refuse to ask pardon –probably even in my own home, among my nearest and dearest.

**ACTIO:** -Specifically reach out to someone you have avoided  
-Reach out and comfort someone in excruciating physical or emotional pain

**TWEFLTH STATION: Jesus dies.**

**LECTIO: Philippians 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**MEDITATIO:**

The work of salvation was finished. That's why he came... "And you will name Him Jesus for he is to save his people from their sins." Jesus – Yeshua... God saves. He died to save me. My good shepherd laid down his life for me and you—the lost sheep. He chose to become a

slave, a shepherd... to be one amongst us... to feel our pain and bear our griefs, to have the 'smell of the sheep'. Is the call to synodality challenging me to do the same?

**ORATIO:** Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Contemplate the name JESUS (*Yeshua*—meaning God Saves). There is power in the Holy Name of Jesus.

**ACTIO:** Do an act of service for someone meant to serve you.

**THIRTEENTH STATION: Jesus' body is placed in Mary's arms.**

**LECTIO: Luke 2:34, 35**

'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

**MEDITATIO:**

Mary cradled the lively baby Jesus in her joyful arms in the cave of Bethlehem. Now she cradles the lifeless body of Jesus in her sorrowful arms before placing him in another cave hewn in a rock. Our journeying together has myriad joys and sorrows, up and downs, dreams and disappointments. We need the equanimity (serenity) of Mary to hold us, to comfort us, to point us to Jesus, to tell us to 'do whatever he tells us'. We place all our Synodal deliberations, hopes and plans in those very hands in which the broken body of Jesus was placed.

**ORATIO:** We fly to your protection O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

**CONTEMPLATIO:** Contemplate the Sword that pierces the heart of Mary

**ACTIO:**

- Reach out to someone who has just lost a loved one
- Visit a hospital or prison or reach out to someone who is feeling helpless and depressed

**FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is laid in the tomb.**

**LECTIO: Matthew 27:59, 60**

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

**MEDITATIO:**

The body of Jesus is shrouded in a cloth. The world is shrouded in silence. In silence Mary sat outside the tomb. In silence, Mary pondered the Word in her heart. In prayerful silence, we are called to sit in the midst of our upheavals, before making our choices, after listening



with the heart... so that we may discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches... what the Holy Spirit is saying to me.

**ORATIO:** Speak Lord, your servant is listening.

**CONTEMPLATIO:**

Contemplate in silence the darkness that shrouds – us, our families, our work, our nation, our church, our world. Much like it did in the beginning of Genesis. And yet God was there, God is here, God is always present. Experience His presence.

**ACTIO:**

- Spend time in silence; it should be long enough that you feel uneasy... put an alarm so you don't keep checking
- Set aside time to practice the daily examen (St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises) & discernment with Spiritual direction
- Develop a habit of 'listening with the heart'

**FIFTEENTH STATION: Jesus rises on the third day.**

**LECTIO: Luke 24: 32, 33**

They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem

**MEDITATIO:**

Hallelujah. He is risen. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never overcome it. Christ is our light. His Spirit burns our heart, his word brings life, his body nourishes us. Can you imagine how wonderful it would be if every liturgical service, every Synodal encounter is an encounter with Jesus in communion, participation and mission...even after this synod can I continue to be a Christ-bearer in my every encounter. Imagine if every Christian does the same... facilitating for the world an encounter with Jesus, 8 billion people experiencing their hearts burning within them with the Love of Jesus.

**ORATIO:** Stay with us Lord ... *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (the Taize chant could be used)

**CONTEMPLATIO:** The light of Christ dispels our darkness. The spirit of Christ enables us to say 'Abba Father'. The love of Christ impels us.

**ACTIO:**

- Be a bearer of Christ (a 'Christopher') to a needy person
- Light a candle and spend time in silence reflecting if the light of Easter is shining through me
- Go to the sacrament of Reconciliation and be set free

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.  
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.  
Does not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.  
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.  
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

**FOR THE INTENTIONS OF THE HOLY FATHER:** One Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory be...

**CONCLUDING HYMN: 188** I have decided to follow Jesus. (*Joyful Celebration*) Or any other.

**Contributed by: Royston Braganza**  
**CEO**  
**Grameen Capital India and part**  
**Of the Bombay Archdiocesan**  
**Synodal Committee.**