



AN ECOLOGICAL WAY OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION:

When we participate in the Way of the Cross, we recall the torments Jesus endured two thousand years ago. We also realise that his suffering continues in the brokenness that we see all around us. When people across the world suffer, Jesus is suffering along with them. Today, we also recognise the fact that the destruction of the natural environment contributes to the ongoing suffering that Our Lord has to endure.

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, Lord of Creation, as we retrace your journey to redemption through suffering and death, we acknowledge that your sacrifice enables all of creation to be reconciled to God. Yet, our sinful actions often hinder this reconciliation. As we follow you O Lord on this Way of the Cross, we ask for mercy and healing for ourselves and for all of creation. Amen.

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.*

Reflection: “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate is hesitant at first, but a blood thirsty crowd and colluding elders sway him into sentencing the innocent Jesus to death. Our disregard for the earth and the exploitation of natural resources causes death and misery to so many creatures. Many of us are aware of this, but are reluctant to take the initiative and do something. Will we wash our hands off like Pilate or will we choose to care for creation?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we have been mere bystanders on a dying planet. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

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

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

Reflection: The sins of the world are placed on Jesus in the form of a cross. He accepts this burden not because he has to, but because it is the only means of our salvation. We often feel that we are not the main polluters of the environment and hence are not obliged to undertake big sacrifices for the earth. Today, the Lord invites us to undertake this mission not out of obligation but out of love for our fellow creatures.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, heal us of our selfishness and make our hearts open to embrace creation. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

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

Reflection: The heavy cross cuts into Jesus' skin and strains his muscles, his strength falters, he falls under the burden of all our sins. More wounds open, but Jesus struggles to his feet and endures onward. Caring for the earth is not an easy task and our efforts often seem futile and insignificant. When we meet with failure, will we fall and walk away or will we rise to continue onward?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we give up on each other and the planet. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

Hymn: 272. Mercy Lord, we have sinned, listen to our plea. (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

*Mercy Lord, we have sinned, listen to our plea
Mercy Lord, we have sinned, answer now our prayer.*

*We have turned from the poor, let the hungry die.
We neglect the oppressed, we ignore their cry.
Now's the time, now's the day, turn back to your God,
Tear your hearts, cry to Him: Spare your people, Lord!*

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.*

Reflection: A falsely accused Jesus on the way to a criminal's death; his mother, carrying the knowledge that a sword would pierce her soul, emerges from the taunting crowd. An encounter of immense pain and yet, immense love. When we contemplate our mother earth, we become aware of the immense love and care we have received from her. We also notice the great pain she undergoes right now. We need to rediscover our love for the earth and commit ourselves to healing her pain.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us heal the ruptures between us and the earth. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

FIFTH STATION: SIMON 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.*

Reflection: The soldiers force Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus. This was not an act of compassion, but one of coercion. Simon was not willing to offer this help, but Jesus had to be kept alive till the crucifixion. Our concern for the earth does not always arise from a pure intention. We protect natural resources not because we care but because we want those resources for our own comforts. We must learn to reach out to the earth not with ulterior motives but as compassionate stewards of creation.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we only extract from the earth and do not really care for her. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

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.*

Reflection: The soldiers could have dragged this frail woman away, the crowd could have attacked her. Yet, Veronica summons the courage to reach out to Jesus, coming away with a cloth on which the face of the Son of God is imprinted. We will surely encounter many obstacles in our work of caring for creation. Will we, like Veronica, find the courage to remain faithful to our mission in the face of these challenges?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, heal us from inaction and fill us with the courage we need to continue caring for creation. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

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

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

Reflection: The scorching sun, the jeering crowd, his loved ones out of sight, a steadily weakening Jesus crumples to the ground yet again – bruised and even more bloodied. The earth too is falling and growing weaker – species are rapidly going extinct, the air is turning poisonous, water and food are becoming scarce. It is up to us to support and strengthen the earth in her time of dire need.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for plundering the abundance of your creation. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

Hymn: 377. Verse -1. Thank you Lord for all you've done (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

*Thank you Lord for all you've done,
Things both great and small,
And for Jesus Christ your Son,*

Thank you most of all.

*You forgive us when we falter,
You bring healing when we sin,
You redeem our life from bondage
And renew us deep within.*

EIGHTH STATION: THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS

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

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

Reflection: Unlike most of the crowd, it is some women, marginalised by society, who are moved by Jesus' torment and lament. Yet, he tells them to weep not for him, but for themselves and their children. Life in today's unequal and individualistic world makes us focus on our own burdens. Are we so focused on our own problems that we become blind to the needs of creation?

Prayer: Jesus, heal us of our distress and enable us to respond to the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor, and the cry of the young. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

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

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

Reflection: The ordeal is not yet over, even with another to help bear the cross, the weight of the sins of the world overcome Jesus and he stumbles. Despite unimaginable agony, he manages to continue for the final time. The ecological crisis presents us with a problem that seems almost too heavy to bear. On the one hand, we can despair and let the weight of the ecological crisis crush us. On the other hand, we could learn from the example of Jesus and allow his love to strengthen us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for not manifesting our love for you in actions to safeguard your creation. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

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

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

Reflection: Jesus now undergoes further ridicule and indignity. Preparing for his crucifixion, the soldiers take off his garments, exposing his bare flesh and bloodied wounds to the crowd. Humankind's actions have nearly stripped the earth bare, and yet like Jesus, the earth still continues to sustain and nourish us. How much longer will we continue to abuse the earth?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we humbly implore you to heal the earth which we have laid bare. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

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.*

Reflection: The agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, the humiliating walk to Calvary, the stripping of Jesus' garments – all of this is not enough torment. Nails are brutally driven through Jesus' flesh, crucifying him to the very cross he carried. All too often, we are careless and wasteful in our habits. Little do we realise that our actions have an impact on the earth and the poor. The waste we generate and our indiscriminate use of resources are like nails hammered into the body of the earth.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for overburdening the earth and hardening our hearts towards the less fortunate. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

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.*

Reflection: This is the crux of Jesus' torment, his greatest suffering. Under the sin of all the world of all time, Jesus is truly alone and cut off from his Heavenly Father. Salvation comes at the great price of the Son of God's death. *(Silent pause)*

We realise more and more that our future is tied up with the future of the earth. It is necessary to make some sacrifice to ensure that we can all enjoy this future together. What is the price we are willing to pay for our salvation and that of all creation?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, by your death on the cross you brought redemption to humankind and all of creation. We humbly implore you to heal and sanctify us as we turn away from the path of sin to the path of eternal life. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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

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

Reflection: Jesus' supporters have thus far stayed far away from the scenes of brutality and torture. Now they finally come forth to take down his body. His corpse is placed in the arms of his anguished

mother. Thus far, many of us have been cowed down by the magnitude of the ecological crisis and have chosen to remain in the background. Will we, like the disciples, finally emerge from the shadows and come forth to undo the damage we have done?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we have not come forward to undo the harm we have caused. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

Hymn: 272. Mercy Lord, we have sinned, listen to our plea. (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

*Mercy Lord, we have sinned, listen to our plea
Mercy Lord, we have sinned, answer now our prayer.*

*We have turned from the poor, let the hungry die.
We neglect the oppressed, we ignore their cry.
Now's the time, now's the day, turn back to your God,
Tear your hearts, cry to Him: Spare your people, Lord!*

FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS BURIED IN THE TOMB

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

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

Reflection: Born in an inn's stable, Jesus is laid to rest in a borrowed tomb. Even though he is the Son of God, he did not live with riches and grandeur. His whole life was lived out in simplicity and in harmony with humans and creation. The Lord provides for our needs through the bounty and goodness of the earth. Unfortunately, we sometimes get caught up in a rat race, driven by the desire to possess more and more. We ask for the grace to find happiness and contentment in what the Lord provides us through the earth.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, heal us of our consumerism and the desire to have many possessions. Help us to surrender ourselves fully to you, our Saviour and Provider. Amen

Leader: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, Lord of Creation, we thank you for redeeming us through your Passion, Death and Resurrection. Along with the whole of creation, we eagerly yearn to share your glory in our heavenly abode. Strengthen us that we may fulfil your command to proclaim the gospel to all of creation, following in your footsteps of healing and reconciliation. We ask this in your sanctifying name, Amen.

*-Prepared by Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello (Subject Matter Consultant)
And Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ (Head) of the Archdiocesan Office for
Environment of the Archdiocese of Bombay.*