



THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR SENIOR CITIZEN

INTRODUCTION

Through his journey to Calvary, Jesus taught us the profound dignity of life, suffering and death. Our own life's journey is marked by moments of trials and triumphs. Crosses are inevitable at every stages of life but how we carry them will determine our final victory. The Senior citizens have consolations and crosses particular to their age. At a time, when they long for stability, they face drastic, and unwelcome, changes — moving home, the loss of a partner or children causing deep sorrow and loneliness. May our walk with Jesus lead us to the path of life.

THE 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: The Prince of peace and justice stands condemned at the hands of His creatures, what an irony! Jesus spent all his life doing good—giving hope to the poor and the downtrodden, yet he was condemned to death on the cross. How many times do we complaint about little pains, aches and other limitations that come along with aging to the extent that we lose sight of the opportunities that ageing presents to experience the Lord in new quiet ways.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, grant us the serenity to accept from your hands the things we cannot change. Prevent us from all-knowing or self righteous attitude that is quick at pointing fingers at the failings of others while expecting everyone to overlook our own false and failings. May your love, peace, courage, justice and truth rule our hearts. Amen

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE SECOND STATION: *Jesus carries his cross*

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

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

REFLECTION: For Jesus, the cross is not only a heavy log of wood, but on it, He bore the sin of the world, as we are told in 1 Pet 2:24, “On the cross Jesus bore our sins in his body, so that we might die to sin and death.” May the meditation of the way of the cross help us grasp the depths of God’s love for us and help us live our life with profound gratitude.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we were unwilling to carry our crosses—our illness, disability that comes with age, loss of a job, loneliness or wayward children that we are confronted with. Grant us the grace to follow your example, to embrace our crosses willingly, knowing that sharing in the mystery of your cross, we may share in the glory of your resurrection.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE 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: There is a sharper interior pain when we fall after being helped by our loved ones. Your mother Mary, Simon and Veronica provided you the little relief they could managed and it must have been overwhelming for you to fall helplessly again. Some days can be challenging for us as we advanced in age. Our bodily or mental weakness makes us irritable, do or say things that cause embarrassment. Help us to offer our dependence on others, our helplessness joined to yours.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You took on the fullness of our weak human nature to share in our vulnerabilities. We often fail to reach the standard we have set for ourselves and we are tempted to give up, but we thank you for showing us the way that we can always rise again. Walk with us Lord; and take us to our journey's end. Amen.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

HYMN: 431. We Hail Thee, **Verse -1** (*Joyful Celebration*) or any other appropriate hymn.

THE 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: Amidst all the shouts and jeers from the crowd that move like a wave in your mind. One familiar voice stands out and soon your mother was there for you. She has always been there for you. And here, in your darkest hour, she was there. Thank you for gifting us this faithful mother whose love will accompany our earthly journey too.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, the gaze that rested between you and your mother was one of pure love and profound pain. Lord, when we are confronted with struggles of life that seem to break us, help us to remember the consoling presence of your Mother by our side.

PRAYER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE FIFTH STATION: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his 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 appeared to have a moment of compassion but instead, it was to get their orders done, to get you alive up to Calvary to be crucified. Simon of Cyrene would have felt mysterious awe and reverence as he was assisting you. Life brings along many chances of offering help and solace to others even by just being understanding or listening. How often do we miss those?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, open our ears to hear the ways in which you call us to serve you in our neighbours. Help us follow Simon's example of helping even strangers in need for no one is really a stranger in our human family. Grant us also your spirit of humility to humbly and gratefully accept help from others. Amen.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE 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: In that face, marred by suffering, Veronica recognises the face of our redeemer who would transform and restore our image marred by sin and human weakness. In caring for one another, especially the old and the disabled, we wipe clean the face of Christ again but sadly in our society today, the young and able-bodied are fully occupied with their own lives and older people are left without any relatives to care and assist them.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, Veronica wiped your blood stained face with a scarf and you gifted her with the imprint of your sacred image. I pray you for an ability to see your sacred image in others, to recognize their hurts, to stop and join them on their difficult journeys, and to feel the same compassion for them as Veronica did for you. Amen

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE SEVENTH STATION: Jesus falls a second time

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

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

REFLECTION: Drained out of energy and strength, his weakened body could stand it no longer, Jesus stumbled and fell to the ground once more. Yet determined to fulfil the Father's will, pulled Himself up and walked on to Calvary. His fall reminds us that in life, challenges, problems and difficulties are bound to present themselves before us, and at times, we will fall, but that we must rise and move on.

PRAYER: Lord, because of the frailties of our human nature and the trials of our daily life, we feel drained out. Our desire to fight life's battle gives way and we feel like giving up and letting go: But your fall tells us, that no matter what, the strength of your presence and grace will enable us rise up and journey to the finish. Help us keep trusting in you. Amen.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE EIGHTH STATION: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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

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

REFLECTION: He who wept over Jerusalem did not allow the women weep for him. Compassionate as he was, though with laboured breath, spoke to the women who are following him, and in the most gentle tone, exhorted them to weep for themselves and their children—arming them to deal with their own pain and suffering which is part and parcel of human life.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, Grant us an unselfish and compassionate heart like yours that does not dwell on one's own troubles, but are quick to sense the pain and suffering of others especially the elderly, the sick and homebound. May we find joy in the service we render to others, and in turn find our life meaningful and worth living.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE 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: It was the sheer will of Jesus to fulfil His father's plan that pressed Him forward while even when every fibre of His body wants to stop right there and move no further. Jesus gives us a glimpse of what lies beyond pain and suffering: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him."

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, though it grieves my heart to see you so weak and helpless, it comforts to my soul to know that you understand my sufferings from your own experience. Your love for me made you go through every kind of pain. Grant me the grace to live my life in total gratitude of your marvellous love.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE TENTH STATION: Jesus is stripped of his garments

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

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

REFLECTION: By letting himself to be stripped, Jesus invites us to let go of what we possess. Sometimes in sickness or as we age, we go through the dependency of infancy. We need help in clothing ourselves, in divesting demanding humility and letting go. We can offer the pain of dependency to atone for the sins of immodesty. Perhaps the most subtle, yet frightening, pressure which society exerts upon the elderly is its widespread worship of youth. Our culture glorifies forever young, strong and beautiful.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, Help us realize that our possessions, status and achievements don't really define us but our true dignity lies in being the children of God and that our life is precious beyond all price; from the very moment of our conception till our last breath. We also pray that human rights and dignity be protected everywhere in our society. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord.

All: Have mercy on us.

THE 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 soldiers drive the nails into Jesus' hands and feet. Jesus could have called on the powers of heaven to stop such torture. Yet, because his love is so great, Jesus accepted the agony of this pain and suffering for love, a love beyond all comprehension. May all whose lives are broken due to war, or natural calamities place their hope in God who makes all things new.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you let yourself be nailed to the Cross, accepting the destruction of your body and your dignity. You did not try to escape or to lessen your suffering. May we never flee from the pain and struggles that would bring us new life in you. Help us flee instead from the false freedom which would distance us from you. Amen.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE TWELFTH STATION: Jesus dies upon the cross. (Pause for Silence.....)

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

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

REFLECTION: It was never the nails that kept Jesus on the cross. He's the Son of God. In a split second He could've summoned legions of angels to free Him from this horrific suffering! It was love that kept Jesus on the cross. It was His conscious, continuous decision to stay up on that cross till He gave His last breath. How much gratitude and love we owe to Jesus!

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, even before your last breath, you gifted us your beloved Mother, May we prove ourselves as her faithful sons and daughters. Grant eternal rest to all our departed loved ones; especially who have died in a sudden accident, war, violence or in sleep without prior sacramental preparation. Amen.

LEADER: Have mercy on us O Lord.

ALL: Have mercy on us.

THE 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: What would have been the thoughts of Mary to see the lifeless body of her son? Today, she continue to embrace the lifeless bodies of her children given by Jesus on the cross in the grieving hearts of all the mothers in the world that are forced to grieve for the lives of their children cut short so tragically right before their eyes.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may the example of your blessed Mother teach us to hold fast to you in life and death. You will always strengthen our weak hearts and lead us forward to where God's will calls us. Grant us the fidelity to withstand moments of confusion and a love ready to embrace you in your utter helplessness, like your Mother, who once more holds you to her heart. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord.

All: Have mercy on us.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is laid 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: It was Mary who received and presented Jesus the gift of the Father to the world and now, she follows her Son to the Tomb. She wraps the cold, lifeless body of her God-Son for the last time on earth. She knew He was returning to the Father who gave Him life - to save a world created in love.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, entering into life with You requires that we die to sin and selfishness daily. May our Lenten journey strengthen and renew our spirit. Amen

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord.

All: Have mercy on us.

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Lord God, Our Saviour Jesus Christ had opened the doors to a new and eternal life. Grant us the grace to carry our own crosses that we may rise to a glorious life with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

FOR THE INTENTIONS OF THE POPE: Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be...

HYMN: 211. Into your hands we commend our spirits O Lord (*Joyful Celebration*) or any other appropriate hymn.

-Commission For Liturgy
Archdiocese of Bombay