



SYNODAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS

HYMN: WALK WITH ME O MY LORD

INTRODUCTION:

When Pope Francis launched the Synodal journey on October 10, 2021, with the theme "Communion, Participation, and Mission", we were invited to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit to discern 'what is the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today?'

As the Church celebrates the liturgical season of Lent we reflect on the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus, Christ's crucifixion in the weak and vulnerable today, and the Church's vocation to respond to the "Crucified People" with the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

The decision to 'journey together' as a Synodal people is a prophetic sign for the human family and as a Church we are called to share communion and fraternity, participation and subsidiarity, in fidelity to what she proclaims, especially to be able to stand beside the poor and the least and lend them her own voice. The poor are today's crucified people who are with us on the journey.

Reflecting on Jesus' final journey to Calvary, the Stations remind us that Jesus' journey is the Church's journey. Hence, we can learn from Jesus what to expect, and receive the grace to respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers.

We pray for the grace to identify with the Crucified Christ in persons who are forgotten, neglected or ignored on the journey, to listen to them, to attend to their needs and walk with them.

FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Again, the high priest began to ask him, and said to him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said to him, "I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." But the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" And they all condemned him as liable to death. (Mark 14: 61 - 64)

Leader: The synod reminds us that "no one should be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences, insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true. This is especially true of those who are most vulnerable or marginalized" We are created in the image and likeness of God and we belong to one human family. On this synodal journey, let us not condemn anyone to the margins of the journey due to their physical, psychological, religious, ethnic, or cultural difference. Let us not wash our hands of the abnormal and deviant members of the human family. Let us journey together inspite of our differences.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

And Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" But they cried out, "away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priest answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. And so they took Jesus and led him away, bearing the cross for himself. (John 19: 14 - 17)

Leader: The synod reminds us that faced with the disturbing prospect of the cross, there are disciples who leave and mood-changing crowds. The deviousness that divides – and, thus, thwarts a common path - manifests itself indifferently in the forms of religious rigor, of moral injunction that presents itself as more demanding than that of Jesus, and of the seduction of a worldly political wisdom that claims to be more effective than a discernment of spirits” We are called to take up the cross of Jesus Christ on this synodal journey. It is our responsibility to journey together as the People of God – men, women, children, religious men and women, clergy, bishops. Taking up the cross means taking on each other’s problems, disorders, weaknesses, frustrations, and disappointments. We accompany the crucified Christ on the journey.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

HYMN: No 203. If you wish to be my Disciple (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own. Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I have spoken to you: No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also. (John 15: 18 -20)

Leader: The synod reminds us that “as on any journey, we need to be aware of possible drawbacks that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality” As we walk together, sometimes we fall due to the weight of our fraternal responsibilities. When we fall, let us not abandon the mission of journeying together. Let us not judge harshly or blame those who fall. Let us not neglect or ignore the weak and defenceless who fall. Christ, too, fell under the weight of his own missionary cross, but he rose again and carried on the journey.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS SORROWFUL MOTHER

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Now there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19: 25- 27)

Leader: The synod reminds us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercedes for us as we journey together on the path that God sets before us. As in the Upper Room at Pentecost, may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one another and carry out our mission in the world. With her, we say together as the People of God: "Let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38) Mary is the Mother of the Church. In the midst of the Church's crisis, she does not abandon, neglect or ignore her sons and daughters. She faithfully accompanies us on the journey and shares in our pain and suffering. Following her example, the Church must never abandon her sons and daughters. She must go where they are feeling the most excruciating pain – in broken relationships, in dysfunctional families, and in poverty. We must be mother to all on the journey.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

HYMN: MOTHER DEAREST MOTHER FAIREST

FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

And when they had mocked Jesus, they took the purple cloak off and put his own clothes on him, and they led him out to be crucified. Then they forced a certain passer-by, Simon of Cyrene coming from the country, to take up his cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha a name meaning 'the place of the skull.' (Mk. 15: 20 - 22)

Leader: The synod reminds us that we are continually challenged 'as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and their spirit. For too long the cry of the victims has been a cry that the Church has not been able to hear sufficiently. Jesus Christ is Head of the Body of Christ. As Head, He teaches us to be hospitable to strangers whose gifts and presence can help us carry our cross. On this journey, we encounter modern day Simons of Cyrene, strangers of different social status, religious beliefs, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and intellectual capacity. Let us extend hospitality to all welcome strangers.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

"Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you; or thirsty, and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger, and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?" And answering the king will say to them, "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me." (Mt. 25: 37 - 40)

Leader: The synod reminds us that the assembly of the People of God consists not only of men (Exodus 24:7-8) but also women (Joshua 8: 33 & 35). It is partner convoked by the Lord every time He renews His covenant. By touching His wounded and despicable face, Veronica honours the Lord. Despite his wounded and bleeding face, she dignifies it with her touch. Today, who are the wounded and unattractive faces that Veronica encourages us to dignify? Is it the child who is weeping, the face of an abused woman scarred with acid, the faces of the physically challenged, the flabby and crimped skin of old women or men, or the face of a teenager not deemed worthy for the front cover of fashion magazines?

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

It was our weaknesses that he carried, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the punishment that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. (Is. 53: 4 - 6)

Leader: The Covid-19 pandemic made many existing inequalities explode in the Church and in the world. This global crisis revived our senses that we are all in the same boat, and that 'one person's problems are the problems of all.' When members of the human family fall under the weight of the effects of climate change, dire socio-economic conditions, natural disasters, internal political conflicts, war, genocide, and religious discrimination we fall with them. We belong to one human family, journeying together, with God as Mother and Father of this family. Let us fall and suffer with the fallen. Falling together gives them the strength to rise and continue the journey.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

HYMN: MERCY LORD WE HAVE SINNED

EIGHTH STATION: WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP OVER JESUS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

There was following Jesus a great crowd of people, and among them were some women who were bewailing and lamenting him. Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." (Luke 23: 27-28)

Leader: Pope Francis reminds us of the interrelated goals of the process of listening: ‘to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us.’ We feel the deep emotional pain of mothers. They bear the burden of the death of a child, a wayward child, the departure of her children from home, the abuse of her children, or the terminal illness of a child. On this journey, we join with the contemporary women of Jerusalem in weeping with and for their children. We walk with them in solidarity and hope.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

I lie prostrate in the dust; give me life according to your word. I declared my ways and you answered me; teach me your commands. Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds. My soul weeps for sorrow; strengthen me with your words. (Ps. 118: 25 - 28)

Leader: Jesus takes upon himself the evil, the filth, the sin of the world, including the sin of all of us, and he cleanses it; he cleanses it with his blood, with the mercy and the love of God. On the synodal journey, we fall under the weight of our cross. Carrying the cross, we carry the evil, the filth and the sinfulness of the world. We fall under the weight of the disrespectful and callous ways of speaking to each other, or the judgmental and insensitive ways of listening. On this journey the Church falls down under the weight of clericalism, authoritarianism, individualism or narcissism. Sometimes, the cross is too heavy to carry.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

They gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall; but when he had tasted it, he would not drink. Then after they had crucified him they divided his clothes, casting lots to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet, "They divided my clothes among them, and upon my garments they cast lots." (Mt. 27: 34-35)

Leader: We can be weighed down by our weaknesses and sinfulness, prejudices and stereotypes. When we listen we are stripping our minds and hearts from mindsets and attitudes that lead us on the wrong path, towards ignorance and division. What are we willing to be stripped off on this synodal journey? Jesus was stripped of his clothing and his human dignity. Paul was stripped of his religious and social status. Peter was stripped of his pride. Of what am I willing to be stripped? Is it our controlling and manipulative tendency, positions of privilege, our invincible or indispensable attitudes, or an all-knowing attitude?

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

When they came to Golgotha, the place called the Skull, they crucified Jesus and the robbers, one on his right and other on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Lk. 23: 33-34)

Leader: There are many in our world who are nailed or pinned down by destitution, poverty, rejection, imprisonment, hunger, homelessness, indifference and injustice. On the journey of life, they are nailed to the cross before our eyes but we turn a blind eye. Are we willing to be nailed with them in solidarity with their condition? It is insufficient simply to pray for them. They too are on the journey with us. They need our hands, feet, and voice.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

HYMN: No 431. We hail thee (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the curtain of the temple was torn in the middle. Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, "It is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Then, bowing his head, he died. (Lk. 23: 44 - 46)

Leader: So many persons die on this synodal journey, especially those who have no voices, like the unborn, defenceless and vulnerable. There can be darkness in the world caused by these unfortunate situations, sometimes created by a materialistic and an ungrateful mindset. Am I willing to die with those affected by advocating for justice, equity, and peace? Am I willing to die defending the rights of the unborn, those on death row, the homeless, or the physically and emotionally abused? Am I willing to go down to the abyss to be with them?

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

When the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead so that they did not break his legs, but one of them opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came our blood and water. Joseph of Arimathea, because he was a disciple of Jesus (although a secret one for fear of the Jews),

besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave permission. (Jn. 19, 33-34, 38a.)

Leader: On the synodal journey we walk through the “valley of the shadow of death.” Do we really believe that darkness can lead to light or that situations of darkness have no permanence? Though Jesus died a cruel death, he still had faithful companions willing to risk shame and embarrassment to claim his body. What are we willing to risk to defend the defenceless, to identify with the outcasts, or the most despicable or unwanted persons in our society?

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

People: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, and wrapping it in a clean linen cloth he laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn out of rock. Then he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and departed. (Mt. 27: 59 - 60)

Leader: The synodal journey is marked with many tomb-like experiences. They are dark moments for communities in which there is no perceived solution to crises. It may be a heated argument or quarrel, the revelation of a story of abuse, someone refusing to talk with another person, or a group refusing to listen to another group's perspective. We feel stuck in the mud. It seems like the end of the synodal journey. But, we persevere believing in the resurrection of Jesus.

Leader: Have mercy on us O Lord

People: Have mercy on us

PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD

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.

Do 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.

FINAL HYMN: 289. O Cross erected above the world (*Joyful Celebration Hymnal*)

-By Fr Reuben Tellis
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