



WAY OF THE CROSS FOR YOUTH

By Fr Ryan Alex

Introduction:

Life is difficult and in modern times it has become far more difficult. Depression and Addiction have become synonymous with modern living. In the midst of the suffering of common people we have the Son of God who was born in a world of suffering just like us. While he gave up his authority and powers in heaven to be born in a cradle of humans, his authority is questioned and is given death by the cross. We will try to relive the experience of agony of Christ by following the way that paved our salvation.

FIRST STATION: Jesus is Condemned to Death

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. When Jesus was brought to trial, Truth itself was brought to trial. But the politically correct Pilate wanted to maintain peace in the province. Although after having tried Jesus himself, and found no fault; he was reluctant to release Jesus against the popular demands of the mob to crucify him. He tried to create a dilemma by threatening to release the law breaker Barabus. However it did not satisfy the crowd. Faced with the possibility of a riot he finally sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion, while washing his hands to indicate that he refused to take responsibility for his failure as a judge.

Let Us Pray:

Dear Jesus, Life can be unfair. It is difficult and in the quest to live a good life I face injustices. I am treated badly even if I have done good to those around me. I am left alone in my difficult times even if I have helped others in their troubles. I am constantly judged by others even though they don't know me for the person I am. Lord Jesus, help me to withstand the injustices of life and still do justice to others. Help me to be fair in my dealings with others and live a life according to the Gospels. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

SECOND STATION: Jesus is made to bear His Cross

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)



Reflection:

After being whipped at the pillar, Jesus is made to carry his own cross to the place where he would be crucified. The log of wood kept pressing on his scarred shoulders while he dragged his feet through the Streets and by lanes of Jerusalem. The jeering crowd demoralised him at each step of his way. They cursed the sorry state of his life. They nudged and jostled him like a piece of object for their entertainment.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, I hate exams. They are like crosses that I have to carry and are endlessly recurring in my life. I feel the anxiety before every exam and even go blank although I have prepared for it. I would prefer to avoid my exams if I could, but this is the only way for me to prove my worth. Help me to accept my cross no matter how hard it is or how heavy it is. Help me to have faith in you and confidence in myself that I can achieve anything through hard work and perseverance. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Finally it became difficult to bear the cross. Jesus' weak and bruised knees staggered and he came crashing to the ground. The crowd broke into a comical laughter. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and here they saw the Son of God falling to the ground like a weak ordinary person. He, who never fell into sin, fell under the weight of an ordinary piece of wood.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, help me to face the falls in my own life. The failures in exams, relationships, jobs, and expectations leave me staggering in my life too. Sometimes it seems that I am destined to fail even though I have given my best shot. These failures can be very tiring and discouraging such that I don't feel like trying anymore. Help me Lord, to learn from your fall as an essential part of the learning process of life. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

FOURTH STATION: Jesus meets His Mother

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

**Reflection:**

In the midst of violent jeering crowd stood Mary – the mother of Jesus as a sorrowful witness to the humiliating death of her beloved son. The prophecy of Simone seems to be finally coming true when a sword has indeed pierced through her heart. While Jesus, her son carried the wooden cross, she carried a sword in her heart. Her wounds were not visible but her pain could not be hidden. Her son was now on his mission for which she had given him a virgin birth.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, your Mother who gave you birth is now seeing you die as an ordinary criminal. The pain in her heart is indeed like a sword that has pierced in her heart. She not only walks the entire road to Calvary but sees her son being crucified brutally right before her eyes. She is not part of the crowd, but part of the suffering. Help me to be grateful for the sacrifices of my Parents so that I can share in their joys and sorrows as a worthy child. Help me to understand that even if don't have ideal parents, I have God as my father and Mary as my mother who will teach me the virtues of a child of God. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

FIFTH STATION: Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the Cross

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Simon came from Cyrene in Africa to visit the city of Jerusalem and accidentally encountered the mob surrounding Jesus walking with his cross. As Jesus kept falling along the way, the Roman guards forced Simon to help Jesus carry his cross. He was reluctant because carrying a cross was a shameful thing to do in any case. However after having helped Jesus he had a change of heart and his reservations no longer remained. The bitterness was replaced by compassion such that he was able to assist Jesus on his way to Calvary.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, You spoke about the outcast Good Samaritan whose deeds exceeded that of the Levite and the Priest. The reluctant Simon of Cyrene came forward to help you while you lie down on the road to Calvary beaten down by the weight of the cross. Lord Jesus, help me be the unknown stranger who helps those on the street. Let me not work for the credit of my deeds, rather for the good that my work does for those in need. Help me understand that good works that goes unnoticed in the eyes of the world, is recognised in the eyes of God. These good works are treasures in heaven that I can claim one day. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

SIXTH STATION: Veronica wipes Jesus' face

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



All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Courageously stepping out of the crowd a woman named Veronica wiped the face of Jesus with her veil. Without fearing the consequences of her actions she came forward and did the unthinkable. There were those in the crowd who were shocked at the boldness of Veronica. There were those in the crowd who were angry at her act of kindness. There were the soldiers who wanted to maintain order in the chaos of the crowd and would have pulled her back. But ultimately she was rewarded for her sympathetic gesture when she found the imprint of His face on her veil.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, I live such a busy life that at times, I don't have the time to do simple acts of kindness. Veronica shows me that even the smallest acts of kindness will not go unnoticed in the eyes of God. We may not be called to do great things, but can do small things in a great way. These small acts of kindness may be ordinary for me, but can be of great significance to the receiver. Lord Jesus, give me the courage and wisdom to reach out to those in need and do the good I can no matter how small for those in need. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Falling once is hard, but falling again only makes the shame worse and the pain unbearable. The cross is indeed heavy and the scars from the scourging made the journey to Calvary a torture. The carrying of the cross seemed far more difficult than anyone had anticipated. With every fall, wounds of the past seemed to open up and bleeding increased profusely. The body seemed to stiffen and the legs won't just move. Every step is a struggle and breathing was heavy at every step.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, Failure can be very difficult. Infact it can be very suicidal too. It stops me from taking any new initiative. It prevents me from having any self-confidence. It makes me angry with myself. It discourages me from starting afresh. Help me Lord to learn from you that failure is not the end rather a stepping stone to success. Help me learn how to swallow my pride and move ahead even though I may be emotionally drained and spiritually dry. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

EIGHTH STATION: The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

**Reflection:**

Some women of Jerusalem were moved with compassion and broke in tears at the state of Jesus laden with the cross. We don't know whether they cried specifically for Jesus or were moved to tears seeing a person under such suffering. However their emotional outburst received the attention of Jesus, who advised them to save their tears not for his destruction, rather for the destruction of Jerusalem in the years to come. The holy city of Jerusalem which was the epicentre of religious life of every Jew would fall in the years to come and Holy Son of God – Jesus would rise and become the epicentre of faith for the world.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, At times I feel insensitive to the pain of people around me. Helping others means that I have to go out of my way to look into their concerns and be useful to them even if it's a loss to me. While we live in a world where every good is done for the publicity of oneself, there are many unknown angels helping simple souls in need. Dear Jesus, help me to be sensitive to the needs of others, know their pains and understand their sufferings. Help me in my own little way become a Simon of Cyrene helping others carry the crosses of their lives. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

Falling seems to have become a pattern for the frail and tired Jesus. Struggling to reach Calvary Jesus falls again and again. He is drained of his last paces of energy. The strength of a man weakened by the carrying of his cross and the humiliation of a crowd who would rather see him dead has waned away. Each step to death was more painful than death itself. Will he conquer death by falling so many times? Will his weakness become a source of strength for others? Will he need the help of some more to finally complete that what he had started?

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, sometimes I try to stand up but keep falling repeatedly. It's like a trap in a slippery slope. Whether it's screen addiction, junk food or porn I fall into the temptation repeatedly. I decide to come out of it but struggle in the battle of my mind. Lord Jesus, let me not be discouraged by the many times I fail to rise of my weaknesses. But keep trying until I have conquered by sins and overcome my evil tendencies. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

TENTH STATION: Jesus is stripped of His garments

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

**Reflection:**

The ultimate shame and indignation was yet to come. They wanted to strip Jesus of every ounce of dignity in front of the crowd. They wanted to make an example out of him so that no one else will dare to speak up against the temple authorities or question their arguments on religious matters. The One who gave dignity to the leper by touching him and healing him was now left in a state of indignation. The One whom the crowds followed so that they could just touch the hem of his garment. The One who was pure and uncontaminated of any sin was made to stand in stark nakedness before a crowd for their amusement.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, Our clothes don't just cover our bodies, but give us dignity in society. However we see in social media how exposed bodies are used to get likes and followers. How the physique is emphasised, more than the intellectual and emotional intelligence of the person; how youngsters are trapped in the pleasures of their body and diverted from the real goals of life. Lord Jesus, help me to treat my body as the temple of God, which is sacred and blessed. Help me understand that while the physical body ages with time, I can grow mature in my spiritual, emotional and mental faculties to ultimately live a life of abundance. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

The carpenter's son who drew nails into furniture was now being nailed to the cross. The piercing shots of the hammer tore through the wrists. In most cases, the criminal was tied to the cross, not nailed. But in the case of Jesus, they wanted to deliver the most brutal punishment. The intensity of the pain was such that it numbed every sensation of pain in the body. The screams of a tired Jesus were drowned in the jeering of the mob looking to vent their anger. Jesus is finally nailed to the cross that will become the salvation of the world. Jesus and his cross are now inseparable forever.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, there are those who have to live with their problems all through their life, they are literally nailed to their problems. There are those who are nailed to their bed due to chronic sicknesses. There are those who are nailed to their depression due to heartbreaks and failures in life. There are those who are nailed to their jobs merely to make a living even if it gives them no satisfaction and takes a large portion of their life. Lord Jesus, Help me to overcome the pain of being nailed to my cross. Help me understand that the path to redemption is in the cross itself. Help me to break free in faith even though I am nailed to the cross. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection: The Cross of Jesus was lifted to stand on the Mount of Calvary. Jesus hung there between heaven and earth. He could now be seen even by those standing at a distance. His Mother and a few disciples stood at the foot of the cross. He asked for water and they gave him vinegar. The taunts and abuses never stopped. They challenged him to come down from the cross if he was the Son of God. The humiliation was complete. Then, with a final gasp of breath he left the world he created. His adversaries had achieved their goal. They had silenced the rebellious voice that preached the word of God. They had restrained the hands that healed the sick.

Let Us Pray:

Death is indeed a painful end to the beauty of life. There are sadly many youngsters who embrace death rather than face life. There are those who inflict death upon the innocent one by aborting a child who has become an obstacle or inconvenience to their lives. There are those who become walking zombies of death by turning addicts. There are those who cause death by murder and genocide. Lord Jesus, you embraced death for our sins. You bore the responsibility of our sins on yourself and saved us from eternal damnation. Your pain was not for your wrongs but to correct our wrongs forever. You have paid the debt of our sins by your death. 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 praise You. (Genuflect)

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

The lifeless body of Jesus was left hanging on the cross and had to be removed before sunset because the next day was Sabbath. Jesus was crucified during the Passover celebrations, and it was forbidden in the law to have the bodies up during the Sabbath. Therefore the thieves had their legs broken to ensure they would die before sundown. However, Jesus died before this could happen. Joseph of Arimathea personally asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Joseph was a wealthy and influential man, so he had the clout to ask such a favour. The spectacle that the crowds had come to watch was over and the people returned back to their normal lives.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, when times are good and life is going well we are surrounded by many whom we don't even recognise. But the moment time changes for the worse we realise the real ones who care about us and those who do not. We like to be noticed and liked on social media by as many viewers but help me distinguish between online subscribers and real life friends. Help me recognise the ones who truly love me and make sacrifices for me. Help me to appreciate those genuine relationships in real life who will be with me through the thick and thin of life. Amen.



Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is placed in the Sepulchre

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

All: Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Reflection:

The Son of God was born in someone else's stable and now is buried in someone else's tomb. Just like a baby is wrapped in loin cloth, so was the dead body of Jesus was wrapped in a simple loin cloth. The story of Jesus has finally come to an end according to a well-executed plan by the crafty minds in Jerusalem. The fear of this public execution will prevent anyone who would speak out against the temple establishment. Additionally, soldiers were placed to guard the tombstone so that his apostles don't commit any foul play by stealing the body. Death has lent its final blow and this time too it seems to have emerged victorious.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, there are many unmarked graves; those who have been forgotten with time, those who have been buried by strangers, those who have become strangers to their own families, and those who have been buried with their talents that they never used when they were alive. Lord Jesus, help me to make the best of my life that you have blessed me with, so that one day when death knocks I shall return to you with gratitude. Like you, let me not live a life of selfishness but a life for the good of others. Amen.

Leader: Have mercy on us. O Lord!

All: Have mercy on us.

Concluding Prayer:

Finally Jesus, I have come to the end of your way of the Cross. Your agony and your pain that were visible are manifested in this way of the Cross. However, there were a lot more that you had to undergo: The emotional suffering of betrayal by one of your apostles for a few silver pieces. The loneliness due to the denial by your chosen apostle who you had prophesied would be the rock of your church. The anger of being denied justice by your own community elders in the middle of the night. The list is long and the suffering cuts deep. But You would rise again from the ashes on the third day but till then we wait and learn from your way of the Cross. Amen.

Contributed by Fr Ryan Alex

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