



# Stations of the Cross

*(based on the life of the migrants  
- names of people are fictitious to protect their identity)*

## **Introduction:**

The practice of the Way of the Cross began in the Middle Ages, when pilgrims began to follow the route that Christ had taken on his last lap to death. They stopped to pray, especially, at key points in this journey. This was their way of showing their solidarity with Christ in his suffering by 'calling to mind' and retracing his steps.

Today we shall call to mind the Way of the Cross by seeing it in today's life. Christ is still suffering today, in the back breaking and nerve wrecking responsibilities that migrants are forced to take up. We see Christ carrying his cross. He is still being nailed when migrants are made the scapegoats of vengeance and jealousy, or when migrants are tied down to great burdens. He dies a million deaths in the violence of murder, terror and calamity. Migrants need Simons and Veronicas and the weeping women to help and sympathise with him.

Today we shall hear the stories of different migrants who suffer with him.

## **FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED**

The whole group rose up and took Jesus before Pilate. "We caught this man misleading our people." Pilate asked Jesus "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered "So you say." Then Pilate said to the chief priest "I find no reason to condemn this man." But the crowd insisted the whole crowd cried out "Kill him. Set Barabbas free." Pilate again asked, "What crime has he committed?" and the crowd shouted even louder. "Crucify Him." Pilate then washed his hands saying, "I am not responsible for the death of this man."

## **INCIDENT TODAY:**

When Rita's cousin offered to bring her to Mumbai from Kolhapur so that she could pursue her studies, her family readily agreed. Little did they know what was in store for her.



A year later, 13-year-old Rita Shyam lies battered in G.T. Hospital after surviving a close brush with death. On July 15, her cousin and her husband allegedly tried to strangle her. She was saved by the timely intervention of neighbours who called up Childline, a child crisis helpline.

Already frail and malnourished, Rita was punched in the eye, beaten with an iron rod and strangled with a rope. She lies in the hospital with a swollen and bleeding eye. Her body is scarred with cuts and welts, which are testimony to the year of torture that she has suffered.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord Forgive us.

- Lord, for those occasions when you stood alone condemned and we kept silent.
- For the times, when like Pilate, we washed our hands off situations, and refused to get involved.
- For those moments when we closed our eyes to the suffering and difficulties of people and preferred our own enjoyment.

### **SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS**

Our Lord had been a visitor to our earth when as a child, he was taken to the Temple, Simeon with prophetic vision declared, "this child will be a sign of contradiction." Later on, it was mentioned, "He came unto his own and his own received him not." As a symbol of the world's rejection, he is given the Cross.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Listen to the story of JOHNY, a migrant from North. Johnny can't move his hands and feet as we can move. He can't talk as we can talk. He is a spastic. That is, his muscles don't work with his brains. Johnny's way of the Cross is like Jesus' Way of the Cross. He carries his Cross courageously.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord Forgive us.

- Lord, for the times that we laid a cross upon the shoulders of others through our ill-temper and lack of understanding.
- For the occasions that we are preoccupied with our own problems and failed to see what others were going through.

- For those times when we were envious of others and grumbled and complained in moments of suffering and difficulty.

### **THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME**

Jesus drags himself along. His head is crowned with thorns. His body sore, aching with pain. The weight of the Cross is too much. He stumbles and falls. But Jesus struggles to His feet and tries once more.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Satish, aged 26, from Bihar was a car-seat maker, living in a slum at Sahar. He had saved up all his money to buy a shed. On September 16, 1985, the Municipality bull dozer came and smashed all the huts and sheds. That was too much for Satish to bear. He said to his friend that afternoon: "I am tired of running round and round. I am fed up with life. I haven't the strength to run anymore, my friend." That night Satish went to the Vile Parle railway line and laid his head on the rail. Like a cross made up of two parts his body was cut into two.



**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord Forgive us.

- The children, who are mercilessly inducted into the rat race, goaded by their parents to succeed, to compete, to out-distance others.
- The youth who face failure and frustration in a highly competitive world that leaves them disheartened.
- Those migrants who struggle hard to make an honest living and meet with injustice.

### **FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER**

Mary is visibly shaken as she confronts her son Jesus on the road to Calvary. She gazes at him; bruised and disfigured, his head crowned with thorns, his body weighed down with a Cross. It was a painful meeting.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Rupali Desai's first child happened by chance. While walking to her office from the bus stop one morning, Rupali saw a boy who came to the city

from Orissa being thrashed by a fruit vendor. The vendor said the boy was an orphan and always pestered him for food. Says Rupali, "I went back again in the evening. The child was crying helplessly. I decided to take him home. Rupali and a few like-minded friends decided to register a society, Saikripa, to look after migrant children.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord Forgive us.

- When we see our loved ones tormented by alcohol and drugs.
- When no one seems to care for us and assist us in our moments of need.
- When the world around collapses and we are left orphaned and give in to despair.

### **FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS**

Fearing that exhaustion and weakness would rob them of unfurling him, like a banner of warning on top of Mt. Calvary, they forced Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus with the task of carrying the Cross.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

For years, R. Raman migrant from Chennai, was just an ordinary autorickshaw driver in Bangalore. As he ferried passengers across the city roads, Raman would see destitutes on the streets. Unlike most people, he did not turn his face away. Nor was he put off by their scraggy hair full of lice, their unwashed clothes, or their sores. In fact, their miserable state moved him. "Why should they live such a life? Can I do anything to help them even in a small way?" he wondered.

So, one day, he took home a sickly old woman, gave her a bath, clean clothes and some food. What's more he gave her refuge in his

own home. Since then, there has been no looking back. Raman's home is shared by many destitutes he has picked up from the streets of Bangalore.





**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord Forgive us.

- Lord Jesus, give us the courage to break down the walls of color bar, to knock off the chains of caste, class and communalism in our own country.
- Lord Jesus, set our people free from bonded labour and from the clutches of money lenders. Let your cross bring hope to our down trodden working class, exploited fisherman, badli workers and domestic workers.
- Lord may we be a Simon to the sick, invalid, rejected, outcast, poor, exploited, lonely and the hopeless.

### **SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

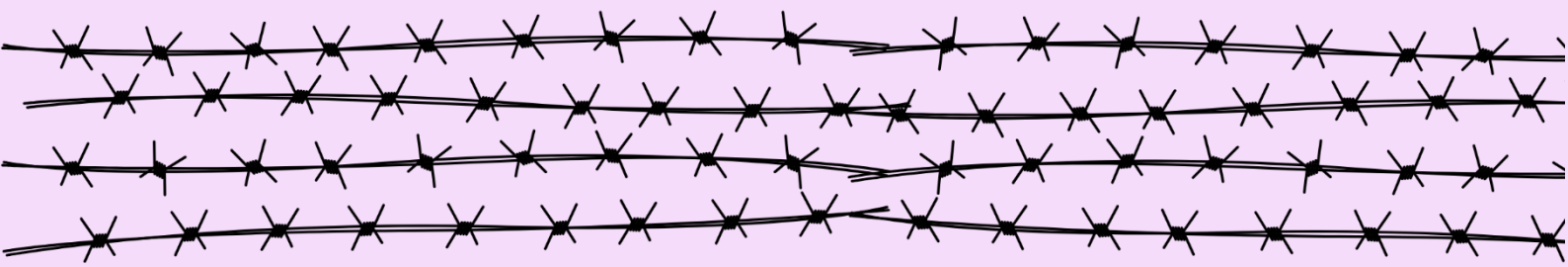
Jesus carrying his Cross presented a truly sorry spectacle. His condition called for attention. There were many in the crowd who felt like reaching out to Jesus but were too scared. What would people think of them, reaching out to a condemned man?

It took a woman like Veronica to reach out and wipe the blood-stained face of Jesus.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Mariam Fateh's family migrated to Mumbai when she was 23. She challenged the Muslim personal law in the supreme court as being against the Constitution, on grounds of being discriminatory to women. She had just been divorced through the triple TALAZ method. Her petition provoked harsh criticism. Ten years later, Mariam has educated herself in law and Islam. She has formed an organization of poor migrant Muslim women, in Nagpada: AWAAZ- E-NISWAAR or VOICE OF WOMEN is known throughout India, for taking up atrocities on Muslim women, as a militant feminist organization. Mariam was given the Neerja Bhanot Pan Am Trust Award.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord, help us face the realities of Life.

- When we hesitate to get involved because of the risks.
  - When we are confronted with tragedies and disasters.
  - When we have to stand up for what we believe in.
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## **SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME**

Simon's help provided Jesus with a respite from his burden. So too did Veronica's gesture of compassion. But alas, the respite was all too brief. The weakness came on again. He struggled against it. He tried desperately to keep on putting one foot in front of the other. But it was no good. He started to feel dizzy, before he knew it, he was on the ground again.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Sheila, aged 7 years, collapsed in the classroom of a village suburban school in Uttar Pradesh.

In a weak and timid voice Sushma her sister spoke, 'Today was not Sheila's turn to have break-fast'.

Sheila and Sushma belonged to a family of seven children.

Their father, a migrant farmer, could not afford to feed his children. So, they took turns. Some ate while others starved.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord, help us to rise again.

- In moments of failure and frustration.
- In moments of weakness, loneliness and deep despair.
- In the moments when we are assaulted by the temptation to take life easy and compromise.

## **EIGHT STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM**

Large number of people followed Jesus, which included women. They cried seeing his sight. But Jesus said, "Weep not for me but for yourselves and your children."

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Tears stream down her cheeks as she narrates her tragic story. Four months back Shanti was a happy woman living in a hut in the heart of the city with her husband and her year-old child. Her husband worked as a dish-washer in a nearby hotel, while Shanti supplemented the family income by working as a domestic aide in one of the middle-class families.

Then one day before the outbreak of the rains, their hut along with others



were demolished and they were heartlessly left on a marshy patch outside the city. This is where she is now. In the meantime, her husband lost his job. Then came the monsoon and with it mosquitoes and disease. Her child fell sick and died within a week. Shanti's husband is now severely stricken with malaria. The family has no money for food and for medicines.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Deliver us, O Lord.

- From the tendency to magnify our suffering beyond all proportion.
- From the tendency to draw undue attention and make ourselves the objects of self-pity.
- From the tendency to ignore the plight of the suffering people around us.

### **NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME**

As Jesus covers the last lap of his journey to Calvary, he finds himself totally tired. He cannot make it. He crashes to the ground under the weight of the Cross. There is no strength left in his body. He has emptied every ounce of it. At this point it might seem so easy to give up, but Calvary was now in sight. And this driving force impels Jesus to collect himself, stand up and trudge the last mile.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

So many of our people struggle like Jesus just to survive. He struggles in them. He struggles in Pushpa Wadekar, a widow living with her child in the hills of Ghatkopar. Pushpa's husband died in 1982. While he was working, a bottle of acid fell on him and he was killed. Ever since then, Pushpa has been wandering with her son, looking for a job and a shelter: She worked hard, carrying mud and stones for RS 15/- a day. She built a small hut at Parksite. The BMC came and demolished it on the 15th of November. She and her son spent 15 days out in the open. But she carries on with the mud work. She will rise again and build another hut on another hill. 'Must live for my son,' she says.



**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Destroy in us, O Lord.

- The inclination to belittle the poor and look down on them.



- The inclination to be high-handed and cruel in our dealings with our domestic workers.
- The inclination to draw a circle and exclude others who do not belong to our social group.

### **TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS**

God's dealing with humanity has been a continuous process. The first act was creation. The second was telling the secret of his love for us i.e. Revelation. Finally, "God so loved the world that he gives us his only Son." This is Incarnation. Now on the hill called Calvary, Jesus willed to empty himself and abandon - all for our sake. The soldiers pounce on Jesus. They strip him. Jesus stands exposed stripped bare of his clothes and belongings.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

On April 4, 1984, Rita D'Souza, age 13, a house-worker was murdered by her mistress, a Catholic lady, staying at Antop Hill. She tied up Rita with a rope, beat her up with an iron rod, and then tortured her to death with a burning candle.

On November 1990, Sisters Sarika and Alka were murdered. Sisters' Sarika and Alka took care of street-children, at Sneha Sadan, Jogeshwari.

On the night of September 28, 1991, RANJIT TIVARI, trade-unionist and a social reformer, was murdered by big businessmen's Mafia, who had the politicians and the police in their pockets.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Have mercy on us.

- I see the Crucified as stripped of everything:
- Migrants Stripped of their dignity.
- Stripped of success.
- Stripped of credibility.
- Stripped of support.
- Stripped of life





## **ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED ON THE CROSS**

Jesus was nailed to the Cross. He hung there unable to move. He was powerless. With this nailing, the tiny flicker of hope seemed extinguished. The awfulness of it, the excruciating pain is beyond imagining. Jesus mounts his pulpit for the last time. This time it is the pulpit of the Cross.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Her name was Virali, migrated to city attracted by the city dreams. She had looks, charm, intelligence, ability, a good job with a no mean salary which brought her social status and access to the good life.

And this is what she actively sought and relished with all her heart - high living:

the comforts of a well-furnished flat, good food, good clothes, entertainment, parties, pleasure trips, and more pleasure. Yet for all the fun and excitement she exacted out of life, she wasn't happy... Deep, deep down within her, she experienced a lonely void. In her loneliness she consumed an over-dose of sleeping pills. Virali died as she had lived.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Jesus, be my strength.

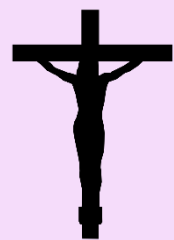
- When I resist the temptation to be calculating in my love.
- When I fight the pressures of society which reduce love to a mere commodity.
- When I challenge the false values and live according to the Gospel.

## **TWELTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

It was about noon. The sun was hidden and darkness came over the whole land. Then Jesus gave a loud cry "Father into your hands, I commend my Spirit." Jesus then breathes his last.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Listen to the story of RIYAZ YOUSUF, a 12-year-old Christian boy from Lahore who was shot dead because he spoke strongly on behalf of child-workers. At the age of 4, Riyaz was sold by his parents to be a slave a carpet weaver. For nearly 6 years he was chained to the carpet-weaving loom. Riyaz Yousuf worked as a carpet-weaver from the age of 4 to 10. When he was set free from bonded labour, he travelled to Europe and



spoke at an international labour conference in Sweden. He travelled to America and spoke in Boston. The whole world was shocked. Because of Riyaz's awareness campaigns, many carpet-weaving factories were closed down and thousands of bonded child-labourers were set free.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** SILENCE.



### **THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

Jesus was dead. The first thing that had to be done was to take down the body. To do this, they had to get the permission. His mother then took the body into her arms. It was in a sorry state - dirty, sweat stained, blood stained and bruised.

#### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Listen to the story of the three sisters of Kanpur: Sweta, Asha and Devyani who had received college education. But their parents had not enough dowry - money to get them married. Every day men came and had a look at them. Like in a bazaar, the three sisters were shown and then rejected. One day, when the parents had gone out somewhere, the three sisters decided to end their lives. They took their mother's sarees. They left a suicide-note for their parents:

"Dear Daddy and Mummy, we can't bear this suffering any more. We are doing what we are doing out of our own freewill. Please forgive us.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Destroy in us, O Lord.

- Our prejudices and biases; our pride and vanity.
- Our sham and hypocrisy; our indifference and apathy.
- Our selfishness and evil; our stubbornness and superficiality.

## **FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB AND RISES ON THE THIRD DAY**

He was born in an abandoned cave because there was no room for him in the inn. He lived as a refugee. He had said... the son of Man has nowhere to lay down his head. He is buried in a borrowed cave. But he will rise.

### **INCIDENT TODAY:**

Listen to the story of Aarav Kevin. He was born in Andhra Pradesh. Both his parents had leprosy. So they were forced to stay outside the village, in a leprosy colony. They could not mix and mingle with other people. They were not welcome. Aarav had to leave his home and stay in an orphanage. His mother used to beg and send him money for schooling. Later on, when he grew up, he worked with the missionaries and cared for leprosy patients. He got married to Rosy whose parents were also leprosy patients. Today, Aarav Kevin lives at Maniguda, in Orissa. He has started a centre called NEW HOPE for work among leprosy patients. There is a hospital for surgery on the 35-acre land. Village girls go on bikes to various villages to help the villagers to eradicate the disease. In 10 years, 3000 villagers are completely cured of leprosy.

**RESPONSE PRAYER:** Your response: Lord, may your victory be ours.

- In the struggles and hardships of daily life.
- In the fight against the evil forces of sin and injustice.
- In our struggles for human rights.

### **FINAL PRAYER AND BLESSING**

#### **Acknowledgement:**

We express our gratitude to Fr. Felix D'Souza, Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Church, Santa Cruz West for his contribution.

