



A Way of the Cross for Children

By Fr Vincet D'Cruz

(The reflection is meant to be read slowly and meaningfully...feeling the pain and agony our Lord felt on His last journey on earth.)

Opening Hymn: If you wish to be my disciple...

Introduction prayer: Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to follow me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake, shall save it.

Today as we tread the path walked by Jesus, on his way to Calvary; He challenges us to contemplate whether the way of our own lives as Christians in any way reflects his life- a life of commitment and dedication, self- sacrifice and service to the very end.

FIRST STATION: Jesus is Condemned to Death

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

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

Reflection: Jesus was unjustly condemned to death on a cross which he so humbly accepted and embraced. Today we hear of so much of persecution in various parts of the country. With these growing atrocities on our catholic brothers and sisters who are condemned for their faith, how can we as children, play a part to accept Jesus, defend and share our faith with our non- catholic friends in school and our neighbourhood? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me never to abandon you or my faith for the sake of the world and its pleasures. I plead for your strength to face the world with boldness and courage, to be a true disciple and zealously learn to love and appreciate everything in my life. I also pray for the missionaries and priests who everyday are condemned for their faith and selfless work in the Lord's vineyard.

Leader: *Have mercy on us O Lord*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

SECOND STATION: Jesus Accepts His Cross

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

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

Reflection: Here, Jesus has embraced the cross and set out on his final journey on earth. By clinging to his cross, Jesus has embraced our sins, our fears, our anxieties and pain. He has so willingly accepted to bear it all (our sins and wrong doings).

What is our answer to His humble action of love for us? Are we willingly to forego our luxurious and materialistic pleasures for our not so privileged brothers and sisters? What is my reaction to the crosses and troubles that come my way? How do I react when my parents refuse to give me what I want? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Dear Lord, I plead with you to provide me the strength to bear the crosses that come my way. Give me your wisdom to deal with the problems and confront them with joy and love, blessing me to be a new person every day.

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.*

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

Reflection: Life is full of ups and downs, and failure is an important part of our lives. How often we fail in our exams or are not able to cope with the competition of this world. So many times, we fail to reach up to our parent's expectations? But at this juncture of our Lord's suffering, He is teaching you and me to rise above all our failures and move ahead.

Can we like Jesus, get up and move ahead, despite our many failures and shortfalls? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Lord of Mercy and compassion, give me the courage to face the challenges and failures of my life and the strength to move ahead in life by learning from my faults/ failures and renewing my life each day with your grace.

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.*

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

Reflection: Little did Mary realize what her YES to the Angel Gabriel would someday mean! She had pledged her willingness to be God's partner in our liberation, but did not quite know what to make of the sorrowful spectacle unfolding before her eyes. Was this the same child whose birth the Angels proclaimed so gloriously to the Shepherds and whom the Magi trudged long distances to worship? How often do I disobey my parents? And cause them hurt and pain? Can I start obeying and respecting my parents and not allow them to be hurt with my behaviour? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: O Mary! I am the cause of Jesus' sufferings. Let me participate in these heart-felt pangs, which rent your tender soul, when you did behold your Son trembling with cold, covered with wounds, fainting under the Cross, more dead than alive! Grant me the effective grace of perseverance to be a good person, so that I can be a reflection of your son's sacrifice in my life to my parents, siblings and friends.

Hymn: Be with us Mary

Leader: *Have mercy on us O Lord*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

FIFTH STATION: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

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

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

Reflection: The fifth Station represents Christ fainting, devoid of strength, unable to carry the Cross. He seeks the help of Simon of Cyrene. Today we should ask ourselves if we are living a life which helps Christ spread his word and kingdom, or do we partake in replenishing His kingdom? How often do we readily agree to help others in need and pain? What can I do from today to help Christ spread His word and Kingdom of love on earth? Can I be of any use to the Lord in bringing salvation to my fellow brethren? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Lord, I need you to give me the grace to reach out to others when they need my help. May I also be an instrument of peace and love in your Kingdom by loving and spreading your kingdom of love in my family, among my friends and in school.

Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace

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 praise you.*

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

Reflection The sixth Station represents the place where the pious Veronica, compassionating our agonizing Redeemer, beholding His sacred face livid with blows and covered with blood and sweat, presents a handkerchief, with which Jesus wipes His face. Life is full of innumerable acts of kindness shown to us in the most unexpected circumstances. If only we would recognize those instances! Do we also perform such acts of kindness towards others? Can I do at least two small acts of kindness everyday to the least of our brothers and sisters? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Oh Lord, stamp your image on my soul, that it may never admit another love. Give me the courage I need to accept a helping hand, the grace to recognize hidden acts of kindness and above all the generosity of heart to acknowledge such acts spontaneously. May I learn to appreciate my parents' hard

work and the sacrifices they make for me to live a happy life. Help me to see the best in everything I do and receive.

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.*

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

Reflection: This fall of Jesus tests our will, our desire to do good. Time and again we enjoy seeing other's downfall. We enjoy seeing others go through failure and grief. How often do I make fun of friend's weaknesses, fun of their inabilities? How often do I mock my friends and gossip about them? Can I change this hurtful habit and hold my tongue before I speak bad about others? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Oh Lord, teach me to be humble and detest my pride. May I respect human life and uphold human dignity. Give me the wisdom to avoid giving in to recurring temptations that can bring a downfall to others and myself. Make me meek and humble, Lord.

Leader: *Have mercy on us O Lord*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

EIGHTH STATION: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

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

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

Reflection: This Station represents the place where several devout women meeting Jesus, and beholding Him wounded and bathed in His blood, shed tears of compassion over Him. Consider the excessive love of Jesus, who, though suffering and half dead through the multitude of His distress, is nevertheless attentive to console the women who wept over Him. They merited that tender consolation from the mouth of Jesus, "Weep not over me, but over yourselves and your children."

Do we pay attention to the pain of others and suffering or do we concentrate on our own problems? Do we reach out to others who's suffering may be greater than our own? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Gracious compassionate Jesus, give me the grace to pay heed to the cry and pain of others suffering. Please Lord, stir me out of my apathy and make me sensitive to the plight of my fellow brothers and sisters in need. May I be of help to them and become an instrument of peace to my family, friends in my neighbourhood and at school.

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.*

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

Reflection: This Station represents the foot of Mount Calvary, where Jesus Christ, quite devoid of strength, falls a third time to the ground. The anguish of His wounds is renewed. Here, Jesus is weak and cannot move any further. The weight of our sins on that cross is so heavy that he falls the 3rd time.

How often do we sin and fail to ask for forgiveness? Many a time we so conveniently escape the brunt of our sins because He bore it for us. Can we from today lead a more worthy life? Can I resolve to avoid telling lies at home, with my friends and teachers in school? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Dear Lord, I know it is difficult to carry my sin but give me the grace today to lead a worthy life, a life which reflects your light and shines in the darkness. May I be the salt of the earth and add flavour to the lives of my parents, my siblings, my friends and my teachers in school.

Hymn: *I surrender all*

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.*

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

Reflection: How humiliated Christ must have been to be stripped of his clothes! Imagine the Lamb of God being stripped and being laughed at! We often hear and read about what it means to be a follower of Christ, but fail to live up to our own commitment to the Gospel.

How would you feel if you were stripped off your dignity, your achievements and your talents? How often do you strip Christ through your thoughts, words and actions? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Dear Lord, I am sorry for stripping you each time I lie to my parents, each time I disobey and disrespect my elders and each time I mock or laugh at my friends' downfall. Please give me the grace not to do so. Pour on me your grace to respect human life to love my parents, my siblings and friends. Make me oh lord a channel of your sacrificing love to my community and neighbourhood.

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.*

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

Reflection: This Station represents the place where Jesus Christ, in the presence of His afflicted mother, is stretched on the Cross, and nailed to it. How insufferable the torture – the nerves and the

muscles are held by the nails. Consider the exceeding sadness, the anguish of the tender Mother, eye-witness to this inhuman punishment of her beloved Jesus.

Can I today generously resolve to bury my old self of its disobedience, disrespect to elders, lies, and hatred towards my enemies and nail it to the wood of the Cross. (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Lord, give me a change of heart today, to bury my old self, my attitudes, my selfish desires and worldly pleasures. Let nothing and nobody prevent me from pulling out the nails of injustice that pierce innocent hearts so that love and caring hands may serve to make the world a better place to live in.

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.*

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

Reflection: The Messiah, King of all ages dies... (silence). This Station represents the place where Christ was publicly exalted on the Cross between two robbers, who, for their enormous crimes, were executed with the innocent Lamb. Death and destruction surround us on all sides.

Much, if not most of all the earth's resources are used in the service of death with the war equipment industry, with the wrong use of the internet. The forces of death are visible also in the violence rampant within families and neighbours. With the media offering entertainment based on violence. At the root of all this lies distrust which leads to hatred and an unforgiving attitude. (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Jesus, your death on the cross, though cruel and shameful, never fails to fascinate me; for even while you were hanging there in agony, you cared to touch the heart of the repentant thief with your forgiving attitude. Teach me, Lord to forgive and forget just the way the heavenly father wants us to. Help me to remember that true and unconditional forgiveness alone can bring the peace you have promised.

Hymn: Into your hands

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.*

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

Reflection: Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus asks for the body of Jesus at the risk of his political and religious reputation. The sacrifice of Jesus is complete, but not his mother's. Mary must cradle in her arms the lifeless body of the son she bore.

Do we stand for what is right and just, even at the risk of losing popularity? (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Lord, give us the courage to accept the separations that come our way from friends who go away, siblings who leave home for further studies, parents who live abroad. Give me your grace to say with Mary, “Be it done to me according to your word.”

Leader: *Have mercy on us O Lord*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

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

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

Reflection: There is no room for the Messiah to lay his lifeless body, no family grave for the son of man. Born in a stranger’s cave, he was buried in a stranger’s grave. Like Jesus, there are millions around us who have no roof over their heads. Strangely, many of the very homeless work to construct huge structures that go to make our homes; yet, the gravity of their situation fails to touch us. (Pause for reflection)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, soften our hearts of stone. Open our hearts to the fact that you have no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which your compassion looks out on the lowly and the needy around us. Ours are the feet with which you chose to walk in the midst of the homeless. Ours are the hands with which you care for the sick and the aged in our neighbourhood. Help us to reach out and touch the lives of those in need.

Leader: *Have mercy on us O Lord*

All: *Have mercy on us.*

Closing Prayer: Oh Lord, source of life and happiness, thank you for dying on the cross for my sins and redeeming me. You paid a heavy price for my wrong doings. It is because of you that I live today, it is because of your sacrifice on the cross that I can face the challenges that come my way. It is because of your victory on the cross that all my fear has gone. It is all because you live... I am grateful to you to give me life and to be proud to be your child.....Make me oh Lord a channel of your love and peace, an instrument to be constructive not destructive. With you alone can I be a better person... Grant me your grace O Lord.... Amen

Hymn: We hail thee

For the intentions of our Holy Father.....

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be to the Father...

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