



## THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

### Introduction:

Whenever we make the Way of the Cross, we are overcome with the tragedy of Jesus' trial, his walk to Calvary bearing the weight of the cross, and his crucifixion. We forget however, the reason for his dying – that we might ourselves pass-over from death to eternal life.

Some of us have reached the twilight of our lives; others are getting there. We have experienced both painful and joyful circumstances through the years. We have waded through fear and despair in our efforts to be whole and at peace. Jesus stands before us today telling us he knows our story; and he reminds us that he is with us always, helping us to persevere till we finally triumph as he did. Let us take a walk to Calvary and meet Jesus on the way.

**Opening Hymn:** Any suitable hymn could be sung

**Opening Prayer:** Loving and Merciful God, we come to you with the weight of our cares and our responsibilities, our struggles and longings, which lie heavy upon us. Yet, we know that Jesus Christ has gone before us as our Way, guiding our paths to you, and that your Holy Spirit is within us, strengthening us on the journey. We gather now to follow Christ to his crucifixion, and to hope for the joyful abundance of new life in him. Amen.

### First Station: Pilate Condemns Jesus to Die

*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Pilate is annoyed. The angry crowd outside his gates wants this man's life. "Crucify Him", they yell. Pilate sees no reason to crucify Jesus; but he feels he has to act, if he doesn't want to be perceived as weak. As he prepares to pass judgment, he hesitates, then takes water and washes his hands in front of the crowd.

**Reflection:** When I feel I'm being treated unjustly, or when people criticize me unfairly, I feel shunned and unloved. I sometimes react by retreating into a shell. While it is indeed an injustice to judge and condemn others rashly, it is also an injustice to judge ourselves harshly when we think we are not worth loving. How easy it is for us to believe that we are worthless or useless based on the judgements of others; and how easy it is to forget that God does not judge us or repay us according to our many faults and failings.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, help us to know as you did, that an injustice cannot be set right by committing another injustice. Give us the gift of being just, that we may not hurt others by unjust condemnation, or fail to stand up for ourselves when we can. Help us to see ourselves and the people in our life through your eyes. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.



## 2nd Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

In the courtyard, the procession is ready; the gates of the Antonia fortress swing open. The Roman soldiers lead the way. Although hardly able to stand after his terrible scourging, Jesus, crowned with thorns, moves forward with quiet dignity. He does not seek pity. He has a far greater mission to complete.

**Reflection:** I find I have several crosses. Perhaps, I have adult kids who don't respect me, screen addicted grand-kids who barely acknowledge me, family members who question my actions, interfering neighbours – the list is endless. I also do not like the problems that come with our 21st century digital convenience, because I am often unable to understand the technology. I throw my hands up in despair. Which one is my real cross? There is only one thing that can lighten our crosses, and that is to carry them with love. Without love, any gesture or action becomes a burden in itself. Jesus says to us today: 'Take heart, I am with you to help you with your burdens. Come to me, put your crosses on my shoulder and you will find rest'.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, give us the gift of tranquillity in the face of our crosses, that we may carry them like you carried your cross. Give us an understanding of the realities of the world around us, so that we may support others struggling with life's burdens. Remind us often that nothing can happen, that you and we, together, cannot handle. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

## 3rd Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

The procession moves out of the city gate going downhill towards the valley. The soldiers are hurrying Jesus forward, wanting to get this job done as quickly as possible. The Sabbath is coming. Jesus is exhausted and unsteady on his feet. Suddenly, he buckles and falls face down, the cross upon him; and his wounds re-open. The soldiers, with a few quick lashes, pull him roughly and painfully up. The procession moves on.

**Reflection:** As I grow older, I find it hard to accept that I'm getting slower. I get tired easily, my legs refuse to carry me fast enough, and my joints ache with rheumatism and arthritis. It is easy to despair over small things. I can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself. My family cannot understand me when I feel like this. Jesus understands what we are going through and will help us face our limitations each time we are overwhelmed by them. With patience and perseverance comes the hope that we shall overcome as Jesus did.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, you shared and experienced our human condition. You felt the limitations of the body, you stumbled as we stumble, fell as we fall and you didn't give up. Therein lies our hope. We pray for those who find the burdens of life too heavy and the road too long. With your help, may we persevere and endure in all things. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord.

**All:** Have mercy on us.



#### 4th Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

As the procession moves forward, Mary, the mother of Jesus, makes her way towards him. She had held him to her, nurtured, loved and raised him. Now she sees him, under the weight of the cross, his face disfigured, his body bleeding from the lashes. Jesus sees her and tries to move towards her, but in an instant, the soldiers pull him away. They are stopped from speaking; but their love, communicated through eyes and heart, cannot be taken away.

**Reflection:** How hard it is for mothers and fathers who go to meet their children in jails, hospitals and detention homes! Or for those who know that their ‘special’ children can never be normal like other children. How heartrending it must have been for Mary to meet her beloved son covered with blood and spittle, condemned to death and made a spectacle of in public! Gone are the days when my children looked at me with total trust, knowing I’d always be there for them. They grew up and moved away from home, some to distant lands, some in the city but very busy with their own lives. I feel alone sometimes, and there’s an ache in my heart from missing my children. I wonder: can one measure God’s unconditional love for us?

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, when we witness the pain of loved ones, teach us to stand by their side and to bear with them, to offer a consoling word, to lend a shoulder or an arm and never to count the cost. Give us the grace to cherish them and to love them unconditionally, no matter the situation. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

#### 5th Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

The going is slow, towards the hill where the crucifixion is to take place. The soldiers look for someone in the crowd who can assist Jesus with his cross. They spot a sturdy man, Simon from Cyrene, who is passing by on his way in from the country. A soldier beckons Simon. He pushes him towards Jesus while explaining what is needed. Simon looks at the bleeding, exhausted, condemned man, and hesitates, but shoulders the cross. They continue up the hill.

**Reflection:** Was there no one among Jesus’ friends and followers to help him, but a stranger? Nevertheless, Jesus accepted Simon’s help and no doubt it eased his physical suffering for a while. As I grow older, I realize that not only my body is slowing down, but my mind is caught up with worrying about the process of ageing. Will I continue to keep good health? Will my savings last? Will I always have the love and support of my family and friends? A cross is lighter when two carry it but I find it difficult to share my misgivings or to ask others to help me when I’m troubled and need assistance.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, you needed help in your final human journey. You had the humility to accept that help. In so doing, you honoured the strengths, the gifts and the capability of those who helped



you. Give us the gift of honouring and appreciating those around us who love us and faithfully stand by us. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### 6th Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

The procession continues towards the peak of Golgotha standing out against the sky. Suddenly from the ranks of bystanders, a woman named Veronica breaks away with a cloth in her hands. She runs towards Jesus. Without consideration for her own safety, she seeks to alleviate his suffering by gently wiping his face. Jesus feels the comfort of the cloth, and without the blood and sweat trickling down his face he is able to see the tears on her face and the compassion in her eyes.

**Reflection:** Why did Veronica do what she did? It's probably because she was a very compassionate person. Every act of compassion reveals the face of Jesus. Often, I want to reach out a helping hand, but I hold back and let the opportunity pass me by. Has growing older somehow made me weak in spirit as well? I remember some of the things others have done for me which have made me happy and brought me joy, especially in troubled times. So, what can I do today to bring joy to someone?

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, give us the grace to see beyond ourselves by being concerned about those who are in need. Give us a deeper and more courageous faith to become a healing presence in your world even now, to use our hands to wipe away the grime and the tears of others, and to see everyone as pilgrims on the same journey. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### 7th Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

The procession wends its way forward. Onlookers crowd its path, some curious, some sympathetic, many jeering and spiteful. Without the weight of the cross, Jesus is still unsteady on his feet; the scourging, hunger and exhaustion taking their toll on him. He pitches forward and falls again, the rough stones on the path causing the blood to seep from his wounds. The soldiers lash out at him angrily and haul him roughly to his feet. This journey is taking too long.

**Reflection:** Simon's help provided Jesus with a brief respite from his burden. So too did Veronica's gesture of compassion. Yet, the weakness came on again. And as he struggled against it, he collapsed again. A few moments later, he stood up again. When I feel ill, my family thinks I'm imagining things. Illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and cancer are scary; many people I know have succumbed to them. Other ailments like respiratory, vision and hearing problems are no less frightening. My medical expenses are eating into my family's finances. I am burdened by guilt, worry, and fear and it makes me more ill. How did Jesus overcome his physical weakness again and again?



**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, teach us to take time to heal our bodies using the medical therapies available, and to heal our spirits with your unconditional love and mercy. Help us not to become bitter or intolerant when things don't get better; teach us to graciously accept, along with joyful moments, the pain that is the inevitable condition of life here on earth. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **8th Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem**

*"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."*

The crowd of bystanders is growing. Jesus can hear many women crying. The shrill pitch of their wailing brings him to a stop; he turns and addresses them: "Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children." Jesus is not being dismissive of their sympathy; rather, he accepts it and returns it, knowing that Jerusalem will soon face days of terror.

**Reflection:** It's a small thing to ask another how they're doing, to listen, to give comfort and support. It's such a small thing, yet so important. Jesus is telling us to weep for ourselves and for what is happening around us, the growing passion for duping and cheating, the problems of alcoholism and drug-addition, the menace of the flesh trade and honour killings, the horror of communal backlash. Within our families, physical abuse, mistreatment of women and children, neglect of the elderly in various ways, deprivation of people's comforts and rights, verbal humiliation, financial abuse – all these things are taking place today even though we can pretend they're not. Can I imitate Jesus in comforting others even as I might be in need of comfort myself?

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, grant us the gift of patience and kindness in our dealings with others so that we may treat each other with dignity and respect and never inflict pain or ridicule on anyone. Guide us to protest against all that is loveless, degrading and violent in our world, and to comfort the ones who are hurting, helpless and distressed. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **9th Station: Jesus Falls for the Third Time**

*"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."*

The top of the hill is in sight, just a few minutes away. The soldiers get rougher, pushing people out of the path. Simon keeps looking at Jesus anxiously, compassionately. Jesus' cross is heavy even for Simon. Jesus is getting weaker, his gait uneven. His feet give way under him and he falls a third time. He tries to rise as quickly as he can, to avoid more lashes from the soldiers' hands. Rough hands drag him up and steady him; it is getting late – they must hurry.

**Reflection:** I don't have the courage to face my fears, and they are many, especially when I hear of people in my age group falling victim to dementia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. Every time I forget something, I fear it's happening to me. How will I cope if it does? Will there be someone to look after me patiently at that time? Or will I be all alone? Jesus doesn't want us to get discouraged in our moments of



weakness. Philippians 4:13 reminds us that we can do all things through him who strengthens us. We can endure whatever comes our way because Christ is our strength.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, without you, we can do nothing. We rely on your strength, and we need you in every struggle we face. May your loving presence strengthen us and urge us onward. Help us not to give up, whatever our weakness, however often we fall. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **10th Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments**

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

They arrive at the top of Golgotha. The soldiers set about getting the cross ready. The crowd stands around the periphery, talking among themselves. Jesus glances up; the two thieves are in their places. He looks down and waits for his turn. They remove his outer clothing, tossing it aside and leave him naked. His battered body is bloodstained and shivering. The soldiers, debating what to do with his clothes, decide to cast lots and divide the clothes among themselves.

**Reflection:** Jesus had nothing left. Everything had been taken away from him. Like most people, I worry about my today and my tomorrows – will I be stripped of everything and sent to an old-folks home in the end? Jesus speaks to us of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air highlighting the fact that if God cares for them so lovingly, he will certainly provide for his people's needs. Can I strip myself of everything that keeps me from a total, trusting relationship with God? I ask myself now: how much do I trust in God's providence?

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, when we are stripped of everything, and left with nothing, cover us with your love. When we feel lonely, helpless or defenceless, cover us with your presence. Help us cover another, with the comfort of a smile and kind words like you did. And when death draws near, cover us with your perfect peace. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **11th Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross**

*“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”*

The soldiers shove Jesus roughly down onto the cross. He is face up; his arms outstretched. The sunbeams hit his eyes. Each hammer blow rips the metal into his flesh, breaking the arteries and fracturing the bones. The unbearable pain leaves him almost senseless. He can't take it anymore: he closes his eyes against it all. The spectators on the sidelines stand impassive. A few women sob quietly in a corner, some pray. All is set. Jesus is nailed to the cross. The cross is raised; with a sign on it which reads: "The King of the Jews." His breathing becomes laboured.

**Reflection:** Jesus was crucified between two thieves. They were the kind of companions he would have wanted, for he had said, "I came to seek out and to save the lost." Oftentimes, I feel disturbed and unhappy



because things seem unbearable to me. It is very easy to make a mountain of a molehill, however unnecessary. Then I feel as if nothing will go right again. "Have a little faith in me", says Jesus, "and everything will be alright". Faith, put simply, is surrendering, letting go. I know that's what I need to do; what's stopping me?

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, help us to let go of the desire to control every situation. We pray for the gift of surrender and the truth that sets us free. Help us understand and know that all things happen according to the will of the Father and in his time. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **12th Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross**

*(Kneel and pause for a silent prayer)*

*"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."*

Mary, his mother, his beloved disciple John and the other women, move towards the foot of the cross. Jesus looks down; seeing them he whispers to his mother: "Woman, here is your son" and to John: "Here is your mother". Jesus then says, "I am thirsty". A soldier offers him wine mixed with myrrh. He declines. Suddenly he cries aloud: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" His lungs make a whistling sound; pain etched on his face and body. The sky is overcast and darkness falls on the city. Silence descends upon the hill. He cries out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Those under the cross hear him whisper: "It is finished!" At that moment, the earth shakes, rocks split, the curtain in the temple tears from top to bottom. The centurion guarding Jesus acknowledges, "Truly he is the Son of God." **(All kneel in silence for a few moments)**

**Reflection:** The one certainty of this life is that it will end in death. It is truly the hardest part for us to understand. What is the use of life, if we are born to die? We cannot see beyond it. Yet, I need not fear the terror of death if I can connect it to the death of Jesus. If I can whisper with the good thief, "Jesus, remember me as you enter into your Kingdom", I can be sure that there is where I will be.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, in doing the will of the Father, you poured out your life as one great act of love. Your death on the cross challenges us – to walk the path you walked, to love not hate, to forgive not hold a grudge, to heal not harm, to bring peace not destruction wherever we are. In you we have our victory and our life. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **13th Station: The body of Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross**

*"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."*

The Temple elders and the people have returned to their homes to prepare for the celebration of Sabbath. A soldier arrives to verify the deaths of the crucified. He shoves a spear into Jesus' side, bringing out blood and water. The soldiers then remove Jesus' body from the cross and give it to Joseph of Arimathea. Pilate has honoured Joseph's request for receiving the body of Jesus into his care. As Mary holds the lifeless



body of her son, she grieves. She, no doubt, remembers the countless times she had cradled him as a little babe.

**Reflection:** Seeing Mary's sorrow reminds me that I too have known grief at various times: people have come into my life, I have loved them and had to let them go, my dear ones have left forever to go home to the father. But unlike Mary, I am insecure and fearful of change. When I am saddened with grief, I turn to despair and disillusionment. It is at these times that I must look to Mary and hold my head high with the kind of fortitude she displayed.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, in your wisdom grant us the grace and strength to accept the things that cannot be, or that must be a necessary part of our lives. Help us learn to grieve as well as to rejoice and cherish moments spent with our families. Give us the grace of fortitude that helped Mary, our mother endures your agony and death. Amen.

**Leader:** Have mercy on us O Lord

**All:** Have mercy on us.

### **14th Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb**

*"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."*

An eerie silence settles over Golgotha. The women accompany John, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus down from the hill as they carry the body of Jesus to the tomb. The men enter the tomb laying Jesus on a bench of rock within the burial chamber. The women place spices in the cloth covering the body and go home to prepare more spices. The men block the entrance with a large boulder. Pilate has given his soldiers orders to seal the entrance and to guard the tomb for three days, which the soldiers prepare to do.

**Reflection:** The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. As I pass by tombstones in a cemetery I think of my final resting place. As my body fails me, I think about the silence and quiet of the tomb as opposed to the hurly-burly of this life. But before I reach there, there is yet work for me to accomplish, in that I might help to make God's love real to others. Death, however, is not the end. Romans 8:11 tells us that, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in us.

**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, you offered us the greatest gift of yourself. When we are restless for fulfilment, be for us the peace that the world cannot give. May your love cast out all fear, and become a beacon for everything we do, so that we may retain and reflect the hope of eternal life with you. Amen.

### **The Fifteenth Station (optional) The empty tomb**

Very early on Sunday morning the women return to the grave with the spices they have prepared. They find the stone rolled back from the entrance and the tomb empty. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stands near them and says, "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here. Remember what He said to you while he was in Galilee? The Son of Man must be handed over to sinful men, be nailed to a cross, and be raised to life on the third day."

**Reflection:** We leave the story of Jesus here, knowing that we have yet to come to the most important part, namely, the Resurrection. Something momentous happened then - good came from evil, joy from pain, victory from apparent defeat, glory from shame, life from death. The silence now is not the silence of death, but the awed silence of what God has prepared for those who love him.



**Let us pray together:** Lord Jesus, it is you who changes our mourning into joy, our tears to laughter. We now understand that you are there with us every step of the way to hold our hands, to guide our feet, even to catch us when we fall. When we feel ourselves in the confined spaces of darkness and isolation, we will remember your empty tomb with hope in the promise of better things to come. Amen.

**Concluding prayer:** Almighty God, you loved us so much that you gave your only Son that we might live and truly become what you created us to be. May our eyes, our minds, and hearts be open to see that the way of the Cross is not one with pitfalls but with opportunities, not one of defeat but of humble surrender to your will, not one of sorrow and death but of joy and eternal life. We pray that we, who have followed Jesus on his painful journey to Calvary, may find the hidden beauty in ordinary things and your grace at work in the humdrum and negative corners of our lives. May we feel in our hearts the joy of his Easter victory and give witness through our lives of prayer, love and service. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**For the intentions of the Pope:** Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be...

(Note: Suitable hymns may be inserted between the Stations as required)

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