



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

IVC Chicago – March 2017

Jesus suffered and died long, long ago. He suffers no more, nor can He ever die again. We walk with Him this traditional way of the cross to remind ourselves of two important truths.

First, while Jesus does not suffer anymore, His sisters and brothers do. They are suffering and dying at this very moment.

Second, in His way of the cross, Jesus reveals to us the real nature of the human pilgrimage through life. In every life there is suffering, carrying the cross and dying.

“Follow Me, come with Me”, Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Life and the Truth. Learn from Me that dying is a part of life, that the cross is the way to new life which lasts forever.”

Amen.

First Station

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Jesus was innocent of all charges. He had never harmed anyone. In our own day, we condemn prophets, radicals, people who dare to be different and people who seek the truth. We kill or send into exile the very best among us. In no case in history was that more true than the trial and sentence of Jesus.

Let us pray:

Lord God, we are still shocked by the travesty of justice that condemned Jesus to death. May we be equally shocked by the miscarriages of justice in our own day. And may we be slow to accuse or condemn anyone. We ask this through Jesus who once stood falsely accused and unjustly condemned.

Amen.

Second Station

Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Suffering, trials and frustrations are a part of human life. Jesus took up His cross and carried it long before He made that last visit to Jerusalem. His constant word to His friends and followers was: "Take up your cross and come follow Me."

Let us pray:

Lord God, we are sorry for all the times we whined about the crosses in our lives - all the times we refused to carry them. Help us to take them now and put them on our shoulders as obediently and graciously as did our Master, Jesus.

Amen.

Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Every human being has physical limits. Jesus was well acquainted with the weakness that comes from fatigue. How many times in His life was He out of sorts, impatient, upset and frazzled? It was worse, far worse, in His last hours when a night of beating and torture so debilitated Him that He collapsed on the filthy stones of a Jerusalem street.

Let us pray:

Lord God, may we accept our own limits. When we are young, we cannot do all we wish to do, accomplish all we dream. As we grow older, physical infirmities dog all our steps. May we never be ashamed of falling. We ask this through Jesus who fell but got up again to go farther.

Amen.

Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Mother

There on the corner stood his mother, Mary, watching Jesus stumble along the way. Oh, how it must have hurt Jesus to see his mother so distressed and humiliated by his own sentence and disgrace. Life is always an enormous risk. We wish desperately, today, to protect our loved ones from harm — especially our children. The sad look shared by Jesus and Mary tells us we cannot always keep failure and evil away.

Let us pray:

Lord our God, may we protect our loved ones as long and as well as we possibly can. But may we free them to take their own risks in life, to carry their own crosses. We ask this of Our Lord Jesus whose fate broke his mother's heart.

Amen.

Fifth Station

Simon Of Cyrene Is Forced to Help Jesus With His Cross

No one lives alone. No one should walk alone. We, at times, need help and we must allow others to help us in our moment of need. Jesus was close to fainting. A man from the country was passing by and the soldiers forced him to carry the cross of Jesus. He may have been made to do it. But once he picked up the cross of Jesus, he became one of history's most famous people.

Let us pray:

O God, help us to be open to helping others, especially those in great need. Let us not look away, or wait for others to help. When heavy crosses are put on the shoulders of people close to us, we are literally forced to share the burden. Give us the strength to do so graciously. We ask this through our Master, Jesus, who gave a grateful nod to Simon long ago.

Amen.

Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Legend has it that along the way of the cross, a compassionate woman wiped the face of Jesus. In return, the blood sweat from the face of Jesus formed a perfect image on her towel. That is why we call her Veronica, the Greek word for “True Image”.

Jesus suffers no more. But his brothers and sisters do. With all its faults, T. V. does bring us the true image of the human race — millions suffering from hunger, thirst, war, violence, abuse — tragedy of every kind.

Let us pray:

Lord God, may we see the tormented face of Jesus in every devastated, panicked, grief-stricken, agonized countenance we see in person or on television. These suffering people are our brothers and sisters. May we suffer with them and always do what we can to help them. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus, who left us the True Image of himself in the agony of those who suffer.

Amen.

Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time

All his life, Jesus struggled to touch the hearts of His people and to change the systems which oppressed and excluded the poor and defenseless. In so doing, He came up against entrenched power and, for the most part, failed. Selfishness enshrined brought him to his knees.

Let us pray:

Lord God, keep us faithful to the following of your son, Jesus. May we never accept the world as it is, full of cruelty, unfairness and death-dealing. May we never become cowards. May we continue to confront the forces of evil even though we fail in battle. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus who rose from failure.

Amen.

Eighth Station

Jesus Speaks to The Women of Jerusalem

Jesus comes upon a group of women who are weeping at the sight of his blood and impending death. Jesus says to them “Do not cry for Me. I shall be with you only a little while longer and then I shall go to my Father and my suffering will be over. Rather weep for yourselves and your children.” Very few seem to care what is happening among us. That indifference will cost our children and grand-children dearly.

Let us pray:

Father, may we wake up and see the horrors of our time — the violence, the greed, the insane pursuit of pleasure, the reckless spending of money and abuse of resources. May we, too, weep for the disasters we are preparing for coming generations. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus, who ignored his own pain to issue a warning about the future.

Amen.

Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Only the worst of sinners were crucified. It was thought the agony and humiliation would adequately punish the criminal and deter others from a career of crime.

But Jesus was innocent and good. The people who were crucifying him were the real criminals. Yet he chose to identify with sinners. As St. Paul would say: “For our sake, he took on sin.”

Let us pray:

Lord God, may we be conscious of our sins and faults. We know you forgive us, but let us be aware of the enormous harm we do by our criminal thoughts, words and actions. We ask this through our Lord Jesus who fell under the terrible burden of our sins.

Amen.

Tenth Station

Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes

The Jews were a very modest people. So it was with deliberate malice that Jesus was stripped naked — deprived publicly of his dignity, his privacy, his modesty.

We are fast becoming an immodest people. We use the naked body to degrade people, especially women. We use the sacred gift of sex to sell products. We are panderers and abusers.

Let us pray:

You created us in love. You fashioned us in the image of your own beauty. We have dishonored our own bodies — but especially, we have degraded and abused women. May we be converted to a people who reverence sex and return to women their inheritance of equality and respect. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus who endured obscene nakedness that we might see the evil of our ways.

Amen.

Eleventh Station

Jesus Is Nailed to The Cross

Jesus had been taken prisoner the night before. Now he was being nailed to a wooden cross from which he could not, and would not escape. He would end his life as a prisoner.

In the time of Jesus, there were people in jail because they couldn't pay their debts. There were people there, such as John the Baptizer, because they spoke out against injustice and moral corruption. In our own world and time, how many languish in prison cells; how many live in solitary confinement; how many suffer exile because they dare to speak out in the name of God and God's justice?

Let us pray:

Lord God Almighty, we are scandalized by the abuse of power which deprives human beings of their freedom. We acknowledge that abuse, wherever it occurs — in our nations, in our churches, in our law-enforcement agencies, in our own homes. May liberty and freedom for all be an ideal — more important to us than life itself. We ask this through our Master Jesus who suffered and died in "prison."

Amen.

Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

It took three hours for Jesus to suffocate and to bleed to death. It wasn't pleasant at all. People jeered and mocked him. The bad thief tormented him. It was an agonizing, humiliating, torturous way to die. Yet, by his obedience, Jesus turned the worst way to die into an event so significant the world will never forget it.

We are all sentenced to die. It doesn't matter when or from what cause. We may die suddenly or after a long illness. We may die young or very old. What does matter is how we shall die and for whom.

Let us pray:

God Our Father, it is your will that we live and die for others. Help us to be as gracious and as obedient in dying as your Son, Jesus. May we, too, die graciously, trusting in your promise of eternal life. We ask this through your Son, Jesus, who entrusted himself and all his dreams, to your care.

Amen.

Thirteenth Station

The Body Of Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross

They reverently and carefully took the body of Jesus down from its perch and laid it for the last time in the arms of his mother. What an agony for Mary. She had given him to the world as an infant. She had sent him out to heal and preach, a wholesome young man. And now she was getting her gift back — a bloody, broken, filth-covered corpse.

She could have cursed bitterly and cried hysterically. But there was no revenge or bitterness in her. Like mother, like son. At the last moment of his life, surely Jesus was strongly tempted to complain bitterly about his fate, to curse his executioners. He conquered that last temptation with those amazingly gracious words — "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Let us pray:

O God, our beginning and our end, grant that no matter how big or heavy the cross we bear in life, we never fall into bitter complaints. Grant also to us, the grace to forgive as you do, willingly and freely. May we live and die forgiving those who hurt and hate. We ask this gift through our master, Jesus, who died with words of forgiveness on his lips.

Amen.

Fourteenth Station
The Body of Jesus Is Laid in A Tomb

It was approaching sunset. The Sabbath was about to begin. So Mary and the disciples hurried to lay Jesus to rest. They were, as always, observant Jews who were faithful to their traditions.

On a hill nearby, centuries before, Abraham had taken his son, Isaac, to sacrifice him as the Lord had commanded. The extraordinary obedience of Abraham pleased the Lord God and the Lord ordered the patriarch not to harm his child.

“Jesus was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.” Jesus had died praying, “Into your hands, Father, I commend my life.” He had lived well and died holy. He had done all he could. The rest was up to his Father.

Mary, as she walked down the hill, remembered the words of her Son — “I shall leave, you will not see me, but after a little while you shall see me again.” Mary held tight to that promise of resurrection.

Let us pray:

Lord God Almighty, ever true and faithful, you are with us always in our pilgrimage in our trials and troubles. You walk with us through the valley of death. You swore that you “would not leave your holy one to see corruption.” You made good your promise of raising him to life and glory on Easter Sunday morning.

May we believe in your word, your promise to us. May we walk our own way of the cross, trusting in you. We ask this through Jesus who never, for a moment, doubted your promise of eternal life.

Amen.