

Stations of the Cross



In His Footstep

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny Himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

Matt 16:24

There are two things that this devotion has to say to us: first, it teaches us to feel with our very hearts what Our Lord suffered. We walk with Him and bear the load with Him. Thus is it revealed to us how great is the Redeemer's love and how great our guilt. We learn to repent and pray for the grace of a deep inward turning to God. Second, the Stations of the Cross is the school where we are taught how to overcome. We see how Our Lord goes through the most bitter suffering of soul and body, but also how through His Love for God and us, He overcomes. We learn from Jesus how to do the same with our own lives. The Stations of the Cross therefore, reveals itself as above all, a school of victory over suffering.

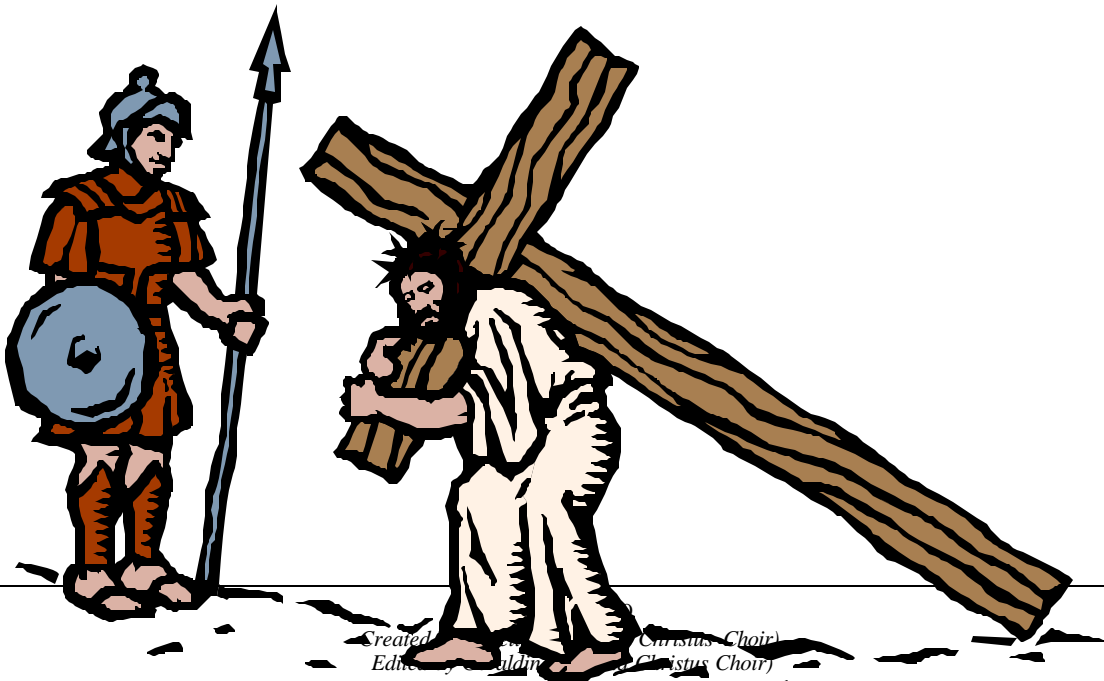
Opening Prayer

Leader In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen

“Christ” These fourteen stops that you are now about to take, you do not walk alone. I walk with you. Though you are you and, and I am I, yet we are truly one – one in Christ. And therefore my way of the cross 2000 years ago and your “Way” now are also one. But note this difference. My life was incomplete until I crowned it by my death. Your fourteen steps will be complete only when you have crowned them with your life.

Antiphon Keep in mind that Jesus Christ
Has died for us and is risen from the dead
He is our saving Lord, he is joy for all ages



1st Station: Jesus is Condemned to Die

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” In Pilate’s hands, my other self, I see my Father’s will. Though Pilate is unjust, he is the lawful governor and he has power over me. And to Pilate’s rule I submit myself because this is my Father’s will. Can you refuse obedience to those whom I have placed over you? (Pause)



All Jesus my Lord, obedience cost you your life. For me, it costs an act of the will – no more – and yet how hard it is for me to bend. If open injustice befalls me, Lord, with your grace, help me, even me, to keep perfect silence and to leave my justification to the Father. Remove the blinkers from my eyes that I may see that it is you whom I obey in all who govern me. Lord it is you.

Antiphon By our sins we have condemned you,
Jesus, let us now befriend you,
Sorrowing and penitent

Personal *Jesus stands before the judgment seat. Those who accuse him are liars.*

Reflection *The procedure is an insult to all justice. At this tribunal, our Lord is declared guilty of a grievous crime. The penalty is both shameful and terrible. Jesus knows how pure his goodwill has always been. The fearful injustice and the wantonness of this sentence must have shaken the heart of our Lord to its very depths. How would my sense of justice be revolted if some sought to inflict injustice on me – how vigorously would I defend myself? But, our Lord is silent – he accepts the sentence of his own free will, because the most holy will of the Father lies therein, because our salvation is at stake.*

2nd Station: Jesus takes up his cross

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” This cross, this chunk of tree is what my Father chose for me. The cross you must bear are largely products of your daily life. And yet my Father chose them too, for you. Receive them from his hands. Take heart, my other self, I will not let your burden grow one ounce too heavy for your strength. (Pause)

All Lord, it is one thing when we have no problems to say: “I am ready for all that God wills” but quite another to be really ready when the cross comes. Jesus my Lord, help me take my daily cross and welcome the monotony that often marks my day, discomforts of all kinds, the heat, the cold, my disappointments, tension, set-backs, cares. Remind me often that in carrying my cross, I carry yours with you.



Antiphon Sinless Lord, the cross that you bear
Is the burden we all should share,
Sinners all deserving death.

Personal *Our Lord takes up the wood of pain. He does not stand there numb while they load him with it, but resolutely sets his hand to the task. All that is now to happen stands hard and clear in all its terrors before Jesus' soul. He has no illusions nor is it the courage of despair which drives him forward. Our Lord is wholly free, without any fear. It is the Father's commission which he sees in the cross, and our salvation. His soul is fully serene and collected. He goes to meet the cross and sets his hand to it resolutely.*

3rd Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” The God who made the universe and holds it in existence is too weak as man to bear a piece of timber’s weight. This is the human reality which I experience. If you be my other self you also must accept without complaint your human frailties. (Pause)



All Lord Jesus, how can I refuse? I willingly accept my weaknesses, my irritations and my moods, my headaches and fatigue, all my defects of body, mind and soul. Because they are your will for me, these handicaps of my humanity I gladly accept them. Make me content with all my discontents, but by the strength of your patience and love, help me in such hour, that I may not lose heart but to struggle after you.

Antiphon Jesus we behold your first fall,
Teach us that for us, if we fall
We should never give up hope

Personal Reflection *Jesus has gone without sleep all night and has tasted nothing since last evening. From one tribunal to another have they dragged him. Pain and loss of blood have weakened him. All the baseness of men has tortured him. Our Lord is terribly weary. The cross is too heavy for him: the load is beyond his strength. He carries it with trembling knees for a little way, then he stumbles against a stone and in the throng, someone pushes him and he falls. Laughter, abuse and blows are rained on him as he lies there. As soon as Jesus can, he gathers himself up, painfully raises the cross on his wounded shoulders and goes on.*

4th Station: Jesus meets his mother

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” My Mother sees me whipped. She sees me kicked and driven like a beast. She counts my every wound. But though her soul cries out in agony, no protest or complaint escapes her lips or enters her thoughts. She shares my martyrdom and I share hers. We hide no pain, no sorrow, from each other’s eyes. This is my Father’s will. (Pause)



All Jesus my Lord, I know what you are telling me. To watch the pain of those you love is harder than to bear your own. To carry the cross after you, I too must stand and watch the sufferings of my dear ones; the heartaches, sicknesses and grief of those I love. And I must let them watch mine too. I do believe that all things work for good for those who love you.

Antiphon When we see your Son, our Brother,
Make us feel O Mary Mother
Deep compassion in our heart

Personal Reflection *Mother and son say no word. They are alone, the one with the other, alone in the world, in spite of the horrid throng that press about them, from eye to eye, heart to heart. What love and anguish then goes through their souls, and passes from eye to eye between them, is known to God alone. Will you ponder for a moment what her soul was like? Perfectly strong, perfectly tender and deep, nothing but love. Her heart is pierced to its very depths. That was a long, swift moment. Then the glance of the Lord speaks: “Mother, it must be. The Father wills it so.” “Yes, Child, the Father wills it, and you too— so be it.”*

5th Station: Simon helps Jesus to carry the cross

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” My strength is gone. I can no longer lift the cross alone. And so the legionaries make Simon give me aid. This Simon is like you; my other self. Give me your strength. Each time you lift some burden from another’s back, you lift as with your very hands, the cross’s awful weight that crushes me. (Pause)

All Lord, make me realize that every time I wipe a dish, pick up an object from the floor, assist a child in some small task, or give another preference in traffic or at the store, each time I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, teach the ignorant or lend a hand in any way – it matters not to whom – my name is Simon. And the kindness I extend to them I really show to you.



Antiphon Make us understand, O Jesus
By your pains, your will to need us
Taking our cross with you

Personal Reflection *The length of one short moment our Lord was enfolded in his mother’s love: his home. Now, he must again go forth. All the more bitterly he feels the brutality about him. He is all alone. Those who love him are powerless; those who might have helped, will not. Even with Simon’s help, our Lord is utterly alone, utterly alone in the agony of his distress. Only the Father is with him.*

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” Can you be brave enough, my other self to wipe my blood-stained face? At home, whenever eyes are filled with tears; at work when tension arise; at the playground, in the slums, courts, hospitals, jails – wherever sufferings exist – my face is there. And there I look for you, to wipe away my blood and tears. (Pause)



All Lord, what you ask is hard. It calls for courage and self-sacrifice and I am weak. Please give me strength. Don't let me run away because of fear. Teach me to be thoughtful of others and understand them. Show me how to win their confidence, how to say a word of true kindness, how to comfort them, raise them up and help them. Lord, live, act and love in me. And not in me alone – in all men – so that we may reveal your glorious face on earth.

Antiphon For our neighbour show compassion;
For our Saviour, ease his passion;
Draw his image in our heart.

Personal *Our Lord is wholly forsaken. Around him, nothing but enmity, cruelty, stupid dullness of heart. He is exhausted through thirst and pain; weary in body and soul to the point of collapse. The cross presses terribly – everything reels before his eyes. Anyone would tread that path in desperation and have no thought of anything else. Jesus is grasping beneath his burdens and yet so alert is his heart and so tender that he is able to take heed of Veronica's service, to appreciate it and divinely to thank her for it. He wipes the blood and sweat from his face, and when he returns the napkin, it bears the likeness of his sacred features.*

7th Station: Jesus falls a second time

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” This seventh step, my other self, is one that tests your will. From this fall, learn to persevere in doing good. The time will come when all your efforts seem to fail and you will think: “I can’t go on”. Then turn to me, my heavy-laden one and I will give you rest. Trust me and carry on. (Pause)



All Give me your courage, Lord, when failure presses heavily on me and I am desolate. Stretch out your hand to lift me up. I know I must not cease to persevere in doing good. Enlarge my soul and make it generous so that I may place my sufferings with yours and overcome them with the joy of being your helper in your work of love and redemption. But Lord, alone, I can do nothing. With you I can do anything you ask. I will.

Antiphon Jesus, as we see you falling,
We can hear your Spirit calling
urging us to persevere.

Personal Reflection *Jesus is again alone – he has to part from his mother, his disciples have fled and the new faithful ones are powerless in the midst of the great multitude. Nobody helps him in his distress. The cross weighs so heavily but still more heavily does all the ingratitude about him oppress his soul. With purest love has he proclaimed to them the kingdom of God. Perhaps some are there whom once he healed or fed in the wilderness. And now they rage against him as though he were their bitterest enemy. It is that which weighs him down to the ground for the second time. But a great light shines in his soul: through the very things that they inflict upon him, he wills to redeem them! For the second time, he rises painfully and goes on.*

8th Station: Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” How often have I longed to take the children of Jerusalem and gather them to me? But they refused. But now these women weep for me and my heart mourns for them – mourns for their sorrows that will come. I comfort those who seek solace in me. How gentle can you be, my other self? How kind? (Pause)



All My Jesus, your compassion during your passion is beyond compare. Teach me Lord, I want to learn. I often snap at those who hurt me with their ridicule, those who misunderstand me, those who hinder me with some misguided helpfulness, those who intrude upon my privacy. Now, in the power of your patience, help me to curb my tongue and hold myself together, to meet others with kindness even when they are unreasonable, unfeeling, uncouth. Let gentleness become my cloak. Lord, make me kind like you.

Antiphon As the holy women weeping,
So our tears for Jesus keeping
For ourselves and all mankind.

Personal Reflection *This too reveals the marvels of Jesus' heart. When we think of what he is feeling...his head tortured with thorns, his flesh torn with deep wounds, tormented by acrid sweat...about him nothing but hatred and scorn, and facing him the fearful end...if we were in such distress, and people came and made a great lamentation, bewailing on fate with many words and tears, would we not be impatient? But Jesus' soul remains free and collected, he talks quietly with the women and exercises his office: that of teaching them and showing them the truth.*

9th Station: Jesus Falls the third time

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” Completely drained in strength I lie.
Collapsed upon the cobblestones.
My body cannot move. No blows,
no kicks can rouse me up. And yet
my will is mine. And so is yours.
Know this, my other self, your body
may be broken but no force on
earth and none in hell can take
away your will. Your will is yours.
(Pause)



All My Lord, I see you take a moment's
rest, then rise and stagger on.
When all my strength is gone and
guilt and self-reproach press me to
earth and seem to hold me fast,
save me from despair. Teach me,
Lord, to understand that you did not
ask me never to show weakness
but you asked me, always and
always, to rise up again. Lord, never
let me feel that any sin of mine is
greater than your love. No matter
what my past has been, I can always
begin anew.

Antiphon Now three times we see you stumble;
Let our human power crumble
Make us put our trust in you

Personal Reflection *Soon after the second fall, Jesus breaks down for the third time. What can be said in the presence of such torturing anguish? All words here are empty. Strive to feel with him what he feels...how weary he is, even to death, and what it means to fall to the ground under such a load, amid such surroundings, for the third time! He is at the end of his strength. Nevertheless, he drags himself up yet once more and carries the cross to its goal. That which there await him is not deliverance but a terrible death.*

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” Behold, my other self, the poorest King who ever lived. Before my creatures I stand stripped. The cross – my death bed – even this is not my own. Yet who has ever been so rich? Possessing nothing, I own All – my Father’s Love. If you too, would own everything be not solicitous about your food, your clothes, your life. (Pause)



All My Lord, I offer you all –whatever I possess – and more, my very self. Detach me from the craving for prestige, position, wealth. Root out of me all traces of envy of my neighbour who has more than I have. Release me from the vice of pride, my longing to exalt myself, and lead me to the lowest place. And if the time comes when my honour is assailed, if others mistake my intention, if I am slandered or my good name attacked, if even those nearest and dearest to me misjudge me, remind me of your strength and to trust in you. May I be poor in spirit, Lord, so that I may be rich in you.

Antiphon Lord we strip our souls before you;
Sorry, humbled, we adore you;
Take our sins and grant us grace.

Personal *Everything they have taken from him: his liberty, his friends, his work.*

Reflection *Now they take from him the dignity and honour of his person as well. Naked and uncovered, he is given over to shame. Every insolent passerby can look upon him and jeer at him. All those who once revered him as the great prophet, exalted him as the Messiah – friends, strangers, all the people – behold him in his humiliation. With burning flames, as it were, shame closes over him. But, he stands fast in God’s will and holds out in the end.*

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” Can you imagine what a crucifixion is? My executioners stretch out my arms; they hold my hands and wrists against the wood and strike the nail until it stabs my flesh. Then with one heavy hammer smash, they drive it through- and pain bursts like a bomb of fire in my brain; they seize the other arm; and agony again explodes. Then raising up my knees so that my feet are flat against the wood, they hammer them fast, too. (Pause)



All My God, I look at you and think; Is my soul worth this much? What can I give you in return? Here and now I accept for all my life, whatever sickness, torment, agony may come. When the hour comes when I feel helpless, teach me, Lord, to do the one thing I can: to recollect my heart and will in you, to hold myself firmly, unflinching to your will and calmly ensured to the end. To every cross I touch my lips. May the power of your cross be in me and make me strong.

Antiphon Victim of the nails and hammer.
We acknowledge on our altar
Hid beneath the bread and wine

Personal Reflection *What takes place now is so dreadful that one would flee away and not have to look upon it. They nail him to the cross and then lift it erect. O my Lord and Saviour! I have no right to make my escape – I must stay here. It is for me he suffers. On his way, Jesus has been able to walk, to move, to exert himself. Now all that ceases. Now he can do nothing more, only hang there in silence and endure. The pain in his pierced members, in his hand and in all those deep wounds, increases and burns like fire; more and more tormenting grows the thirst, heavier and heavier the anguish and oppression of his heart. And he cannot aid himself, cannot move, can do nothing, only endure and feel that he is on his way to death.*

12th Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” The cross becomes a pulpit now. ‘Father, forgive them ... you will be with me in paradise... There is your Mother... There is your son... I thirst... It is completed.’ To speak I have to raise myself by pressing on my wrists and feet, and every move engulfs me in new waves of agony. And then, when I have borne enough and have emptied my humanity, I let my mortal life depart. (Pause)



All My Jesus, my God, what can I say or do? I offer you my death with all its pains, accepting now the time and the kind of death in store for me. I pray for all who are dying now, that they may turn to you with trust and confidence. I pray for those who feel that their lives have lost meaning and seek to destroy it. Forgive all their sins and help them find hope in you. Lord, I also pray especially for those people dying of the dreaded SARs disease and for those soldiers and innocent people who have been lost in the Iraq war.

Antiphon Dying Jesus let us ponder
Your last seven words, and wonder
At the love of God made Man

Personal Reflection *For 3 long hours, Jesus endures. By the cross stands his mother and his dearest friend. By giving his mother to his friend and vice versa, it is as if he is stripping himself from the enfolding love of these 2. He wills to be alone. He has taken our guilt upon himself, alone he wills to appear in our stead before the face of the eternal Justice. No one is to stand by him. Utterly alone he settles this fearful thing with God. What went on in the soul of Jesus during this time, no man knows. Up to now, his heart has felt God's nearness as comfort. Now that, too, forsakes him. He is utterly naked and alone. Forsaken by all, alone he stands without guilt, face to face with the divine justice. Only one thing sustains him: his unswerving faithfulness to the work which the Father sent him to do: His incomprehensible love for us. And in this love, he consumes himself till all is accomplished.*

13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” The sacrifice is done. Yes, my mass is completed; but not my mother’s and not yours, my other self. My mother must still cradle in her arms the lifeless body of the son she bore. You, too, must part from those you love, and grief will come to you. In your bereavement, think of this: A multitude of souls were saved by Mary’s sharing in my Calvary. Your grief can also be the price of souls. (Pause)



All I beg you, Lord to help me in accepting the partings that must come, friends going away, leaving home, and most of all, my dear ones called to your eternal home. Help me believe that all men belong to you and you care for and love them more than I do. Help me trust and hold fast to you, believing that all living, suffering and dying, mine too, will bear everlasting fruit.

Antiphon Mary, from the cross you take him;
Cold and dead, his foes forsake him;
Let us still keep faith with you.

Personal Reflection *Our Lord has suffered to the end. Now he is dead. God’s wonderwork, this life in its very flower, full of all power and of all riches, so strong, so delicate, lies in ruins. Humanly speaking, he had his life before him – what teaching, what deeds, what help – might have blossomed forth from him had he passed through the whole course of life. Now all is crushed under foot. But, that is the “foolishness of the cross” “the grain of wheat must die” in order that highest life be brought forth from it and they who have trodden it into the ground have become sowers of salvation.*

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

“Christ” So ends my mortal life. But now another life begins for Mary, and for Magdalene, for Peter and for John and for you. My work as man is done. My work within and through my Church must now commence. I look to you, my other self. Day in and day out, from this time forth, be my apostle – victim – saint. (Pause)



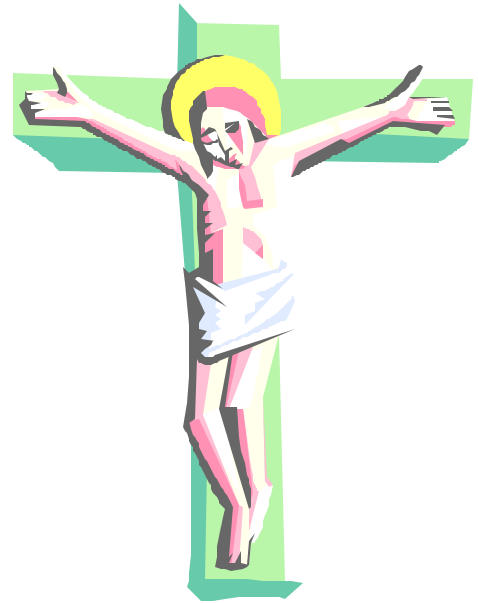
All Jesus, my Lord, you know my spirit is as willing as my flesh is weak. The teaching you could not impart, the sufferings you could not bear, the works of love you could not do, in your short life on earth, let me impart and bear, and do through you. But I am nothing, Lord. In you shall I feel equal to the task. Help me.

Antiphon Buried in the tomb, then rising
We, too Lord, by our baptizing
Share your hope of victory.

Personal Reflection *They wrap the body of our Lord in linen cloths and lay it in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Then place the heavy slab in the opening and sorrowfully go home. Now all is still. We breathe again now that the terrible distress is over at last. Deep peace lies about the lonely tomb. It is the peace of fulfillment. He who sleeps therein has, with divine fidelity, brought to an end all that the Father had laid upon him to do. Now he rests from his work. For the disciples, all hope is gone. For them, the passion and death of Good Friday is the end. But together with them, our Lord will soon appear radiant in power and light to us and we realize that his death was the price paid for our lives.*

Concluding Prayer

“Christ” I told you at the start, my other self, that my life was not complete until I crowned it with my death. Your ‘Way’ is not complete until you have crowned it with your life. Accept each moment as it comes to you, with faith and trust that all that happens has my mark on it. A simple ‘yes’ – this is all it takes; a breathing in your heart: ‘I will it, Lord’. So seek me not in far off places. I am close at hand, your classroom, the playing field, the science-lab, the office, your work bench and hours spent at society meetings – these are altars where you offer love. And I am with you always. There, go now. Take up your cross and with your life complete your ‘Way’.



Hymns

A. No Greater Love

Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down His life for His friends. Jn15:13

1. You loved me, when I was so unlovely
You sought me, when I was lost.
You showed me, how much You really loved me,
When You bought me, at the highest cost.

Chorus

There's no greater love than this
There's no greater love than this
Than a man would give His life for a friend.
There's no higher sacrifice
Than a man would give His life
You have paid a precious price for me.

2. You chose me, when I was so unworthy
You cleansed me, with Your own blood,
You clothed me with righteousness and mercy
And You crowned me, with Your steadfast love.

B. Hosea

1. Come back to Me with all your heart
Don't let fear, keep us apart.
Trees do bend, though straight and tall
So must we, to others' call

Chorus

Long have I waited for your coming home to Me
And living deeply our new life

2. The wilderness will lead you
To your heart, where I will speak
Integrity and justice,
with tenderness, you shall know

C. Prodigal Son

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. LK 15:20

1. Father I have sinned, help me find my way,
Remember not my sins, just let me hear You say

Chorus

I forgive you, I love you. You are mine, take my hand
Go in peace, sin no more, beloved one.

2. Father I have turned, my back and walked away
Depended on my strength, and loved life my own way
3. Father I have closed, my heart to those in need
Thought only of myself, a victim of my greed
4. Father I've returned, I'm home with You to stay
Standing by your door, knowing that You'll say

D. Change my heart O God

We are the clay. You are the Potter; we are all the work of Your hand. Is 64:8

Change my heart O God, make it ever true
Change my heart O God, make me more like You

Change my heart of stone, to a heart of love.
Take my selfishness, and teach me Lord to serve.

Chorus

You are the Potter, I am the clay
Mould me and make me, this is what I pray

Change my heart O God, make it ever true
Change my heart O God, make me more like You

E. O Mighty Cross

1. O mighty cross
Love lifted high
The Lord of life
Raised there to die
His sacrifice on Calvary
Has made the mighty cross
A tree of life to me

2. O mighty cross
What throne of grace
He knew no sin,
Yet took my place
His sacrifice on Calvary
Has made the mighty cross
A tree of life to me

3. O mighty cross,
O Christ so pure
Love held Him there,
Such shame endured
His sacrifice on Calvary
Ha made the mighty cross
A tree of life to me

4. O mighty cross, My soul release
The stripes He bore
Have brought me peace
His sacrifice on Calvary
Has made the mighty cross
A tree of life to me

F. Above All

“He who comes from above is greater than all. He who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly matters, but he who comes from heaven is above all.

John 3:31

Above all powers
Above all things
Above all nature and all created things
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man
You were here before the world began
Above all kingdoms
Above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure what You're worth

Crucified
Laid behind the stone
You lived to die
Rejected and alone
Like a rose trampled on the ground
You took the fall
And thought of me
Above all



G. O God you Search me

1. O God, you search me and you know me
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I Walk or lie down you are before me
Ever the maker and keeper of my days
2. You know my resting and my rising
You discern my purpose from afar
And with love everlasting you besiege me
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are
3. Before a word is on my tongue, Lord
You have known its meaning through and through
You are with me beyond my understanding
god of my present, my past and future too
4. Although you Spirit is upon me
Still I search for shelter form your light
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight

H. Jesus, remember me

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

I. God is Forgiveness

God is forgiveness, Dare to forgive and God will be with you
God is forgiveness, Love and do not fear

J. O Lord hear my prayer

O Lord hear my prayer (2X), when I call answer me
O Lord hear my prayer (2X), come and listen to me

K. The Lord is my song

The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise
All my hope comes from God
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise
God the wellspring of life

Meditating on the Passion of Jesus

Introduction:

As with his disciples long ago, today Jesus Christ invites us to go with him on a life's journey to glory. Those who accept the invitation find that the path begins on the road to Calvary: "Take up your cross and follow me." When Jesus first spoke of suffering to his followers, they felt afraid. They were like us in wishing for comfortable, untroubled lives. In taking up his cross, Jesus taught his followers to face suffering rather than to flee it. The hope of glory lies ahead for those who follow his example of infinite love. As he enlightened disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus will guide you as you remember the things that happened to him.

The Prayer of Jesus in the Garden

*They went to a place called Gethsemani, and Jesus said to his disciples,
"Sit here while I pray."*

The scene of the agony in the garden was an ancient olive farm where our blessed Lord frequently retired to pray to his Father. The time was about midnight on the eve of the first Good Friday. The paschal moon, filtering through the olive trees, spotlights this dramatic scene. Our blessed Lord prostrates himself upon the rocky soil clutching at the very ground for support. He groans in distress and writhes in physical agony. His usual calmness deserts him as he keeps repeating the same prayer over and over again: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Great beads of sweat appear on the face of Jesus as a shattering storm engulfs his soul. Gradually, the sweat turned in crimson as his prayer increased in its intensity. Soon, his entire body perspires...a sweat of blood.

What are the causes of this internal martyrdom of our Lord? What is this "cup" which he pleads with his Father to remove? He has just witnessed a 'Preview of his Passion.' Picture after picture, the various sufferings of the Passion flashed through his mind. The crucifixion, stark and terrifying, loomed up before him and caused his sensitive soul to recoil in terror. Once again he pleads with his Father, 'If it is possible...' Yet Christ did not run away from the Cross and the suffering that he knew awaited. Nor did he take the easy way out. He suffered this incredible agony in reparation for our sins. The conclusion is obvious. We cannot live a "comfort-at-all-costs" philosophy of life. To follow Christ calls for an unrelenting struggle with the tendencies to sin found in the make-up of each of us.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you taught us to watch and pray, lest we be overcome by temptation. We confidently ask you to share with us your own spirit of prayer.

By your prayer in the garden, you prepared for your passion and death. Help us, your disciples, to be in intimate communion with our God in every event of our life.

In the garden, you persevered in prayer even when distressed to the sweating of blood; grant that, by prayer, we may live with God despite distress and sorrow.

Lord, at your Father's bidding, you gladly drank the cup of your passion; create in us a like thirst to do the Father's will.

Sustained by your prayer, you gave yourself up to those who seized you unjustly; help us to find in prayer the strength to be faithful in trials and difficulties.

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." After his arrest in the garden, he was taken for a hurried hearing that led to his judgment and condemnation. Prompted by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, judged him and sentenced him to death. Most likely Jesus was just another obscure Jew to Pilate, unexpectedly thrust before him the day before a hectic Jewish feast, when the Romans stood poised, battle-ready, to crush any sign of Jewish disorder or rebellion. Pilate's priority that day was to keep order in the restive city. Controlling Jerusalem was far more important than the innocence of the One who stood before him.

And so Jesus was condemned as a possible troublemaker. The Roman process was quick, unfair, and without appeal. A show of raw, impersonal power. Once sentenced, Jesus was handed over to executioners who immediately began to taunt and torture him till his death. Yet deep within, Jesus knew that God's judgment matters most, and he trusted the judgment of God whatever others might say.

Prayer:

Lord, you are eternal Truth who came into the world to testify to the truth, enable us to bring your truth to the world. Inspire governments with a concern for justice so all peoples can enjoy justice and peace.

Lord, we pray we may too be faithful to the truth and do your will, no matter how we are judged by others.

Jesus is Scourged

Then Pilate released to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

The gospels describe the scourging of Jesus in the sparsest terms. Early readers of the gospels had no need to have it described; they knew first-hand the terrible part scourging played in Roman crucifixion. When the sentence for crucifixion was passed, Jesus was stripped of his clothes and tied to a low post or thrown to the ground. Then he was beaten, probably with leather whips fitted with bones, or lead, or spikes. According to Roman practice, his executions could beat him at any time on his way to crucifixion, as they pleased.

The lashes from the punishing whip must have left tracks of blood on his body, an aching, pitiable sight. Pilate, according to John's gospel, led the scourged Jesus before the crowds as his last hope to set him free. But they showed no pity. "The Word was made flesh," St. John says. His blessing touches all flesh, we believe. It will touch those who suffer in mind and body. "By his stripes we are healed," the prophet Isaiah says. The Passion of Jesus is a sign that God will not abandon the weak and those crippled by pain.

Prayer:

Loving Savior, you were despised and treated with contempt; teach us to imitate your humility. In your passion, you fused yourself with the powerless and afflicted ones of the earth help them in their troubles. Strengthen with your own strength those who suffer. Help us to comfort them while we work to help them. By your stripes bring healing to us all.

Jesus is Crowned with Thorns

The soldiers led him inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. They began to salute him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and kept striking him on the head with a reed and spitting on him.

Besides Mark's gospel, two other gospels (Matthew and John) report that Jesus was handed over to the Roman soldiers who mocked him as a king. They took him into a courtyard, probably outside their barracks, put a ragged purple cloak on him and a reed in his hand, and then pressed a crown of thorns onto his head. Kneeling before him in false homage, they ridiculed him: "Hail King of the Jews." And in brutal sport, they spat on him and struck his head.

After this mockery, John's gospel says that Pilate brought the pitiable figure of Jesus before the crowd and said, "Behold, the man." Here was God's Son: so disguised, so hidden, so weak, mocked as king and wearing a crown of thorns! And evil seems to have its way with him. Yet one who sees in faith sees Jesus still a king. Evil's seeming rule endures only a little while, an "hour," a fleeting moment in God's time. It does not master Jesus Christ, the king.

Prayer:

Loving Savior, you allowed your enemies to crown you with thorns and to treat you like a fool, make us patient when we suffer and forgiving when we are slighted.

"Behold, the man." Yes, Lord, I see you brought low, and I believe you are a king. Help me to recognize your power whenever evil seems to conquer good, whenever the good are brought low. Give me faith to believe, even when evil seems to reign, that your kingdom will come.

Mother of Sorrows

As Eve was a conspirator with Adam at the fall, so God wished Mary to be the companion of Jesus at the restoration. God inspired this great woman to set out for Calvary not to be a spectator, but a partner in the sacrifice of her Son.

We know Jesus because we are brought to him by others. Could we know his Passion, for example, without the great stories of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Without Paul the Apostle, or Moses and the prophets? Without the liturgy of the church, the wisdom and reflection of generations of saints, mystics, preachers, theologians, writers, scholars, artists and poets, as well as multitudes of ordinary Christians?

Yet among all of these, one is unique - Mary, his mother. She knew Jesus from birth to death and resurrection and she knew him in a special way, as mother. She wrote nothing down - no words, no recollections are directly attributable to her - but the church does not think of her as a writer of recollections. Rather Mary is a living presence among us, who communicates a holy wisdom. She is a guide to those who walk by faith; an agent of the Holy Spirit, who helps us to know the mysteries of Christ. She was there when they crucified him. A few simple sentences of the gospel describe her role: "There was standing by the Cross of Jesus, Mary, his mother." Long before that moment she had learned to walk by faith, to wait, to trust, to believe. Then, as she stood there watching her Son die, Mary was tested as never before. And she did not falter. The mysterious words of Jesus- "Behold your mother"- are meant for us, as well as for the disciple who stood watching with her. When the mystery of the Cross falls on us, Mary has been promised to us. She will be at our side, a brave companion who knows how to stand in the dark time of Calvary and wait for the light.

Prayer:

God of mercies, the Holy Virgin placed her hope in you and kept your word in complete faith, may we receive your word with ready faith and enduring hope.

Most loving Father, when Jesus who is life itself died on the cross, the faith and hope of the Virgin Mary lived on; help us find in the hardships of this life sources of grace.

God, author and lover of life, whose Son even now is crucified and is dying in his brothers and sisters, may we stand with Mary at the countless crosses of the unfortunate, and bring them love and hope of resurrection.

The Face of the Suffering Christ

Jesus came out wearing a crown of thorns and the purple cloak. Pilate said to the Jews, "Look at the man."

If we had looked at the face of Jesus when he stood in Pilate's courtyard, what would we have seen? A face bruised from the mockery of the soldiers; a face wrapped in silence, not offering any defense against the slanderous allegations of the leaders; a face masking a great mystery of love that would not relent from following God's will even to death. The face of Jesus in his suffering looked very much like the faces of countless other victims of despotic power and human greed down through the centuries. Throughout the world each day, a hundred petty rulers like Pilate tell a hundred jeering crowds to "Look at the man". See the "criminal" who would dare question the status quo of injustice enshrined in political and economic systems built on the subjugation of the poor. And ordinary people just like us see faces bruised from the interrogator's blows, faces wrapped in silence, forbidden to speak in their own defense against the lies fashioned by their enemies, faces masking within them the great mystery of commitment to God and the courage to die for the truth.

Do we honestly look at those faces or do we turn away in embarrassment because we cannot face the truth for which these people are ready to become martyrs? Look at the face of the Crucified who invites you to follow him. He will be father, mother- everything to you.

Prayer:

Blessed are you, Jesus, the Man of Sorrows and our Savior, let us see your face, Lord, and we shall be saved. In your own person, you restored us to the likeness of God, keep us from defacing that image in our souls. Comfort with your strength all our afflicted ones and let us be bearers of your compassion.

The Crucifixion and Death of Christ

Constantly remember the pains of our crucified Love. Know that those great saints who now reign with divine love in heaven above reached the height of perfection by this very path.

People in love have no trouble remembering all kinds of things about each other - the distinctive tone of voice, the gifts which bring delight, and the other person's characteristic moods and preferences. People in love remember the sacrifices they have made for each other over the years. People in love also know very well the sufferings that burden each other's heart. Indeed, being sure of a friend's supportive care makes it possible for us to bear with enormous difficulties in life. Keeping in mind each other's pain teaches us to share our gifts sensitively and generously.

When we remember the pain of Jesus Crucified, gratitude soon follows because we recall that he endured those sufferings on our behalf. He is no longer suffering for us: "He did that once for all when he offered himself." (Hebrews 7:28). Christ does not need our strength now. But we give thanks for his love by sharing our compassion with those who suffer today. They are numberless and, too often, faceless and nameless. The path to holiness leads us to love our neighbor with the generosity of Jesus, who gave his life for us.

Prayer:

Blessed are you, Jesus, our Savior; you gladly suffered for us and you redeemed us with your own blood. On the cross, you asked your Father to forgive those who were tormenting you, inspire us to love those who dislike or oppose us. Help us to following your example by dying to ourselves so that others may receive life.

Jesus is Pierced by a Lance

Hide yourself in the Passion of Jesus.

At times we sense that our whole life is a journey. We are returning to the Father, just as Jesus returned to his Father after fulfilling his mission to bring good news. "And bowing his head, he handed over his spirit." No more sleepless nights, no more controversial arguments with the Pharisees, no more disappointment and betrayal from his closest disciples. When life has been a great struggle, as it was for Jesus, death brings a certain rest. The soldiers knew that Jesus was already dead yet one of them thrust his lance into the side of Jesus. "And immediately blood and water flowed out." The lance did not kill Jesus. Ironically, the weapon of death became a source of life.

In the side of Christ, the lance opened a door of salvation for us. The Church and the sacraments born from that pierced side accompany us on our journey back to the Father. From birth until the hour when we bow our head and hand over our spirit, God's gracious love touches our life in its most significant moments. From the side of Christ comes the life-giving grace we need to return safely to the Father. In times of temptation and danger, we can hide ourselves in the Side of Jesus, finding strength in the sacraments which flow from that place of salvific grace.

Prayer:

Jesus, your side was opened by a lance and poured forth blood and water to symbolize the birth of your spouse, the church, keep your church spotless and holy. Just as you opened heaven to the penitent thief, open it also to all the dead who embrace you as their Redeemer. Jesus, our Savior, who gave your life out of love for your brothers and sisters, may we love each other with a love like yours

Jesus Rises in Glory from the Tomb

They put him to death, hanging him on a gibbet; but God raised him to life on the third day, and allowed him to be clearly seen, not by the whole people, but by witnesses whom God had chosen in advance - by us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Peter, an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus, can hardly contain his surprise as he tells the story to anyone he meets. Jesus was raised from the dead! A cruel death seemed to end everything, but Jesus was alive, risen! The apostle who denied him was forgiven by the Risen Jesus while they ate and drank together on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. A new age of God's favor had dawned! The women at the tomb early Easter morning were the first to know, it seems, perhaps because, standing their ground beneath the cross, they clung to hope till the last. Soon the most doubtful disciples, like Thomas, were convinced. No, Jesus was not a ghost or someone they imagined. They touched his wounds with their hands.

The gospels do not describe Jesus coming forth from the tomb, but only his meetings with his disciples, now one, now them all. They, in turn, burning with overpowering belief, told others that they might believe. And so, because they saw and experienced him, we meet the Risen Jesus too. "He disappeared from before our eyes, that we might find him in our hearts", St. Augustine said of our Risen Lord. Why then envy those who saw him? Who knew him face to face? United with the Risen Jesus in baptism, we share his promises made to them. We too can proclaim the same faith: 'On the third day he rose again'!

Prayer:

Christ, Son of the living God, in baptism we were baptized together with you, grant that we may rise with you to a new life. Through your cross and resurrection you opened to everyone the way to eternal life, welcome our departed sisters and brothers as they appear at the gate of your heavenly kingdom.