

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On this Good Friday let us commemorate, in prayer, Jesus' final journey from the place of where he was put on trial and condemned to death to the place of his execution. This prayer requires the use of our imagination, fired by the Word of God and reflections upon that Word. So, let us begin by asking God to help us pray well.

Heavenly Father, we thank you
for the saving work of Jesus Christ your Son
which we call to mind
in following this Way of the Cross.
May our faith be strengthened
as we journey in hope together with Jesus
who promised that
"Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them".
Send your Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts
and increase our love of You
and of one another.
We ask this in the name of the same
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
Amen.

*O dreadful night a traitor's kiss made darker,
When priests sent guards to take by force our saviour;
No need of swords to lead this lamb to slaughter:
He followed meekly.*

The First Station

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



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

Pilate spoke to the crowd: "What do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But

they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

(Mark 15:12-15)

The situation had been worsening for some time. After telling of the raising of Lazarus from the dead St John writes that, “from that day they were determined to kill him”. This was no ordinary criminal trial. The kind of thinking which led to his trial and execution has no place in the Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus’ every word and action. The pursuit or maintenance of power by means of injustice is still a feature of this world. It not unusual for people who oppose those in power to be disposed of in much the same way as Jesus was by the leaders of his own people.

As we remember the unjust treatment meted out to Jesus, let us pray for those who are suffering from similar injustice today.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*Sanhedrin boldly judged him whom they hated
But had no power to kill the light of this world;
Pitiless crowds, through Pilate’s voice, decided
Our saviour must die.*

The Second Station

JESUS IS MADE TO CARRY HIS CROSS



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

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away (Matthew 27:27-31) and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called *Golgotha*. (John 19:17)

We read in the gospel of the way in which Jesus, after being condemned to die, was treated savagely by those charged with his execution and finally made to carry the cross on which he was to die. His mission was directed to saving people from whatever leads them to treat others in such an inhuman way.

As we remember the suffering of Jesus, who taught us to, “do unto others what you would have them do unto you”, let us pray for people who are subjected to arbitrary cruelty in the name of the law.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*O shameful death: a gibbet by the wayside
For men whom men despise, but now made ready
To bear God's Son who, first, to Golgotha
That cross must carry.*

The Third Station

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME



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

At my stumbling they gathered in glee,
they gathered together against me;
ruffians whom I did not know
tore at me without ceasing;
they impiously mocked more and more,
gnashing at me with their teeth.
How long, O Lord, will you look on? (Psalm 35:15-17)

Jesus said: “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

The weight of the cross was considerable and it would have been difficult for any man to carry it along the rough and rising road to Calvary. Jesus was already weakened before this journey began. What did he pray as he struggled along? Perhaps he recalled the Psalmist’s words we have just read. Who knows? We know so little, but surely, from time to time, he would have fallen.

As we remember Jesus' first fall, we recall that he told us, and all his disciples, that we should be prepared to meet opposition; that we must take up our own cross to follow Him. Let us pray for those who find the weight of their circumstances too great to bear, and fall.

Lord in your mercy.
Hear our prayer.

*O piteous sight: a tortured man, so weakened
Who trembles as they place the weight upon Him.
Beneath the cross He scarce can walk, He stumbles:
He falls a first time.*

The Fourth Station

JESUS MEETS HIS SORROWING MOTHER



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

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' (Luke 2:34-35)

It is likely that Mary was among the crowd through which Jesus had to make his way, and that she would have approached him. Doubtless the sight of his anguished mother, who later was to stand close to him as he died, increased his pain and she, surely, would have recalled that strange prophecy of Simeon as she felt her heart must break. How can it be that only thus could mankind be saved from its alienated self?

As we think of this meeting let us pray for mothers whose children, by their way of life, cause them pain; for mothers who grieve for the loss of a child, or of the adult who was once their child.

Lord, in your mercy.
Hear our prayer.

*O mother's woe, to see her child so suffer;
She feels a sword has pierced her heart: she must die.
His body's torment deepens when he sees that
His mother suffers.*

The Fifth Station

SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS WITH THE CROSS



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

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. (Mark 15:21)

Who was he, this man who, however reluctantly, helped Jesus carry his cross? Probably a Jew of the diaspora in Jerusalem for the Passover who, along with his sons (Alexander and Rufus), became a follower of Jesus. He encountered Jesus, unexpectedly, weakened by his suffering when he was no longer able to announce, in words, the coming of the kingdom. Perhaps by taking up the cross of Jesus, sharing in his suffering he grasps intuitively the call to be a disciple and understands its cost.

As we remember what Simon of Cyrene did to help Jesus, let us pray for those generous people who at the sacrifice of their own safety are ready to help others in distress; if they have no faith may they find it through their actions.

Lord in your mercy.
Hear our prayer

*O loving soul, compelled to share, unknowing,
In Jesus' pain, and lend his strength to carry
His cross, and find himself a true disciple,
At one with Jesus*

The Sixth 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.

A Samaritan while travelling came near the man who had fallen into the hands of bandits; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:34-36)

Jesus said: “The king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

There is no mention of Veronica in any of the gospels but, like the Samaritan in Jesus’ parable she is a model of the compassion which is a mark of Jesus’ disciples. The sympathy she shows towards the suffering Jesus is the sympathy she would show to anyone, knowing that in person she could meet Jesus Himself. She follows the example of her master who became a servant to his disciples and told them to serve one another; she imitates Christ.

As we remember Veronica’s act of kindness, let us pray for those who spend themselves in the care of others who are sick or in any kind of need.

Lord in your mercy.
Hear our prayer

*O kindly heart who acting with compassion
Wiped blood and tears from Jesus face so gently.
Her cloth retained her Saviour’s face, but truly
She was His image.*

The Seventh Station

JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME



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

He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5)

In the society in which we live it is commonplace for people to make demands on others which they themselves would be unready or unable to bear. There are tasks to be performed which are distasteful and, sometimes, punishments to be handed down. It seems it was always like that. Jesus struggles under the weight of the cross they have laid upon him. They could have killed him without all this. Perhaps they needed, or wanted to see him fall. In any case, it is inevitable: he falls as second time.

As we remember this second fall, let us pray for those, in our own society, who have burdens laid upon them which are too heavy for them to bear and who fall beneath them; pray that they may be able to rise up again.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*O failing strength: defeated by the burden
By law, unjustly, laid upon his shoulders.
Once more he sways, his legs no longer hold him:
He falters and falls.*

The Eighth 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.

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?' (Luke 23:27-31)

Jesus meets the women, the 'daughters of Jerusalem', who seem to have understood and welcomed his message of peace more easily than the 'sons of Abraham'. He sees their sorrow and distress as they weep for him and sees that, like himself, they will suffer because of the madness and violence which have overtaken their culture and their city. Everything will be destroyed and like him they and their children will be innocent victims of the world which rejected him.

As we remember the tears of the women of Jerusalem, let us pray for people who are persecuted for their religious faith or political opinions in our own age and for their grieving families.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*O tender hearts who loathe this vile oppression,
Condemning men to death by crucifixion;
Who comfort those despised by all and enter
Into God's Kingdom.*

The Ninth Station

JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME



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

A heavy yoke is laid on the children of Adam,
from the day they come forth from their mother's womb until the day they return to the mother
of all the living.
Perplexities and fear of heart are theirs,
and anxious thought of the day of their death.
From the one who sits on a splendid throne
to the one who grovels in dust and ashes,
from the one who wears purple and a crown
to the one who is clothed in sackcloth... (Ecclesiasticus 40:1-4)

Closer to the place of execution, Jesus falls again. Will he be able to get up again? What
must he have felt like at this point on his journey to execution? How did his guards
manage to get him back on to his feet? Probably with further acts of cruelty. Jesus who
brought the promise of eternal life is made to experience the very worst that this life has
to offer.

As we remember Christ's final fall, let us pray for those who have fallen below the level
at which normal life is sustainable: the homeless, the starving, the abused.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

*O fearsome pain, increased by every movement,
Which blinds the eyes and overwhelms all feeling.
He cannot walk or stand, he is defeated:
He falls a third time*

. The Tenth 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.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says,

'They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.' (Psalm 22:18)

And that is what the soldiers did. (John 19:23-25)

Jesus has now arrived at the place where he is to be crucified. He is thought by many to be a common criminal; why else would he be brought to this place. He is hated by some. Now he is to be stripped naked by his executioners whose worth, in their own eyes and those of the crowd, is measured by their distinctive, military dress. This is not a nakedness which implies innocence but shameful nakedness imposed so others may scoff.

As we remember Jesus stripped of his clothes, let us pray for those who are treated similarly in prisons and those who, for whatever reason, are subjected to physical or psychological torture.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

*O cruel hands that stripped him of his clothing,
Sought gain from stolen dignity and disgrace,
Who scorned Him they abused whilst never knowing,
His death would save them.*

The Eleventh 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.

(They came) to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. (John 19:17-18)

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' (Luke 23:25-26)

Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews", but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' (John 19:19-22)

About murder, the Law of Moses is quite clear: thou shalt not kill. But this is different; the same Mosaic Law dictates that those who break some of its statutes must be put to death. This way of thinking persists in many modern law codes. Some condone ways of executing criminals designed to maximise their suffering. Imperfections in the judicial system and, sometimes, the machinations of those in power lead to innocent people being treated in this way. So it was with Jesus.

As we remember Jesus being nailed to the cross on which he was to die let us pray for those who are obliged to carry out the death penalty and for those who are executed illegally or in error?

**Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

*O mindless slaves of men in power, accustomed
To treat their fellow men as less than worthless;
Obedient, nailing hands and feet they stray from
Their human nature.*

The Twelfth Station

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



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

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, *'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?'* that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!' (Matthew 27:45-54)

Jesus cried out, 'It is accomplished,' and breathed his last. He is recognised, by his executioners, as the Son of God. Nothing will ever be the same. Matthew's description is intended to help us realise that what had just occurred is a cosmic event; a new stage in the history of God's creation is beginning. Mankind can embrace the Kingdom of God and the world can escape from the darkness, so evident in the events we have been calling to mind, into the light of Christ.

As we remember the moment of Jesus' death on the cross, let us pray for his disciples who spend themselves to hand on the good news to all nations, even to the ends of the earth.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*O hour of death: the Son of God is sacrificed;
He conquers death by which He seems now conquered;
Men murdered him through whom they were created,
Yet He forgave them*

The Thirteenth Station

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.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body of Jesus wrapped it in the cloth. (Mark 15:42-46)

They call this scene the '*Pieta*'. The word means pity, or perhaps compassion. No matter how inadequately, Mary and the other disciples must have shared in the suffering of Jesus. They must, too, have experienced grief at the loss of a Son, a friend. The mystery of death was as real to them as it is to us. Some of his friends had already fled. Never was faith so challenged.

As we remember Jesus being taken down from the cross, let us pray for those who, because of a death, feel that the light has gone out of their lives.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

*O grieving hearts, who looked upon the body,
Of Him they loved, in whom they trusted fully;
Who was their light, who promised life eternal:
Now all seems darkness.*

The Fourteenth 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.

Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. ()

Jesus' friends hurriedly laid his body in a tomb. Had they time to observe the proper rituals? Perhaps they thought to return, after the Sabbath, and finish their work. Did any of them understand, or even remember, what he had said to some of them: that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again'?

As we remember Jesus in the tomb, let us pray for our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in God's mercy, that they may enter into the light of his face.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

*O silent tomb where lay the corpse of Jesus
A seed of life eternal sown in secret
To grow unseen for three days, as He promised,
But not defeated.*

I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of Heaven and earth;

and in Jesus Christ,
His only Son Our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into Heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God,
the Father almighty;
from there He will come
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting.
Amen.

Our Father....

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

May the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you all
and remain for ever.
Amen.