

The Way of the Cross

For Cursillo

Prepared by The Rev. Thack Dyson for The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

The First Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The First Station - Jesus Is Condemned To Death

My Jesus, the world still has you on trial. It keeps asking who you are and why you make the demands you make. It asks over and over the question, if you are God's Son, why do you permit the world to be in the state it is in? Why are you so silent? I must admit that silently, in the depths of my soul, I sometimes have these same questions. Your humility frustrates me and makes me uncomfortable. Your strength before Pilate as you drank deeply from the power of the Father, gives me the answer to my question - The Father's Will. If only I too could be steadfast in the faith when all seems lost - calm when accused unjustly - free from tyranny of human respect - ready to do the Father's Will no matter how difficult.

Reader 2:

Silent Jesus, give us all the graces we need to stand tall in the face of the ridicule of the world. Give the poor the strength not to succumb to their privation but to be ever aware of their dignity as children of God. Grant that we might not bend to the crippling disease of worldly glory but be willing to be deprived of all things rather than lose you. *Amen.*

The Second Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Second Stations - Jesus Carries His Cross

How could any human impose such a burden upon your torn and bleeding body, Lord Jesus? Each movement of the cross drove the thorns deeper into your

head. How did you keep the hatred from welling up in your heart? How did the injustice of it all not ruffle your peace?

I see injustice and am frustrated and when my plans to alleviate it seems futile. When I see those burdened with poverty suffer ever more and cross is added to cross, my heart is far from serene. I utterly fail to see the dignity of the cross as it is carried with love. I would so much rather be without it.

Reader 2:

Jesus, in your love for sinners like me, you clasp the cross willingly. You chose the hard way out of love of others and I, for the love of self, treat myself to the best, always concerned for my own comfort. And all the while, around the world you are starving in my brothers and sisters in Sudan, Somalia, and yes, even here in my own land. I cannot face your deep and silent look of love and forgiveness. I understand now. I am the reason you must die. Have mercy on me, Lord, and heal me of my sin by the merits of your love. *Amen.*

The Third Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Third Station – Jesus Falls the First Time

My Jesus, it seems to me, that as God, you would have carried your cross without faltering, but you did not. You fell beneath its weight to show me you understand when I fall. Is it pride that makes me want to shine even in pain? I fear failure and do not want to stumble and fall. Yet you were not ashamed to fall- to admit the cross was heavy.

Reader 2:

If the Father permits failure in my life just as He permitted you to fall, then I must know there is good in that failure which my mind will never comprehend. I must not concentrate on the eyes of others as they rest upon me in my falls.

Rather, I must reach up to touch that invisible hand and drink in that invisible strength ever at my side. Your love for me gave you strength to rise from your fall. Look upon all those whom the world considers unprofitable servants and give them the courage to be more concerned as to how they stand before you, rather than before their fellow human beings. *Amen*

The Fourth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Fourth Station - Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

My Jesus, it was a great sorrow to realize your pain caused Mary so much grief. When you glanced at each other in unutterable suffering, what gave you both the courage to carry on without the least hesitation - without anger at such injustice? I know it had to be only through God's will.

Reader 2:

Yet, often when I see so much suffering in the world, there are times I think it is all hopeless. There is an element of lethargy in my prayers for humankind that says "I'll pray, but what good will it do? The sick grow sicker and the hungry starve." But then I think of that glance between you and Mary - the glance that said, "Let us give this misery to the Father for the salvation of souls. The Father's power takes our pain and frustration and renews souls, saves them for a new life - a life of eternal joy and eternal happiness. It is worth it all." Please give all of us perseverance so we can carry the cross of frustration and agony with love. *Amen.*

The Fifth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Fifth Station - Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

My Jesus, your tormentors enlisted Simon of Cyrene to help you carry your cross. Your humility is beyond my comprehension. Your power upheld the whole universe and yet you permit one of your creatures to help you carry a cross. I imagine Simon was reluctant to take part in your shame. He had no idea that all who watched and jeered at him would pass into oblivion while his name would go down in history and eternity as the one who helped his God in need. Is it not so with me, dear Jesus? Even when I reluctantly carry my cross as Simon did, it benefits my soul.

Reader 2:

Simon wondered as he took those beams upon his shoulders, why he was chosen for such a heavy burden – and now he knows. Help me Jesus to trust your loving providence. Please watch me and give me strength just as you did Simon, so when I enter your Kingdom, I will know as he knows, what marvels your cross have done to my soul. *Amen.*

The Sixth Station

Reader 1 We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Sixth Station - A Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus

My Jesus, where were all the hundreds of peoples whose bodies and souls were healed by you? Where were they when you needed someone to give you the least sign of comfort? Ingratitude must have borne down upon your heart and made the cross nearly impossible to carry. There are times I too feel all my efforts for your Kingdom are futile and end in nothingness. Did your eyes roam through the crowd for the comfort of just one individual - one sign of pity - one sign of grief?

My heart thrills with a sad joy when I think of one woman, breaking away from fear and offering you her thin veil to wipe your bleeding face. Your loving heart, ever watching for the least sign of love, imprinted the image of your torn face upon it!

Reader 2:

I must admit, I have been among those who were afraid to know you rather than like this gracious woman. She did not care if the whole world knew she loved you. Heartbroken Jesus, give me that quality of the soul so necessary to spread Your Word - to tell all people of your love for them. Send many into your vineyard so the people of all nations may receive the Good News. Imprint your Divine Image upon my soul and let the thin veil of my human nature bear a perfect resemblance to your loving Spirit. *Amen.*

The Seventh Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Seventh Station - Jesus Falls a Second Time

My Jesus, one of the beautiful qualities the people admired in you was your strength in time of ridicule - your ability to rise above the occasion. But now, you fall a second time - apparently conquered by the pain of the cross. People who judged you by appearances made a terrible mistake. What looked like weakness was unparalleled strength!

I often judge by appearances and how wrong I am most of the time. The world judges entirely by this fraudulent method of discerning. It looks down upon those who apparently have given their best and are now in need. It judges the poor as failures, the sick as useless and the aged as a burden. How wrong that kind of judgment is in the light of your second fall! Your greatest moment was your weakest one. Your greatest triumph was in failure. Your greatest act of love was in desolation. Your greatest show of power was in that utter lack of strength that threw you to the ground.

Reader 2:

Weak and powerful Jesus, give me the grace to see beyond what is visible and be more aware of your wisdom in the midst of weakness. Give the aged, sick, handicapped, deaf and blind the fruit of joy so they may ever be aware of the

Father's gift. Please give them the knowledge of the vast difference between what the world sees and what the Father sees, and the comfort in knowing that only the Father's opinion matters. *Amen.*

The Eighth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Eighth Station – Jesus Speaks to the Holy Women

My Jesus, I am amazed at your compassion for others in your time of need. When I suffer, I have a tendency to think only of myself but you forgot yourself completely. When you saw the holy women weeping over your torments, you consoled them and taught them to look deeper into your Passion.

Reader 2:

And yet, Jesus, I haven't the grace and compassion you have. My focus tends to be on my wants, pain, and needs to the exclusion of others. Open my heart Lord Christ. Tear down those walls of self-conceit and indifference. It is such a sublime grace to possess Your own Spirit. Help me to see you in people, circumstances and human events. Help me to help all those who are discouraged, sick, and lonely to recognize Your Presence in their midst. *Amen.*

The Ninth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Ninth Station – Jesus Falls a Third Time

My Jesus, even with the help of Simon you fell a third time. Were you telling me that there may be times in my life that I will fall again and again despite the help of friends and loved ones? Though it grieves my heart to see you so weak and helpless, it is a comfort to my soul to know that you understand my sufferings from your own experience. Your love for me made you want to experience every kind of pain just so I could have someone to look to for example and courage.

When I cry out from the depths of my soul, "This suffering is more than I can bear," I know you whisper, "Yes, I understand." When I am discouraged after

many falls, I know you say in my innermost being, "Keep going, I know how hard it is to rise."

Reader 2:

There are many' people who are sorely tried in body and soul with the ravages of alcohol and drug addictions, and other afflictions and conditions that bring the strongest to their knees again and again. Through the humiliation of this third fall, give them – no, give all of us the courage and perseverance to pick ourselves up and to take up our cross and follow you. *Amen.*

The Tenth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Tenth Station – Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

It seems that every step to Calvary brought you fresh humiliation, my Jesus. How your sensitive nature recoiled at being stripped before a crowd of people. You desired to leave this life as you entered it - completely detached from all the comforts of this world. You want me to know without a doubt that you loved me with an unselfish love. Your love for me caused you nothing but pain and sorrow. You gave everything and received nothing in return. Why do I find it so hard to be detached?

In your loving mind, dear Jesus, did you look up to the Father as you stood there on that windy hill, shivering from cold and shame and trembling from fear, and ask Him for forgiveness for those whose greed would make them lie, cheat and steal for a few pieces of silver?

Reader 2:

Forgive us all, dear Jesus. Look upon the world with pity, for humankind has lost its way and the principles of this world make greed, lust and luxury a necessity. Have mercy on us and grant the people of this day the courage to see and know themselves as they really are and the willingness to change. *Amen.*

The Eleventh Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Eleventh Station – Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

It is hard to imagine God being nailed to a cross by His own creatures. It is even more difficult for my mind to understand a love that permitted such a thing to happen! As those men drove heavy nails into your hands and feet, dear Jesus, did you offer the pain as reparation for some particular human weakness and sin? Was the nail in your right hand for those who spend their lives in dissipation and boredom? Was the nail in Your left hand in reparation for all baptized souls who live lukewarm lives? Were you stretching out your arms to show us how much you love us? As the feet that walked the hot, dusty roads were nailed fast, did they cramp up in a deadly grip of pain to make reparation for all those who so nimbly run the broad road of sin and self-indulgence?

Reader 2:

It seems, dear Jesus, your love has held you bound hand and foot as your heart pleads for a return of love. You seem to shout from the top of the hill "I love you - come to me - see, I am held fast - I cannot hurt you - only you can hurt Me." How very hard is the heart that can see such love and turn away. Is it not true I too have turned away when I did not accept the Father's Will with love? Teach me to keep my arms ever open to love, to forgive and to render service - willing to be hurt rather than hurt, satisfied to love and not be loved in return. *Amen.*

The Twelfth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Twelfth Station – Jesus Dies on the Cross

Jesus is dead!

Pause or kneel silently for a moment of contemplation

No wonder the earth quaked, the sun hid itself, the dead rose and Mary stood by in horror. Your human body gave up its soul in death but your Divinity, dear Jesus, continued to manifest its power. All creation rebelled as the Word made Flesh departed from this world. Humankind alone was too proud to see and too stubborn to acknowledge the truth.

Redemption was accomplished! Humankind would never have an excuse to forget how much you loved them. The thief on your right saw something he could not explain - he saw a man on a tree and knew He was God. His need made him see his own guilt and your innocence. The promise of eternal life made the remaining hours of his torture endurable.

Reader 2:

A common thief responded to your love with deep Faith, Hope, and Love. He saw more than his eyes envisioned - he felt a presence he could not explain and would not argue with. He was in need and accepted the way God designed to help him.

Forgive our pride, dear Jesus as we spend hours speculating, days arguing and often a lifetime in rejecting your death, which is a sublime mystery. Have pity on those whose intelligence leads them to pride because they never feel the need to reach out to the man of sorrows for consolation. *Amen.*

The Thirteenth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Thirteenth Station – Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

My Jesus, it was with deep grief that Mary finally took you into her arms and saw all the wounds sin had inflicted upon you. Mary Magdalene looked upon your dead body with horror. Nicodemus, the man so full of human respect, who came to you by night, suddenly received the courage to help Joseph take you down from the Cross. You are once more surrounded by only a few followers.

When loneliness and failure cross my path, let me think of this lonely moment and this total failure - failure in the eyes of humanity.

How wrong they were - how mistaken their concept of success! The greatest act of love was given in desolation and the most successful mission accomplished and finished when all seemed lost. Is this not true in my life, dear Jesus? I judge my failures harshly. I demand perfection instead of holiness. My idea of success is for all to end well - according to my liking.

Reader 2:

Give to all creation the grace to see that doing your will is more important than success. If failure is permitted for my greater good then teach me how to use it to my advantage. Let me say as you once said, that to do the will of the Father is my food. Let not the standards of this world take possession of me or destroy the good you have set for me - to be Holy and to accomplish the Father's will with great love. Let me accept praise or blame, success or failure with equal serenity. *Amen*

The Fourteenth Station

Reader 1: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Reader 1: The Fourteenth Station – Jesus is Laid in the Sepulcher

My Jesus, You were laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. You were born with nothing of this world's goods and you died detached from everything. When you came into the world men slept and angels sang and now as you leave it, creation is silent and only a few weep. Both events were clothed in obscurity. The majority of humanity live in such a way. Most of us live and die knowing and known by only a few. Were you trying to tell us, dear Jesus, how very important our lives are just because we are accomplishing your Father's will?

Will we ever learn the lesson of humility that makes us content with who we are, where we are and what we are? Will our faith ever be strong enough to see power in weakness and good in the sufferings of our lives? Will our hope be trusting enough to rely on your providence even when we have nowhere to lay our head?

Reader 2:

My Jesus, hide my soul in your heart as you lie in the Sepulcher alone. Let my heart be as a fire to keep you warm. Let my desire to know and love you be like a torch to light up the darkness. Let my soul sing softly a hymn of repentant love as the hours pass and your Resurrection is at hand. Let me rejoice, dear Jesus, with all the Angels in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for so great a love- so great a God- so great a day *Amen.*

Reader 2: I bid you go in Silence – and rest in the Peace of Christ.

A brief history of the Stations of the Cross

Ever since Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration in 313, permitting freedom of worship, Christian pilgrims have journeyed to the Holy Land to walk where Jesus last walked in Jerusalem. In the 15th century, Franciscans began to build a series of outdoor shrines commemorating the procession to holy sites in Jerusalem. The number of stations varied from eleven to thirty. It was not until the 17th and 18th centuries that stations came to be erected in churches, ranged at intervals around the walls. Pope Clement XII, in 1731, fixed the number of stations at fourteen. Each station was marked by a wooden cross, usually accompanied by a representation of an event in the Passion to fix the incident in the mind. They are now almost universal in Roman Catholic churches of the Latin rite and also in many Anglican churches. Eight stations (*1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, & 14*) commemorate events related in the gospels and six stations come from early tradition.