

A Way of the Cross in a Time of Conflict

Sign of the Cross

Jesus prayed before his Passion that his cup of suffering be taken from him yet he undertook his final journey in a selfless act giving us the hope of eternal life. Today many other innocent victims are praying that their suffering will also pass may they also receive that gift of hope.

PRAYER: Jesus, you embrace the whole world from the cross: forgive our failings, heal our hearts and grant us your peace.

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** Washing his hands of innocent blood –Pilate condemns Jesus to death.

World leaders wash their hands of innocent blood: collateral damage –unfortunate victims of war.

PRAYER: Lord, forgive your people. Bring those who have died into the light of your presence –enfold them in your eternal mercy and love.

I love you Jesus, my love, above all things: I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always and then do with me what you will.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

The Second Station Jesus receives the Cross

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

Taking upon himself the burden of unwarranted suffering – Jesus shares the lot of all those who are overburdened. So many were already burdened with poverty and illness –and now have the burdens of fear of death or severe injury –fear of what will happen to loved ones –what will happen to their future.

PRAYER: Lord, you share the burdens of those who are overwhelmed by fear and anguish of heart. Show us ways in which we can share their burden – to be in solidarity with them –our brothers and sisters. Glory Be....

The Third Station Jesus falls for the first time

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

The burden of the cross becomes too great – and Jesus falls. People scabble for food but are not strong enough to get to the front of the queue. They are pushed aside: the children, the weak, the frail, the elderly. They fall, and the food disappears into the hands of the strong or to those who will sell it to them at extortionate prices. Their strength is further sapped, their weakness increases; in the dust they despair.

PRAYER: Lord, our brothers and sisters fall –too weak to stand up to the strong. Help us to support them through the work of agencies who can work alongside – protecting the weak raising the lowly.

Our Father.....

The Fourth Station Jesus meets his mother

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

Where else can a mother be? Drawn to the suffering of her child – Mary meets her son.

So many mothers are watching their children die with no access to drugs to alleviate their suffering.

Mothers cower over their children, using their own bodies to try to protect them from bombs and bullets. Pregnant women are killed before meeting their unborn children.

PRAYER: Lord, you looked into the eyes of your mother and saw how your suffering increased the anguish of her heart. Yet she would not leave you –she would not abandon you. May her heart reach out in love to all the mothers and fathers whose hearts are broken or filled with fear for their children.

Hail Mary....

The Fifth Station Simon of Cyrene helps to carry the cross

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

Seeing Jesus' increasing weakness Simon of Cyrene is pressed into helping to carry the cross. A man in the crowd – who did not even know Jesus – forced to share his burden. How many men and women – whose names we may never know – are tonight sharing the burdens of suffering? Soldiers become brothers and sisters – sharing the fear – the grief for fallen comrades – striving to fight for peace – trying to show a human face in an inhuman war.

Prayer Lord, you had the strength of another man to share an intolerable burden. Bless all those who are using their strength to defend the weak – those who are sharing the burdens of those unable to carry them alone. Strengthen their sense of purpose, temper their determination to succeed with compassion for those they seek to liberate.

Glory Be...

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 woman overwhelmed with pity comes from the crowd and wipes the face of Jesus. People wiping the tears of those who are broken-hearted – tending the wounds of those who are injured and in pain – going into places of danger to love and serve those in great need.

PRAYER: Lord, the tenderness of Veronica's gesture – simple and loving – reflected in countless simple gestures of loving service. Bless those who show the courage to come forward and be seen – protect them as they show mercy and compassion for your people.

Our Father...

The Seventh Station Jesus falls the second time

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

The burden of the cross again overwhelms Jesus – and he falls a second time. How often can we pick ourselves up and start again. A people dominated by fear – oppressed and afraid – knowing the fate of those who tried to take a stand before them. Where do they get the courage to believe in their future – and to act in that belief that this time – this time it will succeed?

PRAYER: Lord, the people enduring conflict are bruised and battered – and some are without hope. Raise their eyes to a new future – give them confidence in their own strength and belief that they can make a difference – for themselves – for their future.

The Eighth Station The women of Jerusalem mourn for Jesus

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

Mourning – weeping – wailing – the sound of grief that fills homes – streets – hospitals – and bomb-sites. Parents weep again for their children – and cannot be comforted.

PRAYER: Lord, you told the women of Jerusalem to weep not for you – but for themselves and their children in so many war torn places – and now they do. Words spoken here cannot bring consolation – but take our love and our prayer – add it to your own – and let the little we can offer – be of some comfort and support to those left distraught and broken.

Hail Mary...

The Ninth Station Jesus falls for the third time

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

Weakened beyond endurance – Jesus falls for the third time. There will be some who will be overcome with despair – whose souls are ground down into the dust – for whom the prospect of rising to new challenges is beyond their strength – beyond wildest hopes.

PRAYER: Lord, you know the depths of utter fatigue – the sense of utter helplessness. Infuse your love and hope into the hearts of those who despair of beginning again – for whom future happiness is glimpsed only through the awareness of pain yet to come. Help us too to believe that we can make a difference – when all seems darkness – despair – and repeated failure.

Glory Be...

The Tenth Station Jesus is stripped of his clothing

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

A people has been stripped of everything –their dignity lost in years of sanctions– their homes lost by years of bombing –their hope gone by years of oppression, grief and suffering -their wounds visible for the world to see. Some view with compassion –others with idle curiosity – and from others – unwholesome gloating that this is the price of success.

PRAYER: Lord, a people stands naked before the world's gaze. Let that gaze be compassionate, may their suffering evoke in us a desire to ease their pain and the will to fight for peace with justice in the whole of the earth.

Our Father.....

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**

Stories of great cruelty inflicted on rivals –torture and random killings of those who disagreed. People living with deep, cruel scars –minds haunted by memories too fearful to share. Nails driven through minds and hearts – pinning them to terror – to fear – to despair.

PRAYER: Lord, we cannot begin to imagine the pain you endured –but your pain makes your compassion real for those who have suffered unimaginable agony. Pour your healing love over them –enfold them in your mercy. Give them a sense of security –so that the wounds inflicted on body, mind and spirit can slowly be healed and, like yours, become signs of glory –of witness to the triumph of good over evil.

Hail Mary

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**

Jesus cried out in a loud voice “father into your hand I commend my spirit” Then bowing his head, he dies.

PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION

So many deaths –some swift and unexpected –some slow and lingering. Death – no respecter of age killing the elderly and frail – young soldiers – men and women in the prime of life –children – and babies yet unborn.

PRAYER: Lord, death feels final. Sudden death leaves us stunned and reeling –our hearts bleed for those who suffer long, slow decline. We entrust the souls of all who have died in war to your mercy. We ask you, who walked through the veil of death, to be there to meet them – and lead them home.

Glory Be...

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**

A mother holding her dead child. Friends standing in disbelief that the one they have loved has died. Long moments of weeping – sighing – longing to bring them back to life – but not to the suffering –never back to the suffering.

PRAYER: Lord, those moments of loss –as the reality that the one we love is no longer there. The hand we touch is cold – the heart is still. May those who mourn find comfort in the love of family and friends – may the love of your mother – who held you in her arms –bring them comfort –may our compassion transcend the distance that separates us –and in the solidarity of humanity –touch their souls with our love.

Our Father.....

The Fourteenth Station Jesus is placed in the tomb

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world**

The final glimpse of the one who has been so loved. A last touch – and then – the end. A hasty burial with few mourners. A lonely cremation in a burnt-out tank. The moment when death becomes reality –the moment of parting –the moment of walking away –to try to pick up the pieces and rebuild a life.

PRAYER: Lord, so many people are standing by gravesides –wondering how to rebuild life without the one they love. May they find hope in the midst of their grief –a conviction that their loved one did not die in vain –and that they are safe – free from pain and fear –at rest in God for ever.

I love you Jesus, my love, above all things: I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always and then do with me what you will.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

CLOSING PRAYER

In the rubble and carnage of war – what hope can we find? In the suffering and despair of humanity – how can we believe in the future? In the face of death – how can we believe in resurrection?

PRAYER: Lord, at times like these our faith can be tested to the full. We share the desolation of people torn apart by suffering –and wonder whether life really is stronger than death. Yet you have walked through death to new life – your family and friends bore witness to your resurrection. We trust your word and their witness and look to the future with confidence that the cause of all the pain in the world is sin –but all shall be well –and all shall be well –and all manner of thing shall be well.

Sign of the Cross