

CAFOD STATIONS OF THE CROSS 2026

OPENING REFLECTION

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

As we reflect on the final journey of Jesus, leading to his death on the cross, we do so in solidarity with all those, here at home and across the world, who are suffering today. Let us pray together for God to transform our lives and the lives of others:

PRAYER: God of mercy, we gather as disciples, seeking to follow Christ, on the costly path to Calvary. As we walk the Way of the Cross, open our eyes to see the face of Jesus in the faces of people in every kind of need and sustain in us the commitment to build a better world where all can flourish. Amen.

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

The first Station: Jesus is condemned to death

“And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.” *Mark 15:14-15*

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

Challenging injustice can be costly today, just as it was for Jesus. The gospel is a disruptive force; it points toward a kingdom of justice and peace that necessarily unsettles the status quo. While Jesus’ message is hope for the vulnerable and marginalised, it is a provocation to those who hold onto oppressive systems. As followers of Christ, we are entrusted with continuing his mission of liberation and healing. We pray for the strength to live the radical way of the gospel and to speak courageously for what is right, even when it is difficult,

PRAYER: Christ Jesus, you remained faithful, in the face of injustice and violence. Give us the courage and commitment to live with generosity and justice, to speak out for peace and love

The second Station: Jesus carries his cross

“So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.” *John 19:16b-17*

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Jesus begins his walk, forced to carry the heavy wooden cross, on the road that leads to the hill where he will be crucified. Across the world, many of our sisters and brothers are on difficult journeys. More than 100 million people are displaced due to conflict, persecution and disasters. Refugee camps in the area are past capacity, with many families vulnerable to the spread of diseases and unable to feed their children dinner every night. We pray for the grace to walk alongside refugees, migrants and all those making challenging journeys.

PRAYER: Faithful Jesus, you carried the wood of the cross with courage and love. May we walk alongside our neighbours seeking sanctuary seeking to build a world where all people are loved, welcomed and safe. Amen.

The third Station: Jesus falls for the first time

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” *James 1:12*

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Burdened by his heavy cross, worn down by fatigue and pain, Jesus falls. Yet he pushes himself up and continues on. We pray for all those in the front line of the climate crisis who continue to persevere in the face of adversity. We pray for strength and determination when we face challenges.

PRAYER: Resolute Jesus, you fell under the weight of the wood yet did not abandon the journey. Be with us when we are struggling, and help us persevere in love. Amen.

The fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” *Luke 2:33-35*

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This was the fulfilment of Simeon’s prophecy, the sword that ran through Mary’s soul. She who nurtured Jesus as a baby, witnessed his first steps and words, now meets her son on this final journey. What pain Mary must have felt, unable to reach out to help or comfort Jesus. Yet she remains present and steadfast. So many mothers throughout the world grieve, as they struggle to feed their hungry children or access vital medicines and healthcare. Let us look to the example of Mary and not turn our faces away from those who are suffering.

PRAYER: Compassionate Jesus, you gave us your mother and entrusted us to her care. May we stand with those who suffer offering comfort and assistance. Amen.

The fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene carries the cross

“And they compelled a passer by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.” *Mark 15:21*

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Simon of Cyrene comes into the city of Jerusalem on the day of Jesus’ death. He finds himself in the crowds along Jesus’ pathway to Golgotha and is enlisted to help carry his cross. He does not know Jesus but lends his strength to carrying the heavy weight of the wood. Although Simon did not have a choice but to help carry Jesus’ cross, we do. We pray that we will look for opportunities to help one another and to build a better world.

PRAYER: Jesus, our brother, you call us to bear each other’s burdens. Bless all who give of themselves in the service of others; and make us always ready to offer and to receive help. Amen.

The sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” *Mark 4:30-32*

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Moved by Jesus’ pain, Veronica’s love overcomes her fear and she courageously steps forward to wipe the blood and sweat from Jesus’ face. She cannot change his fate, but recognising his dignity, she faithfully performs her small act of compassion. As the guards force Jesus onward, the image of his face is left on Veronica’s veil. At this station, we pray for the grace to look for opportunities to do small acts of kindness and generosity. In so doing, we recognise the face of Jesus in our neighbours, and he imprints his face on each of us.

PRAYER: Jesus, our teacher, as you journey to the Cross, you show us the way of your kingdom. May we not grow discouraged but be always ready to act with compassion and hope. Amen.

The seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time

“For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.” *Luke 11:47*

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Under the weight of the cross, Jesus is once again brought to his knees. After this second fall, Jesus’ struggle to rise up again is much harder. In *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo XIV reminds us of our call, as the People of God, to speak out against structural injustice. He writes “Unjust structures need to be recognized and eradicated by the force of good.” As we reflect on nations trapped in a cycle of debt, we pray that God will help us to build a global family where the dignity of the person is always placed before the demands of profit.

PRAYER: Jesus, our redeemer, you were willing to die that we might live. Help us stand against injustice so all people can flourish and fulfil their potential. Amen.

The eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

“And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” *Luke 23:27-28*

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As Jesus draws closer to the place of execution, he encounters the women of Jerusalem weeping for him. There is a shared empathy here as Jesus recognises their difficulties and tells them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children. As we recall this exchange, we remember the many societies where women face huge challenges. Today, women represent the majority of the world’s poor. Globally, they are less likely than men to be involved in decision making, to own land or property, or to have access to education, technology and employment. We pray for the work of Women for Change and for a world where the distinctive contributions of women and girls are valued and all can live free from violence, fear and discrimination.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, despite your own pain you notice the suffering of others. Give us hearts that grieve for all that is wrong in our world and embolden us to work for change. Amen.

The ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” *Isaiah 53:4*

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

Jesus falls a third time. In this final fall, he shares the exhaustion of those who feel overwhelmed by difficulties. Love gave Jesus the strength to stand again and continue onwards. We pray for all those who need strength and courage, that in the face of so many struggles, they will know Christ’s love and comfort.

PRAYER: Jesus, suffering servant, you know the crushing weight of violence and hate. Be with all who suffer because of conflict and inspire all people to work for reconciliation and peace. Amen.

The tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

“When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic.” *John 19:23*

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Jesus has nothing left. Arriving at his place of execution, even his clothes are taken from him. He holds nothing back. Let’s pray that we will also stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers whose rights are being unjustly challenged.

PRAYER: Jesus, you sacrificed everything and endured mockery for our sake. Strip away our indifference and clothe us with your love May we advocate for justice for all our global family. Amen.

The eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” *Isaiah 53:5*

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The soldiers drive the nails into Jesus’ hands and feet. Yet even in this moment he shows his compassion, praying for those who crucify him. Jesus continues to be crucified in all who suffer in our world. He is present in those whom society marginalises: people who are hungry or homeless, refugees or asylum seekers. He is crucified in the exploitation of our common home, the earth and its resources. As followers of Jesus, may we show his compassion and so be a source of hope for all our brothers and sisters, our global family, and our common home, the earth.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you stretched out your arms on the cross, to embrace all creation. Bless all those who reach out in love to their neighbours speak out for justice, care for creation and work to build your peace. Amen.

The twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” *John 19:28-30*

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

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

Just before he dies on the cross Jesus cries out that he is thirsty. We can hear him continue to say these words to us, through our brothers and sisters who each day must strive for enough water to live. These last words of Jesus challenge us. They call us to see his face in all those who thirst for justice and to stand alongside them raising our own voices for change. May we thirst for a better world, where all our neighbours have safe water.

PRAYER: Jesus, the living water, you know what it is to thirst. Let your love well up within us. Together may we reshape the world, so that the thirst for water, and for justice, is satisfied. Amen.

The thirteenth Station: Jesus’ body is taken down from the cross

“Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” *Mark 15: 43*

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The bodies of those crucified were usually left on the cross to decay. Joseph of Arimathea has been a secret follower of Jesus, but now he finds the courage to go to Pilate and ask for Jesus’ body. He acts despite the fear he must have felt, to ensure the lifeless body of his teacher is, at least now, treated with dignity and gentleness. As we gaze on the Lord’s lifeless body, we see too the bodies of refugees washed ashore from the sea, the bloodied victims of conflict and war, and those consumed by the slow violence of poverty. May we join Joseph in seeking the kingdom of God, where the dignity of all is respected.

PRAYER: Jesus, Lord of life, you descended into death. May we, the Body of Christ, cherish the gift of life and promote the dignity of all people. Amen.

The fourteenth Station: Jesus’ body is laid in the tomb

“Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.” *Mark 15: 46*

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There has been little time to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. Joseph has to move quickly to place it in the tomb before the Sabbath begins. He wraps it in a simple linen cloth and rolls the stone over the door. The disciples have scattered in fear and grief and it seems like the end. We too must act quickly if we are to protect our common home, the earth, for future generations. As Pope Francis warned in his final apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*: “Our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.” We pray that we may have a sense of urgency and hope, even in dark times, as we seek to make a difference.

PRAYER: Jesus, rock of our salvation, your body was sealed in a tomb, May our hearts be broken open by the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Amen.

CLOSING REFLECTION

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.” *Luke 24:5-6*

Jesus is alive. He has conquered death and is here among us. His resurrection opens the way of hope and assures us that injustice, pain and death can be overcome. As we reflect on Jesus’ final journey, we pray for the strength to live each day as people transformed through God’s love. May we radiate God’s love to all our sisters and brothers throughout the world.

PRAYER: Risen Jesus, you make all things new, Renew us with your risen life, to carry your loving presence into our broken world. Amen. Glory be to the Father.....Amen