

The Way of the Cross *With Mother Theresa.*

Invitation to Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, we follow you with faith and love on the way of the cross. Let your pain be our pain, let your cross be our cross, let your death be our death, so that we may be with you in the glory of the resurrection for ever and ever. Amen.

The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death.

Pilate brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of 'Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Here is your king!" They cried out, 'Away with him, away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. (Jn 19, 13-16)

Behold the man. Jesus is condemned to death. It is important that each one of us see him and take upon ourselves our own crosses. We need to accompany him all along his ascent to Calvary if we wish to reach the summit together with him. It is for this reason that Jesus before his death, gave us his body and blood so that we may have the strength to carry our cross and follow him step by step on his way.

Lord, pardon our sins which are the cause of your death. Free us from the violence of insane judgments and arouse in us the love for life.

Our Father...

The Second Station: Jesus Accepts His Cross.

So they took Jesus, and he went out bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. (Jn 19,17-18)

Let us take our cross and begin our ascent to Calvary with courage and joy: through holy communion, Jesus our bread of life is with us and gives us life and strength. It is a strength that comes from his joy, an energy that comes from his passion. Without the passion, without this joy, nothing is possible. We shall not waste our strength in useless things, but shall concentrate on our suffering in search of the Love.

Lord, grant that the suffering you have accepted for your love for us may restore hope and comfort to all who are in pain.

Hail Mary...

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time.

And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again... And he told them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mk 8,31-35)

Poor and hungry Jesus falls under the weight of the cross. How many, like him, fall and die in the thousands because they do not have food to eat? How many suffer the same lot for lack of love and recognition?

Lord Jesus, the weight of our sins have made you fall under the wood of the cross. Lord, be with us in our weakness; raise us from our falls.

Glory Be...

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother.

Simeon said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also) that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." (Lk 2, 34-35).

The meeting of Jesus with his mother should urge us to become mothers to those who suffer, mothers full of compassion and love especially with regards the young who are alienated and disoriented. We have to be present and offer them our compassion when they feel rejected by others. In one word, be with them.

Lord, may the love of Mary your Mother and ours accompany us to bring help and comfort on the way of pain.

Our Father...

The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.

And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him.

(Lk 23, 26-27)

Taking upon himself the cross, Simon of Cyrene follows Jesus, sharing with him the fatigue and pain of the ascent to Calvary. Every single offer, every single gesture of help and love to the poor and discarded, make us share in the help of Jesus to the least and transforms us into real Simons of Cyrene.

Lord Jesus, my heart protests: "The cross, no! Leave me alone!" Lord, load over me the burden of all those who suffer because of injustice.

Hail Mary...

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes The Face of Jesus.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (Is 53, 3-4)

The gesture of Veronica who wipes the sweat of Jesus becomes a gesture for everyone of us when we share the suffering of those who are overcome by solitude and feel rejected by others and the world. We have to shed our pride that makes us give a disinterested glance at them and proceed on our way and be present at the side of our neighbour to wipe the pain from their face.

Lord, imprint in my heart the image of your love. Do not allow me to ignore the poor, the sick, the little ones and the old and all those whom society rejects.

Glory Be...

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Is 53, 5-6)

Jesus falls a second time. Jesus needs our arms to get up; Jesus needs our hands for proceeding on his way. How many times have we collected the poor on the streets, abandoned like animals who were eager to die like angels. Can you see people who feel discarded, dejected, lonely and abandoned? They are given to you to heal and restore them.

Lord, falling on the ground, you raise the sinners, the sick who suffer, the prisoners who despair, the strangers held in hostage. Shake up my torpor and infuse in me your charity.

Our Father...

The Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks To The Women and Children.

And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, `Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. (Lk 23, 27-28)

The sufferings shared with the passion of Christ is a marvellous gift. The most beautiful gift one can ever receive is the possibility of participating in the passion of Christ. Yes, this gift is a sign of his love, because it is in this way that the Father has shown us to love the world: by sending his Son to die for us.

Lord Jesus, our eyes are closed in indifference. Restore our sight that we may see the pain of those who weep.

Hail Mary...

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth... because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Is 5-3,7.12)

In the invitation to be his disciples, to take up our cross and follow him, Jesus invites us also to give food to all who are hungry, to clothe those who are naked, to give shelter to those who are homeless and to treat all as our brothers and sisters. In carrying the cross of all of us to Calvary, Jesus falls a third time for everyone of us. Like him we should be ready to meet him in every human being that we encounter.

Lord, men and women continue to fall on the sorrowful way of life. Help us to raise all those who have fallen prostrate into misunderstanding and discouragement.

Glory Be...

The Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic for which they cast lots. (Jn 19, 23)

Like so many poor of today, like so many humble in various parts of the world, Jesus was deprived also of his clothes. Also in rich countries babies are deprived of love even before they are born, babies constrained to die before they see the light of day because they are rejected. Jesus chose to be loaded with the suffering of all, to be stripped before the world. These babies, our brothers and sisters who are not even given the chance to choose, are denied every possibility. But we have the possibility of accepting them, loving them, and taking care of them.

Lord Jesus, I see you naked in the men and women of our times who are stripped of their dignity. Help us in our poverty and cover us with your mantle of mercy.

Our Father...

The Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Lk 23, 33-34)

Today the crucifixion of Jesus is repeated in many humans: in the minority, mentally retarded who live enclosed and marginalised in the hospitals. Do we have the courage to go and visit them, share with them at least one hour of their crucifixion?

Lord, from the top of the cross unite all the people in an embrace of pardon. Give us a big heart to welcome all those who are lonely and those in despair.

Hail Mary...

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 bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (Jn 19, 28-30)

Looking at the cross, you will see that Jesus has the arms open because he wants to embrace you, has the head bent because he wants to kiss you, has his heart bleeding because he wants to welcome you. So, when you feel lonely and spiritually poor, look at the crucifix: the pain, the suffering, the humiliation, the unhappiness, the loneliness are nothing but occasions for joining with him who feels lonely, suffering and abandoned like you.

Lord, you have come that we may have life and have it in abundance. Grant that I may be a cause of joy and not of pain to my brothers and sisters.

Glory Be...

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate granted the body to Joseph. And taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb. (Mk15, 43-46)

Transforming himself into bread of life, Jesus told us `only if we eat his flesh and drink his blood we will be able to follow him and be his disciples. Though today Jesus does not have to set out on his via dolorosa carrying the cross to Calvary, he continues to suffer and relive the passion in us.

Lord, the earth is silent and dumbfounded as it prepares itself to welcome you in her womb. Grant that our life like a grain of wheat fallen in the ground, may rise again in you.

Our Father...

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb.

Joseph of Arimathea took away the body of Jesus. Nicodemus also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. They took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with spices. In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. They laid Jesus there. (Jn 19, 38-42)

We have to become a genuine and fruitful branch of the vine of Jesus. Accepting in our life what pleases him, we have to become: like the truth we have to tell, like the life we have to live, like the light we have to light, like the love we have to love, like the way we have to traverse, like the joy we have to give, like the peace we have to spread, like the sacrifice we have to offer in our families and to all our neighbours.

Lord Jesus, you were wrapped in the linen of sorrow and compassion so that you may not forget our love. Come, Lord, free us from our tombs and make us live in you.

Hail Mary...

Closing Prayer.

Suffering taken in itself is nothing: but suffering shared with the passion of Christ is a marvellous gift. The most beautiful gift one can ever receive is to participate in the passion of Christ.

I find my work easier and can smile more sincerely when I think of each one of my suffering brothers and sisters. Jesus needs you to continue to pour the oil of your love and sacrifice in the lamp of life. Continue to really relive the passion of Christ. Bruised, broken, full of pain and wounded as you are, accept Jesus as he comes to you.

Let us pray. Lord, grant that we may see in your crucifixion and resurrection an example of how to suffer and die in the agonies and conflicts of daily life. Make us understand that only by dying continually to ourselves we will be able to live a fuller life, because only by dying with you we will be able to rise again with you. **Amen**