



The Way of the Cross

A PRAYER FOR HOPE AND HEALING AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Praying the Stations During This Time of Social Distancing

The Stations of the Cross is a widely practiced devotion, especially during the season of Lent. Unfortunately, gathering for this devotion in our parishes has been disrupted by the need for social distancing during this pandemic. This prayer resource is purposely flexible and can be used in a variety of ways.

CREATE A PRAYER SPACE

Find a place in your home suitable for prayer. This place should be comforting and quiet. If you have a crucifix, consider making it the focal point of your prayer space. Feel free to arrange any icons or other meaningful religious items around it.

Creating space for prayer is not only about the physical space. We must also make room in our minds and hearts. Find a time

when you can truly quiet yourself, and allow yourself to breathe, free of distraction.

SOLO DEVOTION

In its simplest form, one can simply read this prayer on one's own. We suggest reading it aloud.

If you prefer to be guided through the prayer, you can pray along with the audio ver-

sion available from the Open Your Hymnal podcast. You can find it at www.openyourhymnal.com/episodes/stations-of-the-cross or by using the Spotify code below:



AT HOME WITH FAMILY

If you are at home with family, you might consider praying the Stations of the Cross together as a daily or weekly devotion.

Assign someone to be the reader, or alternate taking turns. The prayer will flow best if these decisions are made ahead of time.

VIRTUAL PRAYER

In this time of social distancing, many faith communities are using virtual tools to foster connection and prayer. Consider praying the Stations of the Cross with friends over a video conferencing platform. You could also do a livestream of the service to share with others via social media. Members of our faith communities are longing to maintain a connection with other parish families. Offering a platform for a community to come together to pray the Stations of the Cross is a great way to maintain connection.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Silence and Prayer Whether praying alone or with others, allow time after the reflections for silent prayer. Allow silence for reflection as you move from station to station.

Music Many parishes incorporate sung chants and other music into their Stations of the Cross. Feel free to add music to these Stations. In the audio version of this prayer,

related by Open Your Hymnal, you will hear some suggestions for music.

Faith Sharing These meditations can also serve as prompts for faith sharing in small groups. As many groups continue to meet in virtual ways, you might consider offering these meditations for group reflection and conversation. They can serve as a way to help process and discuss the challenges of the pandemic and social distancing.

May we all be safe and well and joined in prayer at this challenging time.

Opening Prayer

*Heavenly Father,
we come to you in the midst
of fear and struggle.
Calm our anxious hearts,
and give hope to all who despair.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, bearer of our sins,
healer of our every ill,
walk with us through our trials,
through our darkest hours.
Open our hearts to the hope offered by
the mystery of your dying and rising.*

*Holy Spirit, breath of life,
bringer of truth,
plant your word deep within us.
Let the story of your passion
inspire us anew to walk our path
of discipleship.*

*We pray this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

THE FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Jesus' condemnation is one of injustice and cowardice. It is the condemnation of truth itself. Pilate finds no crime in Jesus, yet he falls to the pressure of the angry crowd.

This station calls us to reflect on the importance of discerning truth and whether we allow that truth to guide our lives. In this present moment we are bombarded by voice after voice, message upon message. During this pandemic it is more important than ever that we heed the advice offered by those who proclaim truth.

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, our Way, Truth, and Life,
help us to discern your voice
from the noise,
help us to know your truth from deceit,
and keep us rooted in the hope
of your gospel.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE SECOND STATION

Jesus takes up his cross

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

At the time, crucifixion was reserved for the lowest of classes. As he takes up his cross, we see Jesus again aligned with the poor and marginalized.

We are all suffering a variety of challenges in the wake of this pandemic. As we tend to our own struggles, let us also be mindful of those most impacted by this time of social distancing: those who have lost work, those without access to medical care, the elderly, the poor.

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, bearer of our crosses,
give us the strength to meet the challenges
of these difficult days.
Help us to live your call to serve the poor,
to heal the sick, to clothe the naked.
Bless us with the creativity and the courage
to find ways we can continue to serve
the least among us.
We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE THIRD STATION

Jesus falls the first time

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

The weight of Jesus' cross causes him to fall. We, too, will fall as we seek to bear our own crosses.

As we seek to bear the weight of the challenges posed to us by the Coronavirus, there will be many times we falter and fail. Our strength, our patience, will be tested at times. Yet we remember: Jesus got up and persevered, and so must we. When has your faith been tested? What provided you comfort during those times?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world, give us the strength to persevere when we falter.

Teach us the compassion to show others patience and mercy.

Inspire us to rise up stronger each time we fall.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his mother

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Times like this stir many questions about our faith and the nature of God. How could a God who claims to love us allow such suffering? What is our call as disciples when our faith is tested? Mary, the first disciple, is our hope. It is Mary who stands at the intersection of motherly suffering and steadfast discipleship. Her words "May it be done to me according to your word" not only applied to the birth of Jesus, but also to his death.

And so we pray:

ALL:

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now and at the hour
of our death. Amen.

THE FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Often we are asked to carry crosses that are not our own. This is especially true now, as we are asked to make sacrifices for the good of our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Yet the carrying of our crosses, the call of discipleship, are not things we are asked to do on our own. We, as members of the body of Christ, bear these challenges together. Whom do you cling to during times of trouble? Who depends on you for courage and strength?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ,
strengthen the bonds of our community.
Help us to extend the spirit of mercy
and compassion to all our brothers
and sisters.
Make us ever mindful that we journey
this difficult road together.
We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

While Veronica, specifically, does not appear in the gospels, we can focus more on her gesture rather than on who she was. In wiping Jesus' face of his sweat and blood, she helps to reveal again the face of God. Do we see beyond the scars, the tears, the wounds of our neighbors? Do we see beyond whatever veils the presence of Christ living within us?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, face of God among us,
open our eyes to your presence dwelling
in everyone we meet.
Heal us of our spiritual blindness,
and help us to see past each other's
brokenness.
We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls the second time

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Each time we fall, we are presented with the choice to give up, or to try again. We will struggle with doubt, anxiety, and even hopelessness as we grapple with the new reality set before us. How will you make the choice to keep going? What gives you hope to move forward?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, giver of hope,
be with us in our trials, our doubts,
and our questions.
Be the strength we need to rise again.
Continue to show us the way forward.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Jesus was always mindful of the marginalized members of society: the women, the sick, the poor. Not only does Jesus hear the cries of women, but he redirects their concern toward a prophecy that would soon come to pass: the fall of Jerusalem. It could be tempting to fall into our own self-pity during these times. Yet, even in his immense suffering, Jesus looks beyond himself.

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, compassion of God,
help us to see beyond our own struggles.
Open our hearts to the voices of all in need.
Fill us with the spirit of your unending
mercy.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE NINTH STATION

Jesus falls the third time

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Saint Paul writes: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross.”

As Jesus falls the third time, we reflect on the frailty of his human form, a frailty in which we all share. Time and time again, we fall, we sin, we hurt each other—and yet, time and time again, God offers us another chance.

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, God of endless chances, teach us the ways of your mercy, of your patience. Help us to extend the grace you show us to all we encounter.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Jesus offers himself completely. He is stripped of his garments and even refuses the gall and vinegar that might have helped to sedate him. We are shown a Jesus who is willing to experience fully the misery of the crucifixion, the weight of our sins. We are shown the meaning of true sacrifice. We, too, are being asked to sacrifice material comfort for the sake of others. How might we fully experience our own sacrifices offered up for the good of our neighbor?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, Lamb of God, inspire in us the courage to offer ourselves completely to you. Give us the grace to offer ourselves completely to each other. Let your example of endless love direct all our choices and actions.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the cross

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Every step along the Way of the Cross shows us Jesus willing to live every word he preached. We might ask ourselves, “Did it have to end this way?” Jesus means to show us the complete, unconditional mercy and love God has for us. Would we have understood it any other way? Do we understand it even now?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, sign of God’s love,
help us to realize all the ways you pour love
and mercy into our lives.
Open our eyes to see your presence
in all we are,
in all we do, in every person we encounter.
Make us ever thankful for your willingness
to show us the love of God.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the cross

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

We who are baptized with Christ Jesus are also baptized into his death. It is this death on the cross that awakens us to new life with Jesus Christ. It is this final breath that redeems the world. We are called to and saved by this mystery of his dying and rising.

How will we emerge from this period of darkness? How will we bear this challenge in a way that inspires new life?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Lord Jesus Christ, bearer of our sins,
remind us that death is not the end.
Light the way out of this darkness,
and reveal the path to new life.
We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to his mother

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

Again we are reminded that Mary's discipleship did not end with her "yes" to the angel Gabriel or with the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary's discipleship is made ever more inspiring by her witness during the crucifixion. *This* has been the true test of her faith in God's promise. For us, it is difficult to see beyond the darkness of these times to the light that God has promised. Even now, what signs of God's presence do we see in our struggles?

And so we pray:

ALL:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of
our death. Amen.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

READER:

We are Christians whose faith is informed by the events of the resurrection. While Christ is laid in the tomb, we have the comfort of knowing that it is not the end, that Jesus will, indeed, rise. We, too, are in a tomb now. Yet God makes us the same promise: resurrection! This is not the end; for God has promised us a future not of harm, but of hope—a future of new life in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray in the words that Jesus gave us:

ALL:

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.