

## WAY OF THE CROSS WITH THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD

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Available in booklet form at <https://pastoral.center/way-of-the-cross-with-the-women-of-the-world>.

Like Jesus, we are invited to walk the journey of the unknown with faith in the God who loves us unconditionally. We remember the women today who are condemned to a future of violence, compelled to flee their homes because of poverty, war and famine, only to discover great peril of immigration detention centers. We hold in our hearts women who are incarcerated, whose gifts and talents remain imprisoned. Fueled by those systems that foster inferiority, they are consigned to further shame and silence.

We remember those women who are burdened in life – those who wake each day hopeless and go to sleep at night in fear...those carrying the burden of being abused. We hold in our hearts those who are burdened with the decisions of life: when to move on, when to stay put, when to work, when to stay home.

We remember those women who suffer because of broken and lost relationships: the widows, the divorced, the separated, those who have miscarried or witnessed the death of a child. We hold in our hearts those who have suffered relapses in their recovery from addiction, depression or from dependence.

We remember the sorrowful women in our midst who have been betrayed, have lost loved ones; as well as those unable to be with their loved ones because of COVID. We hold in our hearts those who find it hard to forgive and let go, those who have been abandoned, overlooked and neglected.

We remember all who by their life choices support the poor and legislate on their behalf for social justice. We hold in our hearts those who are at the ready to wipe away tears and serve as passionate advocates for the immigrants, refugees and the poor.

We remember our neighbors, especially those whose way of life may differ from ours. We hold in our hearts those women who have wiped our faces: and held us in their hearts: our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and guardians.

We remember women whose energy is totally spent – whose hopes and dreams for a new life seem overshadowed by lowered aspirations and shattered by anxiety. We hold in our hearts all women who struggle with debilitating illnesses or repeated return of symptoms and those who fear death.

We remember single mothers who shed their own tears, struggling to provide food, clothing, education and health care for their children. We hold in our hearts women whose gifts are ignored, underappreciated and disparaged. The women who have become weak because they are stifled by bureaucracy, politics, isolation, and lack of acceptance by male hierarchy – and those oppressed and silenced by sexism, gender, sexual abuse, or genital mutilation.

We remember those women who have been forced to stay in unhealthy relationships for the sake of their children or financial circumstances, and those who struggle to balance family responsibilities and demands of work or career. We hold in our hearts women who have been held back from life-giving employment and dignity because they have no child care.

We remember women who are the voices of truth – prophets who call for adequate housing, health care and food for all. We hold in our hearts all whose very lives are signs of the presence of God, who offer hospitality, consolation, and welcome.

Jesus reminds us that forgiveness is always possible even when it seems irrational and impossible. “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”<sup>1</sup> John tells us of the steadfast human love of women faithful to the end: “Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.”<sup>2</sup>

We remember those who silently suffer because their voices have been taken away, their rights violated. We hold in our hearts all those who die this day [especially those attacked by the COVID virus] and especially those [neglected] or at the hands of anger, hatred or violence.

We remember those women whose spirits have been wounded, dishonored, diminished, or even killed, because of sexual harassment, prejudice or discrimination. We hold in our hearts those whose innocence has died this day because of incest and molestation, neglect, violence or abuse. – [especially when] perpetrated by anyone in a position of leadership or power.

We remember those women who have been and continue to be our mentors; those who do not give up on us even when we have given up on ourselves. We hold in our hearts those whose passion for life has left them; who suffer from depression, mental disorders, fear of life or distorted perceptions.

We remember those who have gone before us, who have left an imprint on our hearts. We hold in our hearts those who this day will bury their loved ones.

Jesus, Son of Mary, you call us to follow in your footsteps, to love and serve in a world that often seems void of your presence. We ask that you shower us with the gifts of wisdom, strength and compassion. As we leave this space and time, keep us ever mindful of the suffering you endured for our salvation.

Mary, mother of Jesus, you inspire us to bring others the comfort, hope and healing that you have secured for us. You remind us always of the great truth that - no matter how vast our brokenness - love will prevail. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 23:34

<sup>2</sup> John 19:25