

## Maryknoll Stations of the Cross

### **The First Station: Jesus is condemned to die.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus, the prisoner, stands defenseless before the power of the Roman Empire that brutally suppresses any and all challenges to its absolute rule and authority. Pontius Pilate is determined to keep the peace at all cost, no matter how many innocent lives he has to sacrifice. In vain he tries to wash his hands of bloodguilt, yet today, 2,000 years later, Christians around the world solemnly announce: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, you still stand condemned to death in the countless prisons around the world, where the guilty and the innocent both suffer. People are still unjustly judged, condemned and imprisoned by corrupt officials. Help us work to abolish the death penalty and to work for the dignity and sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death. Until we reform our justice system, empower us to fulfill your words: "I was in prison, and you visited me."

### **The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus, the carpenter, bears the weight of the wood, once the source of his livelihood; now it is the means of his execution. Already weak from being tortured, he carries the symbol of public shame and humiliation through the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Before him goes the sign announcing both his identity and offense: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, the cross is the price you willingly pay for living your truth: all people are precious sons and daughters of God, the Gentile no less than the Jew, the slave no less than the free, women no less than men, sinners no less than the righteous. Help us to follow you by living your Gospel in our lives, no matter what reaction or opposition we might face. Help us be true disciples by taking up our cross daily to follow you for the sake of all our brothers and sisters, who do not yet know your love, mercy and forgiveness.

### **The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground not only under the weight of the cross, but also from the cruel jeers of the spectators and the taunts of the Romans. And where are his disciples? His followers? Those he healed? The guards, the chief priests and the people are impatient. They will not allow Jesus to rest, even for a moment. They kick, punch and drag him back up to his feet. The Prince of Peace, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, is forced to walk to his death along a hostile way strewn with hatred, contempt, jealousy and lies.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, good and honest people are still suffering today for trying to do what is right. They courageously speak out against injustice. Some will lose their jobs, others their reputations, and others their freedom or even their lives. Whether dangerous working conditions, polluted air, contaminated water, or inequality in how we treat one another, these are all crimes that cry out to heaven. By your Passion give us the will to stand with the lost, the loneliest, and the least of our brothers and sisters.

### **The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

No words can describe the silent gaze that passed between mother and son, as Mary sees Jesus on his way to his crucifixion and death. Did her "Yes" to the angel Gabriel in Nazareth lead to this? If she had known, would she still have consented to be mother of the Messiah? Seeing the pain in his mother's eyes was perhaps the hardest suffering for him to bear. Each would have gladly changed places with the other. Watching a loved one suffer is often harder than what we suffer ourselves.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, by this encounter with your mother on your way to Calvary, you consecrated the millions of mothers who must watch helplessly as their children die: many from war and violence, many from hunger, and many from preventable diseases. Give us the strength of Mary to stay with our loved ones when they are in pain or are dying, and to let suffering parents know they are not alone.

### **The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus cannot go on. Worried he may die too soon, without enduring the public humiliation and agony of crucifixion, the Romans grab a bystander, Simon of Cyrene, and force him to pick up the cross and follow Jesus. Minding his own business, perhaps Simon only stopped out of curiosity to see what all the excitement was about. However reluctantly, by picking up the cross and following, Simon became the very definition of discipleship.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, sometimes we too are embarrassed to be seen or be associated with you, when you appear poor, homeless, abandoned or just unpopular. Give us the courage to help others with their burdens and crosses, especially when we don't feel like getting involved. We see the plight of refugees and immigrants in our land and we want to turn away or ignore them, afraid to be seen defending or helping them. Help us to help others, especially those who stand alone against the angry mob.

### **The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

His face covered in blood, dirt and sweat, Jesus can barely see. Then from out of the crowd, one courageous woman ignores the angry mob and forces her way to the condemned man. She takes off her veil and wipes his face. For her bravery in showing mercy to a man marked for death, the Lord of Mercy bestows this singular favor: the imprint of the Holy Face. The name Veronica comes from the Greek for "true image." By acts of mercy we reveal the divine image in which all people are created.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, too often we go along with the crowd. We are afraid to speak out, much less to stand out. Veronica symbolizes all brave women around the world, especially those who boldly stand up for justice, truth and freedom, despite threats to their safety, lives or families. We see Veronica in the brave witness of Dorothy Day, Rosa Parks and Malala Yousafzai. May their example inspire us all to speak out, even when it is unpopular to do so, or even if we have to stand alone.

### **The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Even with Simon's help, Jesus cannot maintain his balance and once again he falls down face-first onto the rough and dirty cobblestone. As he grows weaker, this unexpected interruption in his public execution only infuriates the mob more, and their angry shouts increase. Resigned to the possibility Jesus may die before he can be crucified, this time the soldiers let him be. To everyone's surprise and amazement, he struggles back up to his feet and, with great determination, continues along the way.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, so many people today struggle with various kinds of addictions, bad habits, setbacks, repeated failure and relapses. Falling down again is not the problem; staying down is. By getting up again after your second fall, you serve as an example and inspiration to all who struggle with their persistent faults and weaknesses. We pray not only for people with addictions, but also for everyone in recovery and Twelve-Step Programs and for their families as well.

### **The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus, even on his way to his death, takes time to comfort the women of Jerusalem. They weep for him, who risked his reputation and life defending them. He tells them not to weep for him, but rather for themselves and for their children, saying, "If this is what happens when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" We must not let the passing of time deaden the power of Jesus' words or the meaning of his message and life in our world.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, women around the world still suffer under oppressive laws and customs. We pray that all your followers might join in the struggle to safeguard the health and dignity of women everywhere, especially people of color. We pray also for all victims of human trafficking, and for their safety and deliverance. In addition, we pray for women who have faced or are facing unexpected pregnancies. Give them courage to make the right choice, and grant merciful healing to all those who do not.

### **The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Onlookers watch, this time in stunned silence, as Jesus falls yet again. They resign themselves to the likely disappointment of being denied the bloody spectacle of watching this famous imposter crucified. But just when the crowd starts to break up and go home, amazed shouts spread the news: he's getting up again! They marvel at his motivation. Why bother getting up, only to be crucified a few minutes later?

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, we too face repeated failures and frustrations. Sometimes it's our own fault; other times it's because of factors beyond our control. In either case, your Third Fall inspires us, not only to get up and try again, but also to do so without anger, resentment or bitterness. We pray for those who struggle and fail to get out of poverty, to have a baby, to find a better job or nicer home. Many people face relapses of serious illness or are in unhealthy relationships or marriages. We pray they find the strength and courage to overcome their present situation.

### **The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus arrives at Golgotha, the hill of public execution outside the walls of Jerusalem. To add to his humiliation, soldiers strip away his outer garments, leaving him almost naked before the world. Being condemned to death, Jesus must forfeit everything he owns to compensate the soldiers for their troubles. They pass the time by casting lots to see who will get his robe of homespun cloth, woven in one piece. Jesus' crucifixion, like that of thousands before him and countless others after him, serves as a warning to any who would dare challenge the authority of Rome.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, grant us a spirit of detachment and stewardship with our material goods. Everything we have will one day go to someone else. Let us give freely now, not just of our possessions, but also of our time, in order to make life more bearable for all those who "labor and find life burdensome." In this way we pay you the greatest worship: following your example.

### **The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Hands that once blessed, touched, and healed are pierced with iron nails. Feet that walked the way of peace and holiness are securely attached to the crude wooden post. Jesus predicted that, if he is lifted up from the earth, he would draw all people to himself. Everyone who looks up at Jesus on the cross sees in his crucified body the human condition. We stand before this mystery: Jesus accomplished his greatest work when he could move neither his hands nor his feet. Yes, nails fastened Jesus to the Cross; but his love for us kept him there.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, how many people today are nailed to the cross of poverty, prejudice or indifference? Elderly people become increasingly abandoned and invisible. People with disabilities or chronic illness are often ignored or looked upon as burdens. Perhaps the worse cross of all is to be unwanted, unappreciated and unloved. Open our eyes and ears, Lord, to recognize you in everyone we meet, especially the least, the lonely and the lost.

### **The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Unable to move, unable to talk, and finally, unable to breathe, Jesus finally succumbs to the hours of torture, agony and suffering. Bowing his head, he breathes out his spirit upon the world — and dies.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, by dying in this most shameful and humiliating way, you consecrated human life from beginning to end and proved that not even death can separate us from the love of God. It was not God but we, who demanded such violent proof that God loves us unconditionally. Give us the strength and grace to consecrate our lives and our deaths to you. Be with all those at this very moment who breathe their last and let them know you are with them to receive their souls.

### **The Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Normally the body of a crucified criminal would be left on the cross to rot and become food for wild animals. Above all, this gruesome scene served as a warning that a similar fate awaited all who defy Roman rule. But the Passover Sabbath was fast approaching and, out of deference to Jewish custom, the Romans allow his few remaining disciples to come and take his body down before sunset. In keeping with Roman law, when a criminal's body is to be taken down prematurely, a soldier must verify the death by piercing the heart of the crucified man. In the end, only some loyal women, one disciple and a few followers were on hand to witness this greatest act of love and mercy.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, around the world today countless people die alone and are forgotten. Sometimes their families are too ashamed; other times it is just too dangerous. Sometimes nobody knows who or where these people are. By your descent from the cross, Lord, at the moment of death let everyone be received into your loving arms and those of your mother.

### **The Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb.**

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**Reader:**

Jesus must be buried before the Sabbath begins. Born in a stable, he who had no place to lay his head in life must rely on others even in death. Joseph of Arimathea offers his new tomb to receive the lifeless body of his Master. There is no time to prepare the body for burial. That will have to wait. The disciples block the entrance to the tomb with a stone. The chief priests seal it. Roman soldiers stand guard. There is nothing more to do, but mourn and wait.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, it is you we mourn and bury today in the millions of unmarked graves around the world, where the bodies of the poor, the outcast and the outlaw are discarded and forgotten. Until that Day when all the dead rise to everlasting life, Lord, let us mourn with those who mourn, weep with those who weep, and pray for the repose of the souls of all the dead, especially those who have no one to pray for them.

