

# PRAYING THE STATIONS of MERCY

WITH POPE FRANCIS

## Introduction

Each time we go to Mass, we find ourselves praying for mercy. “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.” Again in the *Gloria*, we repeat this familiar appeal: “You are seated at the right hand of the Father: *have mercy on us*” (italics mine). And later again, we return to this theme: “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us*” (italics mine). What's going on here?

We do not pray for mercy because we believe that God has failed to be merciful to us already. We know that God has a tender and merciful heart. We do not pray for mercy because we believe that, by doing so, we can change God from being angry at us for our sins to being kind. The wonder of our faith is that, while we are still sinners, God watches as the father did for his prodigal son, watches for us to come home to his loving arms. No; we pray for mercy because in our prayer we open our hearts to receive this

amazing gift, this powerful and life-changing and generous gift of God's endless mercy.

*We must receive God's mercy.* That's the secret to the Stations of the Cross. We retell this story of Jesus' self-giving love in order to open our hearts to what is already given to us: mercy. We do not earn it; we don't even deserve it; but we have it. That's the miracle.

As we reflect and pray, bear in mind that even though this is a story about Jesus' way of the cross, it is also a story about us. May these moments of prayer open our eyes to see this grace in our lives. May we be moved to recognize those who are being crucified in our society today- by hate, prejudice, illness, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. May we leave here determined to have the same mercy on all others that God has on us.

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## Opening Prayer

*(As the ministers enter the sanctuary; all rise. Facing the cross, all pray together.)*

**All:** + In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**All:** Loving Jesus,  
you took up your cross  
in order to have mercy on us.  
You walked the way to your death  
in order to give us the freedom of new life.  
We willingly take up our own crosses today  
and follow you on your journey,  
walking with you on this pathway of love.  
Stir up within us the desire to forgive our enemies,  
to love our friends more deeply,  
and to have mercy on others  
in the same way you have mercy on us.

**All:** Dear Mary, Mother of Mercy,  
be our example of courage now  
as we face this way of the cross.  
Pray for us as we journey here  
that our lives might be filled with grace.

**All:** Give us clean hearts, Holy Spirit,  
and kindle within us the fire of your love.  
Let us be thankful for the merciful love of Christ  
that led him to embrace the cross.  
And lead us now  
to the loving arms of God our Father,  
with whom we hope to live forever and ever. Amen.

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## The First Station

### JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

*Leader:* The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross,  
you have redeemed the world.

*Leader:* Pilate spoke to them again,  
'Then what do you wish me to do  
with the man you call the King of the Jews?'  
They shouted back,  
'Crucify him!'  
Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd,  
released Barabbas for them;  
and after flogging Jesus,  
he handed him over to be crucified.  
(Mark 15:12-13, 15).

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*Lector 1:* Jesus had just celebrated Passover  
with his closest friends.

In the warm intimacy of their shared meal,  
Jesus had washed their feet,  
fed them with the bread of life,  
and loved them with mercy and tenderness.  
But their joy turned to bitter disappointment  
when he was betrayed, arrested, and condemned.

How could Judas have led the soldiers to Jesus?

How could he have used that fateful kiss,  
a sign of love, to betray Jesus?

How could Judas have had no mercy on Jesus,  
his beloved friend?

We too betray Jesus when we put ourselves first,  
allowing others to fend for themselves.

We abandon him when we ignore the poor,  
choosing instead

to feed, clothe, and house ourselves first  
while the poor sit at our gates suffering.

We condemn others like Judas did Jesus  
when we follow the pathway of selfishness and sin  
rather than self- giving love.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 2:** In the words of Pope Francis  
from his homily given at daily Mass  
in the Casa Sancta Marta on February 15, 2015

**Lector 2:** The way of the church  
is not to condemn anyone for eternity  
but to pour out the balm of God's mercy  
on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart.  
We in the church must leave behind her four walls  
and go out in search of those who are distant,  
those who are on the periphery of life.  
We must adopt fully God's own approach,  
which is that of mercy.  
The church must feel the impetus  
to become like Jesus for all of humanity.

**Leader:** Jesus,  
like your disciples, we are weak in faith.  
May your grace empower us  
to be like you in our daily lives.  
May we empty ourselves of selfishness  
so that we may be filled with mercy for others,  
especially those who suffer most.  
Move our hearts, we pray,  
to engage in the works of mercy  
that can heal the world.

**All:** Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

At the cross her station keeping,  
stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
near her Son until the end.

## The Second Station

### JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

*Leader:*     **The Second Station: Jesus takes us his cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.**

*All:*            **Because by your holy cross,  
                          you have redeemed the world.**

*Leader:*     **After mocking Jesus,  
                          they stripped him of the purple cloak  
and put his own clothes on him.  
Then they led him out to crucify him  
(Mark 15:20).**

*Lector 3:* The soldiers who now mocked and humiliated Jesus treated him as less than human.

To them, he was something to be tossed about, laughed at, and spit upon.

Isaiah had written about the Servant of the Lord, saying he would be despised, a man of sorrows, a lamb being led to slaughter.

*Lector 3:* After Jesus' death, many of his followers were also condemned, and some were imprisoned or killed.

In our own day, men and women speak up for justice in the face of governments or corporations who seek only profit

while destroying the environment or using people as pawns.

Those who seek such justice for the poor are often condemned, mocked, and imprisoned; some are killed in the streets or at the altar.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 4:* In the words of Pope Francis  
from his Apostolic visit to Rio de Janeiro  
for World Youth Day in 2013

*Lector 4:* The cross of Christ invites us also  
to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love,  
teaching us always to look upon others  
with mercy and tenderness.

This is especially true of those who suffer,  
those who need help and are vulnerable,  
those who are waiting for us to do something,  
to take a concrete action on their behalf.

No one can think of the cross without giving  
something of him or herself to Christ.

**Leader:** Jesus,  
give us the courage to take your place in this trial,  
to take up our own cross  
and follow in your footsteps.  
May we be a voice for the poor and oppressed.  
May we offer our lives  
for the sake of peace and justice.  
We open our hearts to receive your grace,  
the grace that empowers us  
to love with tenderness  
in the face of violence and hatred.  
May that grace be all we need  
to become your hands and voice in today's world.

### ***Stabat Mater***

Through her heart his sorrow sharing,  
all his bitter anguish bearing,  
now at length the sword has passed.

## The Third Station

### JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

*Leader:* The Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross,  
you have redeemed the world.

*Leader:* He has borne our infirmities  
and carried our diseases  
yet we accounted him stricken,  
struck down by God and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us  
whole" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

*Lector 5:* Many people in the crowds around Jesus  
may have turned their back on his suffering.  
Some may have watched with horror  
but did not step forward.  
But from that crowd did come forth  
someone to help Jesus up,  
to touch him with mercy and tenderness.  
Who among us has not fallen,  
under the weight of the cross we are given to carry?  
Some days the burden may be too much for us,  
the call to self-giving love may be only a distant cry,  
or we simply fold  
beneath the work, pain, or loneliness of life.  
And sometimes we fall  
beneath the weight of our own sins.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 6:* In the words of Pope Francis  
on his parish visit as Bishop of Rome  
to the Roman Parish of  
*Saint Mary, Mother of the Redeemer*

*Lector 6:* Christians can't fool Jesus,  
acting like saints in church  
but living like pagans the rest of the week.  
Jesus knows what is in our hearts.  
He knows we are sinners  
but we need not fear his wrath or judgment.  
Jesus looks upon us only with mercy and tenderness.  
We too, therefore,  
must go to people with the same love.  
With the caress that Jesus taught us,  
we go to those whose burdens weigh them down.

**Leader:** Jesus,  
let us turn our hearts to you now  
and likewise look with love  
upon ourselves and those around us.  
Give us the strength to get up  
from our sinfulness and the burdens of life  
and move onward,  
knowing you walk with us in all things.

**All:** Amen.

## Stabat Mater

O how sad and sore distressed  
was that Mother, highly blest,  
of the sole-begotten One.

## The Fourth Station

### JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

**Leader:** The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross,  
you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** *Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary,  
“This child is destined  
for the falling and the rising of many in Israel,  
and to be a sign that will be opposed  
so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed -  
and a sword will pierce your own soul too”  
His mother treasured all these things in her heart  
(Luke 2:34-35, 51).*

*Lector 7:* Mary's faithfulness to Jesus  
is the model for our own lives.  
It's one thing to accompany people  
whose lives are going along smoothly  
and who never face an obstacle.  
But when times get tough,  
staying with them as Mary did with Jesus  
is more difficult to do.  
We are called to accompany each other  
in good times and in bad,  
in times of sickness and in times of good health.  
When our neighbors get divorced,  
fall into hard financial situations,  
or have a child who is delinquent-  
those are the times they most need our mercy.  
Mary taught Jesus tenderness and mercy,  
and she teaches us all  
that when we remain with each other  
we also remain with Christ.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 8:* In the words of Pope Francis  
from his homily  
on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord  
offered in the Basilica of St. Peter, Rome

*Lector 8:* The church is like a mother to us,  
one who tenderly holds Jesus  
and gives him to us with love.  
Mary and Jesus remained together  
from the time of his conception  
to his birth in Bethlehem,  
to his first public ministry at Cana,  
and throughout his life all the way to the cross.  
Mary is the first disciple of Jesus,  
and now she opens the pathway for us  
to follow Jesus as disciples too.

**Leader:** O dear Mary,  
Mother of Mercy,  
send your blessing upon us now  
and draw us closer to your Son.  
May we stand with each other  
at times of pain, suffering and violence  
just as you stood with Jesus.  
Pray for us, O dear Mother Mary,  
that we may always be in solidarity  
with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**All:** Amen.

## Stabat Mater

Christ above in torment hangs,  
she beneath beholds the pangs  
of her dying glorious Son.

## The Fifth Station

# JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON OF CYRENE TO CARRY HIS CROSS

*Leader:*     **The Fifth Station:**  
Jesus is helped to carry his cross by Simon of Cyrene.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:*           **Because by your holy cross,  
                          you have redeemed the world.**

*Leader:*     **As they led Jesus away,  
                  they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene,  
who was coming from the country,  
                  and they laid the cross on him,  
and made him carry it behind Jesus.  
(Luke 23:26).**

*Lector 9:* It seems likely  
that this man who carried Jesus' cross  
was very surprised to be chosen from the crowd.  
Our encounters with Christ are often unexpected.  
We have to look closely to see him sometimes,  
but lo! there he is  
in that homeless man on the corner.  
There is Christ in that woman with cancer  
who lives down the block  
and carries her cross alone.  
There he is again in the neighbor  
who is caring at home for her dying mother,  
autistic son, or ailing spouse.  
It's easy to look right past Christ when we see him,  
especially when he is suffering  
and burdened by the crosses of life.  
Let us be motivated by love to step forward willingly,  
to risk ridicule or danger to ourselves,  
and to reach out to our sisters and brothers.  
When we do that, we are reaching out to Christ.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 10:** In the words of Pope Francis  
in his homily at daily Mass  
offered at the Casa Sancta Marta

One cannot really understand who Christ is  
until he or she takes up the cross  
as Simon of Cyrene did.

Christ himself prepares us to be the one  
who steps forth to help carry the crosses of others.

This is the mystery of dying and rising  
and it is the pathway to a true Christian life.

*Leader:* Lord Jesus,  
give us hearts full of love  
to pick up and carry the crosses of others.  
Let us not be blind to the pain  
with which some people live;  
but let us pickup their crosses  
and carry them with the joyful knowledge  
that, in doing so, we carry it for Christ.

*All:* Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

Is there one who would not weep,  
whelmed in miseries so deep,  
Christ dear Mother to behold?

## The Sixth Station

### VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

*Leader:* The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross,  
you have redeemed the world.

*Leader:* [Jesus] went on through cities and villages,  
proclaiming  
and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.  
The twelve were with him,  
as well as some women  
who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities:  
Mary, called Magdalene,  
from whom seven demons had gone out,  
and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza,  
and Susanna, and many others,  
who provided for them out of their resources.  
(Luke 8:1-3).

*Lector 11:* Jesus had a close relationship with many women.  
He dined in their homes.  
He allowed them to pay for his ministry,  
as we just heard in this passage from Luke.  
Mary and the other women  
stood with him at the foot of the cross  
even after the men had run off to hide.  
And it was to Mary Magdalene  
that Jesus made his first appearance  
after his resurrection.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 12:** In the words of Pope Francis  
From the Address given  
at the General Audience of January 25, 2014  
Held in the Pope Saint Paul the Sixth Audience Hall

**Lector 12:** Women have a special sensitivity  
toward society's weak.  
Like Veronica, their ministry is often  
to care for the sick  
reach out to the poor,  
and lead prayer groups for other parishioners.  
The gift of tenderness and love  
is especially important today,  
and women have a crucial role  
in helping build up the church.  
Likewise, their presence in the home is essential  
as they pass on both life and faith;  
their role in the family is irreplaceable.

**Leader:** Lord, Jesus,  
the proclamation of your word in today's world  
is largely sustained by women  
just as it was  
during the time of your ministry in Palestine.  
Protect today's women  
as witnesses of your love and tenderness.  
May they be our teachers  
as we all learn how  
to live a full life in your presence.

**All:** Amen.

## Stabat Mater

Can the human heart refrain  
from partaking in her pain,  
in that Mother's pain untold?

## The Seventh Station

### JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

*Leader:* The Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

*Leader:* Jesus went with them  
to a place called Gethsemane...  
He took with him Peter  
and the two sons of Zebedee,  
and began to be grieved and agitated.  
Then he said to them:  
“I am deeply grieved, even to death;  
remain here and stay awake with me:...”  
[He] prayed: “My Father, if it is possible,  
let this cup pass from me;  
yet not what I want but what you want”  
(Matthew 26:36-39).

**Lector 13:** Jesus prayed throughout the night  
that he might be relieved of this suffering.  
He wanted to be freed from carrying his cross!  
And yet, in the end,  
because of his relationship to his Father,  
he knew he would do what needed to be done.  
The text of Luke tells us  
that just at the moment of this prayer,  
an angel came to minister to him  
with tenderness and love.  
The human heart is filled with longing.  
We long to be free of our illness,  
our financial stress,  
our painful relationships with family members,  
or the “thorn in the flesh”  
that is the pain of our own repeated sinfulness.  
But in the end, the human heart truly longs  
only for the presence of God,  
even if that means  
we must carry our cross as Jesus did.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 14:** In the words of Pope Francis  
on his parish visit as Bishop of Rome  
to the Roman Parish  
of Saint Mary, Queen of Peace

**Lector 14:** The hallmark of the Christian life  
is not whether or not you will fall.  
We all fall. We're all sinners.  
The hallmark is whether,  
after falling  
you have the humility and courage  
to get up again.  
We get up with the grace of God;  
this is our witness.  
“Yes, I am a sinner, I did wrong  
but I go ahead because the Lord is with me.”

*Leader:* Help us to get up  
when we have fallen,  
O Lord of all grace.  
Help us believe that you love us  
even while we lay on the ground,  
struck down by sin and failure.  
Take our hand and raise us up with you  
for you live now in love forever.

*All:* Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

O our Mother, fount of love,  
touch my spirit from above;  
help us love as you have done.

## The Eighth Station

### JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

*Leader:*     **The Eighth Station:**  
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:*           **Because by your holy cross,**  
                    **you have redeemed the world.**

*Leader:*     **A great number of the people followed Jesus,**  
                    **and among them were women**  
**who were beating their breasts**  
                    **and wailing for him.**  
**But Jesus turned to them and said,**  
                    **“Daughters of Jerusalem,**  
                    **do not weep for me,**  
                    **but weep for yourselves and for your children”**  
**(Luke 23:27-28).**

**Lector 15:** These women who followed Jesus  
showed great courage.  
They risked being named among his followers,  
a risk that caused Peter,  
only a few hours before this,  
to deny that he knew Jesus.  
They risked the ridicule of townspeople and soldiers.  
But they seemed to understand the larger risk,  
which is in abandoning Jesus.  
They loved him so much  
that they simply could not walk away.  
They could not wash their hands as Pilate had done.  
And where are we in this regard?  
Following Jesus means being the big one,  
forgiving our enemies, sharing our cloak,  
tending the sick, and defending sinners  
with mercy and tenderness.  
These were all the actions of Jesus.  
If we are his followers,  
then we will not be able to turn our face away  
from violence, abuse, loneliness, abortion, or injustice.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 16:** In the words of Pope Francis  
from **The Face of Mercy**,  
the 2015 Bull of Induction  
Announcing the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

**Lector 16:** Jesus reveals to us that God is our Father,  
a Father who will never give up on us  
until he has forgiven our wrongs  
and offered us his mercy and compassion.  
God is full of joy when we return to him,  
ready with open arms to embrace us  
and watching even now for us to trust him.  
When he passed by Matthew's tax collecting office,  
Jesus looked at Matthew as no one else had,  
for he looked at Matthew with mercy.  
He forgave the sins of that man with merciful love,  
and he treats us the same way.

**Leader:** Fill our hearts, O God,  
with mercy and tender compassion.  
With your grace,  
empower us to be like these women  
standing with Jesus Christ through thick and thin.  
Give us the insight  
to see where the world needs healing,  
and then give us the courage to reach out.  
We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

Make me feel as you have felt;  
make my soul to glow and melt  
with the love of Christ my Lord.

## The Ninth Station

### JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

*Leader:*     **The Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.**

*All:*           **Because by your holy cross,  
                          you have redeemed the world.**

*Leader:*     **And now I am no longer in the world,  
                          but they are in the world,  
and I am coming to you.  
Holy Father, protect them in your name  
that you have given me,  
so that they may be one,  
                          as we are one.  
(John 17:11).**

**Lector 17:** These words of Jesus were spoken  
before he began his way of the cross.  
He was assuring his disciples that God loves them  
with the same tender mercy and love  
that Jesus had shown them.  
In God, regardless of how many times we fall,  
we are one family, one community.  
We offer each other  
the tender mercy that Jesus shows to us.  
Let us forgive those among us who have fallen-  
and we know that includes us all.  
We hold no law against each other,  
and we place no obstacle before anyone  
who wishes to come to Christ.  
We are one as Jesus and the Father are one.  
We are a church of mercy  
especially toward those who fall.  
Our mission is to help people encounter the Lord  
and open their hearts to him.

Let us now open our own hearts to Christ  
and allow him to enter our lives  
and to gaze upon us  
with the love he desires for each of us.  
As Pope Francis has said,  
we get many offers from the world around us,  
but let's accept God's offer instead,  
a caress of love.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 18:** In the words of Pope Francis  
From an Address to the Students  
of the Jesuit Schools of Italy And Albania  
given in 2013 in  
the Pope Saint Paul the Sixth Audience Hall

**Lector 18:** We must learn to be on a journey of faith  
that involves taking the time  
to savor God's presence  
but not stopping so long that we miss our goal.  
There will be dark days on this journey,  
days when we fall,  
even days when we fail.  
But don't be afraid of failure;  
get up right away and keep moving forward.  
We cannot make this journey alone  
so we walk together in community  
with friends,  
with those who love us,  
and with those who help us along the way.

**Leader:** We open our hearts to you here today, Jesus,  
and we welcome you into our daily lives.  
Thank you for loving us  
even when we're selfish and strong willed,  
even when we do not pray as we should  
or when we doubt your presence.  
Create in us a clean heart, O Lord,  
and renew your Spirit within us.

**All:** Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

Holy Mother! pierce me through,  
in my heart each wound renew  
of my Savior crucified.

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## The Tenth Station

### JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

*Leader:*      The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

*Leader:*      They divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing  
                         they cast lots.  
(Psalm 22: 18 ).

*Lector 19:* This violation of Jesus' human dignity  
foreshadows the inhumane ways  
we have treated others throughout the world.  
Instead of offering the poor comfort, food, and homes,  
we continue to consume more than our share,  
leaving only scraps for the hungry.  
Instead of defending women and children,  
we allow them to live in poverty,  
even in wealthy nations.  
Instead of welcoming  
the immigrant, refugee, and stranger,  
we ban them and accuse them  
of seeking what we ourselves take for granted.  
When we behave like this,  
we strip Jesus of his dignity.  
Each of the least ones among us  
bears the face of Christ.  
Whatever we do to one of them,  
to any of them,  
we do to Christ himself.

When the prodigal son returned home,  
the first act of his waiting father  
was to dress him in clean and respectable clothing.

*“Quickly, bring out a robe -*

*the best one -*

*and put it on him;” the father said.*

May our consciences be awakened  
as we travel this way of the cross  
so that we will be among those  
who bring peace to the world  
and who overcome evil with good.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 20:* In the words of Pope Francis  
from the Apostolic Exhortation: The Joy of the Gospel  
promulgated in Rome in 2014

*Lector 20:* How good it feels to come back to Christ  
whenever we are lost!  
God does not grow weary in forgiving us;  
we are the ones who tire of asking for mercy.  
Christ teaches us  
to forgive each other seventy times seven times  
but he has forgiven us much more often!  
No one can strip us of the dignity  
bestowed upon us  
by this boundless and unfailing love:  
With a tenderness that never disappoints,  
we can start anew once again.

*Leader:* Lord,  
we return to you now with all our hearts.  
Stripped of your dignity  
and humiliated on your way of the cross,  
you now assure us that we will never lose your love.  
May the garment of our baptism  
never be stripped from us  
by arrogance, indifference to you, or selfishness.

*All:* Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

Let me share with you his pain,  
who for all my sins was slain,  
who for me in torments died.

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## The Eleventh Station

### JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

*Leader:*     **The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.**

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

*Leader:*     ***There they crucified him,  
                          and with him two others,  
one on either side,  
                          with Jesus between them.***  
**(John 19:18).**

*Lector 21:* Jesus was given the death penalty.

For Jesus,

not even this final element of torture and pain  
could stop him from loving us.

His thoughts were with

the two men crucified beside him.

Were they also innocent?

Had society failed

to have mercy and tenderness on these men?

When one of them turned to Jesus to ask for mercy,

Jesus' response was stunning.

Can Jesus' example here be a model for us?

Can we learn to have mercy,

to forgive even our enemies?

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 22:* In the words of Pope Francis  
from a Letter to the President of the  
International Commission against the Death Penalty  
written in 2015

*Lector 22:* The death penalty cannot be justified today  
no matter how serious the crime committed.  
Capital punishment fosters vengeance,  
it allows victims to get revenge  
but it does not lead them to forgive their enemies.  
This cannot be justified by Christians.  
Furthermore, the death penalty is wrong  
because of the potential for errors in the courts  
which often come to light many years later.  
And beyond even that,  
there is no humane way  
to kill another human being.

*Leader:* O God,  
you are the father of mercy.  
Open our hearts to mercy  
even on those who seem most heinous to us.  
Give us the insight  
to see your will for the human family,  
and we shall not kill one another for any reason.  
Make us people of mercy;  
we pray through Christ, our Lord.

*All:* Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

Let me mingle all my tears  
mourning him through all these years,  
all the days that I may live.

## The Twelfth Station

### JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

*Leader:* The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

*Leader:* It was now about noon,  
and darkness came over the whole land  
until three in the afternoon,  
while the sun's light failed;  
and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.  
Then Jesus,  
crying with a loud voice, said,  
“Father,  
into your hands I commend my spirit”  
Having said this,  
Jesus breathed his last.  
(Luke 23:44-46).

*Lector 23:* This final prayer of Jesus  
now becomes the prayer on our own lips  
as we dedicate ourselves anew to being his disciples.  
We place ourselves  
in the tender and loving hands of God.  
“I commend my spirit.”  
Let us now commend our own spirits to God.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 24:** In the words of Pope Francis  
from his homily given at daily Mass  
in the Casa Sancta Marta on March 6, 2014

**Lector 24:** We Christians must follow the pathway  
set for us by Jesus.  
We must accept our cross and carry it  
even when that means denying ourselves.  
This is the style of the Christian  
because it is the style of Jesus,  
and it requires of us  
a strong humility a desire to serve,  
and self-giving love.  
*“If the grain of wheat does not die,”*  
the Scriptures tell us,  
*“it cannot bear fruit”*

**Leader:** By your death,  
you teach us to embrace death  
and so to live a full life.  
May we have  
solidarity with those who suffer,  
mercy toward our enemies,  
and generosity to the poor.  
We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

### *Stabat Mater*

By the Cross with you to stay,  
there with you to weep and pray,  
is all I ask of you to give.  
Virgin of all virgins blest!  
Listen to my fond request:  
let me share your grief divine.  
Help me, with my last breath,  
in my body bear the death  
of that dying Son of yours.

## The Thirteenth Station

### JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

*Leader:*     **The Thirteenth Station:  
Jesus is taken down from the cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.**

*All:*         **Because by your holy cross,  
                  you have redeemed the world.**

*Leader:*     **Now when the centurion and those with him,  
                  who were keeping watch over Jesus,  
saw the earthquake and what took place [when died],  
they were terrified and said,  
                  'Truly this man was God's Son!'  
Many women were also there, looking from a distance;  
they had followed Jesus from Galilee  
                  and had provided for him.  
Among them were Mary Magdalene,  
                  and Mary the mother of James and Joseph,  
and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. (Mt. 27:54-56).**

*Lector 25:* Here are those women again,  
    constantly at Jesus' side,  
even as he suffered and finally died on the cross.  
They are waiting to care for his body now.  
According to custom,  
    Jesus will be anointed and laid in a tomb.  
But for the moment,  
    they simply await that moment  
when Jesus will be removed  
    from the shackles of the cross  
and placed in the arms of his mother, Mary.  
We are also called by this holy moment  
    to care for the body of Christ,  
but today that body takes the form  
    of the homeless you see on the streets.  
When you tend to their needs,  
    you tend to Christ.  
Today, Jesus is found in the sick and dying,  
    in the starving children and the eager immigrant.  
Where do you find Jesus?

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

**Lector 26:** In the words of Pope Francis  
from the homily given at daily Mass  
on June 11, 2015 at the Casa Sancta Marta

**Lector 26:** Let us not forget the cross  
because it is here  
that the logic of "failure" is turned upside down.  
Jesus reminds us all that  
although we can expect trials and rejection,  
in the end we will see triumph.  
The stone rejected by the builders  
becomes the cornerstone.  
The story we tell  
is one that begins with a dream of love.  
It is a true love story.  
It ends up looking like  
a story of failure when Jesus dies,  
but with the great love of God  
Jesus' self-giving love saves us all.

**Leader:** We ask you, Mary,  
to hold us as you held your dear Son  
when he was taken down from the cross.  
With the same tenderness and love,  
pray for us and lead us  
to greater intimacy with Jesus.  
We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

## Stabat Mater

Christ when you shall call me hence,  
be your Mother my defense,  
be your Cross my victory.

## The Fourteenth Station

### JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

*Leader:* The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross,  
you have redeemed the world.

*Leader:* When it was evening, there came  
a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph,  
who was also a disciple of Jesus.  
He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus;  
then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.  
So Joseph took the body  
and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it  
in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.  
He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb  
and went away.  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there,  
sitting opposite the tomb (Matthew 27:57-61).

*Lector 27:* To one without faith,  
this is the end of the story.  
But to us,  
we know it is only the beginning.  
For the moment here,  
let us pause with Jesus in the tomb.  
Think back over the many years of his ministry,  
the many people whom he touched,  
the healing, teaching, and loving  
that were his ministry.  
Rest here in the tomb with Jesus now.  
Easter is only a short time away.

*[Pause for a brief moment of silent prayer]*

*Lector 28:* In the Words of Pope Francis  
from his Easter Homily  
given at Saint Peter's Basilica in 2015

*Lector 28:* Love is stronger than hatred!  
Life conquers death.  
Light chases away the darkness.

*Lector 28:* Jesus has shown us the way to happiness  
and that pathway is humility.  
By our dying and rising  
we Christians become the seed of love in the world.  
Love will grow  
when we live in service of each other  
and when we show the love and tenderness of God.

**Leader:** Thank you, O God of Mercy,  
for this journey of faith  
as we walked the way of the cross.  
May these moments so move our hearts  
that we become agents of your mercy  
and spirit-filled witnesses  
to your everlasting love.  
We pray through Christ, the Lord.

**All:** Amen.

## Stabat Mater

While my body here decays,  
may my soul your goodness praise,  
safe in paradise with you.