

The Way of the Cross 2022

ENCOUNTER WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF THE WORLD

Introduction

This Way of the Cross consists of 14 stations encouraging us to walk the road with Jesus: the prophet, born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth; a pilgrim and preacher of the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Galilee, Judea and the neighbouring regions; accused and condemned to death in Jerusalem.

We accompany Jesus in his final moments on his way to Golgotha.

On this road, Jesus meets many people. Each encounter bears an important message for us today. Many of our contemporaries have to deal with suffering in their everyday life. With Jesus, the condemned and crucified one, let us keep these suffering people in our prayers.

For this Way of the Cross, we invite you to use songs and prayers that you are familiar with.

May Jesus Christ, the Risen One, help you discover God's love in the world!



STATION 1: JESUS IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

Jesus and the “powerful”

Reading

“It was a Friday, the day before Passover, around noon. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king." Then they shouted, "Away with him! Kill him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." So he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified, and they seized him." Jn 19:14-16

Meditation

Jesus meets the powerful people of Jerusalem. He is face to face with the religious and political leaders. He is slandered and accused. The whole machinery is set in motion to condemn him to death. And the galvanized and manipulated population of Jerusalem shouts: Crucify him!

Jesus allows this to happen. His reaction is surprising and disturbing.

He could have fled and left the city of Jerusalem in secret. He could have let Peter defend him with the sword in the garden of Gethsemane. He could have argued before the religious leaders. He could have persuaded Pilate by performing a miracle to convince him. But he chose to react differently.

Jesus renounces the use of his power and is ready to assume it. He opts for powerlessness. Although he can use power, he also chooses not to use it. The fact that he can use it is not automatically a reason to do so.¹

Indeed, once power is disconnected from faith and love, Jesus does not use it. Jesus faced every temptation related to power, power and domination from the very beginning of his public life in the desert.

Jesus has a choice. He keeps his freedom by living powerlessness. He remains faithful to the trust he has in God, his Father.

¹ Reflexion of Jacques Ellul, in : F. Rognon « La théologie verte de Jacques Ellul », 2021, pp.105-106

Pilate has no choice. He must show his power by condemning Jesus to death, or he loses his credibility, influence and power.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, your response challenges us about the way we use power and authority. May we find freedom and liberation in you.

Let us Pray especially for all the victims of armed violence in many countries of the world. (Mention these countries !)



STATION 2: THE SOLDIERS LOAD JESUS WITH THE CROSS

Jesus and the soldiers

Reading

"Jesus, carrying his Cross, went out in the direction of the place called the Skull, or Calvary, in Hebrew, Golgotha. Jn 19:17

Meditation

Things changed; everything changes. A few days earlier, Jesus was still celebrated as a king, as the saviour of Israel. And now Jesus is handed over to the soldiers to be tortured, scourged, maltreated and crucified.

As for the soldiers, they carry out the order without questioning whether it is just or unjust. They obey blindly. Driven by instincts and impulses of violence, cruelty and malice, they take pleasure in doing evil. These soldiers put a heavy wooden cross on Jesus and force him to carry it to Golgotha, where he will be crucified.

In ancient times, crucifixion was a terrible punishment. As symbol of malediction, it was reserved for certain groups of people. Slaves, robbers, thieves, murderers or traitors were crucified. And Jesus is considered one of them. What contempt for Jesus, who did good to all.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, forgive the violence we inflict on others.



STATION 3: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Jesus and the crowd

Reading

"He had neither appearance nor presence to attract our attention. Despised and abandoned by all, a man of sorrows, like a leper from whom they turn away." Is 53:3

Meditation

Shoved and rejected by the crowd, subjected to scorn, deafening shouts, screams and commotion, Jesus stumbles and falls under the weight of the Cross.

This is the same crowd that carried palm branches and shouted just days before: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Jesus recognizes them. He is dismayed and upset.

One day, people are friendly and enthusiastic, and another day, they allow themselves to be manipulated and change their minds and behaviour. They even allow that innocent people are maltreated, shunned and despised.

Jesus falls under the weight, the weight of misunderstanding, disillusionment and disappointment.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, thousands and thousands of migrants today suffer ordeals in their daily lives. Open our eyes, open our arms, that we may commit ourselves with perseverance to their well-being.



STATION 4: JESUS MEETS MARY, HIS MOTHER

Jesus and Mary

Reading

Simeon said to Mary, his mother, "Your son is here for the fall or rise of many in Israel and to be a contested sign... and you will have a sword piercing your soul." Lk 2:34-35

Meditation

Jesus sees Mary, his mother. Their eyes meet. Mother and son meet. What is going on in their minds, and their hearts?

Mary, burning with maternal love, is torn by the pain of her son's condemnation, abuse and suffering. She is torn, unable to intervene to stop this procession where her very son is a victim of injustice. She would like to protect her son but cannot.

The soldiers separate them, and Jesus suffers further beatings and humiliations.

Today, thousands and thousands of mothers know, or do not know, that their children are in dangerous situations and are risking their lives. Their children dig in artisanal mines for gold, coltan or other rare minerals. Their children travel desert roads and cross seas in small, makeshift boats. Their children are victims of armed groups and human traffickers: exploited in plantations, forced into prostitution or sentenced to forced labour.

Mothers cry for their lost children.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, look upon all these mothers who worry about their children.



STATION 5: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Jesus and Simon of Cyrene

Reading

"While they were leading him away, they seized a certain Simon of Cyrene, who was returning from the fields, and they laid the cross on him to carry behind Jesus." Lk 23:26

Meditation

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross. Simon of Cyrene, probably forced by the soldiers, supports Jesus in this ordeal of extreme suffering.

There are many motives for providing support and help to others: duty or obligation; fear of punishment and sanction; constraint of the consequences of not helping a person in danger; financial incentive or interest in social and professional advancement; or as a response to an ethical and moral call.

And on the other hand, Simon of Cyrene undertakes to help Jesus because he allows himself to be touched by the love of the other who suffers: the other who suffers regardless of his origins, religion, convictions, and differences.

The human being in front of him, a mirror of his own humanity, pushes him to act. Like the Good Samaritan, he feels "called to become a neighbour to others".² Simon of Cyrene accompanies and supports Jesus.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, help us see the brothers and sisters in front of us, mirrors our own humanity, and motivate us to become neighbours to them.

² Fratelli Tutti 81



STATION 6: VERONICA RESISTS AND WIPES JESUS' FACE

Jesus and Veronica

Reading

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me!" Whenever you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." Mt 25:34-36.40

Meditation

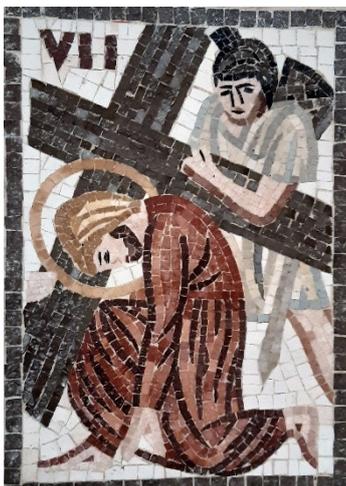
The people mock Jesus. He is mistreated, beaten and knocked down. Others watch, horrified, embarrassed, or eager for a spectacle. A woman watches and acts. Veronica dares to get involved. Tenacious and courageous, she intervenes and wipes Jesus' face.

She is not afraid to take that initiative. She stands out and opposes the behavior of the crowd. Veronica shows resistance. She breaks the circle of violence.

You will not suppress the cry of those who need your help. You will develop the ability to speak the truth and not submit to public opinion. You will raise your voice for those who have been silenced, and you will speak the truth, and the truth will set you and all of us free.³

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, the example of Veronica invites us to show civic courage, to stand on the side of the weakest. Have mercy on our timidity and give us the courage to commit ourselves and resist all forms of violence and exploitation.



STATION 7: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Jesus and the victims of injustice

Reading

"In fact, it was our sufferings that he bore, our pains of which he took upon himself. And we thought that he was struck down, bruised by God, humiliated. But it was because of our revolts that he was pierced, because of our faults that he was crushed. The chastisement that gives us peace was upon him: by his wounds, we are healed." Is 53:4-5

Meditation

Exhausted, without strength after receiving the terrible blows of scourging, weighed down by the weight of the Cross, Jesus falls again.

Even today, Jesus continues to fall. We must not ignore the cry of pain and distress of so many of our brothers and sisters.⁴ Their cries challenge and invite us to commit ourselves to justice. Without this endless search for justice, "human life would become impossible and without dignity.

³ Dorothee Sölle

⁴ Pape Francis, Christmas Message 2021

Moreover, there can be no peace with justice alone; there must be a gratuity and a gift that transcends the exigencies of duty. Love and forgiveness are needed; love and forgiveness go beyond the limits of justice.⁵

Jesus accepts to fall in solidarity with all those who pay the price of human frailty. With the victims of injustice, Jesus continues to fall. "It is on the ground that Jesus meets them, and it is there that he wants to save them."⁶

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, grant us to live in solidarity with the victims of injustice and help us to build social, national and international peace.



STATION 8: JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Jesus and the women of Jerusalem

Reading

**"Large crowds of people followed him and the women too, beating their breasts and lamenting over Jesus. He turned and said to them, "Women of Jerusalem do not weep for me! Weep for yourselves and for your children!"
Lk 23:27-28**

Meditation

Jesus, who is subjected to violent blows, stops. He is touched by the complaints and tears of the women. He speaks to them and opens their eyes. The suffering that he bears, he also bears for them. He invites them to look at their own reality. He asks them to become aware of what is happening in their own lives and what they can do in the world.

"How much violence is directed against women! Enough! To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity."

"Mothers know how to overcome obstacles and disagreements, and instil peace... We need people capable of weaving the threads of communion in place of the barbed wire of conflict and division. Mothers know how to do this."⁷

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, encourage all women to overcome violence and help build peace in the world.

⁵ Leonardo Boff, « Chemin de croix de la justice », 1984, p.41

⁶ Ibid. p.43

⁷ Pope Francis, Message January 1st, 2022



STATION 9: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

Jesus and the silent wood

Reading

"Ill-treated, he humbles himself, he does not open his mouth: as a lamb led to the slaughter, like a mute sheep before the shearers, he does not open his mouth." Is 53:7

Meditation

Jesus falls for the third time under the heavy wooden beam. Jesus holds this wood in his hands and under his arms; he carries it on his shoulders, and he collapses under its weight.

The wood is silent and does not speak. Normally, the wood of a tree gives life to the world. Under its bark flows the sap that feeds the leaves. And its leaves produce oxygen, O₂ which makes all beings live without exception.

A tree of life cut down and pruned becomes a stake to nail an innocent man. A tree of life becomes a cross upon which death is imposed. A tree that gives life is reshaped and transformed to bring death.

The wooden cross carried by Jesus, a symbol of death, is also a warning sign of what is happening in the world today.

Deforestation, desertification, monoculture, loss of biodiversity, destruction of fauna and flora are all causes of environmental degradation and climate change. All of this leads to more migratory flows and conflicts over natural resources.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, may your wooden cross, silent and dumb, become a cry of alarm for all the trees that disappear day after day on our planet Earth. May your wooden cross be a warning sign that alerts us to all the causes and consequences that destroy our common home.



STATION 10: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

Jesus and the exploiters

Reading

"The soldiers took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each of them. The tunic remained; it was a seamless tunic, woven in one piece from top to bottom. Then they said to each other, "Let's not tear it; let's cast lots for whoever gets it." Jn 19:23-24

Meditation

The soldiers strip Jesus of his clothes.

Soldiers, traders, multinationals, political leaders, powerful states, mafia groups: many of them rob our common home, the Earth, today. They get rich and fight for access and profit. They care neither for the common good, nor for the integral development of people, nor for effects on the environment.

They exploit the earth's surface and take over farmers' lands, depriving farmers of their means of survival, and without respecting indigenous rights or ancestral customs.

They exploit the land in search of oil and gold, diamonds, copper, coltan, lithium and rare minerals, so precious in the "ecological transition" era.

They exploit the sea by emptying the sea coasts of their rich fish stocks so that local fishermen cannot survive.

Our common home is being emptied and suffers from human actions, more exploitation, more extraction, more domination, and more growth.

"In the mirror of your stripping, we contemplate Africa and the other continents and unite our suffering with yours, and we understand that your suffering, your stripping, your cross are not an accident, of course, but a way for God to reveal himself to us."⁸

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, you are Emmanuel, God among us, make us attentive to the cries of the earth and the cries of the victims!



STATION 11: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Jesus and the victims of abuse

Reading

"When they came to the place called The Skull, or Calvary, they put Jesus on the Cross, with the two criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." Lk 23:33-34

Meditation

Jesus is nailed to the Cross. The soldiers drive in the nails and pierce his hands and feet. The wounds are deep and the pain excruciating.

Today, many people are traumatized, suffering deep wounds and scars caused by events in their lives: victims of violation of their physical and psychological human integrity; victims of sexual abuse; victims of genital mutilation; victims of violence of all kinds.

Let us take a moment of silence, remember these victims and intercede for them.

Let us pray

O Jesus Christ, make us attentive and receptive to people who carry deep wounds.

⁸ Jean de la Theotocos Ilboudo, « Via crucis Africae », 2006, p.25



STATION 12: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS OUT OF LOVE FOR US

Jesus and us

Reading

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for those one loves." Jn 15:13

Meditation

"Jesus opened his arms to establish a bridge of reconciliation between enemies. The sign of the Cross [...] is for us the link between God and humanity, and between humans. This Cross bears a man torn apart who gives his life, rather than snatching it from others, in order to realize God's plan."⁹

"Like Mary his mother, like Saint John, we are at the foot of the Cross where Jesus dies, abandoned by his people and mocked by the crowd. Where would the Church of Jesus, itself the Body of Christ, be if it were not there, to begin with?"¹⁰

Invitation to bow and reflect. Moment of silence.



STATION 13 : JESUS IS BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Jesus and the "questioners"

Reading

"The whole crowd of people, who had gathered for this spectacle, observing what was going on, went away beating their chests. All his friends, as well as the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood further back to watch." Lk 23:48-49

Meditation

Men and women watch and observe. Some are curious, others mock, others pass by without understanding anything. Others are shocked, astonished, overwhelmed, saddened, perplexed, and remain at a distance.

Others dare to touch the lifeless, inert and cold body to bring it down from the Cross.

The death of Jesus raises questions; provokes doubts and misunderstandings.

He healed and saved others in the name of God, but where is this God when he himself needs him?

Why does God accept this? Why all this? What is the point of this?

⁹ Pierre Claverie, in : Patrick Vincienne, « Prier 15 jours avec Pierre Claverie », 2018, p.106

¹⁰ Ibid. p.108

Through death, Jesus himself becomes a question. And the answer? Only God can give it!

"Any faith that does not go through the Good Friday experience cannot reach the Paschal fullness." Crises of personal faith and those in the history of cultures are important moments in the relationship with God because God, who seems to be absent and hidden, returns to those who have not stopped waiting for him.¹¹

Let us pray

O God, support us in our most challenging and meaningless moments when we are inert and full of doubt.



STATION 14: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Jesus and Joseph of Arimathea

Reading

"Then a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and righteous man, came along... He was from Arimathea, a town in Judea, and was waiting for the Kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took him down from the Cross, wrapped him in a shroud, and put him in a tomb hewn out of the rock, where no one had yet been laid." Lk 23:50-53

Meditation

The death of Jesus touches Joseph of Arimathea. He takes the initiative to go and ask Pilate's permission. He takes care of Jesus' body. He is concerned about giving him a respectful burial. He is not alone. Other people help him to put Jesus in the tomb.

Quietly, they care for Jesus' body and give it respect and dignity with humility and tenacity. They do not get involved out of duty, right or calculation, but rather and above all out of compassion, love of neighbour, gratuitousness, and self-giving.

Let us pray

O God, may the sense of respect and dignity, compassion and love of neighbour motivate us to commit ourselves to the kingdom of God.

FINAL BLESSING

- *We are invited to come one after the other before the Cross in the sanctuary, bow and make the sign of the Cross slowly, and then leave in silence.*

¹¹ Tomáš Halík, « Ich will, dass du bist », Herder, 2019, p.39

Meditation for Easter:

GOD'S ANSWER: JESUS THE RISEN CHRIST

God gives us an answer.

Jesus, whom people had cast aside, is "put back in the game" by God, but as a changed person. The world did not recognize him - and even the disciples who trusted and knew him found it difficult to recognize him. Mary Magdalene thought he was the gardener; the two disciples on the road to Emmaus considered him a stranger.

Then the disciples recognize him: "In the breaking of bread, the voice, the wounds, they encounter his love - that is the expression of his identity. Love alone proves to be a more powerful force than death."

Jesus, being a stranger, a pilgrim and risen, on his way to the Father, cannot be held back; he cannot be stopped.

In turn, the disciples are invited to "be raised from the dead" and to "live here and now as new people" - and the novelty of this life consists in love: to live the relationship with others, with the world, with life and with God in the style of Jesus.¹²

Jesus conquered death and continues to conquer it through our lives rooted, enlightened and animated by faith, hope and love.

By walking together along the path of conversion, we allow ourselves to be transformed and we will be able to move from a static "being" Christian life to a dynamic "becoming" Christian life renewed by Jesus, the risen Christ.¹³

O God, make us ever more immersed and animated by the faith, hope and love that find their source in you!

Information about the Way of the Cross 2022:

This Way of the Cross is prepared by the JPIC-RD Coordination of Missionaries of Africa.

The photos were taken in the church of Saint Joseph in Djerba, Tunisia.

Readings are from the Jerusalem Bible.

Rome, March 2-2022

¹² Ibid. p.36 et 38

¹³ Tomáš Halík "Die Zeit der leeren Kirchen", Herder, 2021, p.142