



The Way of the Cross: Traditional and Modern Meditations

**SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGOURI
FATHER STEFANO PENNA**

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The Way of the Cross: Traditional and Modern Meditations

Traditional Meditations by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri
Modern Meditations by Father Stefano Penna

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The Way of the Cross: Traditional and Modern Meditations

The Way of the Cross leads us to contemplate the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to consider His great love for us, His humility, and the glory of the perfect offering He made in the work of our redemption.

The Way of the Cross, as a devotion, has its origin in the faithful's retracing of Christ's steps in the City of Jerusalem. Throughout the centuries, believers have walked the streets and hills of Jerusalem, recalling the saving mysteries of Christ in the very place where they were accomplished. In time, the Church raised shrines and images representing the Holy Places of Jerusalem throughout the Christian world, so that those unable to make the long pilgrimage to Judea could nevertheless commemorate Christ's Passion by tracing the Way of the Cross.

There are a number of methods for praying the Way of the Cross and a legitimate and holy variety of prayers, meditations and hymns that may be employed according to the devotion of the Church. This booklet contains two complete sets of prayers: a version of the well-loved *Via Crucis* composed by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, and a set of modern meditations composed by Father Stefano Penna, a priest of the Diocese of Saskatoon, Canada. The second *Way of the Cross* includes a "Fifteenth Station," a meditation on Christ's Resurrection, which should be omitted on Good Friday.

According to the provisions of the Handbook of Indulgences, n. 63, a plenary indulgence is granted once daily under the usual conditions (sacramental Confession, Holy Communion, prayers for the Pope, and detachment from even venial sin) to the faithful who devoutly follow the Way of the Cross. Ordinarily this means walking from station to station, but with large groups it suffices for the leader to walk from place to place. Those prevented by poor health or other circumstances from praying the Way of the Cross in the ordinary manner may obtain the same indulgence by spending some time, perhaps 15 minutes, in reading and meditation on the Passion. No particular readings or prayers are prescribed for the fourteen Stations.

The Way of the Cross: Traditional Meditations

adapted from Saint Alphonsus Ligouri's version

An Act of Contrition

R. My Lord Jesus Christ, / Thou hast made this journey / to die for me with love unutterable, / and I have so many times unworthily abandoned Thee; / but now I love Thee with my whole heart, / and because I love Thee / I repent sincerely for having ever offended Thee. / Pardon me, my God, / and permit me to accompany Thee / on this journey. / Thou goest to die for love of me; / I wish also, my beloved Redeemer, / to die for love of Thee. / My Jesus, I will live and die / always united to Thee.

*Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa
Dum pendebat Filius.*

At the cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful Mother weeping
Close to Jesus to the last.



THE FIRST STATION

Jesus is Condemned to Death

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider that Jesus, after having been scourged and crowned with thorns, was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross.

(silence)

R. **My adorable Jesus, / it was not Pilate, / no, it was my sins, that condemned Thee to die. / I beseech Thee, / by the merits of this sorrowful journey, / to assist my soul in its journey toward eternity. / I love Thee, my beloved Jesus; / I love Thee more than myself; / I repent with my whole heart of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Cujus animam gementem
Contristatam, et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.*

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had passed.



THE SECOND STATION

Jesus is Made to Bear His Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider that Jesus, in making this journey with the cross on His shoulders, thought of us, and offered for us, to His Father, the death that He was about to undergo.

(silence)

R. **My most beloved Jesus, / I embrace all the tribulations / that Thou hast destined for me until death. / I beseech Thee, / by the merits of the pain Thou didst suffer / in carrying Thy cross, / to give me the necessary help / to carry mine with perfect patience and resignation. / I love Thee, / Jesus, my love, / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always, / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti.*

Oh, how sad and sore distresséd,
Was that Mother highly blesséd
Of the sole-begotten One!



THE THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls the First Time

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider this first fall of Jesus under His cross. His flesh was torn by the scourges, His head crowned with thorns, and He had lost a great quantity of blood. He was so weakened that He could scarcely walk, and yet He had to carry this great load upon His shoulders. The soldiers struck Him rudely, and thus He fell several times in His journey.

(silence)

R. **My beloved Jesus, / it is not the weight of the cross, / but of my sins, which has made Thee suffer so much pain. / Ah, by the merits of this first fall, / deliver me from the misfortune of falling into mortal sin. / I love Thee, O my Jesus, / with my whole heart; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Quae moerebat, et dolebat,
Pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati poenas inclyti.*

Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son.



THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider the meeting of the Son and the Mother, which took place on this journey. Jesus and Mary looked at each other, and their looks became as so many arrows to wound those hearts which loved each other so tenderly.

(silence)

R. **My most loving Jesus, / by the sorrow Thou didst experience in this meeting, / grant me the grace / of a truly devoted love for Thy most holy Mother. / And thou, my Queen, / who wast overwhelmed with sorrow, / obtain for me by thy intercession / a continual and tender remembrance of the Passion of thy Son. / I love Thee, Jesus, my love; / I repent of ever having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always, / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?*

Is there one who would not weep
Whelmed in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?



THE FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider that His enemies, seeing that at each step Jesus, from weakness, was on the point of expiring, and fearing that He would die on the way when they wished Him to die the ignominious death of the cross, constrained Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross behind Our Lord.

(silence)

℟. **My most sweet Jesus, / I will not refuse the cross as the Cyrenian did; / I accept it, / I embrace it. / I accept in particular / the death that Thou hast destined for me / with all the pains which may accompany it; / I unite it to Thy death, / I offer it to Thee. / Thou has died for love of me, / I will die for love of Thee, / and to please Thee. / Help me by Thy grace. / I love Thee, Jesus, my love; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always, / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Quis non posset contristari,
Christi Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?*

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



THE SIXTH STATION

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider that the holy woman Veronica, seeing Jesus so afflicted, and His face bathed in sweat and blood, presented Him with a towel with which He wiped His adorable face, leaving on it the impression of His holy countenance.

(silence)

℟. **My most beloved Jesus, / Thy face was beautiful before, / but in this journey it has lost all its beauty, / and wounds and blood have disfigured it. / Alas! my soul also was once beautiful, / when it received Thy grace in Baptism; / but I have disfigured it since by my sins. / Thou alone, my Redeemer, / canst restore it to its former beauty. / Do this by Thy Passion, O Jesus. / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always, / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.*

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent.



THE SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls the Second Time

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider the second fall of Jesus under the cross—a fall which renews the pain of all the wounds of the head and members of our afflicted Lord.

(silence)

℟. **My most gentle Jesus, / how many times Thou hast pardoned me, / and how many times have I fallen again, / and begun again to offend Thee! / Oh, by the merits of this new fall, / give me the necessary helps / to persevere in Thy grace until death. / Grant that in all temptations which assail me / I may always commend myself to Thee. / I love Thee, Jesus, my love, / with my whole heart; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

<i>Vidit suum dulcem Natum</i>	For the sins of His own nation
<i>Moriendo desolatum</i>	Saw Him hang in desolation
<i>Dum emisit spiritum.</i>	Till His spirit forth He sent.



THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Speaks to the Daughters of Jerusalem

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider that those women wept with compassion at seeing Jesus in so pitiable a state, streaming with blood, as He walked along. But Jesus said to them, “Weep not for Me but for your children.”

(silence)

R. **My Jesus, laden with sorrows, / I weep for the offenses that I have committed against Thee, / because of the pains which they have deserved, / and still more because of the displeasure / which they have caused Thee, / Who hast loved me so much. / It is Thy love, / more than the fear of hell, / which causes me to weep for my sins. / My Jesus, I love Thee more than myself; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.*

O Thou Mother! fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above.
Make my heart with thine accord.



THE NINTH STATION

Jesus Falls the Third Time

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider the third fall of Jesus Christ. His weakness was extreme, and the cruelty of His executioners excessive, who tried to hasten His steps when He had scarcely strength to move.

(silence)

R. **Ah, my outraged Jesus, / by the merits of the weakness Thou didst suffer / in going to Calvary, / give me strength / sufficient to conquer all human respect / and all my wicked passions, / which have led me to despise Thy friendship. / I love Thee, Jesus, my love, with my whole heart; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

Fac ut ardeat cor meum

In amando Christum Deum

Ut sibi complaceam.

Make me feel as thou hast felt:

Make my soul to glow and melt

With the love of Christ, my Lord.



THE TENTH STATION

Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider the violence with which the executioners stripped Jesus. His inner garments adhered to His torn flesh and they dragged them off so roughly that the skin came with them.

(silence)

R. **My innocent Jesus, / by the merits of the torment which Thou hast felt, / help me to strip myself of all affection to things of earth, / in order that I may place all my love in Thee, / Who art so worthy of my love. / I love Thee, O Jesus, with my whole heart: / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifigi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.*

Holy Mother! pierce me through.
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.



THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

R. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

V. Consider that Jesus, after being thrown on the cross, extended His hands, and offered to His eternal Father the sacrifice of His life for our salvation. These barbarians fastened Him with nails; and then, raising the cross, left Him to die with anguish on this infamous gibbet.

(silence)

R. **My Jesus, / nail my heart loaded with contempt / to Thy feet, / that it may ever remain there to love Thee, / and never quit Thee again. / I love Thee more than myself; / I repent of having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Tui nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Poenas mecum divide.*

Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all our sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.



THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

NOTE: Traditionally, penitents kneel throughout this Station.

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider how Jesus, after three hours of agony on the cross, consumed at length with anguish, abandons Himself to the weight of His body, bows His head, and dies.

(silence)

℟. **O my dying Jesus, / I kiss devoutly the cross / on which Thou didst die for love of me. / I have merited by my sins to die a miserable death, / but Thy death is my hope. / Ah, by the merits of Thy death, / give me grace to die, / embracing Thy feet / and burning with love of Thee. / I commit my soul into Thy hands. / I love Thee with my whole heart; / I repent of ever having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.*

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him Who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.



THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider that, our Lord having expired, two of His disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, took Him down from the cross, and placed Him in the arms of His afflicted Mother, who received Him with unutterable tenderness, and pressed Him to her bosom.

(silence)

℟. **O Mother of Sorrow, / for the love of this thy Son, / accept me for thy servant / and pray to Him for me. / And Thou, my Redeemer, / since Thou hast died for me, / permit me to love Thee; / for I wish but to love Thee, my Jesus, / and I repent of ever having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Juxta crucem tecum stare,
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero.*

By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.



THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is Placed in the Sepulchre

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee.

℟. **Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.**

℣. Consider that the disciples carried the body of Jesus to bury it, accompanied by His holy Mother, who arranged it in the sepulchre with her own hands. They then closed the tomb and all withdrew.

(silence)

℟. **Ah, my buried Jesus, / I kiss the stone that encloses Thee. / But Thou didst rise again on the third day. / I beseech Thee, by Thy resurrection, / make me rise glorious with Thee at the last day, / to be always united with Thee in heaven, / to praise Thee and love Thee forever. / I love Thee, and I repent of ever having offended Thee. / Never permit me to offend Thee again. / Grant that I may love Thee always; / and then do with me what Thou wilt.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father

*Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara;
Fac me tecum plangere.*

Virgin of all virgins best!
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine.

The Way of the Cross: Modern Meditations

by Father Stefano Penna

“We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:20a-21).

He “who knew no sin” became Emmanuel, “God with us”: God with us wherever we are in our flesh, wherever we struggle in our spirit, wherever we are in our joy, wherever we are in our sin. In Christ Jesus, God embraced our humanity: not just the best part of our nature, but the worst part. Christ became one with us who were in the ruin and rubble of our sin so that we could be one with Him in the Tabernacle of His glory.

The Way of the Cross turns all other ways inside out and upside down. For from the sin that fashions the crossbeam, from the hatred that drives the nails, from the violence that hoists nakedness up to ridicule, and from the abyss of loneliness that echoes in the words “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) —from the misshapen ways of the world springs a new voice of victory, a new song of peace, a new promise of love, and a new and living Body of holiness.

“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20a). This is the inside-out way of the Cross.



THE FIRST STATION

Jesus is unjustly condemned to death by Pilate

How is this unjust? Is this not the world's cynical and expedient "justice"? The justice of bottom lines on spread sheets and "collateral damage" in bombing campaigns. The justice of cutbacks and lay-offs, of sweatshops and sex tourism. The justice that thinks not with a heart for persons but with a cold logic for profit, pleasure, power. Pilate knows the world's justice and its power, for even the doubt sown by the remarkable Man before him is washed away in the bowl of worldly reasonableness and the status quo.

"Behold the man!", Pilate sneers (John 19:6). Behold with worldly eyes what a human person is: a cog in the machine of a great empire, an inconvenience to be aborted, a disposable object in the movement of capital and in the development of the Pax Romana. "Behold the man!" But wait, is Pilate speaking of himself? Does he recognize in the wretch before him what his own humanity has become through serving the world's power and prestige and profit?

Yes, Pilate, the Man standing before you reveals what humanity is. Unbelievably, He is your humanity. Jesus is the one who stands in those spewed from the mouth of the whale of a heartless world, and He is the one who stands in those—like you—who are made ugly by being the hand of heartlessness. He stands with all caught in Satan's craw of injustice—and shines forth with a dignity and holiness before which the rulers of this world fall silent.

"Behold the man!"—behold the holiness of the human person! Look closely even at the child dismissed as a 'fetus', the unemployed mocked as a 'bum', the lonely aged ignored as 'old maids'. Behold, the person!

Lord, in the baptismal bowl it is Your justice that washes us clean. Attune our eyes to see You, standing dismissed by our world, so that when we see others, we see You. Help us to "behold the person."



THE SECOND STATION

Jesus Accepts the Cross

The world glorifies the strong and the active, the go-getters who “make things happen” and who “take their destiny in their own hands.” What room in the world’s eyes is there for those who fall by the way? For those who are made passive: forced into loneliness by being abandoned by others; forced into the indignities of a failing body by age; forced into unemployment by market forces. The world cannot bear reminders of passivity and suffering. It shuts its eyes, or, worse, holds up for ridicule those who cannot take their destiny in their hands.

The Creator of Heaven and earth, whose hands formed from dust woman and man, in whose hands lies destiny itself, takes up—what? The Cross which others have fashioned. The Cross of ridicule and fear and blindness. The Cross whose wood is made from favelas and ghettos and killing fields. The Cross fashioned by sin is taken by the Lord of all ages for His destiny, so that all who are crucified might share His Lordship in eternal Glory.



THE THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls the First Time

Once Adam and Eve heard “the sounds of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8), but they were unmade by sin and hid. Now we hear the sound of the Lord God...falling. The sound of the Lord God falling! We know the sound of sin—its dull, sinking, hollow sound that echoes in our soul with the empty gong of self-hatred. It is an appallingly lonely sound, a bitter broken thud that drags us...down...down...into the dust. And there He is, the One who made us from dust, the One who wrote in the dust to remind a howling mob of a sinner’s humanity: He is in the dust that settles like ash around our ears after our fall. There He is.

Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God walking and were afraid. We, the children of Adam and Eve, hear the sound of the Lord God falling and are afraid no more! He is here... even here in the dust. He is here...with us. Is this so? Will we allow Him to be with us? Will we again walk with Him in the garden?



THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

What agony! The silent cry of Jesus to Mary. The cry of a child calling for His mother, a cry once confident that a mother's love awaits to nurse, and mend and heal and caress; this cry that, since the first time it pierced the morning air in a warm stable, could be comforted in love. Oh what agony! For here this cry echoes in the ears of the Mother, and the mother can do nothing. Such is the way that sin chains the heart of this Mother, and makes her one with the chains of so many mothers. The evil of violence and war, the evil of economic exploitation and oppression, the evil of drug addiction and alcoholism—strangling the cries of children and leaving their mothers impotent and broken. The evil of utilitarianism that even goes to stifle the cry of the unborn child, so that a mother hears not the child within her—Agony!

Even here You go, Lord Jesus. You go even to the place where so many who cause untold heartache to their mothers are standing. What it costs you both, Jesus and Mary, you who would sit together in the evening light of Nazareth! You, Mary, what a cost to be one with all whose hearts break in the suffering of a beloved one! You, Jesus, what a cost to be one with those caught in sin's web and who occasion such suffering! Mary knew a sword would pierce her soul. But such a sword? The sword of being one with the Son made flesh in her Amen in the suffering of His being made sin by His Amen.

The crown of thorns will be lifted from His head and placed—transformed into a diadem of stars - upon your brow, O Queen of Heaven. That meeting in Jerusalem was the forge that fashioned your crown. It is a crown promised us, your children.



THE FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene Helps to Carry the Cross

Sin and its consequences produce a maelstrom, a vortex which draws into it all who are around, whether they wish it or no. Simon sought safety in the crowd but was pulled out to bear sin's weight. He must carry the cross of another. What inconvenience! What hard work! All to what end? The cross of another? It is heavy, Simon, for it is the weight of your own sin. Of my sin.

'Half the world's people, nearly three billion persons, live in countries where the annual per capita income is \$400 or less. At least one billion persons live in absolute poverty, that is, "beneath any rational definition of human decency." Nearly 800 million are chronically hungry, despite abundant harvests worldwide. Seventeen out of one hundred children born in those countries die before the age of five, and millions of the survivors are physically and mentally stunted.' (cf. United Nations Human Development Report, 1998)

What inconvenience, this injustice! What hard work to undo it! And to what end? More of the same year after year. Our crosses are hard enough, so why shoulder the cross of another? Jesus is one with those unmade by sin for stunted lives. The cross of another? It is heavy, my brothers and sisters for it is the weight of my sins...of our sins.



THE SIXTH STATION

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Veronica, what Simon was forced to do, you do out of compassion. Was it because compassion itself labored before you, buffeted by the crowd whose sins fashioned His thorn-crown? There in an act of mercy you wipe mocking spittle and bloody sweat from a bruised face. And there rests an image, and image of the One in whose glorious image you were made. An image of the One who will remake you into Glory beyond glory, Beauty beyond beauty, Good beyond goodness.

Already the illogic of sin is undone from within: to reach out to wipe the face of the brother or sister, smashed by sin and neglect, is to reach out to the image of the Lord God which shines even in agony, even in horror.

“Why are you doing this?” the dying man asked the woman cleaning the worms from his rotting flesh. “Because, you are Christ my brother and I love you,” replied Teresa of Calcutta.



THE SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Second Time

Sin is like this. It trips us up. We formulate new resolutions, we walk cheered from insightful counsel, we sign new treaties, construct new economic plans...and it comes to this. The same old story. Was it cockiness and presumption? Did the taste of forgiveness give way to forgetfulness of the Forgiving One? How can one face life when lying in the dust of good intentions?

Jesus again lay in the dust. “What a weakling,” the crowd murmured. “Look, he received help! There is Simon walking with the Cross. He talked a good game, but we have found him out.”

“Found out”—this is the constant threat whispered by sin. “Found out to be weak, and unlovely, and unlovable, and backsliding, and unworthy.” The sound of the second fall is, in many ways, worse than the first crashing thud, for it is filled with the voice of the hired hand whispering through the murmuring crowd, “Found out!”

But the voice of the true Shepherd speaks to us from the dust. Speaks? No, sings, softly and gently: “Found.” Found in the dust, we are raised to our feet, the voice echoing in our hearts: “Found and lovely.” Found in our sin, we walk from the confessional, the voice singing “Found, and lovely, and worthy.”



THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

A wail arises, a keening howl, full-throated and desperate. Women—mothers, sisters, wives, friends—raising lament that mingles across the centuries with women—mothers, sisters, wives, friends—bewailing the ravages of sin: holding a skeletal child, brutalized by constant abuse, shuffling to gas chambers, hoeing sterile soil, challenging oppression, tending the broken. The cry of the women of Jerusalem is the cry of women across time: a cry for justice in its absent face.

He knows the sound of their cry. He knows the longing of their wail. And He wails with them. But in the voice of Jesus the tone of the wail changes—not disconsolate, but protesting; not bereft of direction and meaning, but purposeful; not enslaved, but free! Days of struggle are coming...but the barriers of the City of Jerusalem, with its narrow streets and Roman occupiers, give way to Golgotha and the mountains where all will be new and the shuffling cries of pain become the dancing shouts of victory.



THE NINTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Third Time

This is the true sound of sin...a dull, monotonous wheeze. It is rarely dramatic. It is usually grinding and sordid and over and over and over again. Falling a second time? How long ago was the second time we fell into sin? Fell into sin? We dwell in sin, and we cover despair with fatalistic stoicism or diversions aplenty. Television and radio and Internet and gambling and drinking and dallying: to distract us from the boredom of listening to the wheezing gasp of sin.

Yet even here...even in the second and the third and the fiftieth and the thousandth and the millionth fall...even here He is. The one whose Spirit-Breath “renews the face of the earth” (Ps 104:30) gasps the wheeze of sin-clogged lungs. His mouth pants like our panicked mouths—so that His lips might cover ours and blow the purest of air...pure love...pure Spirit. We wheeze over and over in faltering sin. He breathes over and over and over and over with freeing Spirit. For He breathes the gasp of sin, that we might breathe the breath of God.



THE TENTH STATION

Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

We came naked into this world and we leave naked, ashes to ashes, we have nothing. This is the truth. Our sin leaves us standing in this truth even more vulnerably: youth lost leaves us lost when body and mind fail; seeking for self-fulfillment leaves the gaping hole of broken relationship; fortunes amassed leave the calloused fear of those who rely on the work of their hands. To be naked before this truth before everyone is unbearable. It is the lot of the criminal condemned to prison, the adulterer discovered, the corrupt revealed, the liar found out.

He became naked...not before the beautiful ease of Adam and Eve's original, natural gaze, but before the shame-filled prurience of sin-distorted eyes. And He was made vulnerable to sinners, left open to the leering, the jeering, the whispering, the gossiping, the angry eyes. Left open to the eyes of His Mother...did she long to wrap Him again in swaddling clothes? Left open to the eyes of the disciples. Left open to our eyes...to turn away our face in shame, for here is seen our great fear: shame.

He is here, even here. But look again: most vulnerable, He is most noble. Dignity is here, dwelling even here. Clothing did not make the man, no, He pulses with divinity and life. Behold the man. Behold clearly the man. Behold what God has done: walked with us to the shame-filled nakedness that was the first distortion of sin, so that we could walk in Him to a new nature...clothed in Him who is purity and light and beauty. Behold clearly the Christ, for He stands vulnerable before us Who is Supreme Openness. He stands vulnerable before us who is Supreme Love. Be not afraid! Be open to God! Be open to love.



THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

He is fixed before the world. His crucified body is the image of sin and shame. Transfixed we stand, transfixed that the God whom earth and Heaven cannot contain should be nailed here at this point of death. At the crossroads of the nations stands the Skull Hill; fixed to the crossroads, proclaimed in Latin, and Greek, and Hebrew, and every tongue of Babel is the Truth: here is the King, nailed for you to your sin, so that you can dance in His righteousness. What a glorious exchange: we give Him a Cross, and He opens for us Heaven's Eternity. The echo of hammer blows, the echo of our hurts and pains, our tears and frustrations, the echo of our injustice and violence that sounds again and again in the world is now filled with the glory of the final trumpet. For this is Death's Hour, its Last Hour—it is no more. Sin's sting is drawn by the nails that pierce Life's hands. Sin is seen broken on the Cross, and forgiveness reigns.



THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies Upon the Cross

NOTE: Traditionally, penitents kneel throughout this Station.

Holy God,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One
have mercy on us!

Holy God,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One
have mercy on us!

Holy God,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One
have mercy on us!



THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

There is one place in the dust yet to go. The place of lifelessness. The silence of a heart stilled, the silent mourning of a presence taken away. The Victory is being won, but still, on this side, there is darkness. Mary cradles her lifeless Son. What more words dare be spoken? Are there words enough to fill this empty vessel? “Sorry for your troubles.” As good as any. John the Beloved stands, his Thunder stilled, for the breast upon which he lay moves no more. Are there words enough to fill this empty vessel? “My condolences at your loss.” As good as any. Magdalene, used and abandoned by many men now is left by the man who opened her eyes to her dignity. Are there words enough to fill this empty vessel? “My deepest regrets.” As good as any.

The silent group is played out again and again in the world on this side of the victory. In hospital rooms, in war-torn villages, in deepest famines, at gravesides this silent group huddled together in loss is met again and again. But now a new Word is spoken. The empty vessels of death and loss are filled with this new word. The best of words, the perfect Word, the only Word: “This is the cup of my blood, the new and everlasting covenant poured out for you.” The Word became God’s Life-Blood that we drink, and which flows in our heart with Hope.



THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

And so the Body is laid in the rock that has been hewn out by Joseph for death. And all is silent. Silent? Hardly! For the Body that was Dead is risen! And into the hearts, hardened by sin into rock is hewn, is hewn not a tomb but a Tabernacle! Behold the Tomb has become Tabernacle, resounding with new words to fill the silence. "Take and eat. This is my Body given up for you." The Rock pulses with Life, for sin is transformed into forgiveness. He has lain down in the tomb of our sin, so that our hearts might be the Tabernacle of His glory. Behold, what our God has wrought with our sin! Behold what God has done in us. In Christ Jesus, we are God's righteousness. No more are we to lie in the lifelessness of sin. We are to feed the world with what we have become: the Tabernacle of Christ, open to feed all with the taste of Justice, Peace, and Joy.



THE FIFTEENTH STATION

The Resurrection

The Way of the Cross has become our Way of Life, but it is upside down! Let us walk our ways of the Cross with heads high, listening to the Spirit of the Risen One singing in our hearts: praying, strengthening, teaching, healing. For God, our God—the Father of Mercies, the Son of Compassion, the Spirit of Freedom—has traced with us our pilgrim walk on earth so that we may join forever in the circling dance that is the eternal life of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Death no longer reigns in our hearts, for on the Cross Death was embraced by God, so that Life might embrace and transform us! Yes, we are dead: dead to sin, dead to injustice, dead to death. For “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 3:20) Upside down, our hearts are right side up. Our death was Christ’s own; now Christ’s righteousness is our own.

“Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death,
and on those in the tombs bestowing life.”

- Paschal Troparion

