

JESUS'  
WAY  
OF THE  
CROSS

*Adapted from the words of*  
POPE FRANCIS

## AN INVITATION FROM POPE FRANCIS

Today let us accompany Jesus on his journey of sorrow and love, the Way of the Cross (*Via Crucis*). The Way of the Cross is the consummation of Jesus' life, the example of his obedience to the will of the Father, the realization of his infinite love for us sinners, the proof of his mission and the definitive fulfillment of revelation and salvation history.

The cross is the way to the resurrection. Good Friday is the road to an Easter of light. God never forgets a single one of his children and never tires of forgiving us and of embracing us with his infinite mercy. May we never tire of asking for forgiveness and believing in the Father's boundless mercy.

So let us walk together along the Way of the Cross carrying in our hearts this example of love and forgiveness. Let us go with Jesus through his suffering, knowing that his death is not the end but through God's power he will be raised to new life.

FIRST STATION  
PILATE CONDEMNNS JESUS TO DEATH



Jesus does not enter Jerusalem to receive the honors reserved for earthly kings and powerful rulers but to be scourged, insulted and abused and to receive a crown of thorns, a staff and a purple robe. He enters to climb Calvary, carrying his burden of wood. He is abandoned and betrayed even by his own disciple and sold for next to nothing. He is judged by sinners, handed over by those in authority. In his obedience to the Father's will, we recognize our rebellion and disobedience. In contemplating him—sold, betrayed and crucified by his own people and loved ones—we regret our daily betrayals and our habitual infidelities.

*How have my words and  
actions betrayed my following of Jesus?*

## SECOND STATION

# JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS



Jesus, in your face—struck, spat on and disfigured—we see all the brutality of our sins. In the cruelty of your passion, we see the cruelty of our hearts and of our actions. In your experience of being abandoned, we see all those who have been abandoned by their relatives and by society, left without care and solidarity. Your cross bears the suffering and the sin of humanity, including our own. Yet you accept all this with open arms, bearing on your shoulders our crosses and saying to us: “Have courage! You do not carry your cross alone! I carry it with you. I have overcome death and I have come to give you hope, to give you life.”

*What cross am I being called on  
to carry now in my life?*

### THIRD STATION

## JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME



God placed on Jesus' cross all the weight of our sins, all the injustices, all the bitterness of his betrayal, all the vanity of tyrants, all the arrogance of false friends. It was a heavy cross because it carried all the ugliness of evil. Yet the weight of his cross frees us of all our burdens. He continues to love even to the cross and teaches us to serve and to love. Do not be ashamed of his cross but embrace it, because you have understood that it is in giving ourselves, in emerging from ourselves that we have true joy and that, with his love, God conquered evil.

*How have I fallen beneath my own crosses  
and then found strength to get up?*

FOURTH STATION  
JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



Let us fix our gaze of faith and of love on Jesus' mother, who gave him her love and his human flesh. Now, silent and attentive, she tries to understand what God asks of her. She shares in the pain of her son and accepts with him the Father's will, in that obedience that bears fruit and grants the true victory over evil and death. Like Mary, may we be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.

*How has my faith most matured  
through my suffering?*

FIFTH STATION  
SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS  
CARRY THE CROSS



Our smallest gesture of love benefits everyone, By not seeking our own interests but sharing the suffering of others, we help carry the weight burdening the poorest and the weakest. This solidarity is an integral

part of the communion among Christians. If we live it, we are a sign to the world. It is not just a trivial love that we can offer one another, but something much more profound: a communion that renders us capable of entering into the joy and sorrow of others and making them sincerely our own. Jesus' cross knocked down the wall of enmity that divides people and nations and brought reconciliation and peace.

*Whom might I help to share the weight of their suffering as Simon did for Jesus?*

SIXTH STATION  
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



Jesus leaves his image, impressed upon her veil, which speaks to our heart and moves us to climb the hill of Calvary, to look upon the wood of the cross and to immerse ourselves in the eloquent silence of love. Let

us allow ourselves to be reached by his look, which is directed not to our eyes but to our heart. His disfigured face resembles all those faces of men and women marred by a life which does not respect their dignity. No one can approach and touch the cross of Jesus without leaving something of himself or herself there, and without bringing something of the cross of Jesus into his or her own life.

*How does the image of the suffering Jesus most touch my heart?*



SEVENTH STATION  
JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



By his passion and death, Jesus takes the lowest place but attains the heights of grandeur through service. There can be no compatibility between a worldly understanding of power and the humble service which must

characterize authority according to Jesus' teaching and example. Ambition and careerism are incompatible with Christian discipleship. Honor, success, fame and worldly triumphs are incompatible with the logic of Christ crucified. Instead, compatibility exists between Jesus, "the man of sorrows," and our suffering. He carries all our sins because he came to forgive, to make peace in the world, but first in the heart. Jesus' work is a work of mercy, a work of forgiveness and of love.

*How has the burden of my sins kept me  
from rising up and following Jesus?*

## EIGHTH STATION

### JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



Jesus' cross contains all God's love and there we find his immeasurable mercy. In this love we can place all our trust. If we entrust ourselves to him with a humble and penitent heart, he will tear down the walls

of evil, fill in the holes of our omissions, smooth over the bumps of our arrogance and vanity, and open the way of encounter with him. It is curious, but many times we are afraid of consolation, of being comforted. The suffering Jesus opens the door to the source of every true comfort, that is, the Father. And this is conversion. Let yourselves be comforted by the Lord!

*How has my awareness of Jesus' suffering been most comforting to me?*

## NINETH STATION

# JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME



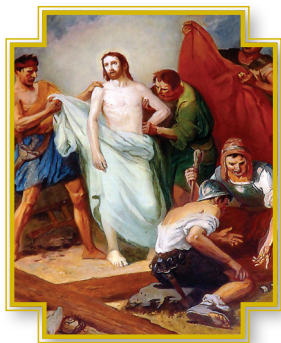
Jesus, with his cross, walks with us and takes upon himself our fears, our problems and our sufferings, even those which are deepest and most painful. With the cross, Jesus unites himself to the silence of the

victims of violence, those who can no longer cry out, especially the innocent and the defenseless. With the cross, he is united to families in trouble and those who mourn the tragic loss of their children. With him, evil, suffering and death do not have the last word, because he gives us hope and life. He has transformed the cross from being an instrument of hate, defeat and death to being a sign of love, victory, triumph and life.

*What encouragement can I take from Jesus' refusal to be crushed by the weight of the cross?*

## TENTH STATION

# JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



Jesus, at the moment of his ultimate self-sacrifice on the cross, sought to keep nothing for himself. In his body—stripped bare, pierced and lacerated—we see the bodies of our brothers and sisters left by the wayside, disfigured by our negligence and indifference. Jesus attains complete humiliation through “death on the cross.” He calls us to leave behind our fleeting illusions and to turn to what is essential, to renounce our insatiable cravings, to abandon our endless yearning for things we will never have. We do well to leave such things behind, in order to discover true peace, joy and the luminous meaning of life.

*Of what might I need to be stripped  
in order to follow Jesus more closely?*

## ELEVENTH STATION

# JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



Jesus bodily suffering includes being crowned with thorns and clothed in purple, mocked and mercilessly nailed to the cross. Crucifixion was the worst form of death, that reserved for slaves and criminals.

Jesus was considered a prophet but he died like a criminal. Yet his tortured body expresses a sovereign majesty. It is as if it let a restrained but powerful energy within it shine through, as if to say: “Have faith, do not lose hope; the power of the love of God, the power of the Risen One overcomes all things.” We thus find ourselves before the mystery of God’s love for us, which gives us hope and courage.

*How does Jesus’ courage in his suffering give me a model to imitate?*

TWELVETH STATION  
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



Jesus appears on the cross as a defeated man: he suffers, is betrayed, reviled and finally dies. On the cross, he feels the whole weight of evil, and with the force of God's love he conquers it and finally defeats it with

his resurrection. Indeed, he allows evil to be unleashed on him and takes it upon himself in order to conquer it. At the foot of the cross, Mary, together with the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. His mercy knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception.

*How have I most experienced God's unfathomable mercy in my life?*

## THIRTEENTH STATION

# JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS



By taking the power of evil upon himself, Jesus conquers it. He destroyed the solitude of suffering and illuminated its darkness. Through his suffering and death he did not remove illness and suffering from

human experience but by taking them upon himself he transformed them and gave them new meaning. He transformed them, because in union with Christ they need no longer be negative but positive. He gave them new meaning because they no longer have the last word which, instead, is new and abundant life. Let us replace our sorrow and fear with joy and proceed on the way to liberation and salvation.

*How has my understanding of Jesus' death given my suffering new meaning?*

## FOURTEENTH STATION

### JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



Jesus laid in the tomb shares with all of humanity in the tragedy of death. Death affects us all, and it questions us in a profound way, especially when it touches us closely. It is a silence which speaks and expresses love as solidarity with those who have always been neglected, whom the Son of God reaches, filling the emptiness that only the infinite mercy of God the Father can fill. The apparent victory of evil vanishes before the empty tomb and before the certainty of the resurrection because nothing can defeat, obscure or weaken the love of God.

O Jesus, dead and buried, the God of life and of existence, may your cross transform our hardened hearts into hearts of flesh that are able to dream, to forgive and to love. *Amen!*