

# WALKING

## THE WAY OF THE CROSS



WITH POPE FRANCIS

## AN INVITATION FROM POPE FRANCIS

This Lent, I invite you to accompany Jesus on his journey of sorrow and love, the Way of the Cross. As we contemplate Jesus in his passion, we see reflected the suffering of humanity and we discover the divine answer to the mystery of evil, suffering and death. Because of 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. No one can approach 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. I have three questions that I hope will echo in your hearts as you walk beside Jesus: What have you left on the cross? What has the cross of Jesus left for you? Finally, what does this cross teach us? So now let us walk together along the Way of the Cross.

THE FIRST  
STATION

PILATE  
CONDEMNNS  
JESUS TO  
DEATH



Jesus' humiliation reaches its utmost in his passion and death on the cross. Humiliated in his spirit by mockery, insults and spitting, he suffers in his body terrible brutality: the blows, the scourging, the crown of thorns that make his face unrecognizable, and lastly, the way of the cross leading to the crucifixion, that most painful form of shame reserved for traitors, slaves and the worst kind of criminals. He takes upon himself all our pain that he may redeem it, bringing light to darkness, life to death, love to hatred, revealing the true face of God, which is mercy.

*How might I take on some of the pain  
of others to transform it through love?*



THE SECOND  
STATION

JESUS  
TAKES UP  
HIS CROSS

Once Jesus has taken the path of humiliation and self-abandonment, he travels along it to the very end. The cross of Christ bears the suffering and the sin of mankind, including our own. Jesus takes upon himself the evil, the filth, the sin of the world, including the sin of all of us, and he cleanses it with his blood, with the mercy and the love of God. Jesus on the cross feels the whole weight of the evil, and with the force of God's love he conquers it, he defeats it with his resurrection.

*What might I do to follow Jesus more courageously  
through my suffering to new life?*

THE THIRD  
STATION

JESUS FALLS  
THE FIRST  
TIME



Jesus took upon himself all human suffering. His cross contains all the weight of our sins. It was a heavy cross, heavy because it carried all the ugliness of evil. In the cross we see the monstrosity of humans, when they allow evil to guide them. But we also see the immensity of the mercy of God, who does not treat us according to our sins but according to God's mercy. Jesus' cross contains all God's love. There we find God's immeasurable mercy. If we, with our weaknesses, take the path of love, then we will embrace the life that never ends.

*How might I stop giving in to evil and  
treat others more mercifully as God does?*



THE FOURTH  
STATION

JESUS  
MEETS  
HIS MOTHER

In Jesus' passion, we find God's response to the desperate and at times indignant cry that the experience of pain and death evokes in us. He tells us that we cannot flee from the cross, but must remain at its foot, as our Lady did. This is the source of our confidence and our joy: to be his disciples, to remain with him, to walk behind him, to follow him. To have faith does not mean to never have difficult moments but to face those moments knowing we are not alone. God is close to us sharing our joys and sorrows, our hopes and struggles.

*How might I remain closer to Jesus and  
share my suffering with him?*

THE FIFTH  
STATION

SIMON  
OF CYRENE  
HELPS JESUS  
CARRY THE  
CROSS



Jesus is the Savior: follow him. To listen to him entails setting out on the journey with him to make of oneself a gift of love to others, in obedience to God's will, with an attitude of detachment from worldly things and of interior freedom. There will always be a cross, trials in the middle, but at the end will be the happiness Jesus promised and will give if we follow his ways. Christ's cross embraced with love never leads to sadness, but to the joy of having been saved and of doing a little of what he did on the day of his death.

*How might I be more willing to make myself  
a gift of love for others in need?*



THE SIXTH  
STATION

VERONICA  
WIPES  
THE FACE  
OF JESUS

Jesus, in the cruelty of your passion, we see the cruelty of our hearts and of our actions. In your face—struck, spat on and disfigured—we see all the brutality of our sins. Impress in our hearts the sentiments of faith, hope, love and sorrow for our sins. Lead us to repent for our sins which crucified you. Lead us to transform our conversion made up of words into a conversion of life and deeds. Lead us to guard within us the living memory of your disfigured face, so as never to forget the terrible price you paid for our freedom.

*How might I express sorrow for my sins  
and act more like Jesus would want me to?*



THE SEVENTH  
STATION

JESUS FALLS  
THE SECOND  
TIME



The cross is the answer that Christians offer in the face of evil, the evil that continues to work in us and around us. Christians must respond to evil with good, taking the cross upon themselves as Jesus did. We must always recall that the cross is the way to the resurrection and Good Friday is the road to an Easter of light. God never forgets a single one of God's children and never tires of forgiving us and of embracing us with his infinite mercy. May we never tire of asking for forgiveness, of believing in the boundless mercy of the Father.

*How have my crosses not been the end but  
a way to a closer relationship with God?*



THE EIGHTH  
STATION

JESUS  
MEETS THE  
WOMEN OF  
JERUSALEM

They took a risk, but they wanted to go to comfort Jesus. Following Jesus means learning to come out of ourselves to go to meet others, to be the first to take a step towards our brothers and our sisters, especially those who are the most distant, forgotten and most in need of understanding, comfort and help. Jesus teaches us to place the needs of others before our own. Lent is a time of grace which the Lord gives us to open the doors of our heart to meet others, to make ourselves close, to bring them the light and joy of our faith.

*How might I extend myself to others  
to be with them and share my faith?*

THE NINTH  
STATION

JESUS FALLS  
THE THIRD  
TIME



The cross is the word through which God has responded to evil in the world. Sometimes it may seem as though God does not react to evil, as if he is silent. And yet, God has spoken, he has replied, and his answer is the cross of Christ: a word which is love, mercy, forgiveness. Let us ask for the patience to carry our own cross, not to refuse it or set it aside, but rather, in looking to him, to take it up and to carry it daily. We embrace it because we have understood that it is in giving ourselves that we have true joy.

*How has carrying my own cross with Christ helped to transform my suffering into joy?*



THE TENTH  
STATION

JESUS IS  
STRIPPED  
OF HIS  
GARMENTS

In Jesus' 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. In Jesus we see before our very eyes and often with our complicit silence our brothers and sisters who are still being persecuted, oppressed and crucified. Jesus teaches us the great courage involved in renunciation. We need to free ourselves from the clutches of consumerism and the snares of selfishness, from always wanting more, from never being satisfied, and from a heart closed to the needs of the poor.

*Of what might I strip myself or renounce  
to be able to help those most in need?*

THE ELEVENTH  
STATION

JESUS IS  
NAILED TO  
THE CROSS



On the cross, Jesus did not remove human illness and suffering but by taking them upon himself he gave them new meaning. This reveals the mystery of God's love for us, which gives us hope and courage: hope, because in the plan of God's love even the night of pain yields to the light of Easter, and courage, which enables us to confront every hardship in union with him. If we experience a dying to ourselves for Jesus' sake, our old way of life will be a thing of the past and we will pass over to a new form of life and fellowship.

*To what new form of life do I experience  
Jesus calling me now?*



THE TWELFTH  
STATION

JESUS DIES  
ON THE  
CROSS

We expect an all-powerful God to defeat injustice, evil, sin and suffering with a triumphant divine victory. Yet God shows us a humble victory that, in human terms, appears to be failure. Indeed, the Son of God appears on the cross as a defeated man: he suffers, is betrayed, reviled and finally dies. Jesus allows evil to be unleashed on him and he takes it upon himself in order to conquer it. If we live united to Jesus, faithful to him, we will also be better able to face the passage of our own death with hope and serenity.

*What most intrigues me about the mystery of God conquering evil through the power of weakness?*

THE THIRTEENTH  
STATION

JESUS IS  
TAKEN DOWN  
FROM THE  
CROSS



Jesus' crucified body is like a bundle of mercy, which reaches each of us through his wounds. Let us draw near to Jesus and touch his wounds. If we do draw near, with his wounds Jesus gives us mercy and intercedes for us before the Father. Never forget that the risen Lord keeps his wounds, the mark of a hard struggle, but they are now wounds transfigured forever by love. Wherever the cross is, there hope is for those experiencing conflict—the struggle between life and death, good and evil—who believe in Christ's resurrection, in the victory of love.

*How might I be changed by drawing more closely  
to the wounded Jesus?*



## THE FOURTEENTH STATION

# JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

The central event of our faith is God's victory over suffering and death. It proclaims the gospel of hope, born of Christ's paschal mystery, which reveals God our Father as the one who comforts all of us in our afflictions. It calls us to remain united to the passion of the Lord Jesus, so that the power of his resurrection may be revealed in us. The apparent victory of evil vanishes before the empty tomb and before the certainty of the resurrection and the love of God which nothing can defeat, obscure or weaken. Jesus is risen, there is hope for you, you are no longer in the power of sin, of evil! Love has triumphed, mercy has been victorious! Jesus is risen!

*With whom might I share my joy in the new life  
that comes through Jesus' resurrection?*