

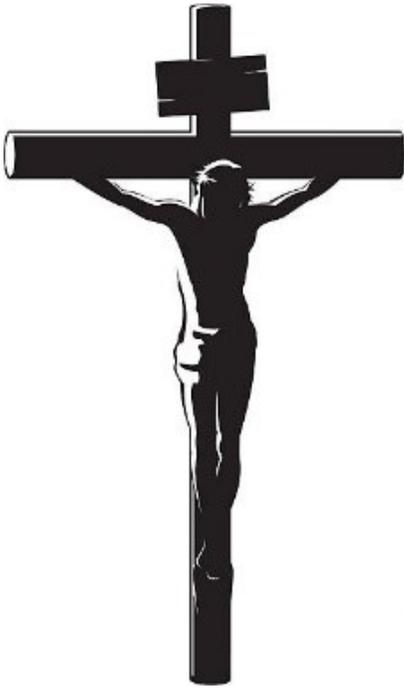
Stations of the Cross

Based on

Pope Francis'

Evangelii Gaudium,

The Joy of the Gospel



Joy of the Gospel Stations of the Cross

Presider: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our Holy Father's encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis implores us to live as joyful proclaimers of the Good News. Pope Francis states:

“An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm - that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing - even when it is in tears that we must sow.” (10).

Presider: The First Station: Jesus is Condemned

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: “People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be. Let us not forget that “responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.” (220).

Assembly: Our Lord was condemned to death by the cries of a mob. This moved Pilate, the governor, to sentence Christ to death – even though he knew was innocent. How have I shirked from my civic duties? Have I prayed for our country? Have I voted for moral candidates? Have I participated in ‘mob’ violence by bullying, excluding, or gossiping about others? How have I condemned the Christ in my brother or sister?

REFRAIN: ALL (Stabat Mater)

*Judge of all He stands convicted
Of the sin that we've committed,
All for love He bears our guilt.*

Presider: The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. (273).

Assembly: Jesus takes up his Cross, not as an unfortunate reality of human sin, not as a burden he reluctantly agrees to, but rather as the core of who he is. “There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Love is not a ‘badge’ one can set aside when it is inconvenient. To bear the cross is not an inconvenience unhappily carried, but rather is the very core of our life and mission.

*Now the cross as Jesus bore it
Has become for us who share it
Symbol of our victory.*

Presider: The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: “You will be blessed if you do this” (Jn 13:17) ... Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. (24).

Assembly: Christ, though he was God, deemed it not below his dignity to take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ by becoming a man, like us in all things but sin. “He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (Phi 2:8) As Jesus fell the first time - his bloodied knees getting covered in mud - we see that there is no place, however ugly, however painful, however shameful that will keep the Lord from entering. How different are our own hearts, so fickle, that we look for praise and approval of the world’s ‘accepted’ while reviling the poor and the ‘unsophisticated’.

*For the sins of His own nation
Jesus walked in desolation
'Til He fell upon His knees.*

Presider: The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: Jesus left us his mother to be our mother. The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood. Mary, who brought him into the world with great faith, also accompanies “the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus” (Rev 12:17). (285).

Assembly: On his road to Calvary, Jesus encounters his mother, our mother, the icon of womanhood. In this tender exchange between Son and Mother, no words are spoken - for none are needed. We see in Mary’s quiet yet profound witness, her supreme compassion for not only her Son who suffers, but for all her children who suffer. Her heart, pierced by compassion for us, accompanies us on our journey. When we falter, Mary is there to remind us that we are loved with a love that words cannot describe.

Can the human heart refrain

From partaking in her pain

In that Mother's pain untold.

Presider: The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labor. Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity. (211).

Assembly: As Jesus continues his journey, a man named Simon of Cyrene is pressed into service by the Roman soldiers to help him carry his cross. The soldiers are afraid that Jesus will perish along the way. Simon was forced to help Christ while others looked on with indifference. How many of our brothers and sisters suffer - and we look on with indifference? Do we heed the Holy Father’s call and look for ways we can bear our brother and sister’s burdens...or do we enjoy the comfortable and silent complicity?

Simon bears with hesitation

Glorious sign of our salvation,

That which we should bear with joy.

Presider: The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others - and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, or on a journey. (127).

Assembly: When we look at the problems of the world, it is easy to grow discouraged, perhaps even to excuse ourselves from doing good because of 'how little' we can do or accomplish. Veronica, a woman of Jerusalem, seeing the sufferings of Christ, knows there is little she can do. But this does not deter her. Seeing his face bloodied and dirty, she offers Christ the only thing she can - a small rag with which to wipe his brow. Yet in this moment, she also offers him her compassion and presence, however brief it was. How many in the crowd jeered at Christ only for a moment - which cut his heart? Yet here was a woman who, for but a moment, sought to ease his pain. And though what she did was 'small', her witness has echoed down through the ages.

With the cloth she wipes His face

Tears of pain she can't erase

From the face of love on earth.

Presider: The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe...while at our door people are starving. (49).

Assembly: Christ falls the second time, bruised, hurting and dirty, fallen in the streets of our sin and indifference. From his very birth, he left the security of his place by the Father to enter a life full of toil, pain, loss, and death. He came to 'serve, and not to be served'. Lord, give us a generous spirit to empty ourselves, to dirty our hands, to bruise our knees on the streets - as you did - rather than find the fleeting comfort the world offers.

Jesus falls upon the ground

Struggles forth without a sound

To continue on His way.

Presider: The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: Today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is the case of inequality. (53)

Assembly: Jesus told the women of Jerusalem to not weep for him, but to weep for the city that would soon be destroyed for its lack of faith. How often are we sad, but for the wrong reasons? St. Paul teaches us that worldly sorrow leads to death (2 Cor 7:10). How often, as Pope Francis notes, do we worry about petty, material things, while those that really matter go unnoticed, uncared for? Lord, give us a true heart of compassion to notice the things that really matter - and to weep and pray for those that truly need it.

*Like the women at His passion,
Loving hearts within us fashion,
That we might share others' pain.*

Presider: The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church, which is glorious precisely because it is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work (tiring as it may be). For all work is “the sweat of our brow”. (96)

Assembly: Christ declared “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” (Jn 9:39) Do we, like the Pharisees, think of how we would change the world, of how much better things would be if we were in charge? Or, like Christ, do we set to the task at hand and serve those that God has granted us to serve? Christ, who fell three times, came down to the level of those beaten and crushed by the world and met them there. Lord, give us the grace to attend to the real ways we can love others in our lives and let us be willing to stoop into the mud to meet them - as he did for us.

*Pain on head and back He bore
Near to death, He fell once more
Yet obedient to God's will.*

Presider: The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in. (85).

Assembly: How often do we ‘clothe’ ourselves with pessimism to protect ourselves from failure? How often do we gossip about others to make ourselves feel better about our own lack of service for God? Jesus teaches us the true way. At this place, as his cross is set down upon the ground, he is stripped of even his clothes. He has no protections, no excuses. He only has himself to give. This is what the Lord invites us to: not pessimism, not excuses, not gossip, not bitterness, but surrender. The naked surrender of who we truly are...of who God made us to be.

Garments stripped, He stands alone

Soldiers mock, no mercy shown

To the Son of God that day.

Presider: The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: Beware of the temptation of jealousy! We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port! Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all. (99).

Assembly: Each of us has our cross to bear, and each of us has our struggles, but how often do we look to our neighbor, and wish we had their life? How often do we wish our crosses were someone else's? As Christ was nailed to the cross, for no sin of his own, he bore in his very body our pains, our burdens. “Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.” (Is 53:4) Christ bore his cross for love of us, and he asks us, in a very small way, to bear our own cross for others. As the wounds of this world pierce us through, Christ, who was pierced for us, will hold us up. Lord, deliver us from all jealousy - especially in regards to our crosses. May we see the cross as the gift it truly is.

Arms spread wide our pain embracing,

Stain of blood our sin erasing,

Though nailed fast, His hands still heal.

Presider: The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles. (183).

Assembly: Christ gave all for us, to the point of death, as he handed his spirit over to his Father. He knew that love is rarely comfortable, and true love flows outward and not meant only for the self. As his side was pierced, blood and water flowed out, his very self to form the foundation of the Church's two main sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist. Lord, grant that we may never see our faith as something only for ourselves, but sacrifice ourselves daily for others, as you did for us.

*Word of Life, of death defiant,
Bowed His head - the world is silent;
Through His death came life anew.*

Presider: The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today! Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love! (101).

Assembly: Jesus is taken down from his cross, and given to the arms of his mother. She who held him in her arms in the manger at Bethlehem. She holds his beaten, bloody corpse, and holds him out to us in total generosity. She is not possessive. She holds no grudge. She lovingly offers her son, as she did to the shepherds year before. She prays for us, sinners as we are. Lord, grant us the fraternal love that Mary has. May we, like her, forgive and pray for those that have wounded us - as we hope they do for us.

*Earth's sky black in midst of day
In His Mother's arms He lay
Now at length His suffering passed.*

Presider: The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Presider: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

Assembly: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Presider: However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew. It rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection...and all who evangelize are instruments of that power. (276).

Assembly: Christ is laid in the tomb as the sun sets beyond the hills - leaving the world in darkness. In all of our lives, the power of death holds sway, sometimes tragically.

Lord, grant us the faith to remember that, as you rose from the dead and conquered death, there is no tragedy in my life, however powerful, that will not be remedied through the power of your resurrection. Let us say with St. Paul: "Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55)

Hidden from the sight of heaven,

Earth's dark womb receives our victim,

Now we wait for Him to rise.

Conclusion

Presider: We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence. ... How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! (264).

Assembly: Lord, break our hardened hearts, and teach us to be heralds of the joy of the Gospel! Amen.

If the presider is a lay person:

Presider : May the Lord + bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

Assembly: Amen.

If the presider is a priest or deacon:

Presider (if priest or deacon): The Lord be with you.

Assembly: And with your spirit.

Presider: May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen.

Presider: Go in peace.

Assembly: Thanks be to God.

The joy of the Lord is my strength...Nehemiah 8:10

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