Praying “The way of the Cross”

**NOTE: Bold print is said by all.**

(Stand)***In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen;*** Matthew 26:14-16, 36,38-39 Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”   Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.” He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father,if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.”

(Kneel) Prayer: **That by the grace of the Holy Trinity, for us to hear our Lord’s urgent request to “keep watch with me”. Jesus, that our prayer and inner thoughts here would bring us ever so closer to you ... in what we believe, say and do.**

(Stand) ***May we feel no bitter hatred, when we too are persecuted, left alone to walk with you.***

The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Mark 15:12-14 Pilate brought Jesus outside and said to the people, “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” “Crucify him!” they shouted. “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

Reflection: Jesus stands before an arrogant Pontius Pilate, wrongly accused guilty…as if truth condemns, and He without stain or blemish accepts the blame for the sin of us all. Jesus “God in the flesh” embraces the Father’s loving plan and so…embraces us, thus becoming the perfect sacrifice for our salvation.

(Kneel) Prayer: **Jesus, enable us to imitate your model of self-sacrifice, and trust in God’s plan for our lives, that when we’re wrongfully burdened with messes we didn’t make, we would readily accept your comfort and hope…and bring the same to others.**

(Stand) ***Now the cross as Jesus bore it, has become for us who share it, the jeweled cross of victory.***

The Second Station: Jesus carries his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

John 19:15-17 Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

Reflection: We think of the pain Jesus endured as he walked; the rough, heavy beam scouring his flesh torn shoulders. Determined beyond human reason, it was obedience and steadfast love that drove Jesus to carry the weight of his Father’s will. His walk to defeat even death itself was purposeful and painful, one step at a time.

(Kneel) Prayer: **Jesus, you took up the cross and embraced humility. Might that your unwavering model of willingness encourage us to push past fear and self-pity, with a presence of mind to know that you are with us always, that we might carry our burdens with the same grace. Amen**

(Stand) ***Weakened, prodded, cursed and fallen, his whole body bruised & swollen, Jesus tripped and lay in pain.***

The Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Isaiah 53: 4-5 Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by Godand afflicted; But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed.

Reflection: Crucifixion was the means by which to publicly dishonor a person. A brutal flogging before carrying the cross was a part of the punishment, and so it was for our Lord. Such physical abuse prompting his body into shock from pain and blood loss, now in his weakness he falls awkwardly to the ground.

(Kneel) Prayer: **Oh my Jesus, how sweet to know that you can identify with my weaknesses and feel my pain; I sometimes fall to the weakness of my own will, grow tired of the trials, am brought down by the immoralities and injustices of society. Lord, we come to you grateful of your mercy for the times when we fall into sin. Amen**

(Stand) ***Jesus met his grieving Mother, she who bore the Lord our brother; Now the sword her heart has pierced.***

The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his Blessed Mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Luke 2:33-35: Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted;(and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Reflection: Now Jesus, blood and sweat… Blessed Mother, grief and tears, abruptly meet face to face. For only them and this encounter, mutual love washes away all of the noise of shouts, wailing and violence. Oh but for a moment her compassion, mere presence would comfort Jesus, protect him from the pain of hate, abuse, and the cross. Mary feels the *sword pierce her own heart*.

(Kneel) Prayer: **Jesus, from the very start your dearest companion was your mother who nurtured you as you grew into a shepherd for all peoples. She encouraged you at Cana, she led you …then followed you, she defended your purpose. Inspire us Lord to embrace her model of love and faithfulness where we too would nurture our neighbors faith, encourage our Pastor, and more than anything, readily defend you and the Gospel.**

(Stand) ***Simon stopped in hesitation, not foreseeing his proud station, called to bear the cross of Christ.***

The Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Luke 23:26 As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Reflection: Simon mere spectator now suddenly, forced to participate. How could one expect such a traumatic twist to his day? We wonder…did he know, believe in Jesus ? Did Simon graciously accept this seemingly chance opportunity to help our Lord….or was it troubling, or did it anger him? Whatever the case, as it turns out he helped carry the cross for whom he would come to learn later was his Savior. An unexpected honor beyond words.

(Kneel) Prayer**:Jesus, thank you for this glimpse of Simon, by which we see and remember the impact we can make in our neighbor’s needs, especially when it’s not the most convenient or timely. Inspire us O Lord, empower us with eyes that don’t only see…but truly “seek “ for when, where, and who we can serve. Humble us too Lord, that we graciously accept help from others who seek and answer your call.**

(Stand) ***Brave but trembling came the woman, none but she would flaunt the Roman, moved by love beyond her fear.***

The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Matthew 10:40,42: He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Reflection: Veronica is bold enough to step into Jesus’ difficult path to hurriedly yet ever so gently wipe the sweat and blood from his face with her veil. In return, the unforeseen fortuitous gift of his sacred image forever engrained into her cloth, a lasting reminder of his promise; “I am with you always”.

(Kneel) Prayer  **Jesus, the lost searched you, and you them, and you left your impression on their lives forever. Condition our hearts, like yours and Veronica’s, to carefully yet most purposely step into the path of the ones who are lost and seeking . Oh my Jesus, that we would be so entrusted to but leave your lasting impression on others. Amen.**

(Stand) ***Weak , depleted, down he stumbled, once acclaimed and dear beloved, victim now of hate and scorn.***

The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Isaiah 53: 4-5 It was our weakness that he carried, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the punishment that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed.

Reflection: For some time Jesus had been the center of attention: Many went at great lengths to see him, hear him, even if simply to touch his garments; Now, still the center of attention, but it’s a storm of chaos; shouts, weeping , the commands of the Guard… he makes his way through a passage of obvious contrast, where some mourn or express their support if even just by their expression, yet others mock, laugh, spit, and hurl hateful insults.

**(Kneel) Prayer: Lord, you were “ led like a lamb to the slaughter or sheep before the shearers”. For those who don’t know you, a figure subject to authority, too weak to endure. We pray for our neighbor who doesn’t know or believe in you, and for ourselves the grace of humility to recognize how we might know you better. Jesus, increase my awareness that my weaknesses that may seem as failures, are often a window to a deeper trust in you. Amen.**

(Stand) ***May our sympathy for Jesus, extend to those who here now need us, may we see Christ’s pain in them. .***

The Eighth Station: Jesus engages the women of Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Luke 23:27-28 A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him.  Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children…”

Reflection: Engaging the women, even in his indescribable affliction, we mustn’t reflect without notice, his undeniable compassion for the faithful now left to their confusion, trauma, and unthinkable loss. Our battered Savior’s empathy for them is a seed of hope and love he purposely plants along the way, even to the bitter end.

(Kneel)Prayer: ***Jesus, God of both justice and mercy, thank you for your unmistakable love and compassion for me and my neighbor. When we suffer, when we’re at a loss or feel abandoned, help us remember your undeniable care. Inspire us to notice the ones suffering or hopeless we encounter along our path, to take that critical step toward their needs and share your care for them.***

(Stand) ***Jesus falls again in weakness, stumbling as we do, to lead us, through our sorrow and our pain .***

The Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Psalm 22:14: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me.

Reflection: As he nears his place of execution, Jesus stumbles and falls yet a third time right at the feet of the bystanders …who might ask one another; “Why did he get back up? Stay down.” But no, in spite of his physical weakness, it wasn’t his will to delay or refuse the inevitable. Jesus is empowered by faith to pushes past the weakness…he knows his ultimate destination isn’t the cross.

(Kneel) Prayer: ***Oh my Jesus, I pray your mercy on us that we would have eyes of faith so as to trust the Father’s will for our lives even when we face the most painful and adverse circumstances. When we become bitter of our burdens, or consider giving up on a relationship, or lose sight of the gifts we’re given, inspire in us the perseverance to get up, and continue our journey to our ultimate home.***

(Stand) ***Stripped and jeered by his own nation, Jesus stood in desolation, Giving all he had to give.***

The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Isaiah 15: 14-15 Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness.

Reflection: Arrived, now as the soldiers thoughtlessly tear away at his clothes our Savior through blood, sweat and swollen eyes, catches a glimpse of the fixed place at which he will be crucified. Even in his pain, stripped of clothes and dignity, he’s abruptly aware that he’s come to that sacred moment of his ultimate Sacrifice.

(Kneel)Prayer: **O Jesus*, thank you for embracing our human experience. Enkindle in us hearts that never forget that which you modeled for us in your birth, ministry and ultimate sacrifice of self. We pray for the strength to take up our cross, and the fortitude to defend your dignity and that of all human life.***

(Stand) ***Pierced the hands that blessed and cured us, pierced the feet that walked to free us, walked the hill of Calvary.***

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

John 17:19 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Reflection: The blunt strike of hammer and nails pierce the cries of Jesus’ followers. Our Savior endures excruciating pain as ruthless soldiers pound thick nails through his hands and feet; Jesus forgives them! Now raised upon the cross, one there crucified next to him is repentant; “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Jesus affirms him in his faith; “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

(Kneel) Prayer:***Jesus, Redeemer, on the cross you embraced and bore the pain of the sins from the beginning of time to eternity, including mine in my weakness today and tomorrow which persist as I often fail in my ignorance and even worse, in full knowledge purposely turn away from you. As I speak Lord, I hand you my sins and ask your forgiveness. Amen.***

(Stand) ***Life eternal, death defiant, bowed his head the earth was silent, through his death came life anew.***

The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Luke 23: 44-46 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

**+++(Kneel) +++** Reflection: Each of us alone with Christ in the quiet of our thoughts.

Prayer: ***Jesus-God, we cannot reason our way into fully understanding that which you are, or did, and will do. What we do know is our desire for “truth” which at times becomes blurred in a fallen world. We ask for the gift of your wisdom to recognize right from wrong, the courage to live and love obediently, and that when our life here is finished, above all else it would have pleased you.***

***Our Father,... … …***

(Stand) ***Stunned and stricken, Mary, Mother, in your arms was placed our Brother, “Full of grace” now filled with grief.***

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

John 19:33-34 When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead…. one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

Reflection: All but for weeping, it’s quiet now, but not peaceful. Mary feels “Simeon’s prophecy” at this soldier’s mindless thrust of violence toward Jesus who is clearly dead, his distorted body hanging lifeless in what time felt like forever to her. Never has she been so anxious, so longing to hold her son. At long last… he’s brought down and ever so tenderly laid in her lap. In her sorrow and loss, she’s defeated yet in awe, and ever so tightly holds him.

(Kneel)Prayer*:* ***Hail Mary, …… … Jesus, when we mourn remind us to long for you…hold ever so tightly to you. Lead us Lord to see and go to our neighbor, whatever their loss, but most especially who mourn the loss of their beloved, we pray. Amen.***

(Stand) ***Jesus who had been forsaken, now beholden you were taken, tomb of stone prepared for you.***

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Matthew 27: 57, 59-60 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.

Reflection: Joseph was determined to carry out the honor and reverence due the Lord. He greets Mary and the women there at the quiet of the cross and graciously asks that they join him and others to bring and prepare Jesus’ body for an appropriate and timely burial, as was the Jewish custom. Joseph’s devotion and random act of kindness bring his mother a sense of peace and consolation when least expected.

(Kneel) Prayer: ***Holy Spirit, enkindle in our hearts a growing devotion to Jesus, transfigured into a likeness of his, a willingness to forgive, compassionate and ready to empty ourselves for the good of our neighbor. Amen.***

(Stand) ***Jesus, Lord your gift accepted, in three days you’re resurrected, you did first what we shall do.***

The Fifteenth Station: The Resurrection

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Mark 16: 1,5-6 On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him.

**ALL PROFESS: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; on the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.**