Stations of the Cross

Opening Prayer

Holy God,
Be with us now as we meditate on your Son's journey to Calvary.
Remind us that even in this present day, many of your children continue that walk to Calvary, carrying heavy, difficult crosses.
May we be like Simon, helping those whose burdens are too heavy to be borne alone.
May we be like Veronica, offering the touch of love and comfort to those in need.
And as we struggle with our own crosses, may we always remember your promises of justice, mercy and peace.
Amen.

First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas! … Let [Jesus] be crucified!" —Matthew 27:21–22

How many of our sisters and brothers are condemned to lives of poverty, hunger and hardships? In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo more than 4 million displaced people are facing crisis levels of food insecurity. Christine, a mother of eight, fled with her family when bombs threatened their home, leaving everything behind. Before the conflict, they ate well. Now they rely on rainwater and donations, which are scarce.

Reflect

Reflecting on the experiences of Christine and her family, do you stand silent in the crowd, or do you shout? And if you shout, what do you say?

Pray

Christ Jesus, you were condemned by people you had come to serve and love. In moments when I may be tempted to condemn others, fill my heart with compassion and understanding.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Second Station: Jesus Carries the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"And carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull." —John 19:17

As we remember our sisters and brothers in poverty, we may be surprised by what we find. If we truly seek the face of Christ among them, we might discover something new about ourselves—about what it means to have something or nothing, and about what it means to pick up our crosses and follow in the way of Christ.

When armed militia attacked Shafa'tu's home in Nigeria, she was among 18,000 people forced to flee her farming community. They were starving before receiving food assistance from CRS. "This food support has come to wipe away our tears," Shafa'tu says.

Reflect

Think of Shafa'tu and the mothers and children who carry the crosses of hunger, conflict and poverty. How can we help them shoulder their burdens?

Pray

Christ Jesus, our crosses are heavy and our bodies weak, but we want to follow you. Give us strength to continue our journey. Though our burdens may be heavy, remind us to pause and help those we encounter along the way.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"I am troubled now. Yet what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." —John 12:27–28

Falls can come in many forms. Storms destroy homes. Violence disrupts communities. We know what it is to fall, both in our own lives and in our communities. But we also know that God invites us to stand back up together.

In Korobororou, Benin, farmers struggle to access natural resources, leading to conflicts with herders who manage resources separately. Antoine, a farmer, faced the devastation of his cassava field being ruined and had to use all his savings to buy more cassava for his family. While participating in a peace project with CRS, Antoine and other farmers and herders learned new techniques to bridge conflict and heal from trauma.

Reflect

Though Jesus fell, he got up and kept walking. How can we learn from Antoine who got up and kept walking toward a path of mutual trust? How can we then help others do the same?

Pray

Christ Jesus, you know that each of us stumbles, each of us falters, each of us gives in to temptation. Help us to remember that, with your grace, we can rise stronger and wiser than before.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Fourth Station: Jesus Encounters His Mother

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary … "You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
—Luke 2:34–35

What must Mary have been thinking as she looked upon her suffering son? What pain must have filled her heart? Yet, we know that she followed Christ until the end and beyond, comforting his friends in their fear and encouraging them as the young Church grew. Mary's desire to love and serve God overcame the suffering she encountered.

Jacinta, a mother of four from Guatemala, has been the primary provider for her family. She weaves traditional clothing to sell at the market but struggles to provide sufficient food for her daughters. Despite these challenges, Jacinta works tirelessly to ensure her daughters live healthy and dignified lives. Let us look to Jacinta and the example she sets for us as she meets Christ carrying the cross.

Reflect

How do we respond to the needs of others, whether in our immediate family or in our global one?

Pray

Christ Jesus, in your Blessed Mother, we find an example of courage, perseverance and faith. Though she was no stranger to suffering, Mary desired to be with those in need. Strengthen us as we try to follow her example.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country … to carry his cross." —Mark 15:21

Even Jesus accepted assistance, demonstrating humility. As social beings, humans thrive in communities. By supporting one another and being open to receiving help, we contribute to building a better world.

In Laos, many children attend school without adequate nutrition, affecting their health and well-being. Kan, a principal, started a chicken farm to provide fresh eggs and generate funds for the school's and students' needs. He collaborated with the local community and government entities to support over 30,000 students with nutritious school meals.

Reflect

We all have needs, and often those we serve reciprocate by serving us. We should never let pride prevent us from accepting help from others. What can you learn from Kan? How can you share your knowledge and talents to help others thrive?

Pray

Christ Jesus, you are God. How awesome it is to think that the God of the universe accepted the help of a simple human like me and continues to desire my help in bringing about the Kingdom of God. Teach me humility that I may serve you worthily.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace."
—Luke 8:48

It's easy to focus on the grandeur of this station, like statues and stained glass. But Veronica's actions were far from simple. She pushed herself into the heart of suffering, disregarding cultural norms to take action. Despite knowing a cloth wouldn't heal Jesus' wounds or stop his fate, she touched his face. This teaches us the importance of being present for others, recognizing their dignity and humanity, especially amidst global poverty and suffering.

Reflect

The Catholic community in the United States has been present through Catholic Relief Services in countries like Ghana, Guatemala and Timor-Leste. What does it mean to stick by a community for the long haul, maintaining our commitment to support those who suffer, even when hope seems all but lost? Is this what Veronica did for Jesus? Is this what Jesus asks of us?

Pray

Christ Jesus, help us to remember that nothing we do for the sake of love is done in vain. May we, like Veronica, have the strength to reach out to those on the margins—to those whom society has forgotten—and show them love.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls a Second Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." —John 8:7

How often do we see that someone fall and forget that we, too, can just as easily trip and find ourselves face-down in the dirt? Remembering our own vulnerability is important when working with people in need. It reminds us that there is no "us" and "them," just one human family of God. We all can fall. Together, we can rise.

In Mexico, droughts have greatly affected the community. Alfredo, a farmer, lost almost all his corn and barley crops as they dried up. Many community members emigrated in search of food and work, never returning home. Despite the struggles to find water and food, Alfredo, stays in his community. "I keep working and putting more effort into it each time to keep cultivating, to keep innovating as well, because with climate changes, we need to innovate," says Alfredo.

Reflect

As we reflect on this story, let us also consider families who so easily fall into poverty, hardship and impossible situations. What is our responsibility to these families? How do we uphold our commitment to ensure that people who fall are helped back up and empowered to continue their journey?

Pray

Christ Jesus, you meet me where I am in my life with an outstretched hand rather than a thrown stone. Help me to do the same for those around me. Teach me what it means to love my neighbor as myself.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Eighth Station: Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children …"
—Luke 23:28

Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus deeply involved with the concerns of individual people. He goes right to the source, engaging with people to understand their thoughts and feelings. Even in the end, he is attentive to the hurts and joys of this group of women. He listens to them. We must remember to act in this way in our own work, eager to listen deeply to the lives of our global family.

Reflect

Catholic social teaching calls us to engage in subsidiarity, which means working with individuals and communities closest to a problem to devise a solution. It is easy to propose solutions for others' problems; it is much harder to enter constructive dialogue for the betterment of all.

Pray

Christ Jesus, you always invite; you never impose. You always seek to engage people in meaningful ways; never pressuring or manipulating. Guide us in our efforts, that we may truly serve the needs of the poor and not simply the needs of ourselves.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls for a Third Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet."
—Luke 15:22

Sometimes it may feel as though we've fallen one too many times. God must be done with us by now, we think. But God never tires of forgiving us, of showing us his mercy as sons and daughters. It is our responsibility to accept that forgiveness and then to be about the business of justice, mercy and peace—the business of building the kingdom of God.

Reflect

We reflect on the work of you, a CRS supporter. You recognize the struggles of our sisters and brothers. Despite your own daily challenges, you dedicate your time and talents to helping those in need. You exemplify the importance of standing for justice and empowering others to build resilience.

Pray

Christ Jesus, we may stumble, we may fall; help us remember that what is most important is to rise again and start anew.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"For creation awaits with eager expectation … in hope that [it] would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God." —Romans 8:19;21

God calls us to be good stewards of creation. Yet, we often act irresponsibly, stripping it of its resources, its beauty and health. In doing so, we adversely affect the poorest and most vulnerable, depriving them of essential life-sustaining elements such as food, water and clean air. God is present in creation. Christ is present in the poor. How then should we respond?

Pope Francis said it best in his encyclical, Laudato Si', "We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Reflect

The environment and the people who inhabit it are interconnected; all of God's creation is one. God calls us to be stewards of the resources which we have been given, to look out for one another by sharing and collaborating, rather than grabbing up everything we can get now and worrying about others later.

Pray

Christ Jesus, all life comes from you. You have created a natural world filled with wondrous resources and beautiful sights. May we truly value that which you have made, and in turn, be good stewards of your gifts for the common good of all.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"He replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" —Luke 23:43

Crosses come in many forms. Financial burdens. Family hardships. Hunger. Homelessness. Insecurity. Crosses are part of the human experience and Jesus knows this. Just as he didn't give up on the thief with whom he was crucified, he doesn't give up on us if we are given these second, third, hundredth chances, how then should we act toward others? Do we take our neighbors down from their crosses?

Reflect

Prayerfully consider the stories of our sisters and brothers around the world. Ask yourself, what can I do to help others come down from the crosses of hunger, homelessness or sickness?

Pray

Christ Jesus, you are always willing to give us another chance to better ourselves and support those around us. May we follow your example and never cease to help others come down from the crosses that bind them, always prayerfully reflecting on our own role in putting them there.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" —Matthew 27:46

Kneel for a reflective pause and then rise.

We look at our world being torn by war, hunger, disease and hate, and we grow discouraged. But God turns death and failure into life and victory. This is the Easter perspective, the message of the Gospel. We see the suffering, but we also see the joy—the slow work of God. And we commit to act.

Reflect

How does this perspective of Easter inspire our own work in seemingly hopeless and failed situations? How does God want us to view problems like poverty, natural disasters and environmental decay—through human standards, or a more hopeful outlook?

Pray

Christ Jesus, even in the most devastating failures, you show us the importance of hope. May we have the courage to work patiently and tirelessly with those in need, always keeping our sights on you.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Thirteenth Station: Jesus' Body Is Taken Down From the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.'" —Luke 22:19

Jesus' broken body reminds us of his full humanity. He had a body just like ours that needed sustenance and exercise, that could be bruised and battered. Through his body, he experienced the world around him. This is shared human experience reminds us of our common dignity and calls us to solidarity with our global human family.

Reflect

Through his example, Jesus challenges us to examine the real bodily needs of those around us, the "neighbors" we pass on the street and in crowded shopping centers.

We are reminded of the Eucharist, the Communion through which we, the Church, share in Jesus' body and blood, in yet another common experience with our sisters and brothers no matter when or where they live. We are called to encounter our God who became human. In experiencing the Eucharist, we receive an opportunity to put our own needs aside and replace them with our neighbor's needs as God did. By doing so, we empty ourselves of what it means to be "me" and better understand what it means to be "another."

Pray

Christ Jesus, you offer us yourself in the Eucharist and invite us to offer ourselves to you and your global family. May we learn to put the needs of others ahead of our own, so we can better love our neighbor.

Our Father… Hail Mary… Glory Be to the Father…

Fourteenth Station: Jesus' Body Is Placed in the Tomb

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Response: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditate

"Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" —Luke 24:26

As Christians, we know that God wins the day, but that doesn't always ease our daily struggles. Many of us are currently living in our own "three days"—a dark period with seemingly no end in sight, feeling our efforts for mercy, justice and peace are in vain. Yet, our faith assures us that Christ wins, darkness ends and the seeds we plant today will bear fruit tomorrow.

Reflect

Where can you plant seeds to bear fruit for tomorrow? How is your trust in God helping you through your dark periods?

Pray

Christ Jesus, as we contemplate all that remains to be done to build a just and loving world, remind us that our work may be incomplete, but it just beginning. Welcome into my heart the Lord's grace to do the rest of the work that needs to be done.

Our Father … Hail Mary … Glory Be to the Father …

Closing Prayer

Christ Jesus, we have walked the way of the cross with you.
We have seen your sorrows and sufferings and have experienced
the hope and joy that a single moment of love can give.
We know that although Shafa'tu, Antoine, Alfredo, Christine, Jacinta, Kan and their families live in other countries, they are a part of our global family.
All over our world, you are at work.
And you call us to work as well, alongside those who are poorest and most vulnerable.
As we continue our Lenten journey, we ask that you bless our efforts to love and serve one another.

Amen.