

VIA CRUCIS THE WAY OF THE CROSS, THE WAY OF THE CHURCH

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction

“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14, 5). As we begin the way of the cross, we wish to ask the Lord, as Thomas did in the Last Supper, “Where are you going?” We ask this because, despite knowing that the Lord’s path leads to salvation and to God, we wish he could have taken a different path leading to the same destination. We ask this because sometimes we do not understand the paths chosen for us by the Lord, we do not understand why he allows certain things to happen, why he allows certain choices and decisions to be made, or why he allows suffering.

To Thomas, Jesus says: “I am the way” (John 14, 6). Among the first Christians, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian choice and life were the path. The fundamental choice to allow Christ into their lives put them on the same path as him not merely as an inevitable consequence but because they truly understood that they needed to embrace him throughout the way of the cross. It is the path that opens outwards so that the word of the Lord reaches the ends of the earth.

It is the path not because there is only one way for us to become the Lord’s disciples but because as we walk with Christ, we come to realise that we are also walking together as a Church: Christ’s family of disciples, a congregation walking the way that is Christ. It is within the community that Christ’s passion continues for the salvation of the world.

And, in this moment of prayer we allow the Lord to show us his true self because it is through the way of the cross, represented by the figure of Christ, that we recognise that we belong to the Church. It is through this that we understand who we ought to be as individuals and as a community.

First Station

Jesus is condemned to death

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (2, 6-8. 12-13)

And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

After the Last Supper, the disciples are faced with the way of the cross once again – a path that is tough and filled with prejudice and condemnation. When you put yourself out there and apply yourself to a

task, you come to understand that you have set about building your very own cross upon which you will offer your life.

Lord Jesus, though we have all taken the same road, we are walking separate but parallel paths, one path lined alongside another, all of which lead to you. As we embrace the path chosen for us, we pray you will help us willingly receive our cross as we follow you, even when we struggle to bear the burden. Help us to trust in the power of your Spirit that encourages us to remain faithful.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Second Station

Jesus carries His cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians (6, 14)

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

What is the Cross? It is that which exists in my life as an individual and our lives as a community. We did not choose it, it was chosen for us, and we are called upon to embrace it to ensure our salvation. When we embrace what may be stifling, Death gives way to life.

Lord Jesus, sometimes it is my community of brothers and sisters who are my Cross. I know too that sometimes it is I who is somebody's Cross. Instead of humiliating and tearing each other down, wouldn't it be better to be warm and welcoming, to embrace each other, and give the other person room to grow? We pray that we do not gloat about the perfection of our community but about how well we are able to come to terms with our individual crosses and accompany each other on our way to you.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Third Station

Jesus falls the first time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (26, 13-14)

When at midday along the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads."

In the Acts of the Apostles, the story of the meeting between Jesus and Paul on his way to Damascus appears three times. It is when Paul's path merged with the Lord's. In these accounts, each time Paul falls to the ground, there is a parallel with each of Jesus' three falls on his way to Calvary, as traditionally recounted in the Gospel.

Lord Jesus, this first fall, like Paul's wake-up call, is our realisation that all is not well: there are problems, there is darkness and sin, there is perturbation, there are blindfolds that keep us from discovering the truth. But it is also this very realisation that throws a spotlight over us and makes possible a true meeting with you. As our idols and delusions fall away, we pray that you will not let us believe in the collapse of all we knew before. We pray you will show us your light and help us cling to it.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Fourth Station

Jesus meets His Mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (1, 13–14)

When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

This mother's faithfulness does not end with her Son's crucifixion. It goes beyond. She walks with the Church – the mystical body of Her Son – and stands at the foot of the Cross of his brothers and sisters given to her as her own children.

Lord Jesus, in your last hour you were prepared to forgo even the love of your own Mother. In so doing, you would have sacrificed absolutely everything for us. You were prepared to give her to

us as our own Mother so that we may never be alone when facing the hardship of life and the world. For this, we give you thanks.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Fifth Station

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (10, 25–28)

On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean."

Just like Simon of Cyrene, Cornelius was a foreigner living in Palestine. Like Simon, Cornelius was on his own path but his meeting with Christ left its mark. He did not carry on unchanged. Just as Jesus does not refuse Simon of Cyrene's help, Peter immediately lets Cornelius' servants take him away so that he may give them news of salvation.

Lord Jesus, we are in the habit of looking at what is foreign to us as unclean. We pray for wisdom so that we are perceptive enough to accept that which you have made pure so that, through us, it will lead to goodness. We pray that we do not mistake outsiders for enemies but rather find allies in them on our journey.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Sixth Station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor 3, 18)

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

“Christ is the Light of nations... a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, par. 1). How wonderful is the Church’s declaration about itself in Vatican Council II. These words reveal the true identity of the Church as a mirror reflects Christ’s face of love and mercy onto the world.

Lord Jesus, sometimes the face of the Church, just like your face, needs drying so that your light may shine brighter. Call from among us prophets who, like Veronica, are brave enough to stand out in the crowd; prophets who with their words bring about conversion and healing without ravaging or throwing out the good with the bad, so that we may transform in your image and in so doing give you thanks.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Seventh Station

Jesus falls the second time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (9, 3–5)

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

With the disintegration of our hopes and dreams in the face of life’s reality and that of the Church, the idea of Jesus we have constructed collapses along with all our incorrect ideas about who God is, and with it the realisation that we did not truly know the Lord.

“Lord, who are you?” We find ourselves asking this question, Lord Jesus, each time our pride takes a hit. But each time, we pray: Help us get back on our feet and help us to understand a little more each time who you really are so that we may continue to be your authentic witnesses.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Eighth Station

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Book of Revelation (21, 1–4)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

The lamentations of the women of Jerusalem are also the lamentations of the Church together with the whole of creation while we await adoption and the redemption of our bodies (see Rom 8, 22). ‘We long for the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our mother, there where the Lord may be all in all.’

Lord Jesus, until this revelation transpires, until our paltry life reaches its fulfilment, let the promise of the revelation of your glory comfort us along with the serenity that awaits us, so much so that even now you will start wiping the tears from our eyes, and spur us to start building your reign amongst men.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles (22, 7–10)

“I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Then he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. I asked, ‘What am I to do, Lord?’ The Lord said to me,

‘Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do.’”

Some failures happen unexpectedly and take us by surprise. Others result from our choices. “Lord, what should I do?” In falling to the ground, Saul chooses both literally and figuratively to make himself small in front of Jesus and embrace his path. It is this humility, this lowering that lifts him off the ground so that he may begin to follow Jesus.

Lord Jesus, today we too throw ourselves at your feet and ask “What ought we to do?” – not what we would like you to do, but what you would like us to do. And we will do this humbly because our pride closes us off from our ability to change our paths where necessary, or accepting others’ paths. We kneel before you and say with sincerity: “Thy will be done!”.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Tenth Station

Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (11, 23. 27)

I often faced near death. In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked.

To choose freely to be disciples of Christ means we need to disavow ourselves, our desire, and sometimes we are even asked to forgo our liberty for a greater freedom. Like Saint Paul, however, we understand that nothing can separate us from Christ’s love, not hardship, not distress, not persecution, not famine, not nakedness (see Rom 8, 35).

Lord Jesus, in our society nakedness has become fashionable. At the same time, we labour to conceal our inner selves while you call on us to expose our souls. We pray for the strength to cast off all that is antithetical to you.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Eleventh Station

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (1, 22–25)

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The Cross is, was, and will remain absurd and obstructive. It is difficult to fathom how suffering can be embraced and how it can lead to salvation. It is so difficult to understand not only do we do everything in our power to obliterate pain from our lives, but sometimes we snub those who appear to be suffering, or worse still, cut them out of our lives entirely.

Lord Jesus, the Church has been plagued with its fair share of scandals. We pray that we are at least at liberty to choose the scandal and absurdity of your Cross so that we may continue to show that salvation is possible even in the face of suffering and ensure that the dignity of those who are suffering is safeguarded.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the First Letter of Saint Peter (2, 21–24)

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

With the death of the Lord, the Cross became the model upon which the disciples built their lives. Every single disciple who truly wishes to resemble the Lord must, like Christ, be prepared always to embrace death. Every disciple must be prepared to dismiss sin on a personal level. At the same

time, every disciple must be prepared, like Christ, to burden themselves with sin and carry the deaths of others.

Lord Jesus, your death reminds us of our own death, not merely the end of our lives but also that which we experience daily. We pray that this encourages us to be open and willing to do good with those our brothers and sisters who are beset by death so that our help will give them hope and courage to continue on.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Thirteenth Station

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians (4, 7–10)

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

The world looks for salvation to eliminate death and to prolong life on earth. The Creator saved the world through death. Since the story of the Tower of Babel, human beings have never ceased to be grasping and hungry for power. God ruled by humbling himself in order to raise all beings.

Lord Jesus, in your lifeless body there are infinite possibilities. Through your death, nothing was closed off to you. Your experience of death established the ultimate channel between human beings and yourself. Comfort us with the certainty that no darkness is impenetrable to you.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Laid in His Tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (6, 3-4)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

The contemplation of Jesus' burial and the present reality of the empty tomb leave us suspended between the Easter Saturday of our Christian life and the advent of that eternal Easter Sunday which we await. We have already attained adoption, but glory is yet to be achieved. Salvation has already been attained but, at the same time, it is yet to be achieved by each one of us on an individual level.

Lord Jesus, until the dawn of eternal life, we are suspended between light and darkness. We are already living a new life thanks to our baptism, but we must continue to renew ourselves until you return to breathe life into us again. We pray you are with us so that our presence will be a reminder to us of all that we have already achieved but also all that we must continue striving for.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

V/. O Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your passion and death.

R/. Lord have mercy on us and forgive us our sins.

Praying for the Pope's Intentions:

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

Hail, Holy Queen to Our Lady of Sorrows

Lord, look down from your heavenly home and protect your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his life to the wicked and for whom he endured the horrific suffering of the cross. He who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.