

Bill Huebsch

PRAYING  
THE STATIONS  
WITH POPE  
FRANCIS

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The material from Pope Francis is paraphrased unless it is within quotation marks.

## INTRODUCTION

In the opening paragraphs of *The Joy of the Gospel*, which was published in 2013, Pope Francis invites us all to a renewed personal encounter with Christ. In order to experience true and full human happiness, he reminds us, we must learn again to walk with Christ. Those who make this choice are not disappointed. Each time we turn our heart toward him, we find him there, waiting for us, just as the father of the prodigal son stood waiting at the crossroads for his beloved child to return.

Pope Francis invites us to return to Christ again and again, and to walk with Christ in our daily lives. “Now is the time,” he tells us in article 3. “Now is the time to say, ‘Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace.’”

We are invited to walk with Christ, and what more fitting path could there be than the pathway of the cross? Let us set out now on this journey, pausing at each station to meditate on the self-giving love of Christ that must now become our own lifestyle of love.

Bear in mind as we reflect and pray that, even though this is a story about Jesus’ way of the cross, it is also a story about us. We pray for the grace to see how carrying our cross is a reality today. May these moments of prayer open your eyes to see this grace in your life. May you be moved to become grateful for the self-giving love of Jesus, which does set you free, but also helps you to see and recognize those who are being crucified in our society today—by hate, prejudice, illness, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. May you leave here determined to work for the peace and justice of the Reign of God.

## OPENING PRAYER

*(As the ministers enter the sanctuary, all rise. Facing the cross, all pray together.)*

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

Loving Jesus,  
You took up your cross  
with complete love for us.  
You walked the way to your death  
in order to give us the freedom of new life.  
We willingly take up our own crosses today  
and follow you on your journey,  
walking with you on this pathway of love.  
Only you can lead us away from selfish darkness  
to the light of self-giving love.  
Stir up within us the desire to forgive our enemies,  
to love our friends more deeply,  
and to take upon our own shoulders  
the needs of the poor and vulnerable  
whom you love so much.

Dear Mary, Mother of God,  
be our example of courage now  
as we face this way of the cross.  
Pray for us as we journey here  
that our lives might be filled with grace.

Give us clean hearts, Holy Spirit,  
and kindle within us the fire of your love.  
Let us be thankful for the merciful love of Christ,  
which led him to embrace the cross.  
And lead us now to the loving arms of God our Father  
with whom we hope to live  
forever and ever. Amen.

# The First Station

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## JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

**LEADER** The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** Pilate did not seem to want Jesus to die. As the crowds called for his death, Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death” (Luke 23:24). And yet, in the end, yielding to public pressure, he washed his hands of it all and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

It is really true that Jesus should have received justice from Pilate. He was, after all, the ruler and the one with power. But his personal security and safety overtook him. He was afraid to move against the crowds.

Let this be a lesson for us. The crowds want us to judge and condemn others in the name of God for their sins or beliefs. The crowds condone prejudice and hatred. They condone war and violence. Do we dare to stand against such crowd thinking? Or are we more like Pilate, letting the demands of such crowds determine our own attitudes and actions?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ DAILY HOMILY ON JUNE 23, 2014 ]

**ALL** People who judge others are wrong, mistaken, and defeated because they assume God's place; but God is the one and only judge.

God often "takes his time" when rendering judgment and does not operate according to human ways or conceptions.

Jesus spoke of picking a splinter in a neighbor's eye while failing to tend to the plank in our own.

"He who does this is so obsessed with the person he wants to judge ...

that the splinter will not let him sleep!

He who judges becomes defeated, ends badly, because the same measure will be used to judge him.

Jesus, before the Father, never accuses; it is the opposite, he defends!"

**LEADER** Jesus, Lord and Giver of Life, we may either support others with love or hand down wrongful sentences of social death. Keep us from pointing our fingers at the wrongs of others. Keep us from condemning others, rejecting them, sending them into exile, or failing to welcome them among us. Let your Spirit be with us to give us the courage to speak up for the weak and walk with them on their journey. We pray in your name.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Second Station

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## JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

**LEADER** The Second Station: Jesus takes us his cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** The idea of carrying one's cross in life has somewhat gone out of fashion these days. We would rather hire someone to do that for us or, better yet, not have to deal with a cross at all.

The soldiers who handed Jesus this cross thought they had complete power over him. How mistaken they were. The power to dominate others is actually a weakness. Jesus did not choose the cross, and yet he seemed to know deep down that carrying it would lead to the real power of self-giving love. He bore the cross, in other words, for us.

Today, the burden of the cross is borne by those who suffer economic hardships, unemployment, insecurity, and homelessness. It is borne by immigrants, victims of war and violence, and the ones we reject. Like Jesus, they did not ask for their cross, and yet they must carry it.

And we, for our part, must now step forward to carry their crosses as well. Like Jesus, we bear it for them. The cross becomes lighter if we all carry it together. Will you pick up their burdens, or will you watch from the sidelines as they struggle up the hill?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ PRAYING THE WAY OF THE CROSS ON APRIL 18, 2014 ]

**ALL** The cross is a reminder  
of how much evil people are capable of  
and how much love Jesus had for a sinful humanity.  
One's cross may be heavy because she is abandoned;  
another's heavy because he has lost a loved one;  
and for others it is heavy because they have taken on  
the pain of evil.

Jesus shows "that evil will not have the last word";  
love, mercy, and forgiveness will be victorious.  
"From the cross we see the monstrosity of [human]kind  
when it lets itself be guided by evil.

But we also see the immensity of the mercy of God,  
who doesn't treat us according to our sins,  
but according to his mercy."

Pray that you may find strength in the trials of your cross,  
and live in the hope of God's resurrection and love.

**LEADER** Be with us, Christ our Light, for in the darkness of the night  
our world seems lost to evil. People struggle to find work,  
we cannot seem to find peace, and we hunger for justice in  
our world. May we faithfully carry the crosses of each other  
so that as one people we might live in your love.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Third Station

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## JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

**LEADER** The Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** With these words, the prophet Isaiah describes the suffering of Jesus:

*He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole. (ISAIAH 53:4-5)*

Yes, Jesus fell. He was frail now and very human. He held the light of heaven in his hands, and he offered peace to the world, and yet, in the chaos, fear, and pain of that way of the cross, he simply fell to the ground under the weight of it all.

But even now, at this moment of weakness, Jesus remains our teacher. None of us is as strong as we need to be. Each of us carries a weight sometimes under which we too may fall. Jesus teaches us to trust in his Father at these moments, to accept our weaknesses, and to admit our limits and frailty.

Jesus fell at this point along his journey, but he also got up again. Will you get back up? Will you turn falling into rising? And likewise toward others—can you accept it when those around you fall? Can you show mercy to them?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, NO. 3 ]

**ALL** “How good it feels to come back to him  
whenever we are lost!  
Let me say this once more:  
God never tires of forgiving us;  
we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.  
Christ, who told us to forgive one another ‘seventy times seven,’  
has given us his example:  
he has forgiven us seventy times seven.  
Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders.  
No one can strip us of the dignity  
bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love.  
With a tenderness that never disappoints,  
but is always capable of restoring our joy,  
he makes it possible for us  
to lift up our heads and to start anew.”

**LEADER** Lord Jesus, give us the grace to rise when we fall and to turn  
our hearts back to you. And strengthen us to help raise up  
all those near us who have also fallen, especially our poorest  
sisters and brothers.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Fourth Station

## JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

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**LEADER** The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** With these words, the Gospel of Luke describes the place of Mary in the story of our salvation:

*Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary:  
“This child is destined for the falling and rising of  
many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be op-  
posed... and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*

(LUKE 2:34–35)

Jesus and Mary met on this journey to the cross, and their meeting helps us understand the depth of Mary’s love for her son. She had stood by Jesus through thick and thin. She stands with us too. Her love reflects God’s unbelievable love for us. How can our own hearts here today not be filled with wonder as we think about how Mary and Jesus must have connected on the road to the cross?

Many mothers in today’s world have watched as their sons and daughters have been seized and tortured, dragged out to the edge of town, and murdered. Mary’s tears are the tears of the mothers of the world.

Mary offers us her arms now, her embrace. Her motherly love remains with us. Mary’s initial “yes” to God’s invitation to bear his Son was a “yes” that she repeated many times, including in this profound moment on the way of the cross.

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ HOMILY ON OCT 23, 2013 ]

**ALL** “Mary said her yes to God:  
a yes that threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil,  
and not only once.  
Any number of times she had to utter a heartfelt yes  
at moments of joy and sorrow,  
culminating in the yes she spoke at the foot of the Cross.  
Here today there are many mothers present;  
think of the full extent of Mary’s faithfulness to God:  
seeing her only Son hanging on the Cross.  
The faithful woman, still standing,  
utterly heartbroken, yet faithful and strong.  
And I ask myself: am I a Christian by fits and starts,  
or am I a Christian full-time?”

**LEADER** O dear Mary, our Mother, send your blessing upon us now  
and draw us closer to your Son. Ask the Spirit to open our  
hearts to the will of the Father so that, like you, we may say  
“yes” when the time comes.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Fifth Station

## JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON OF CYRENE TO CARRY HIS CROSS

**LEADER** The Fifth Station: Jesus is helped to carry his cross  
by Simon of Cyrene.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** The Gospel of Mark reports that, as Jesus was going on this  
way to Calvary, a passerby was pressed into service to help him.

*They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in  
from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of  
Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.*

(MARK 15:21)

Jesus had taught during his Sermon on the Mount  
(Matthew 5:41) that if someone forces you to go one mile  
with him you should voluntarily go two. You should, in  
other words, go the extra mile. When we do more than is  
required of us and give of ourselves in extraordinary ways,  
we deepen our joy and sense of well-being.

So with Simon of Cyrene. He just happened to be pass-  
ing by that day, but he was offered a chance to go the extra  
mile. Such an offer can be a turning point.

When we let the needs of others (including the poor  
and vulnerable) drive us, life-changing decisions follow. We  
take up the cross of Jesus in self-denial. If you give yourself  
away in love, you get back a rich harvest; but if you fail to go  
that extra mile, all you have left is selfishness.

This moves us away from self-absorption into the arena  
of self-giving love. Simon encountered Christ; in this en-  
counter, he also found freedom. Jesus himself tells us: “Just  
as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of



my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Will you go the extra mile in your daily life? Will you pick up the cross of someone near you and help them carry it?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, NOS. 7B-8 ]

**ALL** I never tire of repeating those words of Pope Benedict that take us to the very heart of the Gospel:  
“Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea,  
but the encounter with [the person of Jesus Christ],  
which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”  
Thanks solely to this encounter—or renewed encounter—  
with God’s love,  
which blossoms into an enriching friendship,  
we are liberated from our narrowness  
and self-absorption.  
We become fully human  
when we become more than human,  
when we let God bring us beyond ourselves.

**LEADER** Lord Jesus, give us hearts full of love to pick up and carry the crosses of others. Remove our selfishness and replace it with a heart for the poor so that we might offer them mercy and consolation through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Sixth Station

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## VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

**LEADER** The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** This station on the way of the cross reminds us that we are called to see the face of the Lord on every wounded and forgotten person we meet. Is he homeless? Does she push a shopping cart through the streets of your city? Has he been sick, imprisoned, or disfigured? Are they immigrants? Refugees? Victims of war and violence? Have they lived under bombardment, duress, torture, and fear? Does she live in a poor village in Central America? In a remote part of Africa? Somewhere in rural Russia? Or does he live down the street, forgotten and alone in a nursing home?

In the midst of the crowds that day, Veronica sought Jesus. She knew she would recognize his face because, like the faces of those we have mentioned above, it reflects the face of God. In Jesus, she saw clearly all those near us who need to be consoled with a tender touch, those who cry out with pain, and those who receive neither practical assistance nor the warmth of compassion.

Will you seek the face of God among the poor and the suffering? Will you wipe their faces with your own cloak, unafraid to approach them, even though they are wounded and dying?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, NO. 54B ]

**ALL** “To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others,  
or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal,  
a globalization of indifference has developed.  
Almost without being aware of it,  
we end up being incapable of feeling compassion  
at the outcry of the poor,  
weeping for other people’s pain,  
and feeling a need to help them,  
as though all this were someone else’s responsibility  
and not our own.  
The culture of prosperity deadens us;  
we are thrilled if the market offers us something  
new to purchase.  
In the meantime all those lives stunted  
for lack of opportunity  
seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.”

**LEADER** Lord Jesus, teach us to see your face and not to turn away from  
pain and suffering. Help us to wipe away the tears and sweat  
from our sisters and brothers suffering from injustice and  
indignity. May your own image be revealed in the faces of  
all we meet. Through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Seventh Station

## JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

**LEADER** The Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** Sometimes as we read and hear the story of Jesus' way of the cross, we forget that he was being held as a prisoner under a death sentence—and that he was tortured by his captors. In taking on himself such suffering and humiliation, Jesus carries the sorrow and pain that we humans have inflicted on each other down through the centuries and continue to inflict today.

One can't help but think of Psalm 22 where in verses 14 and 15 we read:

*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.*

Indeed, in this second fall, Jesus lays in the dust of the earth, the dust of death.

Sadly, this is also the bitter experience of those throughout the world who are locked in prisons. Like Jesus, they are alone and yet surrounded by crowded conditions, a lack of speedy justice, and death. Even when finally released, they are treated as convicts and live with shame and fear. Many are tortured as Jesus was, all in the name of justice, by our own government as well as others around the world.

Can we hear the words of Jesus calling us to end this madness? "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36b). Can we reach beyond our own comfort to those



who suffer as Jesus did? Can we support programs to help those who have fallen get up again and start a new journey in their lives? Can we end the death penalty and reform our prisons to make them more just?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ JUNE 23, 2014 IN ST. PETER'S SQUARE ]

**ALL** “I repeat the firm condemnation  
of every form of torture  
and invite Christians to commit themselves  
to work together for its abolition  
and to support victims and their families.  
To torture persons is... a very grave sin.”

**LEADER** Lord Jesus, fill our hearts with your love even for our enemies.  
May we be moved with mercy and compassion for every  
prisoner and all victims of war and violence. As you forgave  
your own killers, may we also forgive those who harm us.  
Through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Eighth Station

## JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

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**LEADER** The Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** We read in the Gospel of Luke about the story of these women who followed Jesus on his way of the cross. Luke says this:

*A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."*

(LUKE 23:27-28)

How often in today's world we see that it is women who are the shining lights of dignity and mercy. The text is clear that these women "followed" Jesus. They did not run away. They did not lose faith. They did not mock or deride him as others did. Rather, they stood their ground with him.

Likewise today, women often step forward to work on the front lines among the poor, the sick, the dying, and the forgotten. Many have given their own lives. Many others have given up a life of comfort for the sake of this ministry. Such women are responding to Jesus' teaching that his suffering was the avenue to new life. He is teaching the women of Jerusalem to be women of faith, even while they are full of grief. He teaches us the same lesson.

Indeed, let us weep for our own failures to carry hope to the world, even when the suffering seems impossible to overcome. We weep for the word of comfort we did not



speaking when we could have, or for the simple act of kindness we might have offered but failed to.

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ DECEMBER 7, 2013 AT THE VATICAN ]

**ALL** “I would like to underline how the woman has a particular sensitivity for the ‘things of God,’ above all in helping us to understand the mercy, tenderness, and love that God has for us. And it pleases me to think that the Church is not [masculine]; it is [feminine]. The Church is a woman! The Church is a mother! And that’s beautiful... We have to think deeply about this.”

**LEADER** May our hearts, O God, be filled with the same compassion as these women of Jerusalem. And may we likewise follow Jesus, tending those who suffer, offering kindness to those who are alone, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and extending hope to all the world. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Ninth Station

## JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

**LEADER** The Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** At this third incident of Jesus falling on his way of the cross, we are reminded that each of us is called to die to ourselves. Each of us is called to learn the art of self-giving love. We are called to put others first, to care for the forgotten, and to reach out with mercy to all. We are called to forgive endlessly, to give away our money, and to put ourselves at the service of others. We are called to imitate Christ in self-giving.

This amazing and powerful call to holiness will sometimes lead us to walk a difficult pathway. The times will be very tough; we will run out of luck; nothing will seem to be going right for us. Like Jesus, we will fall repeatedly. But even then—especially then—we are called to get up and keep moving. We must not spend our days looking backward at how things used to be, but we must pull ourselves up from the ground and move onward with hope.

St. Paul experienced this same call. In Romans chapter 8, he teaches us to hope in the midst of whatever happens. There we read:

*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (ROMANS 8:35–37)*

Can you embrace your own call to holiness, even though



it will lead through suffering and difficulty? Will you imitate Christ in loving others? Will you stop looking back at “the good old days” and start looking forward in hope to what God is calling us to become?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ JUNE 18, 2014 IN A PUBLIC AUDIENCE IN ROME ]

**ALL** Even though we Christians wander away from God,  
“God never tires.  
God has patience, so much patience,  
and continues to form and to educate his people  
just like a father does with his own sons and daughters...  
God walks with us.  
When we recognize that we are sinners,  
God fills us with his mercy and love,  
and he forgives us.  
He always forgives us.  
This is what makes us grow as the people of God,  
the Church.”

**LEADER** O great God of the Universe, give us the strength to die, just as you gave it to Jesus, your Son. Implant within our hearts the ability to hear your call and respond selflessly. May the world find its way to peace and justice by the work of our hands. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Tenth Station

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## JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

**LEADER** The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** Here at this tenth station, we begin the final journey to the cross. We hear this story told in the Gospel of John:

*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another: "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says: "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." (JOHN 19:23-24)*

Jesus was stripped as an act of utter humiliation. Like so many in today's world, he was made into a "nobody" by his captors. They treated him like an animal. Today we see women and children routinely abused and violated. We see victims of war running from their homes with only the clothes on their backs. We see people stripped of their dignity by our gossip and cruelty.

We Christians have the grace to do amazing feats of strength. Will you stand up to the evil kind of treatment that Jesus endured and prevent others from suffering it? Will you practice forgiveness, acts of generosity, and daring work for justice? Will you allow your baptismal garment to clothe you as you step forward to work for the Reign of God?



[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

## **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ GENERAL AUDIENCE ON APRIL 16, 2014 ]

**ALL** Jesus, who opted to pass through this life,  
calls us to follow him  
on his way of the cross.

There are moments in all our lives  
when we find ourselves in great difficulty,  
when we sink into the thickest darkness.

That is the moment of our humiliation and total stripping,  
the hour where we experience  
that we are fragile and that we are sinners.

It is then that we have to admit our failure  
and open ourselves with confidence in God,  
as Jesus did.

Dear brothers and sisters,  
it will do us good to take the cross in hand  
and kiss it with passion,  
saying “Thank you, Jesus.  
Thank you, Lord. Amen.”

**LEADER** Jesus, Lord and Giver of Life, we do come before you as sinners and we admit our failures. Take away our stony hearts and create a new heart within us. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Eleventh Station

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## JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

**LEADER** The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** The hands of the soldiers who were “just doing their job” were also hands that could have chosen to offer healing, comfort, and assistance. They were hands of men who were most likely dads, husbands, and neighbors. Like our own, their hands were the tools they could choose to use for good or for evil.

The cross was cruel and inhumane. It was a punishment reserved for the worst characters of the society. It was painful and humiliating. And it was administered to Jesus by these soldiers. Their hands pounded in the nails, raised the cross to its standing place, and failed to offer mercy or comfort.

Many of our sisters and brothers today are likewise nailed to a bed of pain: disease, old age, depression, addiction—hardship that leads to bitter days and hopeless nights. Others are nailed to the cross by life in war-torn regions, to fleeing as refugees, to hiding because of their creed or race. Who will heal these? Who will release them from their pain?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## In the words of Pope Francis

[ THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, PORTIONS OF NOS, 210, 212, 213, & 216 ]

**ALL** “It is essential to draw near  
to new forms of poverty and vulnerability,  
in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ,  
even if this appears to bring us no tangible  
and immediate benefits.

I think of the homeless,  
the addicted, refugees, and indigenous peoples,  
of the elderly who are increasingly isolated  
and abandoned,  
and many others.

Doubly poor are those women  
who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment,  
and violence,  
since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.

Among the vulnerable  
for whom the Church wishes to care  
with particular love and concern  
are unborn children,  
the most defenseless and innocent among us.”

**LEADER** Lord Jesus, put our hands to work bringing love and mercy to  
a world overwhelmed in hate and violence. May our hands  
provide comfort and healing rather than pain and death.  
We pray in your name.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Twelfth Station

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## JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

**LEADER** The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** This story about Jesus' way of the cross, we know, leads to this moment, his death. Remember as you pray here today that this is also our own story. We are also called to the same journey of faith. We are called to surrender our own spirits, our will, and our life in order to die to ourselves and live with self-giving love. We imitate Christ by following his teachings but mainly by following him to the cross.

The call to die to ourselves is embedded in a thousand encounters and moments of daily life: a sick child, the needs of our spouses and friends, aging parents, neighbors in need, a news story about people suffering somewhere in the world, a nagging intuition to call an old friend, a promise once made, an opportunity for an act of kindness—in these and many other moments, the call is sounded.

Let us therefore go to the cross with Christ. Let us commit ourselves to embrace his paschal mystery and live as women and men of the cross.

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



## **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ NOV 27, 2013 WEEKLY GENERAL AUDIENCE ]

**ALL** “If we live united to Jesus, faithful to him,  
we will be able to confront with hope and serenity  
even the passage of death.  
If my life has been a path with the Lord,  
of trust in his immense mercy,  
I will be prepared to accept the last moments  
of my earthly existence as the definitive  
trustful abandonment  
in his receiving hands,  
in awaiting to contemplate him face to face.”

**LEADER** Father of All, you teach us through Christ to embrace death  
and so to live a full life. May we have solidarity with those  
in pain, hope when we see only despair, mercy toward  
our enemies, and generosity to the poor. We pray through  
Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Thirteenth Station

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## JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

**LEADER** The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** We read this story in the Gospel of Matthew:

*When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. (MATTHEW 27:57-58)*

The Pietà, as we all know, is a sculpture done by Michelangelo in 1498. It depicts Jesus' mother, Mary, holding his dead body in her arms. Her countenance is that of a brokenhearted mother, bound to her son, and unable to let him go. The name Pietà can be translated into the English word "pity," and she may indeed have had pity on him; he had, after all, suffered a terrible death.

But Pietà is better translated with the English word "compassion," meaning "to suffer with someone." Mary suffered with Jesus on his way of the cross and, as she held him, she continued to suffer with him. She bore his humiliation, his pain, and his death within her. And, in fact, we are all called to do that. And not only are we called to suffer with Jesus, but we are called to suffer with the body of Christ when it is starving, homeless, and jobless. The body of Christ with whom we suffer has cancer, AIDS, and malnutrition. It is lonely, abandoned in a nursing home, and invisible.

When Pope Francis asks us to include the poor in our lives and society, he is asking us to suffer with the poor and to allow our compassion to turn into work for justice and generosity.



We must love others to the bitter end, as Mary loved Jesus. Let us bear in our hearts the haunting image of the Pietà, the dead Jesus in the arms of his compassionate mother. From such compassion, can we allow love to flow?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, NO. 285 ]

**ALL** “At the foot of the cross,  
at the supreme hour of the new creation,  
Christ led us to Mary.  
He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey  
without a mother,  
and [we] read in this maternal image all the mysteries  
of the Gospel.  
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.’”

**LEADER** Virgin of Sorrows, compassionate Mother of Jesus, pray for us as we learn to imitate you. May our hearts be moved with love for our sisters and brothers who suffer. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**ALL** Amen.

# The Fourteenth Station

## JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

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**LEADER** The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**LEADER** We read the story of Jesus' tomb in the Gospel of John:

*Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid... They laid Jesus there.*

(JOHN 19:41-42)

This tomb provides us with a pause in this story. Jesus has suffered greatly, comforted along the way by Veronica, Simon, the women of Jerusalem, and his mother, Mary. He has been humiliated and tortured, put to death without being convicted, and now he is buried in a new tomb. We pause. We have three days to think all this over. Will we let this story end here?

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

### **In the words of Pope Francis**

[ AT THE BASILICA OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER,  
JERUSALEM, MAY 25, 2014 ]

**ALL** "It is an extraordinary grace to be gathered here in prayer.  
The empty tomb, that new garden grave  
where Joseph of Arimathea had reverently  
placed Jesus' body,  
is the place from which the proclamation  
of the resurrection begins:



‘Do not be afraid;  
I know that you are looking for Jesus  
who was crucified.

He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said.’

Let us receive the special grace of this moment.

We pause in reverent silence  
before this empty tomb  
in order to rediscover the grandeur  
of our Christian vocation:  
we are men and women of resurrection,  
and not of death.

From this place we learn how to live our lives,  
the trials of our Churches and of the whole world,  
in the light of Easter morning.

Every injury, every one of our pains and sorrows,  
has been borne on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd  
who offered himself in sacrifice  
and thereby opened the way to eternal life.

His open wounds are like the cleft  
through which the torrent of his mercy  
is poured out upon the world.

Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed  
of the basis of our hope.”

**LEADER** O Risen Lord, O Spirit of Holiness, O Father of all Creation,  
we thank you for this journey of faith as we walked the way  
of the cross. May our hearts be moved with love and may  
our hands be agents of mercy as we go forth now to love  
and serve in your name.

**ALL** Amen.

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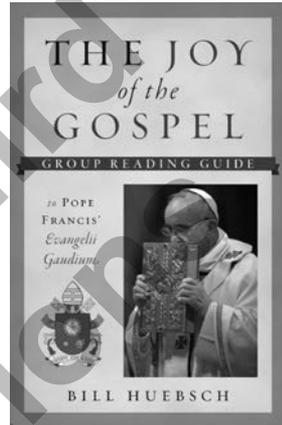
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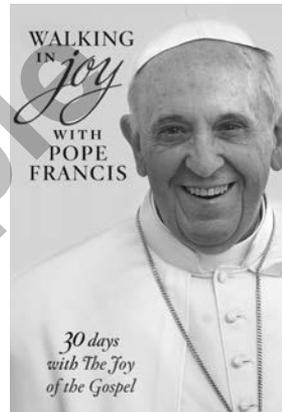


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