

Stations of the Cross

Meditations according to World War I Chaplain Fr. William Doyle

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

Behold, O kind and most sweet Jesus, I cast myself upon my knees in Your sight, and with the most fervent desire of my soul I pray and beseech You that You would impress upon my heart lively sentiments of Faith, Hope, and Charity, with true repentance for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment, while with deep affection and grief of soul I ponder within myself and mentally contemplate Your five most precious Wounds; having before my eyes the words which David in prophecy spoke concerning Yourself, O good Jesus: "They have pierced my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones."

The First Station

Jesus is condemned to death

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Around the judgement seat are grouped a motley crowd. Men and women of every rank, the high-born Jewish maiden, the rough Samaritan woman; haughty Scribes and proud Pharisees mingle with the common loafer of the great city. Hatred has united them all for one common object; hatred of One Who ever loves them and to their wild fury has only opposed acts of gentle kindness. A mighty scream goes up, a scream of fierce rage and angry fury, such a sound as only could be drawn from the very depths of hell. "Death to Him! Death to the false prophet!". He has spent His life among you doing good - Let Him die! He has healed your sick, given strength to the palsied, sight to your blind - Let Him die! He has raised your dead - Let death be His fate!

*At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.*

The Second Station
Jesus carries His cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Away from the palace now a sad procession is winding. On the faces of the multitude a fiendish joy is written, they have had their wish and now issue forth to glut their eyes on the dying struggles of the suffering innocent One. Painfully He is toiling up the long narrow street, narrower still from the crowds that line the way; each step is agony, each yard of ground He covers a fresh martyrdom of ever increasing suffering. With a refinement of cruelty His enemies have placed upon His shoulders the heavy, rough beams which will be His last painful resting place.

Cruelly the heavy beam weighs upon His mangled flesh and cuts and chafes a long, raw sore deep to the very bone.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,

All His bitter anguish bearing,

Now at length the sword has passed.

The Third Station
Jesus falls the first time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Bravely has our Lord borne the galling weight of His cross; bravely has He struggled on, tottering and stumbling, longing for a moment's rest, yearning for a respite however short. But rest He will not, that He may teach us how unfalteringly we must press on to our goal. But nature will have its way. His sight grows dim; His strength fails and with a crash our Saviour lies extended on the ground. Oh! if you have not hearts of stone let Him lie even thus, poor, crushed and broken thing. If you have but one spark of compassion left, one tender feeling of sympathy urge Him not on awhile, so spent, so weary. On a poor maimed brute you have pity - think of the sorrow of Him extended there.

O how sad and sore distressed

Was that Mother highly blest,

Of the sole-begotten One!

Fourth Station

Jesus meets His afflicted Mother

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

To sensitive souls the pain they cause others is far worse than any sufferings they may endure themselves. They may have much to endure, but to see others in pain causes them deeper grief. Jesus and Mary meet. Alone He could have suffered with joy so that she, His dearest Mother, might have been spared the agony of seeing all He must endure. With one look of pity Jesus reads the anguish of that cruelly lacerated heart; with one long gaze of infinite love and pity Mary sees the depth of her Son's woe, His long hours of torture, His utter weariness, His sorrow, His grief, His anguish. May she not help Him? At least lift for one moment that cross?

*Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son.*

The Fifth Station

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

When God lays a cross upon us, some misfortune, some unexpected burden, instead of thanking Him for this precious gift, too often we rebel against His will. We forget that our Saviour never sends a cross alone, but ever sweetens its bitterness, lightens its weight by His all-powerful grace. With reluctance, with unwillingness, Simon bears the cross of His Master. At first his spirit revolted against this injustice, his pride rebelled against this ignominy. But once he accepted with resignation, his soul was filled with heavenly sweetness, he felt not the weight of the heavy beams, he heeded not the jibes of the multitude but pressed on after His Master, proud to be His follower.

*Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent,*

The Sixth Station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

As the sorrowful procession moves slowly on, a woman, who with anxious gaze has watched its approach, steps forward and wipes the sacred face of Jesus. It is a simple action, yet reveals the kindly thoughtfulness of a charitable heart. Gladly would Veronica have done all in her power to lessen the sufferings of the Lord, to ease the dreadful burden which was crushing Him, to show some mark of sympathy and compassion. That little act of love touched the broken Heart of Jesus; He wipes the clotted blood and streaming sweat from His Face, leaving His sacred image stamped on the veil of Veronica; but deeper and more clear cut did He impress on her heart the memory of His passion.

For the sins of His own nation

Saw Him hang in desolation

Till His spirit forth He sent.

The Seventh Station

Jesus falls the second time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Jesus falls a second time, crushed beneath the weight of His awful sufferings which are fast draining His strength. Exhausted and spent He lies upon the rough-paved ground, a cruel resting place for His bleeding, lacerated body. Vainly He tries to rise, for love impels Him on to the consummation of the sacrifice, but His tottering limbs will not support Him and once again He falls upon the ground. Again the soldiers with fiendish brutality drag Him to His feet with coarse jibes and mocking laughter, with kicks and blows they drive Him on, pulling Him now forward, now back, striving if possible to add to the sufferings of the patient victim.

O thou Mother! fount of love,

Touch my spirit from above.

Make my heart with thine accord:

The Eighth Station

The daughters of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

The disciples of Jesus have deserted their Master, and fearful for their own safety, have abandoned Him to His fate. Peter who would die for Him, Matthew who left all to follow Him, are far from Him now and dread to be pointed to as His friends. Yet Jesus is not alone. A few, a faithful few, remain beside Him still: poor, weak women, but strong with the courage of love. The brutal crowd surge round, inflamed with hate and lust for blood; but they offer Him the tribute of a woman's heart - the silent tears of sympathy. "Weep not for Me," He says, "weep rather for those who unlike these My executioners will one day crucify Me again with full knowledge of what they do."

*Make me feel as thou hast felt:
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ my Lord.*

The Ninth Station

Jesus falls the third time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

The hill of Calvary is almost reached, the hour of the great sacrifice is at hand. Still the heart of Jesus thirsts for suffering to show His great, His all devouring love for us. Again He falls! With limbs all bruised and broken, with a body all one raw, red, quivering sore, each step He took was agony. But to fall thus helpless on the ragged ground, to be kicked and beaten as He lay with nerveless limbs all paralyzed with pain must have been to His high-strung, delicate frame a thousand-fold martyrdom. The executioners were alarmed. Was death going to rob them of their victim and cheat them of the joy they promised themselves as their victim writhed in the agonies of death?

Holy Mother! pierce me through.
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.

The Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped of His garments

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

At last He stands upon the hill of shame to pay the price of our redemption. In the eyes of His Eternal Father, a sinner laden with the crimes of a wicked world; before men, the most abject and abandoned of creatures. A brutal soldier advances. He lays his hand upon the garment of Jesus and roughly tears it from His sacred shoulders. The cloth has sunk deeply into the gaping wounds left by the recent scourging, and driven deeper still by the weight of the cross and the oft-repeated blows. With a horrid, rending sound the wounds are torn open afresh, the sacred blood gushes forth anew and bathes His limbs in its ruddy stream. It is a moment of awful agony.

*Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.*

The Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Upon His last resting place Jesus lays Himself down. No soft bed, no easy couch to ease the agony of His aching limbs, but a hard, rough beam must be His place of death. Meekly He extends His arms, those arms ever open to welcome back the repentant sinner, and offers His hands to be pierced as the Prophet had foretold. A long, blunt nail is placed upon the palm: a heavy, dull thud, the crunch of parting flesh and rending muscle, the spouting crimson blood which covers the face and hands of the hardened soldier and Jesus is fastened to the cross. Come, sinner, gaze upon your work for you have nailed Him there! Your sins it was which flung your Saviour down, your sins which drove the iron deep into His sacred flesh.

*Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.*

The Twelfth Station
Jesus dies on the cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Upon the cross He hangs now, the most abject and despised of all men [...] There He hangs, in agony no human lips can tell, no mind conceive, an impostor, a vile hypocrite, a failure. “He came to make Himself a King! See, we have crowned His brow with a royal, sparkling diadem. He sought a kingdom! From that elevated throne let Him look upon the land which will never be His now. He threatened our Scribes with woes and punishments, let Him look to His own fate and if He has that power which some say was His, let Him come down now from the cross and we too shall believe in His word.”

*Let me, to my latest breath,
In my body bear the death
Of that dying Son of thine.*

The Thirteenth Station
Jesus is taken down from the cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

Mary stands at the foot of the cross to receive in her arms the lifeless body of her Son. Once more His head is resting on her bosom as it used to do long years ago when a little child He nestled to His Mother’s breast. But now that sacred head is bruised and swollen, stamped with the cruel mark of the mocking diadem; His hair all clotted with the oozing blood, tangled and in disorder. Even she, upon whose heart is stamped every lineament of her Son’s dear face, can scarcely recognise His features now. On every line is marked the anguish of long drawn agony, of torture and agonizing pain, of woe, unutterable woe, of sorrow, suffering and abandonment.

*Wounded with His every wound,
Steep my soul till it hath swooned,
In His very Blood away;*

The Fourteenth Station
Jesus is laid in the sepulchre

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. (*Genuflect*)

All: **Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.** (*Rise*)

The final scene of the awful tragedy is drawing to a close. Reverently the faithful few bear the dead Christ down the hill of shame, that body from which all the care of loving hands cannot remove the marks of the cruel scourge, the rending nails, the lance's gaping thrust. Into the tomb they bear Him, the burial place of a stranger, best suited to Him Who during His life had not where to lay His head. Reverently they lay Him down; one last, fond embrace of His own Mother before they lead her hence, and then in silence and in sorrow they leave Him, their dearest Master, to the watchful care of God's own angels. Sin has done its work! Sin has triumphed, but its very triumph will prove its own undoing.

*Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
Be Thy Mother my defense,
Be Thy Cross my victory;*

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Acknowledgments

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“At the Cross Her Station Keeping” – Translation by Edward Caswall, published in [Lyra Catholica](#) (1849).