WAY OF THE CROSS

Scriptural Meditations on the Suffering and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ
OPENING PRAYER

Gather Before the Altar

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

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take of their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

Let us pray. Almighty God, your Son our Savior suffered at the hands of sinful humanity and endured the shame of the cross. Grant that in true devotion we may follow him in the way of the cross and live a life worthy of his love; we ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You are invited to sit or stand as piety and circumstances suggest.
FIRST STATION
Jesus is Condemned to Death

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your king!” The crowd yelled “Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked, “What? Crucify your king?” The chief priests shouted back, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then Pilate gave Jesus to them to be crucified. (John 19:14-16)

It’s a political game at best. Pilate wants to be rid of Jesus, but doesn’t want the responsibility. King Herod won’t touch the case, and sends Jesus back to Pilate. Finally the Temple High Council manipulates the crowd into demanding Jesus’ death, and everyone is off the hook. Nobody wants responsibility for this tragic miscarriage of justice. In a cynical gesture Pilate washes his hands of Jesus, even while he gives the order for his crucifixion.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, I’m ashamed to admit how often I wash my hands of you. Give me the courage to follow you, even when all others reject you.
SECOND STATION
Jesus Carries His Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

Then the Roman soldiers took him, beat him, and spit on him. When they tired of their sport, they put his clothes on him again, and led him away to be crucified. (Matthew 27:30-31)

It’s customary to humiliate a prisoner condemned to be crucified. He is stripped naked, tied to a pole and flogged by two soldiers taking turns in their grim work. The whole company of soldiers turn out to beat him, ridicule him and spit on him. It’s great fun! When he can’t tolerate any more torture without the risk of death, they put his clothes back on him, and set the heavy beam of the cross on his shoulders. He is then forced to walk through the streets of the city bearing his cross to the place of execution. Jesus’ struggle with death has begun.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, when I think I can’t stand it anymore, fill me with the love you bore for me when you endured the rejection and humiliation of the cross.
THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls the First Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:12–13)

He staggers from weakness and searing pain, and finally falls on the pavement. But there is no relief. Rough hands pull him to his feet. This journey must be made, one excruciating step at a time.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, when I fall to the temptations of my own flesh, raise me up again, knowing that my struggle, like yours, is one step at a time.
FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

A mother’s love is unconditional, a reflection of the very love of God. Now Mother Mary shares her Son’s pain, just as she did when she labored to give him life. But now it is death about to be born, a painful, awful death. Her heart is broken, a sword thrust through her very soul, just as Simeon had predicted long ago. Could God be in this painful death as he was in Jesus’ painful birth? Mary ponders and prays.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, with Mother Mary give me the grace to use my pain to share my life with those who need your love.
FIFTH STATION

*Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross*

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

They compelled a passer-by who was coming in from the country to carry his cross. It was Simon of Cyrene. (Mark 15:21)

By now there is a real chance that Jesus might die under the weight of the cross. That would never do. The whole idea of crucifixion is the slow and painful death that hanging on the cross produces. As the body hangs suspended from wrists nailed to the cross-bar, the pressure on the rib cage creates a slow asphyxiation. It is like a very slow drowning, gasping for one shallow painful breath after another. All the while the muscles of the arms and legs cramp and spasm from lack of oxygen. Saving Jesus from dying on the road is only preparation for a more painful death on the cross. Against his will, Simon contributes to Jesus’ torture.

*Silence for Meditation*

Let us pray. **Lord Jesus, like Simon, even when I don’t want to, I find myself contributing to the pain of others. By your cross set me free from the terrible power of my sin.**
SIXTH STATION  
A Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me. (Matthew 25:40)

A woman in the crowd does what even the disciples are afraid to do - publicly identify with Jesus. She takes off her veil to use as a cloth to wipe the sweat, blood and spittle from his face. In doing so she makes herself vulnerable. Everyone can see her face, including Jesus. In that brief encounter of compassion, Jesus identifies with her. Venerable tradition says that an image of Jesus’ face was transferred to her veil. From now on she bears the image of the love of Christ.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, like the compassionate woman who risked rejection for your sake, grant me the courage to be the image of your love to all who suffer.
SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls the Second Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

Surely he has borne our infirmities, carried our sorrows, and our diseases, yet we accounted him stricken, struck by God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)

It was the common wisdom of the day that only those who were sinners suffered adversity. If a person is condemned and sentenced to death, he must deserve it and is being cursed by God. Jesus taught that was not necessarily so. In his march toward death in the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus identifies with everyone who is innocently condemned and unjustly treated. He identifies with all who are betrayed by trusted friends, and who are discarded by a political system where justice is for sale. He identifies with all who are persecuted because of their faith, or even simply because they are Jews. There is nothing so terrible that Jesus does not share it, and in sharing it, does not redeem it.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, give me the faith to believe that nothing can happen to me that you cannot redeem.
EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

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

If some of the people of Jerusalem join the sport of tormenting the condemned on their way to execution, others engage in loud lamentation and weeping on their behalf. They think they are doing an act of charity in grieving for the condemned prisoners. Perhaps it’s a patriotic protest, since the Romans are the executioners and the condemned are always Jews. But whatever the reason, imagine their surprise when Jesus turns the tables on them, and encourages them to grieve for themselves and for their children, rather than for him! A chill must have gone down their spines! Suddenly this is no idle protest, it is an encounter with death – their own!

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, I don’t know what to say when somebody I know dies. Give me the faith to face the death of others with compassion, and to face my own death with hope.
We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

I fall prostrate in the dust; give me life according to your word. My soul weeps for sorrow; strengthen me with your words. (Psalm 119:25)

Jesus can’t stand the strain much longer. His tormentors have to drag him along if he is going to live to die. Severely weakened from the loss of blood from his flogging and savage beating, he is practically carried by his executioners, who refuse to be denied the spectacle of his humiliating death.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you embrace my human weakness and share my pain. Let me share your mercy and love with everyone who falls.
TENTH STATION

Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

They stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing. (Matthew 27:34-35)

Jesus is stripped of everything. There’s nothing left to call his own, not even his dignity. He stands at the foot of the cross clothed in nothing but his own blood and filth. Crucifixion is meant to be degrading. In the death throes not even the most private functions of the body are controllable. Jesus’ wounds from vicious flogging and beating are now visible for all to see. Some look away out of modesty. Others gloat and stare at his humiliation.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you allowed yourself to be stripped of everything in the hope of saving me. Give me the grace to gaze upon your wounds in awe and wonder.
ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. **Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.**

He went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgatha. There they crucified him. *(John 19:17-18)*

The last awful step in the journey of death is about to be taken. Jesus is laid on the ground, his arms spread out, so his wrists are on the ends of the cross bar. A spike is driven through each of his wrist bones. The pain is excruciating. Jesus’ body is hoisted into place, its weight pressing on his rib cage and lungs, making it almost impossible to breathe. A spike is driven through his feet and into the heel bones. With painful effort the condemned can push up on the spike in his feet to catch his breath, but to do so only prolongs the agony.

*Silence for Meditation*

Let us pray. **Lord Jesus, you endured the torture of crucifixion to spare me eternal shame and death. May I never take for granted your love for me.**
TWELFTH STATION  
耶稣死在十字架上

我们赞美你，耶稣基督，因为你的圣十字架已经救赎了世界。

当时是正午，乌云密布，直到下午三点。然后，耶稣用有力的声音说：“父啊！把我交在你的手上！”这说完，他呼出最后一口气，并死了。

(路加福音23:44-46)

扩展的静默默想，关于我们的主的死亡

在一个伟大的、最后的生理努力中，耶稣推起钉子，填满他的肺，最后吸一口气。他一口气全部呼出，发出一声痛苦的信仰和希望的呼号。他按照他教他的门徒们祈祷。他用他喷出的最后气息说，“父啊！

天主，你圣名受尊，愿你的国临到，愿你的旨意成全，在地上如同在天上。今天赐给我们日用的粮，宽免我们的债，如同我们宽免负我们债的人。不让我们落入试诱，救我们脱离凶恶。因为你的国，你的权柄，你的荣归，直到永远。阿们。

我们的父，你降在天上，愿你的名受尊。愿你的国临到，愿你的意旨成就，在地上如同在天上。每天给我们日用的粮。宽免我们的债，如同我们也宽免负我们债的人。不让我们陷入诱惑，救我们脱离凶恶。因为你的国，你的权柄，你的荣耀，是永远的。阿们。
THIRTEENTH
STATION
The Body of Jesus Is Taken
Down From the Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body.” (John 19:38)

The soldiers break the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus to hasten their death, so they can’t push up with their legs and catch their breath. They soon die of suffocation. Jesus is already dead. He used his last breath to pray to his Father. Criminals typically hang on the cross for days, but the Sabbath of Passover was approaching and the religious authorities wanted the bodies removed before the celebration. Joseph of Arimathea, who was afraid to publicly associate with Jesus while he was still alive, now boldly asks for Jesus’ body in death. The blood, the filth, the stench is overpowering. Cradling him in his arms, the blood of Jesus is transferred to Joseph. Jesus’ death has changed Joseph. He is no longer afraid to die.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, You suffered torture and death for me that I might not be afraid to live - or to die. I love you Lord Jesus.
FOURTEENTH STATION
Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

So Joseph took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27:59-60)

Everything has to be done quickly. The sun is going down, and that marks the great Sabbath of Passover. Ironically Jesus enters his rest on the Sabbath to wait for the first day of the New Creation. His bruised and blood stained body, marked with the wounds of nails and spear, is hastily washed and wrapped in a clean linen shroud. Joseph of Arimathea lays Jesus where Joseph was to lay in death. Just as Jesus had taken Joseph’s place on the cross, he now takes his place in the tomb. What happens next is shrouded in mystery. Behind the great stone the powers of life and death contend in the darkness.

Silence for Meditation

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, let me find hope in your dying my death, that from this moment on I might live your life.