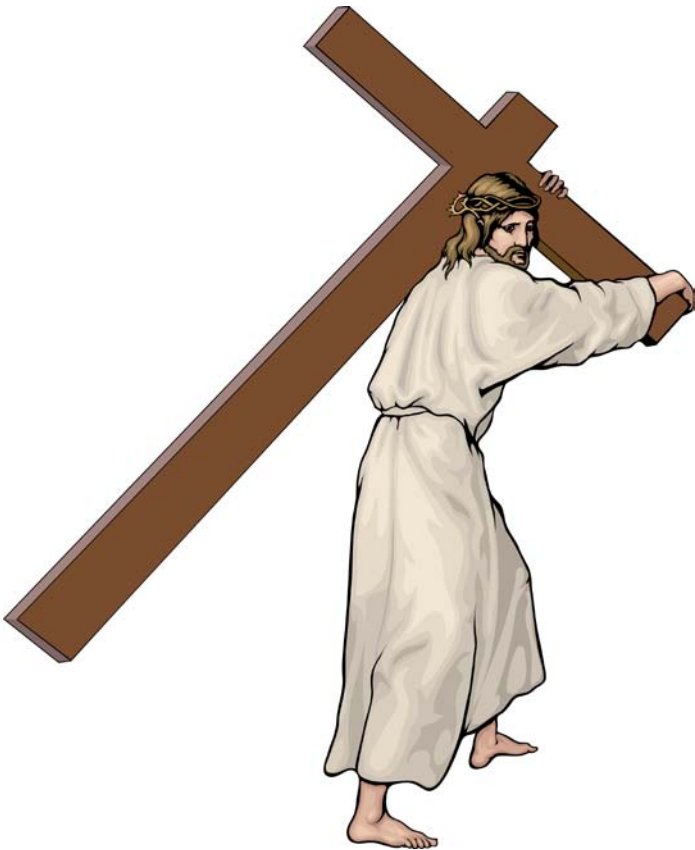


STATIONS OF
THE CROSS
FOR
TODAY



The Stations of the Cross contained in this booklet is a prayer that:

- remembers Jesus' suffering,
- helps us to see the suffering Jesus in the people of today,
- quotes Catholic Social Teaching which call us to acts of charity and acts of justice in our world today.



When poverty strikes a family, the children prove to be the most vulnerable victims: almost half of those living in absolute poverty today are children. When the family is weakened, it is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women and mothers are not protected, it is the children who are affected most.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, 2009

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to



Pilate. And they all condemned him and said, "He deserves to die." When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and then he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Reflection: Christ is condemned to death as he lies alone in the crib, with no one to aid him. Born poor and in fragile health, he needs an operation to cure a simple heart defect. The hospital lacks the necessary equipment to treat him, leaving him to suffer his inevitable fate – death. Lacking the resources we in the First World often take for granted, our poorest brothers and sisters in Christ are ignored by an oblivious world that often condemns them to death when their cries for help go unnoticed.

Catholic Social Teaching: The Catholic Church proclaims that *human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of moral vision for society*. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Reflection: The heavy weight of the cross bears down upon Christ as a woman in the village carries water back to her impoverished village. There is no water in this parched area, so she must trudge for miles over rocky terrain each day to find a source. Etched on her face is the daily pain of her burden, as she seeks something most of us have available at the twist of a tap.

Catholic Social Teaching: The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritas*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Surrounded by a jeering crowd, Jesus sets out on the way to Calvary. He bears upon his shoulders the heavy cross. His strength fails, and he falls to the ground. There is no one to help him, no one to show compassion. Instead, he hears only mockery and insults.

Reflection: Weak from hunger, sobbing from the pain of an empty stomach, Christ sits by a roadside as he begs for food from passing strangers. With no jobs available, his family struggles to find sustenance from day to day. Each time a child perishes from hunger, Jesus falls under the heavy weight of sorrow – the sorrow of an innocent child dying a preventable death.

Catholic Social Teaching: In our world and nation, many of our sisters and brothers live in poverty. The causes are complex, but the results are clear. They cannot find decent work, feed their families, educate their children, secure health care, or find adequate housing. Millions of children live in nations with too much debt and not enough development, in societies with deadly disease and inadequate health care, in lands where conflict and corruption leave people without a place at the table. Millions of families cannot live in dignity because they lack the conditions worthy of human life. The Gospel and Catholic social teaching place our service of the poor and vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of Christian witness. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Mary hurries to the street to see Jesus already being led to His execution. She makes her way through the crowds, and comes upon a tragic sight: Jesus, her beloved Son, is

carrying a heavy cross. Stricken with grief, she cannot utter even a single word.

Reflection: Unable to stop crying, a homeless mother weeps in anguish, knowing her son will fall ill from living in a dirt-floor tent in a makeshift slum. Rain batters his frail body as he shivers in the cold. Without resources or income to build safe, comfortable homes, this mother and other women bear the overwhelming burden of the poverty that condemns their children's futures.

Catholic Social Teaching: When a family is weakened, it is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women and mothers is not protected, it is the children who are affected most. Pope Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, 2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Carries the Cross

Jesus is severely weakened by his ordeal. They fear he may die along the way. So they force Simon of Cyrene, a by-stander, to help carry the cross.

Reflection: As the median U.S. household income declined, more Americans dropped below the poverty line, with Hispanics and children taking a particularly hard hit. The nation's official poverty rate is at 15.1 percent, an increase for three consecutive years.

Catholic Social Teaching: As Catholics, we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. Our faith teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but sisters and brothers in God's one human family. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
Seeing Jesus, his face bleeding and disfigured, a woman named Veronica is moved to pity. Forcing her way through the crowd, she wipes his face with her veil.



Reflection: Born into an uncertain world where few care about the fate of an HIV-positive baby, Jesus is comforted by a nurturing, caring stranger. Rejected and abandoned, and often spit upon and scorned because of AIDS, he finds temporary solace from his pain in a simple act of kindness. With few medical resources available and people too fearful to offer the reassurance of even a simple human touch, Christ suffers in the thousands of innocent AIDS babies condemned to death in the developing world.

Catholic Social Teaching: We are one human family, regardless of our differences. Answering the call to love our neighbors will promote a culture of respect and lead to peace in our communities around the world. U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls Again

Jesus again falls under the weight of the cross. Jesus bears the suffering of all people.

Reflection: Jesus falls with the weight of poverty on his back. According to a special report from the U.S. Census Bureau, 46.2 million Americans are now living in poverty. The number of those living in poverty in America has grown by 2.6 million in just the last 12 months, and that is the largest increase that we have ever seen since the U.S. government began calculating poverty figures back in 1959.

Catholic Social Teaching: Poverty is not just about numbers. It is about parents who cannot feed their children or are unable to bring sick or disabled children to a doctor. It is about the devastating consequences of addiction and family violence. The people in these reports are not just statistics; they are our sisters and brothers, members of our one human family. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

There followed after Jesus a great multitude of the people, and among them were women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

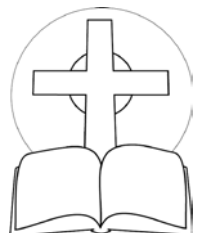
Reflection: Their laments echoing across the barren earth, the women reach out in desperation for food that has run out. Their farmlands are parched, their jobs picking coffee have vanished and hunger is a constant cry of suffering in their houses. All they have in abundance is the grief of watching their little ones starve. Though they themselves suffer, the Christ within moves them to try to comfort their families.

Catholic Social Teaching: Those who live in poverty are not just statistics; they are sisters and brothers, members of our one human family. Poverty is not "one more thing to feel bad about," but rather an opportunity to put our faith into action, to be the "leaven" in society, to lift up the virtues and ethical principles that enhance human dignity. We can make a difference if we mobilize to combat poverty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*, 2002

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Jesus again falls under the weight of the cross. Jesus bears the suffering of all people.



Reflection: Hungry, alone and homeless, Christ sits on a busy sidewalk, her frail body in desperate need of food. Starved for attention and ignored by others, she is branded by society as worthless. Loving hands offering food and fellowship give strength to her spirit. Thousands more of the homeless and destitute collapse from the weary cross of hunger and crushing loneliness.

Catholic Social Teaching: The fight against material poverty concerns the current food crisis, which places in jeopardy the fulfillment of basic needs for all people. All the indicators of relative poverty in recent years point to an increased disparity between rich and poor. The food crisis is characterized not so much by a shortage of food, as by difficulty in gaining access to it, by a structural lack of political and economic institutions capable of addressing needs. Pope Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, 2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And they divided his garments among them by casting lots. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing."

Reflection: Christ is stripped of dignity, freedom of movement and the opportunities given to the handicapped who live in the First World. He sits alone, vulnerable and naked in his defenselessness. There are no programs to help him on his journey, and few resources are available to improve his life. Others turn their heads, unable to witness his helplessness.

Catholic Social Teaching: There is a need to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced. The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

When they came to the place which is called the Skull, there they crucified him; and with him they crucified two criminals, one on the right, the other on the left, and Jesus between them. And the scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”



Reflection: Like nails driven into flesh, the agony of hunger torments Christ. Bone thin and constantly aching, he can count all his bones. The rest of the world looks on without caring about his torment. Nailed to the cross of

poverty, the poor silently suffer, for lack of a little food, a little love and a little human kindness.

Catholic Social Teaching: Faithful to Christ's summons, the Christian community will never fail, then, to assure the entire human family of her support through gestures of creative solidarity, not only by "giving from one's surplus," but above all by "a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption and of the established structure societies." The truth of the axiom cannot be refuted: "To fight poverty is to build peace." Pope Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, 2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Jesus on the cross said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished!" And then, crying with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And he bowed his head, and handed over his spirit.

Reflection: Broken, battered, in pain and alone, Christ slowly succumbs to death in an AIDS hospice. Without family or friends to hold his hand, he breathes his last. His frail body tormented by pain, his suffering finally comes to an



end. Outcast by society, the poor who are stricken with AIDS quietly slip away with few people willing to provide comfort in their final hours.

Catholic Social Teaching: Each of us has many opportunities in our everyday lives to make choices that help or harm those who are most vulnerable. In our families, we can make time to serve those in need and to become involved in efforts that promote justice. We can raise our children with an ethic of service and a passion for justice. As faithful citizens, we should take seriously our responsibilities to vote and to voice our convictions in support of public policies that defend human life and promote the human dignity of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross
When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him.

Reflection: When the life a mother has nurtured from birth has ended, and nothing remains except to pick up the pieces and go on, the poor are left only with faith and hope: hope that someone will renew their spirits and faith in God's eternal promise to all of us. From the grief of a

mother losing her child to starvation, seeds of hope are sewn, with each tiny shoot struggling to blossom, nurtured by the steadfast faith of those who have only their trust in God.

Catholic Social Teaching: The Gospel and Catholic teaching require us to serve those in need and to work for a more just society and world. Both charity and justice are required by our faith. As citizens in the most powerful democracy on earth, we have unique opportunities to use our voices to shape a more caring community, a more just nation, and a more peaceful world. U.S. Bishops, *A Place at the Table*, 2002



Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.

Reflection: Buried beneath oppression, mental illness and homelessness, Jesus silently lies in his tomb as the rest of the world ignores him. The burial place is not even his

own, but a public street belonging to others. Too busy with their own lives and uncomfortable at the sight of the homeless, many look away as they hurry past. Lord, how many times have we passed You by because we are buried in our own concerns and fail to see You in our poorest brothers and sisters who are suffering?



Catholic Social Teaching: If anyone is well-off in worldly possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but closes his heart to him, how can the love of God be remaining in him? Children, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine. This is a time not for just words or mere talk: but for active and genuine commitment by Catholics in the United States to work with others to make a place at the table for all God's children. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*, 2002

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Fifteenth Station: Jesus Has Risen

Once cold and dark, the tomb no longer contains the suffering Christ. From outside comes the piercing light of hope as loving hands reach out in assistance. A child finds peace and comfort in the knowledge that he is no longer alone. There are those who care, and in the spirit of Christian compassion, they fulfill Christ's commandment: *"Love one another as I have loved you."* (John 13:34)

Catholic Social Teaching: When we gather as Catholics to worship, we gather around a table to celebrate the Eucharist. It is at this altar of sacrifice that we hear the saving word of Christ and receive his Body and Blood. It is Christ's sacrificial meal that nourishes us so that we can go forth to live the Gospel as his disciples. Too often, the call of the Gospel and the social implications of the Eucharist are ignored or neglected in our daily lives. "The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest." (Catechism of the Catholic Church) U.S. Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and Respect the Dignity of All God's Children*, 2002)

*Adapted from Stations of the Cross from Catholic Relief Services, Environmental Stations of the Cross and Food for the Poor.
Provided by the Buffalo Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission*

