**Stations of the Cross**

If we were to visit Jerusalem, we could actually walk the path that Jesus took from the time he was condemned to where he died and was buried. We could stop along the way and see where he was whipped, where he fell, and finally was raised to the cross. This ancient prayer, the Way of the Cross, is our remembering the events of the last few hours of Jesus' life. Documented as early as the fourth century, people have been remembering the incredible sorrow, pain and love that drove Jesus to his death... where he died for us.

Praying the Way of the Cross is important because it is a journey that each of us walks throughout life. We deal with pain, sorrow, and love all the time. Being Christian and following Jesus does not mean that you will not have to deal with tough times or that you will not have your own cross to carry. It does mean that you will have the strength and help to make it through those times.

As you experience this prayer today, listen and think about what you hear. Follow along the road and stop where Jesus stopped as he wearily and painfully walked to his death. Imagine what it was like for those involved in this journey and get in touch with what they must have felt. But most of all, as you participate in the Way of the Cross, listen to what the voice of God is saying to you as you take this journey and you will never forget.

**1st Station**

 **Jesus is condemned to death**

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

So, this is how it all begins... sentenced like a common criminal. Could these really be the same people who cried "Hosanna" and wanted to make me king only days ago? Now they are screaming for me to be crucified. Even the lies they have made up about me do not deserve this kind of punishment.

**Our Reflection:**

How often do I go along with the crowd instead of standing up for what I believe in? When do I let others control my thinking because I want to be their friend? Would I have joined this crowd condemning Jesus? Lord, there are so many people willing to believe the lies about you and go along with it. Give me the strength to stand up for what I believe in. Please forgive me when I do not do what I know is right and go along with the crowd. l am sorry for the times when I might have hurt others because of this.

**2nd Station**

 **Jesus accepts His cross**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

Father, your will is what I want to do here. Give me the strength to carry this heavy cross. I know this is just the beginning of a tough road so please walk it with me.

**Our Reflection:**

Lord, you were accused of something wrong and were forced to carry a huge heavy cross to your death. How often do I get accused of things that I did not do or which were not my fault? How do I deal with things that are not fair? Jesus, help me to be as courageous as you are. Show me how to stand up for the truth. Help me to accept the burdens of my life like you accepted the burden of your cross.

**3rd Station**

 **Jesus fall for the first time**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

How many times have I walked along here? I never dreamed that it would turn out like this...let me get up…let me get up...let me get up.

**Our Reflection:**

What are some things that cause me to stumble and fall? How do I handle it when I "fall''? Do I just quit instead of getting up and going on? Jesus, even though you have been beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns, and given a heavy cross to carry, you got up when you fell. Inspire me, please, to get up when I fall.

**4th Station**

 **Jesus meets his sorrowful Mother**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' reflection:**

Oh, please, not my mother. Do not let her see me like this. As much as it hurts me, I know it hurts her more. Mom, you do not deserve this. All you have ever done is to love me. Your love has been incredible. Please do not cry. I have got to do this.

**Our reflection:**

Sometimes, I forget the pain that I bring to people who love me. When I make selfish choices, sometimes others are hurt and I do not even care. Jesus, it must have been awful to look into your mother's eyes at such a terrible time. Help me to remember how much love it takes to care for someone. Give me understanding when those who take care of me try to shield me from getting hurt. Help me to see their love...teach me to love this deeply, too.

**5th Station**

 **Simon helps Jesus to carry the cross**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

I do not know who you are, buddy, but thank you for helping me. I really need it right now. Every part of my body hurts from all their beatings, but my heart hurts the most. Your name is Simon? Thank you, Simon, for the friendly shoulder.

**Our Reflection:**

Jesus, you accepted help when things were tough. How willing am I to let others help me, or do I see needing help as a sign of weakness? I cannot go through life alone. I have got to let people help me along the way, even people whom I don't know very well. Let me be strong in my weakness by trusting the hand that reaches out to me.

**6th Station**

 **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

I cannot believe this woman is willing to take such a risk for me. Does she not see how crazy everyone is getting around here? She is liable to be punished for showing that she cares for me. It is nice to know that others are taking the same risks that I have taken.

**Our Reflection:**

Friends care, and their actions show it. Who are the Veronicas in my life? Have I thanked them? How willing am I to be a Veronica for those who are struggling? Jesus, help me to be willing to take the risk of helping someone who needs it. When I see someone struggling, give me the courage to help them in any way I can, even if it means being embarrassed.

**7th Station**

 **Jesus falls the Second time**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

This is really killing me. I hurt so badly. I can hardly do this even with help. I am so tired...I am wearing out...and there is still a long way to go.

**Our Reflection:**

How many times have I struggled and fallen again and again even when others were helping me? What am I struggling with that wears me out, hurts me and makes me want to give up? Jesus, sometimes I am overwhelmed with life's hassles. I had hopes that following you would make the path easier, but now I see that it was not easy for you either. When I get tired or disgusted, and I fall again, remind me that you climbed back on your feet and kept going.

**8th Station**

 **Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

You women know so much with your hearts and have shown me so much love...do not let your love die. Love one another. Take care of each other as you have taken care of me.

**Our Reflection:**

When things are tough, sometimes all I think about is myself. But even in your pain you put aside your feelings and felt love for others. Sometimes it is so easy to feel sorry for yourself, I forget the others who still love me.

**9th Station**

 **Jesus falls the Third time**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

I will not give up; I am not going to let it end here. Father, lift me up. Give me the strength to make it just a little further. I know there is still more for me to do.

**Our Reflection:**

Who are the people who have shown me how to survive? Who has shown me how to get back up and go on with my life, no matter how many times I fall? Jesus, it would have been so easy to give up here…but instead you got up again. Sometimes I feel like giving up too. I know the good news is that you are always with me and you keep reminding me about the people who have helped me survive. Thanks for keeping them in my life. With them around, I'll never give up.

**10th Station**

 **Jesus is stripped of his garments**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

They hurt my body and now they humiliate me in front of everyone. They have taken everything from me...all that protects me and keeps me warm. All I have now is myself... and my Abba.

**Our Reflection:**

Embarrassment added to the pain! How do I act when others disrespect me? How many times have I been abused? Handling tough times is hard enough, but to have someone disrespect me on top of that is too much. Lord, even when they stripped you of your dignity, they couldn't take away the one thing that kept you going: your love for us. Help me to carry your love and respect on the inside and to show that love and respect on the outside.

**11th Station**

 **Jesus is nailed to the cross**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

Forgive them, Father. They are only doing what others have told them to do. I have become a victim of accusers and abusers, standing far outside the range of these hammers and nails. For every hit, forgive them for what they do.

**Our Reflection:**

Forgive them? How could you say that? Am I forgiving to those who "nail" me? And what about the nails I drive into others? Jesus, I am amazed at how you always forgave people, no matter how much they hurt you. Were you aware of the pain you were going through? Of course you were. Help me to choose not to "nail" others and learn your willingness to forgive those who "nail” me.

**12th Station**

 **Jesus dies on the cross**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Jesus' Reflection:**

I am thirsty…I can no longer breathe. Father, forgive them. John, take care of my mother. I am dying... I am dying. Father, into your hands I give my spirit.

**Everyone Kneels**

**Our Reflection:**

You gave us all you had. No one could give more. Could I love like this if my life were on the line for my friends? Jesus, you stuck with us until the bitter end. You went through pain and suffering beyond what I can imagine. Thank you, Jesus, for giving your all for me... for all of us. I want to be totally committed to loving others. Give me the courage to love like you, no matter the cost.

**13th Station**

 **Jesus is taken down from the cross**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Our Reflection:**

How awful it must have been for your best friends and mother to have watched you hang there to die. Now your limp, broken body is taken down from the cross and laid in their arms. I can almost hear them sobbing as they held you for the last time. How do I deal with the loss or death of someone I love? Have I ever finished grieving for the loss of a friend? Have I ever gotten over one of my parents leaving home? Jesus, the feelings you give me are good. Help me to learn to be in touch with my feelings and deal with them in an honest and healthy way. When I have lost someone or something and I feel sad or angry, help me understand the sadness, the anger, and the disbelief that those who loved you must have felt when they held you for the final time after your death.

**14th Station**

 **Jesus is laid in the tomb**

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

You are the Savior of the world.

**Our Reflection:**

Are there any relationships that I have to “bury" because they have died? How about family members or a friend who died? How do I say good-bye and let go while still keeping the good memories? I wonder what the disciples were thinking as they walked away from the grave. Maybe there was silence; I'd bet there was crying ... and probably arms around each other after they said good-bye and left you there. Think of the loneliness, emptiness, and hopelessness. Jesus, even in the midst of pain and loss, let me never lose sight of hope. When it seems there is nothing else to hang on to, let me cling to hope and knowledge that in you there is life eternal.

**Closing Prayer:**

Jesus, you walked and died the way of the cross because you loved me more than life itself. Your body was beaten, bruised and broken for me. You were laid in the tomb, but not even death could end your life. Your death and resurrection give me hope, and belief that I too can deal with anything that life hands me, as long as you and I share the cross together. I do not stand alone. I know that your risen body lives within me and in those around me. Now I am your body here on earth. My arms are your arms reaching out to others. Remembering the way you went to the cross gives me enough hope to get up after falling, and the realization that, as I walk in my own way, you and others give me strength, and walk it with me.