

Way of the Cross
Toward Justice and Peace

United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Through the traditional devotion of the Stations of the Cross, Catholics are provided with a spiritual means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered for the sins of the world. Today, Christ's suffering continues through the cries of the thousands of men, women, and children who are abandoned and abused, ill and without homes. The cry of Jesus on the cross reveals his solidarity with all of those who are abandoned. God enacts the ultimate preferential option with the poor through this experience of the cross.

Throughout the history of our Church, Catholic women and men have followed the path of Jesus and walked the way of the cross themselves. Many died young; some after years of being witnesses of God's love. This *Way of the Cross: Toward Justice and Peace* follows the final journey of Jesus as shown in Scripture and highlights those who walked in his footprints. These saintly people, from many walks of life, reveal to us that the power of faith can overcome death and lead us to resurrection.

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Leader: Almighty and eternal Father, accept our prayer of thanksgiving for your Beloved Son, our Savior and Lord. As we recall his Sacred Passion, send the Spirit of Christ into our hearts, so that whether we pray or work, we may do all in union with Christ our Redeemer.

People: **Amen.**

*Sing: Jesus, Lord, condemned, defiled,
May we too be meek and mild
As we tread your holy Way.*

*May we feel no bitter hatred
When we too are persecuted,
Left alone to walk with You.*

FIRST STATION:
Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **As soon as morning came, / the chief priests / with the elders and the scribes, / that is the whole Sanhedrin, / held a council. / They bound Jesus, / led him away, / and handed him over to Pilate. / Pilate said to them, / "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?" / They all said, / "Let him be crucified!" / When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, / but that a riot was breaking out instead, / he took water and washed his hands / in the sight of the crowd. Then he released Barabbas to them, / but after he had Jesus scourged, / he handed him over to be crucified.**

Jesus Continues to Be Condemned to Death

Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan priest, was imprisoned during World War II in Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp. In 1941 he exchanged his life for another, by volunteering to take the place of a young father condemned to starve to death. Two years earlier, Maximilian had predicted his torture and death when speaking to fellow Franciscan community members:

"The third stage of my life will be my lot shortly. It will be one of suffering. But by whom, where, how, and in what form this suffering will come, is known only to the Immaculate Mother."

People: **Watch out for yourselves. / They will hand you over to the courts. / You will be beaten in synagogues. / You will be arraigned before governors and kings because of me, / as a witness before them.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Now the Cross as Jesus bore it,
Has become for us who share it,
The jew'led Cross of Victory.*

**SECOND STATION:
Jesus Carries His Cross**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: Then the soldiers of the governor / took Jesus inside the praetorium / and gathered the whole cohort around him. / They stripped off his clothes / and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. / Weaving a crown out of thorns, / they placed it on his head, / and a reed in his right hand. / And kneeling before him, / they mocked him, saying, / "Hail, King of the Jews!" / They spat upon him / and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. / And when they had mocked him, / they stripped him of the cloak, / dressed him in his own clothes, / and led him off to crucify him.

Jesus Continues to Carry the Cross

Franz Jagerstatter was an uneducated farmer from a small village in Austria, a husband, and a father of three children. He was convinced that it would be immoral for him to serve in the Nazi army during World War II, so he refused. Franz was imprisoned and after a military trial, he was beheaded in August 1943. The night before his execution, the words Franz told his chaplain sealed his fate:

"I cannot and may not take an oath in favor of a government that is fighting an unjust war....I believe it cannot possibly be a crime or a sin for a Catholic simply to refuse the [Nazi government] even though he knows this will mean certain death. For is it not more Christian to offer oneself as a victim right away rather than first to murder others... just to prolong one's own life a little while?"

People: **Whoever wishes to come after me / must deny himself, / take up his cross, / and follow me.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Weakened, prodded, cursed, and fallen,
His whole Body Bruised and swollen,
Jesus tripped and lay in pain*

THIRD STATION:
Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

People: So they took Jesus, / and carrying the cross by himself / he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, / in Hebrew, Golgotha. / After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them / and kneeling, he prayed, saying, / "Father, if you are willing, / take this cup away from me: / still, not my will but yours be done."

Jesus Is Still Falling

Sister Thea Bowman, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration, continued in her mission as a gospel singer and evangelist despite battling cancer. During her illness that bound her to a wheelchair, she maintained a grueling schedule of lectures and singing performances designed to raise awareness and appreciation of African American Catholic culture. Two weeks before her death on March 30, 1990, Sister Thea continued to offer hope and courage:

"I've always asked God for the grace to live until I die....To the suffering I say: 'Try to reach out to others. Try to let people know how much you love them. Try to maintain a sense of humor and laughter in your life.'"

People: Blessed are you / when they insult you and persecute you / and utter every kind of evil against you falsely / because of me. / Rejoice and be glad, / for your reward will be great in heaven. / Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

People: Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.

Sing: Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?

**FOURTH STATION:
Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

People: Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother / and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, / and Mary of Magdala. / When Jesus saw his mother / and the disciple there whom he loved, / he said to his mother, / "Woman, behold, your son." / He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." / And from that hour / the disciple took her into his home.

Jesus Continues to Meet His Mother, Mary

Kateri Tekakwitha, often called the Lily of the Mohawks, survived a smallpox epidemic that killed her family and disfigured her face. Jesuit missionaries placed her in the care of Anastasia Tegonhatsiongo, whom Kateri came to look upon as her mother. Devoting her short life to caring for the sick and aged, Kateri died in 1680 at the age of twenty-four.

One week after Kateri died she appeared to her adopted mother, Anastasia. Kateri stood in a light, holding a cross. She said that the cross had been the source of her happiness during her time in the world and that Anastasia should look to the cross as her inspiration, too.

People: To what can I compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? / What example can I show you for your comfort, virgin daughter Sion? / For great as the sea is your distress; / who can heal you?

People: Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.

Sing: Simon stopped in hesitation,
Not foreseeing his proud station,
Called to bear the Cross of Christ.

FIFTH STATION:

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

**People: As they led him away / they took hold of a certain Simon, / a
Cyrenian, / who was coming in from the country; / and after laying
the cross on him, / they made him carry it behind Jesus.**

Simon the Cyrenian Continues to Offer Help

Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII, was one of the outstanding lay people of his time. In 1534 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London because he refused to give absolute allegiance to the king, giving his absolute allegiance to Christ instead. Thomas was tried, convicted of treason, and beheaded after fifteen months in prison. His letters from prison reflect his view that a believing Christian must be an active Christian:

“O Lord, give us the grace to read or hear the Gospel of your bitter passion not with our eyes or our ears in the manner of a pastime, but that it may so sink into our hearts that it stretches to the everlasting profit of our souls.... Though faith is the first gate into heaven, the person who stands at the gate and does not step forward in the way of good works will not enter into where the reward is.”

**People: You know / that the rulers of the Gentiles / lord it over them, / and
the great ones / make their authority over them felt. / But it shall
not be so among you. / Rather, / whoever wishes to be great among
you / shall be your servant.**

**People: Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you
do for me.**

*Sing: Brave but trembling came the woman,
None but she would flaunt the Roman,
Moved by love beyond her fear.*

SIXTH STATION:
Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

People: A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; / he who finds one finds a treasure. / A faithful friend is beyond price, / no sum can balance his worth. / A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, / such as he who fears God finds; / for he who fears God behaves accordingly, / and his friend will be like himself.

Veronica Is Still Wiping the Face of Jesus

Jean Donovan, a lay missionary in El Salvador, Central America, was raped and killed during the Salvadoran civil war in 1980 along with fellow American women, Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clarke, and Ita Ford. Two weeks before she was killed, Jean wrote to a friend:

“Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could except for the children, the poor, bruised victims of this insanity. Who would care for them? Whose heart would be so staunch as to favor the reasonable thing in a sea of tears and helplessness? Not mine, dear friend, not mine.”

People: You are the light of the world. / Your light must shine before others, / that they may see your good deeds / and glorify your heavenly Father.

People: Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.

Sing: Prostrate on the dust He crumbled,
Flogged in Body He resembled
All our brothers poor and scorned.

**SEVENTH STATION:
Jesus Falls a Second Time**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **If God is for us, / who can be against us? / God who did not spare his own Son / but handed him over for us all, / how will he not also give us everything else / along with him?**

My foes all whisper against me; / they imagine the worst about me: / I have a deadly disease, they say; / I will never rise from my sickbed. / But you, Lord, have mercy and raise me up / that I may repay them as they deserve.

Jesus Falls Again and Again

Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was a journalist and a pacifist. She was a leader in the Catholic peace movement until her death in 1980. Dorothy was also a leading voice in support of the causes of the poor and dispossessed. Her commitment to social justice, strengthened by her deep religious faith, is evident by her six imprisonments for civil rights. During one of Dorothy's imprisonments, she described her feelings of loss:

“In the cell I lost all feeling of my own identity. That I would be free after thirty days meant nothing to me. I would never be free again. Solitude and hunger and weariness of spirit – these sharpened my perceptions so that I suffered not only my own sorrow but the sorrows of those about me. I was no longer a young girl...I was the oppressed.”

People: **They will seize and persecute you, / they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, / and they will have you led before kings and governors / because of my name.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *May our sympathy for Jesus
Turn to those who here now need us,
May we see Christ bruised in them.*

**EIGHTH STATION:
Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

People: A large crowd of people followed Jesus, / including many women who mourned / and lamented him. / Jesus turned to them and said, / "Daughters of Jerusalem, / do not weep for me; / weep instead for yourselves and for your children, / for indeed, the days are coming / when people will say, / 'Blessed are the barren, / the wombs that never bore / and the breasts that never nursed.' / At that time people will say to the mountains, / 'Fall upon us!' / and to the hills, / 'Cover us!' / For if these things are done when the wood is green / what will happen when it is dry?"

Women Still Weep for Jesus

St Teresa of Avila lived in the sixteenth century and was the first woman doctor of the Church. She was a mystic and founder of the Discalced Carmelites. Her writings reveal her understanding of the struggle of Christ:

"One day my Lord said to me, 'Believe me, my daughter, trials are the heaviest for those my Father loves the best. Trials are God's measure of love. How could I better demonstrate my love for you that by desiring for you what I desired for myself?'

To be truly spiritual is to make ourselves slaves of God branded with the cross. God can give no greater grace than to give us a life such as was led by Jesus."

People: Come, all you who pass by the way, / look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering, / suffering with which the Lord has afflicted me on the day of his blazing wrath. / At this I weep, my eyes run with tears: / far from me are all who could console me, / far away are any who might revive me.

People: Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.

Sing: Jesus fell again in weakness,
Stumbling as we do, to lead us
Through our sorrow and our pain.

NINTH STATION:
Jesus Falls a Third Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **My iniquities overwhelm me, / a burden beyond my strength.**

Jesus Keeps Falling Again and Again

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, born in South Carolina, became a priest for the Diocese of Charleston before becoming an auxiliary bishop of Atlanta and archbishop of Cincinnati and then of Chicago. He chaired the U.S. bishops' committee that drafted a pastoral letter on war and peace. The cardinal was a constant and staunch defender of the sanctity and dignity of human life at all stages from conception to natural death. In a well-known speech he delivered at Fordham University, he articulated the "seamless garment" metaphor for the consistent ethic of life. Cardinal Bernardin, respected for his spiritual leadership, expressed his sentiments while dying in his memoir, *The Gift of Peace*:

"In my homily for the liturgy of my solemn installation as Seventh Archbishop of Chicago, I had reminded the congregation...that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the model for all my ministry 'is one who lays down his life for his people. Some live this call literally, shedding their blood as martyrs. Others live it in the unstinting giving of their time, their energy, their very selves to those they have been called to serve. Whatever the future holds for me, I pledge this day to live as a good shepherd who willingly lays down his life for you.' The words are simple and direct, and I meant with all my being what I said."

People: **When they lead you away and hand you over, / do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. / But say whatever will be given to you at that hour. / For it will not be you who are speaking / but the Holy Spirit.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Stripped and jeered by his own nation,
Jesus stood in desolation,
Giving all he had to give.*

TENTH STATION:
Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, / they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, / a share for each soldier. / They also took his tunic, / but the tunic was seamless, / woven in one piece from the top down. / So they said to one another, / “Let’s not tear it, / but cast lots for it to see whose it will be,” / in order that the passage of scripture / might be fulfilled that says, / “They divided my garments among them, / and for my vesture they cast lots.”**

Jesus Is Still Stripped Naked Today

Joan of Arc, the patroness of France, was an illiterate peasant teenager who led French troops against English forces in 1430. She was taken prisoner and held in jail for about a year. Joan was tried as a heretic, sentenced to death, excommunicated, and at the age of nineteen, she was burned at the stake. At her trial she defended her faith:

“All my words and deeds are in the hands of God. With regard to them I bow to Him. And I swear to you that I do not want to do anything contrary to the Christian faith, and if I have done or said anything..., I do not want to defend it, but will repudiate it. If I am condemned – and I see the fire lit, the wood made ready, and the scaffold – and when I am in the fire, I shall not say differently from what I have already said.”

People: **Behold, I am sending you like sheep / in the midst of wolves; / so be shrewd as serpents / and simple as doves. / But beware of people, / for they will hand you over to courts / and scourge you in their synagogues, / and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake / as a witness before them and the pagans.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Pierced the hands that blessed and cured us*
Pierced the feet that walked to free us,
Walked the hill of Calvary.

**ELEVENTH STATION:
Jesus is Nailed to the Cross**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **It was nine o'clock in the morning / when they crucified him. / With him they crucified two revolutionaries, / one on his right and one on his left.**

Jesus Continues to Be Nailed to the Cross

Isaac Jogues was a French Jesuit missionary to North America in the seventeenth century. He and his companions were tortured by members of the Mohawk tribe in New York. He survived but was made a slave to a Mohawk woman. Isaac escaped and returned to France. When he came back to America in 1646 to pursue his missionary work among the Mohawks, he was murdered by an Iroquois warrior. His tortures were so brutal that he wrote his reports to his superiors in Latin, so that the common person would not be horrified by the accounts:

“I, who was the last, and therefore more exposed to these beatings, fell, midway in the journey which we were obliged to make to a hill, on which they had created a stage. I thought that I must die there, because I neither could nor cared to arise. What I suffered is known to One for whose love and cause it is a pleasant and glorious thing to suffer.”

People: **Amen, amen, I say to you, / whoever believes in me / will do the works that I do, / and will do greater ones than these, / because I am going to the Father.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Life eternal, death defiant,
Bowed his head – the world was silent,
Through his death came life anew.*

TWELFTH STATION:
Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **At noon darkness came over the whole land / until three in the afternoon. / And at three o'clock / Jesus cried out in a loud voice, / "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" / Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.**

Please kneel for a short time and reflect upon the death of Jesus.

Jesus Still Dies on the Cross Each Day

Oscar Romero, archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador, Central America, was assassinated while celebrating the Eucharist in a hospital chapel. He was targeted because of his stance of defending the poor and powerless against the unjust institutions of his country. In the last homily he gave in that final Eucharist, Oscar associated his life and death with Christ's:

"This holy Mass is clearly an act of faith.... In the chalice, the wine is transformed into the blood that was the price of salvation. This body broken and this blood shed for human beings encourage us to give our body and blood up to suffering and pain, as Christ did – not for self, but to bring justice and peace to our people."

People: **You have heard that it was said, / "You shall love your neighbor / and hate your enemy." / But I say to you, / love your enemies, / and pray for those who persecute you.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

Sing: *Stunned and stricken, Mary, Mother,
In your arms was placed our Brother,
"Full of grace" now filled with grief.*

THIRTEENTH STATION:

The Body of Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **Joseph of Arimathea, / a distinguished member of the council, / who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, / came and courageously went to Pilate / and asked for the body of Jesus. / Pilate gave the body to Joseph. / Having bought a linen cloth, / he took him down, / wrapped him in the linen cloth / and laid him in a tomb.**

The Mother of God Continues to Weep Over Her Children

Mother Jones, a Catholic immigrant from Canada, was a mother widowed by a yellow fever epidemic. Mary Harris Jones devoted her life to the American labor movement during its early years. She was subjected to numerous arrests, vicious attacks on her reputation, harassment by militia guards, and the wrath of public officials, corporate executives, and union leaders. Despite all of this, she persisted in helping laborers to secure a fundamental human right – the right to form a union. When she was eighty, and still organizing, she testified before a congressional committee that asked her where she lived. She responded:

“I live in the United States, but I do not know exactly in what place, because I am always in the fight against oppression, and wherever a fight is going on I have to jump there, and sometimes I am in Washington, sometimes in Pennsylvania, sometimes in Arizona, sometimes in Texas, and sometimes up in Minnesota, so that I really have no particular residence.”

People: **Foxes have dens / and birds of the sky have nests, / but the Son of Man / has nowhere to rest his head.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

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

FOURTEENTH STATION:
The Body of Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
(bow from the waist)

People: **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

People: **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. / But Mary Magdalene / and the other Mary / remained sitting there, / facing the tomb.**

Jesus Is Still Being Placed in the Tomb

Tom Dooley, a Catholic doctor originally from St. Louis, worked tirelessly to bring medical care to refugees in Southeast Asia during the 1950's and 1960's while battling cancer himself. The month before he died, Tom wrote a letter acknowledging his pain. In the same letter, he wrote of the peace he found resting in God:

“But yet a milder storm of peace gathers in my heart. What seems unpossessable, I can possess. What seems unfathomable, I fathom. What is unutterable, I can utter. Because I can pray, I can communicate. How do people endure anything on earth if they cannot have God?”

People: **This is my commandment: / love one another as I love you. / No one has greater love than this, / to lay down one's life for one's friends.**

People: **Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me.**

*Sing: Let me share with thee his pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torment died.*

*Virgin of all Virgins best!
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine.*

Greeting and Final Blessing