

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Mystery of the Cross is the key to the world's salvation. So, as we follow Jesus along the fourteen "stations" of his Way of the Cross, we should expect to encounter the multiple mysteries of the one mystery of the cross that transforms Christian living.

We make the Way of the Cross to enter into this mystery and be transformed.

It is the mystery of Christ's new way of life: the way of grace that is constant dying and rising. We die to what restricts us and live to what opens us. We die to failure and discouragement to live to new hope. We die to the darkened light of culture to live in the life-changing light of Christ. We die to death itself to live for life.

We die to our own way by following Jesus along his Way of the Cross, which leads to death and resurrection.

This is not just a "lenten devotion." It is letting ourselves be confronted—first challenged, then comforted—by the multiple mysteries that are all one in the Mystery of the Cross. At each "station," open your mind to die a little more to what holds you back, and to live a little more in the way that leads to the fullness of life. Those who carry Christ's cross with faith, hope, and love find that it carries them.

Pope Francis wrote: "Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is simply the high point of the way he lived his entire life. Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the life of our world, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them in all their needs... We are committed to building a new world... not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives" (*Joy of the Gospel*, 269).

This is what it means to walk the Way of the Cross.

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# The First Station

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JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

## *The Mystery of Our New Identity*

**LEADER** The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.  
This is the mystery of our new identity.

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

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**READER** Pope Francis wrote:

God is not a far-off deity who does not get involved in the world. Rather, Saint Paul tells us, he “became sin.”  
(*Open Mind, Faithful Heart*, p. 27)

Pope Francis is quoting St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: “For our sake God made him who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]



**LEADER** The mystery of the judgment Pilate pronounced on Jesus is not that Jesus, though innocent, was punished for our sins. It is that God made Jesus, who could not sin, to “be sin” by taking us, with all our sins, into his body. Our sins became the sins of his own flesh. The body Pilate sent to the cross was guilty. When Jesus died in that body, we died “in him.” Our sins went down into the grave with Jesus and were annihilated.

We are not just pardoned; we are purified. When we died “in Christ,” the person who committed our sins died, and we rose as a “new creation”—Christ’s own body on earth—with no record of sin. Each of us says with Saint Paul, “It is no longer I who live; it is Christ who lives in me.”

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

**ALL** Lord, you took on our identity when you were made to “be sin.” We took on your identity when we were made to “be divine.” Let us live and act always as your body on earth. Amen.

# The Second Station

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JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

## *The Mystery of Suffering*

**LEADER** The Second Station: Jesus takes up his cross.  
This is the mystery of suffering.

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

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**READER** Pope Francis wrote:

If a family is centered on Christ ... moments of pain and difficulty will become experiences of union with Jesus on the cross ... which transforms difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love. (*The Joy of Love*, 317)

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

**LEADER** Without faith, suffering is just an evil to exterminate. We spontaneously want a savior who will take suffering out of the world by power—by destroying those who cause it.

Jesus' response to suffering is to embrace it. He turns suffering into a blessing by enduring it with love.

We blame God for permitting suffering. But when we do, we are blaming Jesus for accepting the cross.



Jesus never promised to deliver us from suffering; only to “deliver us from evil.” He transforms suffering into blessing for those who endure it with faith, with hope, and with love.

Christians try to spare others from suffering. And when we can't, we share it and bear it with them. But we always bear witness to the mystery that suffering is not a curse but a cross. It is a door inviting us into the mystery of love.

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

**ALL** Lord, you changed curses into crosses. Let us change all crosses into blessings through faith, hope, and love. Amen.

# The Third Station

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JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

## *The Mystery of Failure*

**LEADER** The Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time.  
This is the mystery of failure.

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

**ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

**READER** Pope Francis wrote:

The Christian theology of hope and failure ... must begin with the consideration of the passion and death of Jesus. The historical failure of Jesus in his lifetime and the frustration of the hopes of so many people ... are the royal road for Christian hope. (*Open Mind, Faithful Heart*, p. 281)

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

**LEADER** Jesus is God. But he falls. Do you remember the first time you failed in anything? The first time you fell into sin? Were you tempted to think you were just “bad”? That you were a “failure”? Or did you learn to accept yourself as human?

Jesus falls because he is human. In Jesus, God himself is weak. But Jesus gets up. His response to failure is his victory: he keeps going.



We fail because we are human. But failures don't make us a failure. More important than our failures is how we respond to them.

We are human, but also divine. We don't use our humanity as an excuse for mediocrity. By the power of Jesus within us, we get up and keep going. We are called to "the perfection of love." We reach it by persevering along the stumbling way of the cross.

[ A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER ]

**ALL** Lord, when our failures show us we are human, let our perseverance prove that we are also divine. Amen.