THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

DAYLESFORD ABBEY

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross, the Way of the Cross, the Way of Sorrows, or the *Via Crucis*, all refer to the journey Jesus Christ travelled from the time he was condemned to death until his Body was placed in a burial tomb. Followers of Jesus have told the story of his Passion, Death and Resurrection while pilgrims who travelled to Jerusalem visited the sites where it is believed that Jesus was tried and executed. Journals have been discovered, dated as early as the fourth century, describing these pilgrims chanting psalms as they processed the *Via Dolorosa* (the Way of Sorrows) in Jerusalem. Liturgists view these processions as an embryonic form of the Stations of the Cross.

Many churches typically contain fourteen Stations but as an outgrowth of the Second Vatican Council, a fifteenth Station was added reflecting our Lord's victory over suffering and death and the Good News of Easter – the Resurrection. As we are a post Vatican Council II church, all of our Stations of the Cross, both inside the church and outside, reflect this more complete narrative. Today, Christians everywhere follow Jesus' final journey to unite their suffering with his in the hope of sharing in his Resurrection. In the words of St. Paul: "*I wish to know Christ and to be conformed into the pattern of his death, so that somehow I may come to know the power of his Resurrection.*" Phil 3:1

DISPOSITION FOR PRAYING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Suffering – in one of its many forms - invades all of our lives; no one needs to search for it. We may attempt to deny or run from suffering but it cannot be avoided. What is demanded is the need to come to terms with suffering. It is in this context that we provide the Stations of the Cross for Various Circumstances. We invite you to pray these Stations as a means of uniting your personal trials with our Lord's, so that you too might share in his Passion so as to rejoice in his Resurrection.

We believe in a God who became incarnate through his Son, Jesus Christ, who chose to suffer for the sake of our redemption. This Passion is made visible in the physical Way of the Cross and metaphysically in the psychological, emotional and spiritual suffering that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane – which one might call the overture to the *Via Crucis*.

The radical symbol of the Cross - ubiquitous throughout the world - has lost much of its shocking, paradoxical impact. We see the Cross hanging on walls, towering above churches and suspended from one another's necks in precious gold. The Cross has become a thing of beauty - and it should - for without the sacrifice made on the Cross, there would be no hope of eternal happiness with God.

When we pray the Stations, it is not for the purpose of undertaking an historical remembering of what occurred, but to show us what is happening now - what is happening within each of us. The reason for praying the Stations of the Cross is to enter into the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself for us – to experience his means of transforming suffering through love. We do this "through, with, and in him", step by step, learning how this plan of love can be carried out by us today. In one form or another, his trials are revealed in ours and our trials in his. This frames the spiritual pilgrimage which you are invited to undertake through your particular circumstances, in contemplation of the Passion of Jesus Christ inspired by our faith in the Resurrection.

Allow One Hour

"Could you not watch and pray with me for one hour?" MT 26:40

For the Cross of our Lord's Passion becomes our Tree of Eternal Life

ABOUT DAYLESFORD ABBEY'S STATIONS OF THE CROSS

THE ARBOR GATEWAY

Thresholds are primarily spiritual in nature, not simply physical. Thus, crossing a threshold confirms one's willingness to move from the natural world to the supernatural. Our gateway entrance marks passage through a holy doorway designed to symbolize one's decision to enter into the life of Jesus.

SAINT RAPHAEL

Raphael, which translates as "It is God who heals", is the archangel known for facilitating all manners of healing. He is one of only three of the seven archangels named in the Bible. Raphael is credited with driving an evil spirit from Sarah and restoring Tobit's vision through the use of a fish. Tobit 6:7 Raphael is the patron saint of pilgrims and the appropriate guide for all who travel the Stations - particularly those seeking physical, emotional or spiritual healing. Pilgrimages in early times were a dangerous consideration. Pilgrims made wills before their journey as there was no certainty of a safe return. Unlike tourists, pilgrims travel toward their center, while tourists travel away. As a guardian to pilgrims, Raphael is often depicted holding a staff as well as a fish. The mission of Daylesford Abbey is healing and reconciliation, thus providing a suitable home for St. Raphael.

THE TRAIL

Most Stations of the Cross are typically laid out so that one follows a trail where station posts are staked, and one pauses to pray. The Abbey's Stations are designed with alcoves where one must physically exit the trail - a place of certainty - so as to enter the spirituality of each Station's mystery. Physically, one interrupts their journey to undergo an experience of potentially unitive and transformative change.

THE STATION FRAME

Wood is a powerful, consistent symbol throughout Scripture: the tree in the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, the altar in Exodus, the kindling Isaac carries. It is not by happenstance that both Jesus and Joseph were carpenters. For Christians, all wood signifies and leads us to the one salvific wood of the Cross. Jesus' sacrifice, which redeemed us on Calvary, is re-membered today in the Eucharistic sacrifice that takes place on the altar. All grace flows from the Cross, from our Abbey's altar, which is why our Station's frames are designed to replicate the Abbey church. They are crafted from Brazilian hardwood of substantial weight and density but are ecologically respectful of the Amazon forest, reminding us of God's original commission to humankind in Eden - to be stewards of creation.

THE STATION IMAGES

The Station scenes are bas-relief replicas from the bronze doors located at the Basilica of San Zeno in Verona, Italy. According to tradition, the crypt inside the Basilica was the marriage site of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The church is Romanesque in design typical of 12th century architecture. Our holy father, St. Norbert, lived during that time and the established the Order of Prémontré in 1120, thus connecting the Stations to the founding of our Order.

THE TREE TRUNK BENCHES

Daylesford Abbey took root and evolved from our original home at the site of the former Cassatt Estate. As Providence would arrange it, an oak tree was being removed from that property while our Stations were under construction. Our plans called for some seating to be formed from large tree trunks. This coincidence provided the symbolic means to represent our historical roots.

WE BEGIN: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. LK 9:23

I JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

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

You have already been scourged and crowned with thorns. We fear a corona in our lives as well –virus COVID -19. Now you stand before Pilate an innocent and condemned man. Your mission only appears to have come to a standstill. Our world has come to a grinding halt as we shelter in place. Afraid of death we busy ourselves making wills. You surrender your will to the Father. A cough in the Far East has affected all humanity reminding us that we are one Mystical Body. Pilate washes his hands and we wash ours.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .
May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

II JESUS ACCEPTS HIS CROSS

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

You accepted the Cross. We struggle to accept the cross of anxiety, infection, and despair. We protect ourselves from the cross maintaining six feet of distance, living under the illusion of control. The wealthy flee to their country homes. We wrestle with confinement, unemployment, and separation. For some it is the cross of knowing that they are afflicted; for most it is the anxiety of not knowing, or the fear that they might be carriers. Help us to bear the weight of what we know and what we do not know. Help us to embrace the cross.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

III JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

When someone falls, our first impulse is to help them up. Today we hesitate. We wonder "Are they infected? Will I become contaminated?" You fell and the soldiers laughed. Help us to see this trial not as an obstacle to faith - but the vehicle to a deeper faith. The grace within this collective crisis holds the possibility of drawing us more deeply into your Paschal Mystery.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

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

Just as your mother gazed upon your suffering, we worry about our children and family. "Are they keeping safe? Are they going out? Are they falling, succumbing?" We fear for the elderly the most, yet the young are not as resilient as we first thought. Mary knows how to comfort you with a mother's compassionate gaze. Mary, help us shift our focus away from ourselves so we might reach out to others.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

V SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

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

Simon was traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Our plans for these Holy Days demand confinement. Pulled from the crowd, Simon was forced into servitude to carry your Cross. Those employed in essential services are putting their lives at risk to serve strangers. Are they the new martyrs for our time? Protect our healthcare workers who minister throughout the world as you protected Simon. The cross we carry, you carry with us.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

VI VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

Veronica used her veil to wipe your face. Today, we wear face masks and resist the impulse to touch our face. Grant us the courage to resist the tendency to isolate in our own concerns so we can care for others as Veronica did. Help us to see your face in the face of those who suffer among us.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

VII JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

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

The first wave of this virus is the crushing healthcare catastrophe. The next wave is economic. Our financial markets have infected us with unemployment and the fear of losing our home. Others have panicked, creating shortages resulting in empty shelves in our markets. Our insecurity drives us to recognize that our life truly ultimately depends on you. Help us rebound.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

VIII 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.

Unable to ignore your suffering, the compassionate women of Jerusalem cry out to you. We are governed to maintain social distance. These women weep and mourn, and you respond: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." (Lk 22:38) In your reproach you guide us to the awareness that it is of no use lamenting the sufferings of this trial. We must undertake this journey to be transformed.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

IX JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

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

In union with you we feel overwhelmed by this interminable journey. How long will this persist? With this third fall we come to recognize the monotony of stumbling over the same familiar obstacles that continue to trip us up. With this third fall we experience the next wave of this pandemic – a spiritual crisis. "Where is God in this?" Why does God permit this?" Instead, we might ask ourselves, "How is God asking me to grow?" We slide into the dark, chaotic waters of mystery to remake our image of God.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

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

Jesus is stripped of his garments suffering the further indignity of being naked before the crowd. Our vulnerabilities and insecurities have likewise been exposed; our irritability in confinement, our self-absorption. We must inevitably learn to let go of what we cleave to and adopt an interior disposition of holy detachment. With an honest interior examination, we must name and abandon those longings that we need to be stripped of. For "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." (Lk 9:24)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

XI 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.

"When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." (Jn 12:32) As you are nailed to the Cross, we pray for a vaccine to immunize us all. Needles and intravenous lines provide life support for those who are hospitalized. As we unite ourselves with your suffering, guide us into your Paschal Mystery. As we journey with you, give us the faith and courage we need to face our own mortality knowing that "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (Jn 3:17)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

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

Death on a cross resulted in death by suffocation. Our respiratory systems are the target of this plague. The breath of the Holy Spirit that breathed life into Adam now threatens our survival. Physicians cry out for ventilators as the dying commend their Spirit into your hands. On a daily basis we tally the dead. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn 12:24)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

XIII 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.

You are lowered from the cross into your mother's arms who cradles her Son once more. Do we dare touch the infected body - even that of a loved one? Like Mary, we also grieve for those who have died. Grant us the courage to remain with them as Mary remained with you. "In the prime of my life I felt death reaching for me, calling me to Sheol's gates, cutting short my days. I was stunned to think I will never again see God, never again see a human face here on this earth." (Is 38:10-11)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

XIV 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.

Crucified criminals were not provided with a proper funeral and burial. Our funeral liturgies are limited in attendants just as few gathered for your burial. Unable to fall asleep at night, God calls us to sit outside the tomb. To avoid solitude is to avoid the capacity to hear the voice of God that speaks to us in silence. "Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." (Ps 46:10)

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

XV THE RESURRECTION

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

"Out of God's deepest mercy a dawn will come from on high, light for those shadowed by death, a guide for our feet on the way to peace." (Lk 1:78-79) Concealed within this crisis lies an opportunity for growth, exposing the insubstantiality of what we cling to. Christ's resurrection lights the way towards the renewed kingdom of God. Fill us with the wisdom to be guided by this experience so we might uncover the mysteries contained within it. Grant us the strength to rise up.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .
May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

COVER IMAGE: "Christ the Redeemer" statue illuminated with flags of countries afflicted with COVID-19. Photographed on March 19, 2020. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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220 S VALLEY ROAD PAOLI, PA 19301 610.647.2530