

Teen Stations of the Cross

Priest: Let us come together in prayer to walk with Jesus, to be His companions on His way to the Cross. Our teens bring to life the Stations of the Cross through their own lens, reflecting on Jesus' struggle in the context of their own life experiences. As you listen to these reflections, we invite you to pray with your heart how Jesus can help you to carry your cross this Lent.

As we begin our journey, let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, As we reflect on your Son's Way of the Cross, we ask you to please open our ears, minds, and hearts to your Presence. Please lead us to your Son's Cross, please lead us to your love, please lead us to salvation. This we ask, in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The First Station – Jesus is Condemned to Death.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1- Although sinless, Jesus is sentenced to death as a criminal. Pilate has the ability to release Jesus, but instead he gives in to what the crowd wants. Pilate thinks Jesus is innocent, but he isn't courageous enough to stick up for Him. Pilate washes his own hands of the matter and ties Jesus' hands behind His back. The journey to the cross begins.

2 - As we picture Jesus powerless before Pilate, we are filled with regret. Pilate officially condemned Jesus, but we are responsible too. Our sins brought Jesus to His cross, as well. Jesus was treated so unfairly. Pilate was only interested in giving the crowd what they wanted, rather than doing the right thing. The world is still unfair today. As teens, we often feel stuck in situations that are out of our control. Sometimes, we feel powerless in the face of big problems at school, in our community, and in our world. It is comforting to know that Jesus can relate to us. Standing before Pilate, He probably felt the same way.

Priest: Dear Jesus, You surrendered your power, so that we might be saved. When we feel powerless and unfairly treated, we can come to You, knowing that You will understand. As we set out on our Lenten journeys, help us to remember that You will stand up for us, even when no one else will.

The Second Station – Jesus Takes Up His Cross.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus not only is condemned to death unfairly, but also has to carry the cross on which He will die. The cross is heavy, not only because of the wood, but also because of the weight of all of the sins of the world, past, present, and future. Jesus takes up the cross willingly to take away our sins and ease our burdens. He takes it up out of love.

2 - It is hard to think about the fact that our sins add to the weight of Jesus' cross. Every time we fight with our siblings, every time we talk back to our parents, every time we give in to peer pressure, we add to the weight of Jesus' cross. And still, Jesus takes it up willingly and gives His life to save us. He offers to carry our burdens when they are too heavy for us to bear alone. When pressures at school and worries about college weigh us down and when we see loved ones carrying crosses of illness or pain, we can ask Jesus for help. Jesus wants to carry these crosses for us; it's up to us to let Him help.

Priest: Jesus, you take up the cross to save us from our sins and ease our pain. This Lent, please help us to give up our sins, so that we can lighten your load. Help us to give you our burdens, so that you can lighten our load. Only in you can we find peace, hope, and salvation.

The Third Station – Jesus Falls the First Time.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - The burden of the cross is more than anyone can bear. Jesus falls under the weight of the cross. He falls under the weight of our sins, worries, addictions, stresses, and hurts. Despite His pain, He is pulled up and forced to continue.

When we think of how Jesus fell under the weight of the cross, we think about the troubles in our lives that weigh us down, like school stress and peer pressure. Some of us carry the weight of being bullied or struggling with divorce and death in our families. It can be so hard to get back up when we have setbacks like getting bad grades, hanging out with the wrong people, and getting bullied. We see some people our age falling under crosses of violence, drugs, alcohol, and prejudice.

2 - When Jesus fell for the first time, He found the strength to get up and keep going. We too can find the strength to keep going by talking to trusted adults in our families and in our schools who can help. We can help our friends when they fall by giving them our ears to listen and our shoulders to cry on. Most of all, we can pray and ask Jesus to help all people who fall. He understands and will always help us to get back up.

Priest: Jesus, you know how it feels to fall under the weight of the world's problems. You help us to endure our struggles. This Lent, please pick us up when we fall and give us the strength to continue.

The Fourth Station – Jesus Meets His Mother.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - As Jesus carries on, His eyes meet those of His beloved mother. Perhaps Mary meets her Son's gaze and gives Him the only gift she has left, a loving smile that, while forced, gives her Son the strength He needs to continue. At the wedding at Cana, Mary told the servants to "Do whatever he tells you." On the Way of the Cross, Mary must take her own advice and do as her Son told her – believe in God's will and love as Jesus loved, even against all odds. Allowing her heart to be pierced by the sword, Mary holds back her tears and, with undying love, holds up her Son.

2 - Without a doubt that Mary would have done anything to trade places with Jesus, to walk the Way of the Cross herself if it meant sparing her child; and yet that was not an option. Mary could not take the cross away from Jesus, but because of His cross, Mary can help us. Because of the cross, Mary will ask her Son to pick up our crosses when they are too heavy to bear. Just as Mary did not leave Jesus' side, she will not leave ours. She cares for us; Her Son cares for us. Let us ask Mary for her prayers; she walks with us all.

Priest: Lord Jesus, this Lent, help me to be like your mother and do whatever You tell me. Help me to reach out to the trusted people in my life and accept the love that You and Your mother always offer.

The Fifth Station – Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - The soldiers pull a man named Simon from the crowd and force him to help Jesus carry His cross. The soldiers don't care about helping Jesus; they only care about crucifying Him. Simon doesn't volunteer for this. Maybe he would rather not get involved, but he is not given a choice. Likewise, Jesus doesn't ask for help, but does accept.

Asking for help is not an easy thing to do. Sometimes we are embarrassed and don't want to appear weak. We try to do everything on our own, rather than appear vulnerable. Jesus teaches us, though, that there is no shame in receiving help. It's okay to reach out for help and accept support and relief from people whom we trust.

2 - Simon teaches us a lesson too. Sometimes we are bystanders and see another person in trouble, like when we witness a friend getting bullied or being unfairly judged. In times like these, we can be like Simon and step in to help. We should never walk away, but rather do what we can to make the situation right or find a trusted adult to intervene. It won't be easy, but God will give us courage, as He did for Simon. This Lent, let's pray and ask for Jesus' help when we are struggling. Let's listen to our consciences and ask the Holy Spirit to help us make the right decisions. Let's pray for the strength to assist those in need and to spread peace and tolerance in this troubled world.

Priest: Dear Jesus, you know how it feels to give and receive help. You always offer to help us to carry our crosses. Please help us to accept your offer and give us the strength to pay it forward and help one other.

The Sixth Station – Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1- From the crowd comes a woman. She can no longer stand by and watch Jesus suffer; she has to do something, even if that something is as little as wiping Jesus' face with her veil. Veronica does not change the outcome of the day, but her small actions do make a big difference. Her compassion and her courage are signs of her love for Jesus. Jesus gives Veronica an outward sign of His love for her too, the image of His face imprinted on her veil for her to cherish forever.

2 - Our world is filled with problems that seem so much bigger than we are. Can any of us really make a difference? With Veronica as our example, I know we can. Every loving action is worthwhile. When we volunteer at the soup kitchen, help the elderly, stand up for our beliefs at school, and show compassion and generosity, we make a difference for others. We make a difference for Jesus. Sometimes the smallest actions make the biggest impact. This Lent, let's try to be more like Veronica. When we see someone having a bad day, we can make a difference by cheering them up. We can make a difference at home by helping our parents. We can make a commitment to kindness and mercy. Let's think of the times when others have made a difference in our lives and pay it forward.

Priest: Dear Jesus, you don't ask us to solve the problems of the world on our own. You ask us to love one another. The rest will follow. Please give us the strength to reach out to others in ways, great and small, and the courage to believe that all of our actions, when done out of love, do make a difference.

The Seventh Station – Jesus Falls the Second Time.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus' pain is unbearable and He falls a second time. Lying on the ground, maybe Jesus wants to give up, but He is forced to continue. His love for us gives Him the strength to keep going.

In thinking about Jesus' fall, I think about the struggles that we face every day. School, sports, homework, social anxiety...Pressure is always on us and sometimes we feel like falling under the weight of it all. At times like these, we can try to cope and find strength to keep going..

2 - We can avoid extra stress by putting down our cell phones and putting in more time for schoolwork. We can take care of our bodies, mentally and physically, by exercising, eating right, and getting enough sleep. We can open up to our parents and friends and accept their support. Most importantly, we can pray and open our hearts to Jesus' love. Jesus knows what pain feels like. When we meet Jesus in prayer, He can help us up when we fall and give us the comfort and strength that we need to keep going.

Priest: Dear Jesus, even though you fell along your journey, you never gave up. Please give us the strength to endure our hardest days. This Lent, help us to remember that you will always help us up when we fall. With your love, we will never be alone.

The Eighth Station - Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus continues His journey to the cross. His friends have deserted Him, His body is failing Him, His dignity is diminishing. Along the way, Jesus meets a group of women. They have not abandoned Him. As Jesus sheds His blood, they shed their tears. Despite His own pain, Jesus stops to console these women. Selfless to the end, He gives them His comfort.

2- Jesus was abandoned by all of his friends. Every time we feel left out, when our friends all make plans and don't invite us, we feel some of Jesus' pain. The women who stayed to support Jesus were outsiders to the "in-crowd." Sometimes being a Catholic makes us feel like outsiders too. We try to put our faith first, but many people in the world today don't seem to bother. It's not always easy to decide right from wrong, to live according to Christian values, and to remain faithful, but it is always worth it. When we feel like outsiders, we can turn to our families for support and comfort. We can turn to Jesus in times of pain and ridicule. He knows how we feel. He will console and strengthen us, just as he did for the women.

Priest: Jesus, the life of discipleship is not easy. Help us to be faithful and to follow you even when we feel alone. You will never abandon us; please give us the courage to do the same for You.

The Ninth Station – Jesus Falls the Third Time.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus falls yet again. Perhaps He feels like a failure. Perhaps He is angry at Himself for falling again. Perhaps even Jesus is wondering how good can come out of this suffering. Love gives Him the strength to continue.

As we think of Jesus falling for the third time, we think of times when we have felt like failures, times when we didn't try hard enough, times when we didn't make the cut. When we look around us, we see many people falling under their crosses, as they struggle with academics, follow the wrong people, or give in to temptations like smoking and drinking.

2 - Jesus may have felt like a failure, but He never gave up. When we fall, we must never give up either. When we see friends struggling, we can ease their suffering by letting them know that we care and that they have our trust. When we ease their pain, we ease Jesus' suffering. Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice for us. Are we willing to make sacrifices for Jesus, especially when it comes to our time? Whenever we make time for Jesus by going to Mass and praying over decisions, we show our love for Him. This Lent, maybe the best thing that we can give up is our time.

Priest: Jesus, help us to trust that, in your eyes, we are never failures. Help us to always give our time and attention to You. Please help us to love all people, including ourselves, with a love like Yours.

The Tenth Station – Jesus is Stripped.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus not only has been condemned to the most brutal means of execution; he also is subject to humiliation. As the soldiers strip Him of His clothing, they strip away His dignity. Jesus is totally exposed to a world that is blind to His love.

When we think of Jesus' public humiliation, we think about all of the times when we have felt embarrassed and mortified. We can only imagine how Jesus felt, enduring such public disgrace. He must have been so scared and sad, knowing He was approaching His death.

2 - Why did the soldiers need to take away His dignity too? Wasn't He suffering enough? When we think of how Jesus was stripped of His dignity, we think of the many people in this world who are stripped of their dignity each day...like kids who are bullied relentlessly, the homeless who rarely meet a smile, and reformed convicts who are trying to start over, but will never be given a second chance. Every life is worthy of respect and dignity. Jesus accepted humiliation out of love for us. Now it is our job to strip away sin and hatred from this world and to love as Jesus loves.

Priest: Dear Jesus, when we feel embarrassed, help us to turn to You, knowing that You understand. Give us the courage to stand up for the dignity of ever.

The Eleventh Station – Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus reaches the end of the road and the soldiers crucify Him. As they pound nails through Jesus' wrists and feet, the sound is deafening and echoes throughout the land. The pain is beyond words, yet Jesus bears this out of love for us.

When we think about Jesus being nailed to the cross, we have trouble getting past the pain. It is more than we can imagine. Jesus' willingness to endure that pain shows how great His love for us is. Although sometimes we don't like to think about it, love and sacrifice go hand in hand. We make sacrifices for those whom we love.

2 - What sacrifices can we make for Jesus? Our sins have nailed Jesus to the cross. They nail us to our own crosses in life. We can't remove the nails from Jesus' hands and feet, but we can ease his pain by changing our lives for the better. We can learn from past mistakes and work together to rid the world of problems like drug abuse, bullying, discrimination, and racism. This Lent, let's show our love for Jesus and our gratitude for his sacrifice through our actions.

Priest: Lord Jesus, please help us to remove from our lives the sins that pound the nails into your wrists and feet. When we are tempted to sin, help us to remember the echo of the hammer hitting the nails and give us the strength to turn to love instead.

The Twelfth Station – Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - As Jesus hangs on the cross, each breath is a struggle. After three hours, Jesus can bear no more. He cries out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Jesus breathes His last and gives up His spirit, all out of love.

Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate act of selfless sacrifice. Jesus gave up his life for the benefit of the whole human race. His love for each one of us is so great that He paid the price for our sins.

2 - It's easy to think about Jesus' love in a general way. But think about it on a personal level. Jesus died to pay the price of your sins and mine. He died out of love for each of us. If you and I had been the only people on Earth on Good Friday, Jesus still would have accepted death on the cross, just for us. Any time we feel alone, abandoned, or worthless, we can think of the love that Jesus has for us. There is no greater love than this. What sacrifices are we willing to make to love Jesus in return and bring His love to others?

Priest: Dear Jesus, you accepted death out of love for us. This Lent, help us please to make sacrifices in our own lives to show our love for You and to bring Your love into this world.

The Thirteenth Station – Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and given to His mother one last time. Mary and the faithful disciples grieve and mourn, and yet somehow they stay strong. They serve quietly and humbly, without credit or recognition. Their love for Jesus remains. As Mary holds her Son, her tears wash away the horror of the day. She continues to love, even though her heart has been pierced by the sword.

2 - As Mary and the disciples prepared Jesus' body for the tomb, they had to confront His death head on. Mary couldn't hide from the fact that her beloved Son had died. Jesus' friends couldn't hide from their sadness and anger at such an unfair situation. Despite their emotions, they never stopped serving our Lord. Do we serve Jesus in the same way today? Mary and the disciples remind us that we are called to live as Christians at all times, not only when it is easy or convenient.

Priest: Dear Jesus, please give us the courage to serve you always. Help us to trust in Your love, even during our darkest hours.

The Fourteenth Station – Jesus is Laid in the Tomb.

Priest: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You,

All: because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1 - Jesus' friends lay his lifeless body in a cold dark tomb. The journey of the Cross seems to end in sadness and desperation. The disciples must have felt that that hope, love, and goodness died with Jesus too and were laid to rest in the same dark tomb. But, today, as people of faith, we know that life does not end with the tomb. Jesus died so that death would be no more, so that hope, love, and goodness will be ours for eternity.

2 - As teenagers, it can be easy to feel invincible. We're not supposed to die before our time. Our friends and loved ones are not supposed to die. But some have and we miss them dearly. Jesus' friends must have felt the same way when they laid Jesus in the tomb. Thankfully, as Christians, we have hope and the promise of Eternal Life. We know that Jesus' tomb will be empty on Easter Sunday. Jesus' story did not end with the tomb. Neither will ours.

Priest: Jesus, help us please to live in hope. Fill our emptiness with your love. Replace our pain with your comfort. Help us to see past the tomb and look towards the Resurrection.

The journey to the Cross can change your life.

Priest: When you are struggling, lean on Jesus. When peer pressure is high, when burdens at school are heavy, when you feel alone in trying to live out your Christian values, find strength and courage in Jesus and His cross. Open your heart to the fire of Jesus' love. His Love will change your life when you let it.

Go now, my friends, renewed by the Way of the Cross. Go forth in peace; go forth in love; go forth in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.