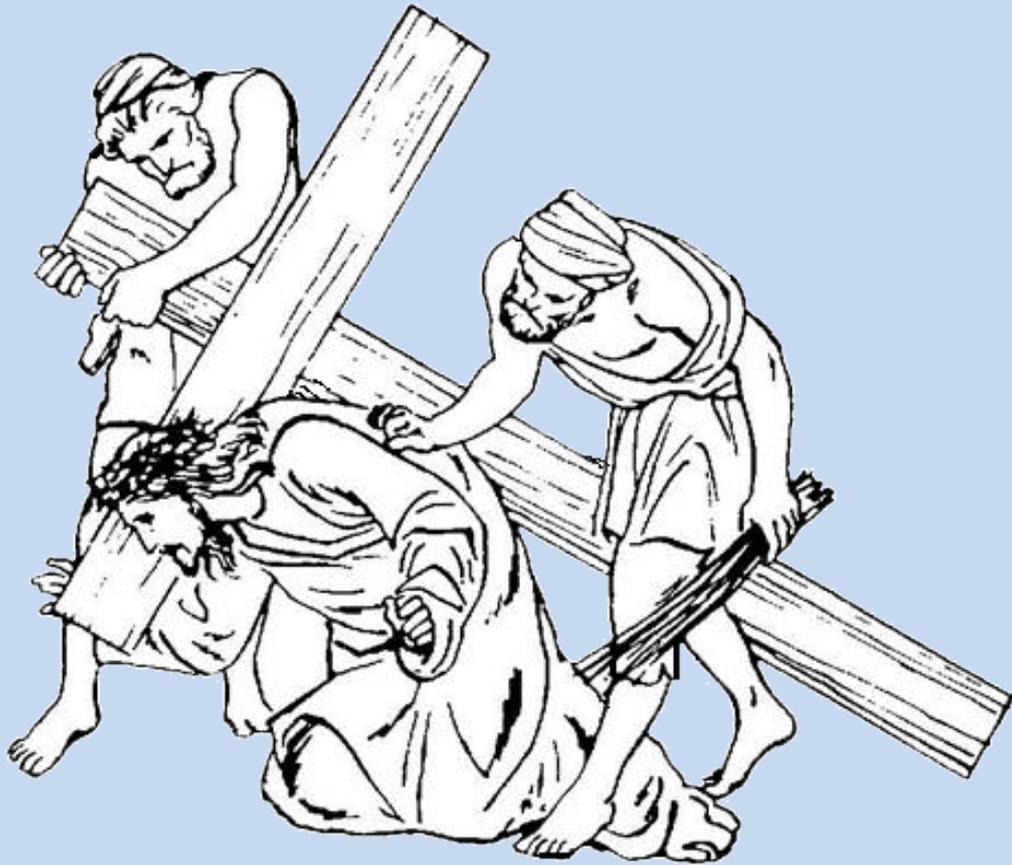


THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Reflections on the Suffering of Christ and the
development in ourselves of His Universal
Compassion



Peter G Whelan

Introduction.

Having been asked to lead the Stations of the Cross during Lent on behalf of Eucharistic Ministers, but with a team representing also a Third World Group, Apparitors and Welcomers, Teaching Brothers, and helpers at a support centre for the homeless, I felt it necessary to use a text which would be representative of all these, while focusing particularly on the Holy Eucharist.

After a fairly extensive search the published version I found nearest to my need was that of Rev Carmen Mele OP, Co-ordinator of Peace and Justice Ministries for the diocese of Fort Worth, USA. That version, however, was too heavily related to the situation in the United States, as it followed a Pastoral Letter from the bishops there on the subject of economic justice. Unable therefore to find an entirely satisfactory existing version I decided to draw up my own, but I acknowledge my debt to Fr Mele in adopting certain of his concepts, notably in my opening Stations.

A year later I found myself again responsible for leading the Stations for a similar grouping of interests, but this time on behalf of a Third World Group, and the same version seemed equally suitable. These Stations have since been used by others with like concerns, but particularly within the broad field of Justice and Peace.

The intention has been to focus on Compassion, not only for Christ's suffering on the road to Calvary, but for Christ present in suffering humanity; and not merely to express our sympathy, but to persuade ourselves into an active concern to relieve suffering and deprivation in whatever of many forms it takes, drawing our strength from Christ's Sacrificial Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

P G Whelan

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

(HYMNS ARE PRINTED ON THE REVERSE - Hymn Numbers refer to "Hymns Old and New")

These Stations of the Cross are offered with the intention that by our sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Universal Compassion of Christ should grow in us.

Dedication (Sub tuum...)

We fly to your patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Invocation between Stations

I love you, Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart of having offended You. Never permit me to separate myself from You again. Grant that I may love You always; and then do with me what You will.

(Alternatively, succeeding verses of the hymn "At the cross her station keeping" (No. 48), or of Psalm 21 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me", may be said or sung).

The Stations

- First Station: "Our choice is to walk with them..."
- Second Station: "...we are ashamed..."
- Third Station: "...overcome our prejudices..."
- Fourth Station: "...Comforter of the afflicted..."
- Fifth Station: "...all comes from your loving hands."
- Sixth Station: "...not to judge lest we ourselves be judged..."
- Seventh Station: "...speaking up for justice and fairness..."
- Eighth Station: "...as we forgive those who trespass against us."
- Ninth Station: "...we did not know what we were doing."
- Tenth Station: "...help us to strip ourselves of our selfishness..."
- Eleventh Station: "...to ask nothing and to refuse nothing..."
- Twelfth Station: "Draw all mankind to yourself."
- Thirteenth Station: "...a Christlike compassion for the suffering of others..."
- Fourteenth Station: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Prayer.

Lord Jesus, who in the Blessed Eucharist left us the perpetual memorial of your passion, may we approach these sacred mysteries with reverence and love, always mindful of your promise that when we eat your body and drink your blood we live in you and you live in us. By our sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice may your universal love and compassion, with a concern for all creation, come to fulfilment in us. Amen.

Hymn No.574

1 To Christ, the Prince of Peace,
and Son of God most high,
the father of the world to come,
sing we with holy joy.

2 Deep in his heart for us,
the wound of love he bore;
that love wherewith he still inflames
the hearts that him adore.

3 O Jesu, victim blest,
what else but love divine,
could thee constrain to open thus
that sacred heart of thine?

4 O fount of endless life,
O spring of water clear,
O flame celestial, cleansing all
who unto thee draw near!

5 Hide us in thy dear heart,
For thither do we fly;
there seek thy grace through life, in death
thine immortality.

6 Praise to the Father be,
and sole-begotten Son;
praise, holy Paraclete, to thee
while endless ages run.

Benediction Hymns No.671

1 O Salutaris hostia,
quae cæli pandis ostium,
bella premunt hostilia,
da robur, fer auxilium.

2 Uni trinoque Domino
sit sempiterna gloria,
qui vitam sine termino
nobis donet in patria. Amen.

1 Tantum ergo Sacramentum
veneremur cernui:
et antiquum documentum
novo cedat ritui;
praestet fides supplementum
sensuum defectui.

2 Genitori, genitoque
laus et jubilatio,
salus, honor, virtus quoque
sit et benedictio;
procedenti ab utroque
compar sit laudatio. Amen.

*Adoremus in æternum
sanctissimum sacramentum*

1 Laudate Dominum omnes gentes;
laudate eum omnes populi.

3 Gloria Patri et Filio;
et Spiritui Sancto.

2 Quoniam confirmata est super
misericordia ejus:
et veritas Domini in aeternum.

4 Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper;
et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Closing Hymn No.498

1 Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast;
Body of Christ, be thou my saving guest;
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide,
wash me with water flowing from thy side.

2 Strength and protection may thy Passion be;
O Blessed Jesus, hear and answer me;
deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me;
so shall I never, never part from thee.

3 Guard and defend me from the foe malign;
in death's dread moments make me only thine;
call me, and bid me come to thee on high,
when I may praise thee with thy saints for aye.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The First Station;

Jesus is Condemned to Death.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Jesus stands before Pilate, unjustly condemned to death; a victim of the bigotry of religious leaders and the cowardice of the civil authority which takes the easy option - giving in to the crowd. The gospel shows Jesus living as a poor man, taking the side of the poor and the despised, warning of the dangers of riches, standing against the hypocrisy of the establishment.

Jesus, so concerned for others, you are condemned to death with no one to defend you. As we begin this journey with you to Calvary, we ask for the deep faith necessary to see you in the homeless, the refugee, the hungry and the deprived. Our choice is to walk with them as we walk with you.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Second Station;

Jesus Accepts the Cross.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

After scourging, the cruel preliminary to crucifixion, the beam of the cross is lifted onto Jesus's shoulders, and he is led through the city as a spectacle, mocked and jeered on the way. Have our sins and injustices really deserved this most savage of sentences?

Jesus, bearer of our guilt, we are ashamed of our reluctance to follow you unreservedly. Overcome in us our undue concern for the disdain of others. Instil in us a new commitment so that we might work to create a society of justice and concern for all.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Third Station;

Jesus Falls the First Time.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Drained by a long and harrowing night of torture, weighed down by the cross, and discouraged by the desertion of his followers and the insults of the crowd, Jesus stumbles and falls.

Compassionate Christ, despair can eat into the soul of the despised and the maligned in society - drug addicts, alcoholics, victims of Aids, single parents, even the unemployed and the handicapped. By your own agony of despair as you journeyed to crucifixion, relieve their burden of hopelessness and give us the grace to overcome our own prejudices, seeing in others only the image of God.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Fourth Station;

Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

While others jeer, Mary sees only her holy child, her thoughtful adolescent, the son concerned only for the well-being of others. This loving mother would have known the danger threatening her son, and now she shares his suffering in true compassion, bringing a look, a word, of comfort in his misery.

Jesus, at the foot of your cross you gave us all, in the person of John, into the care of your mother. She loves each one of us as she loved you. All the children of God are, to her, her only child. May her care and compassion protect us now and always, and especially when we see those we love suffering sickness and pain. Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted, pray for us.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Fifth Station:
Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Christ said "Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me". Some take up the cross of discipline and penance voluntarily; others have the cross thrust upon them. Simon was coerced into carrying the cross for this condemned stranger; but all have some cross to bear, and inevitably there come times of regret, self-pity, uselessness, resentment.

Lord, help us to carry our cross willingly, recognising that all comes from your loving hands. When regret or self-pity overwhelms us, let us remember your promise that all who lose their life for your sake will save it. And when our cross is light, open our hearts to the cross of others, compassionate to the suffering of all creatures.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Sixth Station:
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.*

What courage it must have taken for this woman to step forward from the crowd and wipe the sweat and blood from Jesus's face. She saw a suffering fellow-being where others saw only a condemned criminal undergoing deserved retribution.

Jesus, you have warned us not to judge lest we ourselves be judged, keep far from us all sentiments of vengeance. Keep us mindful of the human dignity of prisoners, concerned only for their reform and reconciliation. Relieve the many imprisoned unjustly or unfairly; and give to those in authority a true regard for human rights, unswayed by political expediency.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Seventh Station:
Jesus Falls the Second Time.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Christ staggers on, falls again, and is dragged to his feet and pushed along the road. He has no choice. The poor and the homeless throughout the world have no choice either. Bound by the constraints of an unjust society they see no prospect of deliverance, while others are concerned only to conserve their prosperity and privilege, closing their eyes to the unequal distribution, not of wealth, but even of essentials.

Jesus, where we have no choice give us the grace to accept your will for us as your divine gift. But where we have a choice you oblige us, as your disciples, to concern ourselves with the welfare of others, bringing aid direct, or speaking up for justice and fairness, especially for minorities oppressed because of race, religion or colour, or whose lives have been devastated by war. Help us by your grace.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Eighth Station;
Jesus Speaks to the Weeping Women.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Jesus had said: "How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused." And now in the midst of his own suffering he sorrows with this group of devout women sorrowing at his plight. "Do not weep for me", he says, " weep rather for yourselves and for your children"; for those who reject me, my values and my message.

Merciful Lord, we too must obey your command to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to do good to those who hate us. Your final prayer from the cross begged forgiveness for those who brought you to crucifixion. Give us the grace of an uncondescending and genuine forgiveness when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Ninth Station;
Jesus Falls the Third Time.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Approaching the place of execution, Christ, exhausted, falls yet again having to be virtually carried the last few steps. As we have journeyed in his footsteps since our baptism, how many times have we fallen along the way? How much have we added by our sinfulness to his agony? Yet by the grace of God we have staggered to our feet and carried on, confident of his merciful forgiveness.

Jesus, forgive us for our sinfulness. We can see in your agony what our sin has cost you. Revitalise our lukewarm commitment to your values, your interests, your consuming concern for others. Plead with the Father to accept our excuse; we did not know what we were doing.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Tenth Station;
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.*

Already stripped of liberty and respect, Jesus is now stripped of his dignity, his clothing, which the soldiers will divide among themselves. All now remaining to him is life itself, and that soon will be taken from him.

Jesus, you have warned us against storing up treasures on earth, help us now to strip ourselves of our selfishness, our undue seeking after comfort and security. Replace our pride with a true humility, and let our over-riding concern be to share, not only our wealth, but our knowledge, our capabilities and our values, with those in need, giving them the means to improve for themselves the quality of their lives.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Eleventh Station;
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.*

"You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Instead, here am I." Christ is cruelly nailed to the cross, his altar. This victim, precious to the Father, takes upon himself our sins and those of all humanity in total expiation.

Crucified Lord, we dare not ask for suffering, to be nailed to the cross with you. Give us grace to ask nothing and to refuse nothing; abandoning ourselves to pure love so that you may crucify and destroy self in us as you see best. By the continued re-enactment of your sacrifice on our altars, may the partaking of your body and blood truly provide the nourishment of our spiritual lives.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Twelfth Station;
Jesus Dies on the Cross.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all mankind to myself." Christ in his torment sees himself abandoned even by the Father. Such is the burden of sin he has taken on himself. He says: "It is accomplished", and bowing his head gives up his spirit.

Glorified King, the cross has become your throne. Draw all mankind to yourself. Let us, your disciples, place no obstacles in the way of others by judging or condemning their path to God. Rather, may we recognise the love of God in them, and share with them wherever possible in bringing that love into the lives of others.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Thirteenth Station;
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.*

The body of Jesus is taken down by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea and placed in the arms of his mother. Her sorrow, foretold by Simeon, is now complete. For the apostles too all seems to be over, and they hide themselves away in fear.

Mother of Sorrows, comfort us when sorrows and disappointments overwhelm us. We can never see the whole picture, our place in God's plan; or how our disappointments and failures, the suffering of all creation, can have a positive value. Nurture in us a Christlike compassion for the suffering of others; and in the love of our heavenly father may we unite our suffering and theirs with the suffering of your son. Mother of Christ, our Mother, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

I love You, Jesus, ...

The Fourteenth Station:
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.*

Accompanied by the mother of Jesus and by Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, Joseph and Nicodemus lay Jesus in the tomb. St Paul reminds us that "when we were baptised we went down into the tomb with Christ and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life."

Jesus, who loved us unto death, we have our different gifts, our lives follow different paths. May we always be mindful that we are each part of your one mystical body, that for all there is only your one commandment: "Love one another, as I have loved you." Good Shepherd, who laid down your life for us, be with us always.

I love You, Jesus, ...
