

The Way of the Cross

Preparatory Prayer (Leader)

Most Holy Trinity, receive my humble prayers
which I offer to you in union with the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints,
to the glory of your divine majesty,
in satisfaction for my sins,
in remembrance of my redemption;
and to obtain rest for the dead,
grace for the living, and everlasting life for all.
All praise, glory, and honor are yours,
Most Blessed Trinity, forever and ever. Amen.

Leader: O God, come to my assistance.

All: Lord, make haste to help me.

Leader: Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

All: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

I. First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus is innocent. He did not and could not sin, but he is condemned to death. Indeed, he is condemned to the most humiliating death of the Cross. Pilate delivered Jesus into the hands of his enemies, so that he might remain a friend of the emperor. Dreadful injustice! Pilate does not fear to condemn innocence and offend God, so that he might please other men and the world.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! You are innocent! But I have sinned and I am consigned to eternal death! But so that I could live, you gladly accepted the sentence of death. How then can I live unless it is for you alone? If I desire to please others, how can I be your servant? Help me to displease others so that the world will know that I serve you alone. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

II. Second Station: Jesus Receives the Cross

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Jesus Christ beholds the Cross. With greatest desire, he extends his arms, already soaked in blood, and gently embraces the Cross. He kisses it, places it upon his shoulders, and although weary unto death, rejoices as he begins his way of pain and suffering.

Prayer

All: I cannot be a friend of Christ if I become an enemy of the Cross! O sweet Cross! O good Cross! O holy Cross! I embrace you. I kiss you. I joyfully accept the hand of God. May God forbid me from boasting about anything except the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ. May the world be crucified to me. May I be crucified to the world so that I may belong only to you, O Lord. Help to share in your passion! O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

III. Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Feverish and oppressed by the weight of the Cross, Jesus falls to the ground. Certainly, my sins are the weight that caused this unbearable burden. And yet, because of his love for me, Jesus carried the weight as if it was both sweet and light.

Prayer

All: My Jesus! You carry the heavy burden of my sins. How then can I refuse to carry the yoke of your holy commandments so that I might help bear the burdens of my neighbor? Your yoke is sweet. Your burden is light. Therefore, I gladly and willingly accept it. I will strive to carry it for the rest of my life. O Jesus, by your grace, console me while I carry my cross; prevent me from falling again into sin. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

IV. Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Most Sorrowful Mother

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Mother Mary sees her beloved son carrying the heavy burden of his Cross. Her glance is both afflicted and deeply sorrowful. After being beaten by his tormenters, his entire body bleeds. His mother's most tender heart shares his unspeakable pain and anguish! She longs for her son! She longs to suffer and die with him!

Prayer

All: O Jesus! O Mary! I am the cause of your pain and suffering! I pray that my heart may share in your suffering! Mother Mary, pray for me! Mother Mary, source of love, help me to feel the force of this pain so that I may weep with you. Help me to burn with love for your son, the Christ. Help me to remember always your son's bitter passion that he suffered because of me and for me. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

V. Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Simon of Cyrene is required to help Jesus carry the Cross. Jesus is crippled and wasted because of my sins. Although reluctant to share the burden, Jesus accepts Simon's help. How pleasing a companion Simon might have been if he had embraced the Cross by choice rather than by coercion. O my soul, Jesus invites me to embrace my Cross and follow him. But I shamefully resist. How pleasing a companion I might make if I embrace the Cross by choice rather than by coercion!

Prayer

All: O Jesus! How truly you say: "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." I pray to be worthy of you, O Lord. I pray for the courage to join you as a companion on the way of the Cross. I pray for the courage to gladly carry my own Cross. If not so heavy like yours, be pleased to place another upon my shoulders. I shall endeavor to carry my Cross and suffer like you for the rest of my life. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

VI. Sixth Station: Veronica Presents the Veil to Christ

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: By compassion and devotion, Veronica offers her veil so that Jesus may wipe his face which is stained by blood and spit. Jesus returns the veil with the image of his holy face imprinted upon it. Such a small thing offered in exchange for such a heavenly gift of the face of Christ Jesus!

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Given what you have suffer for me, what can I possibly give to you? My life! I consecrate myself to your service. I offer you my whole heart. Seal my heart and soul with your holy image so that I may always be mindful of you, so that you may always be mindful of me. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

VII. Seventh Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus falls again under the weight of his suffering, under the burden of the Cross. He strikes the ground with his sacred face, but his executioners offer no comfort or rest. By clubs and ropes, Jesus is forced to stand and continue his walk, carrying the Cross. My repeated sins have caused this second fall. Am I pleased to sin again and again?

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Have mercy on me! Extend your hand to me! Support me before I fall again into my old sins! Knowing my sins, should I repeat them? No, I shall begin again! For this moment, help me to deny myself and serve only you, my God and my all! O Jesus! Console me with your grace, without which I cannot continue on this way! O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

VIII. Eighth Station: Jesus Addresses the Weeping Daughters of Jerusalem

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: The devoted daughters grieve and weep for their savior. But he turns to them and says: "Do not weep for the innocent. Weep for yourselves and for your children." I weep for my sins because they are cause of so much suffering. Weep, my soul! Nothing is more pleasing to Christ Jesus and more useful to the cause of my soul than tears shed with sorrow for my sins.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Grant me the gift of tears! Crush my heart so that bountiful tears may flow! Break my heart so that bountiful tears may be shed in sorrow for my sins! May an abundance of tears extinguish my many sins with true contrition. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

IX. Ninth Station: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus is despised. He is a man of sorrows. He knows weakness. He embraces and carries this Cross for us and for our sake. Reaching now the foot of Calvary, he falls violently for the third time. How savage and sorrowful is the weight of my sin! As many times as the Cross has forced Jesus to the ground, already long ago it would have thrust me into hell – except that Jesus saves me through his most holy passion.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Merciful savior! I give you praise and thanks for the many times that you have saved me from my sins; for the many times that you have preserved me from death even though I deserve to fall headlong into the abyss of hell. My God and my all! Enkindle in me a new fervor! Preserve me through your grace! Keep me from sin! Carry me into the perfect freedom of the true children of God! O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

X. Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: O Jesus, your garments are violently stripped from your body. Because these garments clung to your open wounds with blood and sweat, the pain is excruciating! You will die humiliated and naked! Like you, I shall die naked and humiliated – humiliated by my actions, failures, and sins.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Let this be done! May I strip away my old self! Created by your heart and will, may I put on a new self. Although it may be bitter to my passions and sinfulness, do not spare my selfish flesh. I desire to die naked to the world so that I may live with you for all eternity. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

XI. Eleventh Station: Jesus is Crucified

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: After being stripped of his clothes, Jesus is cruelly stretched upon the Cross. His hands and feet are mercilessly pierced with nails. Such pain! Such torture! But Jesus is silent because he suffers willingly for me, for love of me. O my soul! How can you stand your sinfulness? How impatiently do you suffer the smallest insult or indignity?

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Most gentle and patient Lamb! I hate my impatience! O Lord, crucify me with my own desires and selfishness. Burn here, cut here, so that you might save me for eternity. I cast myself into your merciful embrace. Let your holy will be done in all things. Let your grace alone be enough for me. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

XII. Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies Upon the Cross

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus hangs upon the cross. He is naked, bloody, and mortally wounded. He embraces this horrific suffering for me, for love of me. His crucified body is a symbol of love. His head is lowered to kiss me. His arms are outstretched to embrace me. His love for me is so great. Every one of his wounds can be counted as a pledge of love. Jesus dies so that a sinner may live and be freed from eternal death. But so sadly, while his love for me is so great, it is so poorly repaid!

Prayer

All: O Jesus! Help me to die completely to the temptations and vanities of this world out of love for you. As I look at you hanging upon the Cross, the world becomes vile to me. O Lord, receive me! I belong only to you! I wish neither to live nor die unless it for you alone. O Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

XIII. Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus refused to come down from the Cross in life. Even in death, he clings to it. When he is taken down from the Cross, Jesus rests in the virginal lap of his Blessed Mother. Like Jesus, I must be steadfast in my resolutions by clinging to the Cross. If I persevere, I will be saved. With purity of heart, I may humbly receive my Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! I beg you! Help me to live and die on the Cross of salvation! O God, create in me a clean heart so that I may be worthy to receive you in Holy Communion today, remain in you tomorrow, and never be separated from you. O Jesus Christ crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

XIV. Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Buried

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

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Meditation

Leader: Jesus is buried in someone else's tomb. On the cross, he did not have a place to rest his head. In death, Jesus did not have his own tomb in which to rest because he was not of this world. I may now live in this world, but I seek not to depend on it. I shall denounce the world and its vice so that I may not die with it.

Prayer

All: O Jesus! You have called me from this world! You created me not for this world, but for heaven! What could I truly want in a world such as this? So, I leave the world and its vanities! I eagerly begin my march on the way of the Cross – a way marked with my savior's sacred footprints. I begin the way to my heavenly home where I will live and rest with my Lord forever and ever. Amen. O Jesus Christ Crucified, have mercy on me! Our Father...

Closing

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell;
on the third day, he rose again from the dead,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the Communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and live everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of Saint Francis Before a Crucifix

Most High and Glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart.
Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
O Lord, give me insight and wisdom,
so that I might always discern
your holy and truly will. Amen.

Saint Francis, pray for us!
Saint Clare, pray for us!
Saint Michael the Archangel, protect us!
Our Lady of Angels, pray for us!

Source: Various versions of the Franciscan Way of the Cross are available online and in printed formats. This version was adapted from an English translation of a medieval Latin text.

The Assisi Project

Founded in 2007 by Father Jim Achadinha and Cliff Garvey, the Assisi Project is an international fellowship of 'Franciscans in Spirit' with friends and followers in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa. We are dedicated to helping Christian believers of all ages to more faithfully live the Gospel of Christ in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. For more information, please contact Cliff Garvey at c.garvey@ymail.com or visit our website at assisiproject.com. May the Lord give you peace!