

# SOCIAL JUSTICE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

## Opening Prayer:

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, Source of Love, Comforter of the Afflicted,  
be with us tonight as we journey in the footsteps of Jesus  
as he goes to his suffering and death.

As we reflect on the suffering of Jesus,  
help us to feel the pain and humiliation that he felt,  
so that we may be moved by the great sacrifice he made  
for all humanity.

Send us your Spirit to enter into our hearts  
so that with compassion  
we may listen and respond to the plight of others  
who carry burdens, crosses, despair, and loss of dignity.

Send your Spirit to be with us as we travel this journey together.  
Awaken our hearts  
that we may accept your challenge to create the world anew.

We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
as one God, forever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

*These Stations of the Cross are based on those written by the Social Justice students in Ms. Mary Koss' classes at Catholic Central High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They are used with the permission of the Education for Justice project at the Center of Concern.*

## The 1<sup>st</sup> Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** After Jesus was arrested, he was taken before the Sanhedrin, where the chief priests testified against him. Finally, the high priest asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to what these men testify against you? Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am..." Then they sentenced him to death.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was condemned to death because of who he was. He was punished with the penalty of death not for what he did, but for who he was.

Every day there are those who are quick to judge others in our society. Like Jesus, they are condemned today for who they are: the poor, the marginalized, and even those who are just a little different. Racism, discrimination, homophobia, and exclusion condemn people to a social death because people are too comfortable to let go of current closed-minded conceptions.

When the Sanhedrin questioned Jesus about who he was, Jesus did not deny himself. Sometimes when others judge or mock us we quickly abandon our true selves to avoid condemnation.

Jesus died for our sins, not his own. Even in the face of the harshest injustices we need to be true to ourselves. We need to realize that we must keep exclusion and prejudice from condemning innocent people. We need to begin to recognize that all people are valuable because we are all God's children.

**(Moment of silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** Jesus was brought to Pilate, who had Jesus scourged. They wrapped him in a purple cloak and placed a crown of thorns on his head. Pilate brought Jesus back out to the crowd, who screamed, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" In the end, Pilate handed him over to be crucified. Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, Golgotha.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

Everyone has burdens. Whether they are large or small, burdens are present in our lives. Some individuals carry a heavy load on their shoulders. For example, the poor suffer endlessly because of their lack of food, shelter, and medicine. People in developing countries suffer from disease and famine. Thousands of innocent people die each day as a result of poverty. Some countries, experiencing war, have to deal with corrupt governments, causing their citizens to suffer. These people have huge burdens that weigh down on them both physically and mentally.

Other people are afflicted with burdens that stem from everyday life. Families everywhere often struggle to make ends meet. Children go to school and are bullied and tormented because of their clothes, their race, or their sexual orientation. Students worry about their grades and getting into college. Parents worry about their kids, and if they are hanging out with the wrong crowd. Some people have to deal with drug addiction. Although these burdens may seem insignificant compared to the huge burdens people around the world carry, they still affect each individual, constantly weighing them down.

As Catholics, we are called to help one another with the struggles we have and to help each other carry the crosses we all bear.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** Carrying the heavy wooden cross alone, Jesus stumbled and fell under its massive weight. Already bruised and wounded from the earlier scourging, the pain he experienced must have been unbearable. Yet he got to his feet again and continued his journey towards his death.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus knows there is death at the end of this journey. He is carrying our crosses and offering his life so that we might have new life and be raised up in the end.

Under the massive weight of the cross Jesus fell. Many people today are crushed by natural or financial hardships, and unequal distribution of resources and medicine. These inequities stifle the development of individuals and nations. Poverty, disease, and human suffering all take their toll on people of the world.

The Good News calls us to refocus our priorities. Jesus started his journey alone, but he won't finish it alone. We are called to help those who have stumbled and fallen. This is our duty as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our job is to help others with our resources, our compassion, and our prayers. No one should suffer alone.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** While slowly trudging up the path to Golgotha, Jesus met his mother, Mary. Mary's heart was filled with grief as she watched her only child suffering as he did, being lead out to be crucified, yet there was little she could do for him. She could only be near him in his last hours.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

What is it like to see a member of your family in pain? What must it be like for a mother to see her son in so much anguish and not be able to do anything to help?

There are millions of parents around the world who must face the hardship of losing a child. They must watch their kids lose vitality from AIDS, malaria, TB, hunger, malnourishment, lack of clean water, and cancer. Many ultimately watch their children die because simple medicines or programs were not available to them. This basic human right to life has been violated over and over again in our world.

Mary's love for Jesus was unending and unwavering, much like our parents' love for us. How much do we take our families' love and gifts to us for granted? Do we realize all the sacrifices that they make for us, and their love and constant support? They are there for us in the happy times, the depressing times, the boring times, and the joyous times. Our parents chose life for us.

Let us, like Mary, be supportive to all people, especially vulnerable children who can't help themselves.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** The massive cross that Jesus was forced to carry soon wore him out. Simon of Cyrene, a field hand passing by, was enlisted to help Jesus. With his aid, Jesus was able to continue on his path towards Golgotha.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

This is where Simon's life story becomes part of Jesus' story. Simon was simply walking by when he was called on to carry the cross. He certainly didn't plan to do it, and perhaps didn't want to do it, but he *did* help Jesus carry the cross.

Today, we are called to help others carry their crosses as well. We are called to be a symbol of Jesus' love. From acts of charity to works of justice, we are the "Simons" of the world. In a society marred by the deepening division between the rich and the poor, we need to keep Jesus' words concerning the final judgment in the forefront of our hearts: *"When I was hungry did you feed me? When I was thirsty did you give me something to drink?"*

We need to keep in mind that "loving our neighbor" has a global dimension to it in our interdependent world. Compassion can lead the way to social change. Social change can create a whole new way of living for our world. We must be bearers of the good news to a world in need. By being the presence of Christ in the world, our life story becomes part of Jesus' story.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** While traveling along the path to Golgotha, Jesus met Veronica. Seeing how hot and tired Jesus was, she reached out to wipe his face with her veil. As soon as she took the cloth away from his face, she noticed that an image of him remained on her veil.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

This is the scene where people are mocking, jeering, and yelling at Jesus as he makes his way towards his death. Veronica gives Jesus the dignity he deserves by coming forward and wiping his dirty, bloody face. Veronica gives Jesus simple respect because she feels he deserves some dignity. She reaches out to a condemned man and wipes his face. He was an outcast and yet she still reaches out to touch him and comfort him. She doesn't care what other people think of her and she doesn't care that she could get in trouble.

This small act of compassion should speak to us. Veronica did all she could at the moment to enhance the dignity of Jesus. With tenderness and love, she spoke, through her actions, of the injustice and cruelty of Jesus' punishment.

How many times have we walked passed someone knowing that a smile or hello would have been easy to offer? How many times have we listened to someone being mocked or being treated cruelly, and turned away, saying nothing?

Our smallest actions do matter. Taking time out of our busy schedule to show compassion does make a difference to someone in need.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 7<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** Exhausted from the long journey towards Golgatha, the Place of the Skull, each step Jesus took caused him great pain. He faltered again and fell to the ground.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

There are many ways we fall as a people on the path of life today. When the poorest people in Uganda die because they don't have the money for medical care, we all fall. When orphaned children around the world are left destitute with the responsibility of fending for themselves, we all fall. When people can't afford health insurance and get sick, we all fall. When companies pay men or white people more than women or minorities, we all fall. When society places no value on the lives of the unborn and states support abortion, we all fall. When children in suburban schools are better educated than children in urban or rural schools because of more funding and better resources, we all fall. When people's rights, especially the rights to human dignity, respect, and life are violated, we all fall. When society does nothing to correct these violations, we all fall.

Many of us, like Jesus, have unfair crosses placed upon our shoulders, resulting in our fall. However, we must look at Jesus' example and, like him, find the strength in ourselves and in one another to get up again -- no matter how many times we fall.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 8<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** Along the way, large groups of people followed Jesus. Many women mourned and wept for him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children."

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus calls us look out not only for the well-being of those close to us, but the well-being of all God's children. Jesus is selfless in his words to the women of Jerusalem. For a moment or two, he doesn't think about his suffering, but their suffering. He stops to comfort them! He is more concerned about their struggles than his own life.

Women throughout the ages have always faced many struggles. Many women today still weep because of the injustices they face. They have watched their children die of diseases that were treatable and preventable. Women have watched their sons and daughters fight and lose their lives in war. Women have been treated as second class citizens without a voice in their cultures, their careers, or even in their marriages.

Jesus knew that in his day, women were not treated as equal to men, yet he took the time to acknowledge them and comfort them. Jesus always looked out for the common good of all. We must see the world as Jesus does, that all are created as equal in God's eyes and must live in harmony in an interdependent world.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 9<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** For a third time, the weight of the cross overcame Jesus. He fell to the ground in tremendous pain, but somehow managed to get to his feet.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

At a young age we begin to find the strength to stand up on our own. But soon the weight of the world slowly builds, and like Jesus we fall to the ground. The weight of material possessions often builds on us until we fall into the deep, dark hole of “want and pleasure.”

Jesus bore the weight of our sins on his shoulders. We must not stop trying to “give up” our dependency on things. Jesus will help us, but we have to recognize our faults first.

How many times have we complained about needing our own space at home, while here in our own community people share a room with 50 to 100 others at a homeless shelter? How many pairs of shoes do we have in our closets, while people wait in line for hours for the possibility of putting shoes on their children’s feet?

Most times we don’t even realize how the weight of materialism weighs us down. As consumers we become concerned with the right clothes, or the right new gadget – we forget about the love of Jesus and the love of others and we fall. God doesn’t care what we own or possess. God cares about who we are becoming and how we treat one another.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 10<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** When Jesus reached Golgotha, the soldiers took his clothing and divided it four ways—one for each soldier. But they did not want to tear his seamless garment, which was woven in one piece from neck to hem. Instead they cast lots for it.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

When Jesus was stripped of his garments, the soldiers wouldn’t tear the seamless one. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin first used this image to explain how human life issues cannot be “torn” apart from one another. All life is precious because it comes from God.

Jesus lost everything he had, even the clothes off his back. Too often in the world people have their very survival rights stripped away. Today in many areas of the so-called “developed world”, people are trying to say that life is not precious at every stage. Or, that if someone is born with a physical or mental handicap, their life may not be worth the same as yours or mine.

Each one of us is called to protect the poor and the vulnerable. Innocent children, born and unborn, the disabled, the prisoner, and the elderly are counting on our support and encouragement. It is our time to be Christ for the least among us.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 11<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** After reaching Golgotha, the heavy burden of the cross was finally removed, but Jesus' suffering was far from over. As the nails were driven through his hands and feet, the pain he felt was excruciating.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

There are many people in our world who are "nailed" to a cross just as Jesus was. The priest imprisoned in China for practicing his faith, the labor reformers executed by oppressive regimes in South America are nailed to a cross. There are the children in Africa, orphaned by genocide, who now fight wars as 11-year-old soldiers using assault weapons. There are children here in the United States who have only one meal a day, because that is all their family can afford.

These people are all "nailed" to the cross by society. Jesus refused to resort to violence, yet he was subject to the brutal violence of those around him. Many people turn to violence when trying to seek revenge or to solve a problem. War is a failure for humanity and yet it is often used to attempt to solve problems. Instead of negotiation with one another, leaders try to use power to get their way with another country. People on the streets sometimes think violence will solve their problems, yet it only creates more problems.

Jesus showed us the way of non-violent resistance to injustice in society. It is not the way of passive resignation in the face of the powers of the world. Rather, it is a passionate witness to the power of the cross, which reveals the transforming mystery of God's love.

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## The 12<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** At noon, darkness fell over the countryside and lasted until mid-afternoon. Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then he uttered a loud cry and gave up his spirit.

**All sit.**

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

When Jesus cries out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" he is reciting Psalm 22. This is not a prayer of isolation and forsakenness, but red in its entirety, it tells of a person who places their trust in God and who knows even in the darkest hours, God is with them.

This is the promise that Jesus gives to us. Even in our darkest times, he will be with us.

We have the privilege to receive Jesus' body and blood every week. With this nourishment we are called beyond ourselves to take Jesus' promise with us as we strive to make a better world for all people.

Sometimes people ask, "Where is God in all of these terrible things that are happening in the world today?" The answer is: God is here, in our hearts, encouraging us to be the presence of Christ for one another so that no one should ever have to cry out in isolation or desperation, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## **The 13<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross**

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** The Soldiers came to break the legs of the other men. When they saw that Jesus was already dead they decided not to break his legs. Instead, a soldier thrust a lance into Jesus' side and blood and water flowed out. Then Joseph of Arimathea came to remove Jesus' body.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

How often do we add insult to injury like the soldier did? How often do we get asked by someone for some spare change, and not give it to them for fear of what they will do with it? How often do we hear about an epidemic or natural disaster, but fail to do anything because it takes time and money? We not only have the responsibility to be aware of the problem, we have the responsibility to act on the problem. Even if we can't prevent the injustice from happening, we can ease the burden in little ways.

We can't solve world hunger by ourselves, but we can donate food to local food drives. We can't stop oppression in far off countries, but we can pray for people. We can give people hope.

Jesus' body was bloodied, dirty, and damaged. Things seemed hopeless for his followers. But some, like Joseph of Arimathea, did not lose hope. Joseph courageously asked Pilate for Jesus' body. He stood up for Jesus.

What about people today who are being denied their rights? Will there be someone to support them and give them hope, or will their legs be broken by the soldiers of injustice and dehumanization? Do we encourage and stand up for hope in the world or do we hide away in fear?

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## **The 14<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Laid in a Tomb**

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

**All (bow or genuflect):** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean shroud, and placed it in the tomb. Then he rolled a huge stone in front of the new tomb and went away.

**All sit.**

**Reflection Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

It is so easy to be discouraged. The disciples, who all believed in Jesus, went away in despair over the execution of their teacher and friend.

It is easy for us too to be discouraged and fall into despair over the injustices of the world. It is hard to believe that a few ordinary people can do anything to change the world. It is much easier to believe that there is nothing we can realistically do, and so we bury the issue or the problem.

Sometimes it does seem easier to 'roll a stone' over the problems of the world, and to convince ourselves that they are not our problems as well. It is so easy to forget our responsibilities as brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, we are called to faith, hope, and trust. We are called to believe that anyone can make a difference in the world. It may not be easy. But only through faith, hope, and trust in Jesus can we change the world.

God calls us to take the difficult path sometimes. God calls us to embrace a difficult situation, and struggle through it. With God's help, anyone can make a difference. One person can start an organization that will relieve world hunger. One person can start an organization that will help people with AIDS. One person can give a hug to a lonely elderly person. One person can smile and acknowledge someone else on the street.

Jesus gave his life for all of us. Are we willing to return the favor?

**(Moment of Silence)**

**Leader:** Let us stand.

Your attitude must be that of Christ, who humbled himself...

**All:** ...obediently accepting death, even death on a cross.

## **Closing Prayer:**

**Leader:** Jesus died so that we might live. Through the pain and suffering of the Cross, Jesus bore the weight of our sins. His Resurrection is the Great Triumph over suffering and death. We are not alone, we do not lose hope, for our God is victorious.

Let us pray:

All Loving God –

With hearts transformed by the power of grace  
we hold the key to your Kingdom of Love.

Help us, your Church, to be united in compassionate service.

Open our eyes and our hearts  
to the needs of those around us.

With love and compassion,  
guide us on our journey to You.

Through the sacrifice of the Cross may we realize  
that our sacrifices build your Kingdom too.

Help us to trust that every selfless act we perform  
is a reflection of your love.

With the strength of the Spirit and the hope of Salvation,  
allow us to continue your work on earth.

We ask this in the Name of Jesus,  
our crucified and risen Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** And may Almighty God bless us,  
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, especially as he is found  
among the poor and suffering of our world.

**All:** Thanks be to God.