

Stations of the Cross Prayed for the Coronavirus Pandemic

Opening Prayer: Jesus, as we walk these stations of the cross with you, we hold in a special way the sorrow in our hearts and in the world as we walk in this time of pandemic

1st Station: Jesus Is Condemned To Death

It didn't have to be like this- a good man condemned to die, yet it has happened. So many choices made from denial, fear, and protecting status and power, culminate in this moment where Jesus is condemned to die. Probably no one, not the Pharisees, nor Judas, nor those who chanted "We want Barabbas" fully understood the implications of these actions, and the immense suffering that would result.

In this pandemic, we can see the thousands small decisions that have condemned many good people to death. The initial denial, indifference or unwillingness to stop 'business as usual'. The political maneuvering and power struggles. The failure to act for the common good. Surely no one fully understood the terrible implications of each small action that have led to this enormous wave of suffering and death.

We pray for forgiveness for any choices we have made that contribute to the present suffering. We pray for the grace to appreciate how deeply we are interconnected with one another and work to prevent suffering by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

2nd Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

How overwhelming the weight of this cross must have been for Jesus. It's powerful to contemplate how he found the strength to carry it.

So many of us carry a heavy burden in our hearts during this time of pandemic. The fear of contracting the virus at our job. The burden of unemployment and anxiety about how to make it with no money coming in. The pain of isolation. The endless powerless worry for the most vulnerable in our lives- our sister the nurse, our parent the ER worker, our son the first responder, our friend with asthma who works in a grocery store, our parents whose health is frail. This fear and vulnerability is a painful cross to carry.

May we have the grace to carry this cross by your side Jesus. May the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, give us strength, comfort us and ease our burden.

3rd Station: Jesus Falls For The First Time

I'm overwhelmed by the news. Too many stories of heartbreak and suffering. I feel like I feel like my heart can't hold this much sorrow. I can't take the weight. I fall into despair.

In our moments of despair, we pray to Jesus for the grace and strength to rise. We place our aching hearts in the hands of God, who can hold all the sorrow of our world. We pray to rise and continue.

4th Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Such a wrenching moment. Mary sees her son suffering and bleeding, and wants to save him, to take him in her arms, and comfort him. We can imagine her lunging toward him in desperation, only to be held back by the crowd or the guards.

Mary, be with every mother and father, husband and wife, child, brother, sister, who are suffering the same wrenching moment. Seeing their loved one suffering with Covid, gripped with fear, longing to stay by their side, yet unable to accompany them. Unable to save them, or even to hold their hand as they are dying. It is a pain you know well.

We pray that Mary may send comfort and consolation to all who are experiencing this moment of suffering and separation

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Carry the Cross

Simon did not plan to be part of this, but he picks up the cross, and his strength eases the weight that Christ carries.

Many people have found themselves being Simon in this Covid crisis. Buying grocery for their elder neighbors. Making sure that children have enough to eat each day. Calling friends to check in. Praying for friends whose loved ones are sick. Giving money to ease the burden of those in dire straits. It does not remove the cross, but lightens this load when we are there for one another.

We pray to Simon of Cyrene, to help us to see how we can carry one another's crosses.

6th Station: Veronica Wipes The Face Of Jesus

It is a small but brave act of comfort. Stepping forward, Veronica offers what she can. A cloth to wipe the sweat and blood from Jesus' face. A small comforting touch. It is enough.

"In the ICU in Brooklyn, nurse Janett Perez sings to her patients... They are sedated, intubated, pushed to the brink of death by covid-19. They lie unconscious in their beds as she tends to them. "They can still hear you," the intensive care nurse at Brooklyn's Maimonides Medical Center said. Besides, she is all they have. "They don't have family around. So we have to be their family." (Washington Post)

We pray in gratitude for the legions of women and men who have been Veronica to those who are suffering and dying. We pray for the grace to follow her example and offer whatever small comfort we can to ease the suffering of those around us.

7th Station: Jesus Falls The Second Time

Each day, as the number of sick and the dead grow, I feel overpowered by dread and fall into panic. I want everyone I love, everyone who is dear to me to be spared, yet I cannot control that. So many are sick and dying. There is little I can do to protect them. In my powerlessness, I am brought to a place of utter surrender.

We join our prayer to the prayer of Esther in the Old Testament, *"Help me, Lord, who am alone and have no help but you." (Esther 4:17)*

8th Station: Jesus Meets The Women Of Jerusalem

The women of Jerusalem go out to see Jesus to witness and accompany him in his journey to the cross. They are unprotected and in some danger themselves, yet they go to be with him.

In this pandemic, so many jobs where people are in the highest contact with those who are sick (nurses, aides, grocery store workers, cleaners) are held by women and members of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Often, like the women of Jerusalem, they are unprotected, yet they go out to meet and tend those who are suffering and in need.

We pray in gratitude for the courage and care of these women and men on the front-lines of the pandemic throughout the world, and pray for their safety.

9th Station: Jesus Falls A Third Time

“The stress of everyone being home all the time wears on me. I can’t take it.”

“The loneliness and isolation feel unbearable.”

“I’m gripped with fear every time I leave the house.”

“I don’t see how we can make it through financially with no work”

“I am afraid for our future. I feel like it will never be normal again.”

I fall again into hopelessness. I lay here, angry, exhausted, unsure if I am unable or just unwilling to rise. I do not want this. I want to go back to ‘before’.

We pray to Jesus who found the strength to endure the unendurable, to accept the journey of suffering, who fell but was not crushed. We pray for the strength to stand up again and continue the journey.

10th Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothing

Jesus is stripped of his garments, left naked and utterly vulnerable.

During this crisis we have been stripped of so many of the comforts and protections of ‘normal’ life. Everything seems to be stripped away- our rhythms of life, our connections with others, the feeling of safety and security, our sense of the future. We feel naked and utterly vulnerable.

We pray for the grace of surrender and letting go.

11th Station: Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross

There is bitter cruelty in this moment of Jesus’ suffering and death. Sharp nails driven into his flesh. Not enough for him to die, but to die with such pain and suffering.

In this pandemic too- there is cruelty -this virus that robs people of their breath, the lack of masks and ventilators, the fact that there simply isn’t enough room for all who are dying, and so they lay alone in hospital hallways for their final moments on earth. It’s so painful. We want to look away.

A cry from our heart joins with Jesus’ voice

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and but I have no relief...

*Yet you brought me out of the womb;
You made me trust in you even at my mother's breast.
From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.
Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. (Psalm 22)*

12th Station: Jesus Dies On The Cross

Jesus bows his head and gives over his spirit.

We bow in prayer for those who have died, struggling with breath, as Jesus did.

We pray: *"Into your hands, we commend their spirits"*

13th Station: The Body Of Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross

Finally, the women who stood witness to Jesus' death can draw near to him and hold him. They bathe his face with their tears as they cradle his lifeless body in their arms.

We remember all those who are grieving the death of a loved one. The ache of separation and loss. The heartache and tears of grief. We stand with them and hold them with our prayer, offering the only comfort we can- our presence in their moment of loss.

We pray to the women and men who stood at the foot of the cross that they may encircle all who mourn and bring them comfort in their time of sorrow.

14th Station: Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb

There is a hasty effort to find a place to lay Jesus' body. There is no opportunity to attend him or perform the rituals of burial. They must leave him there. It must wait for another time.

As so many die from the corona virus, there is not enough space to lay their bodies. No time to attend to their bodies, perform rituals of burial, to see to them one last time before commending their bodies to the earth, or to gather with those who mourn. It must wait.

Sorrow heaped upon sorrow.

The scripture says that *"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb" (Mt 27:61)*. We pray for all those who must wait to attend the bodies of their loved ones. We pray to the Marys at the tomb to keep vigil with them as they wait. Comfort them in their sorrow and time of waiting.

Closing

We too must remain sitting there, facing the tomb. Aware of these deaths from the corona virus and those yet to come. Knowing we all one day will be united in death. Awaiting in hope, the dawning of Easter and the promise of resurrection.

We pray for a spirit of love, hope, and consolation to encircle our suffering world, and ask for God's healing. We pray for a deeper understanding of the mystery of death and resurrection. We pray that we can hold fast to the knowledge that suffering and death do not have the final word, and that Your love will bring us to unending life.

AMEN

by Kathy Galleher