

WYD'08 Stations of the Cross



Reflections & Prayers:

✝ Station 1 ☒ The Last Supper

REFLECTION:

Bread, our food, is a sign of life and survival; wine our drink, is a sign of joy and celebration. At this last meal before his death, Jesus Christ offers himself to his friends through the signs of bread and wine. He has given himself so often before in friendship, teaching, and leadership; this time however, he gives them everything: his very body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine. As bread is broken, His Sacred Body will be broken on the cross. As wine is poured out, His Precious Blood will be poured out of his side. It is a terrifying prediction, but not without hope. In this last meal, Jesus is replacing the old Passover with his own journey to the Father, old sacrifices of animals with his own self-giving. Amidst the gloom he gives thanks and promises his friends that he will drink again with them one day. However dark the journey of the next 24 hours will be, Jesus leaves them a promise of reunion and joy on the other side of death.

PRAYER:

Lord, many people lack the food and drink that bring true joy. They do not know, or have forgotten, how you wish to meet them in the Eucharist and share with them your humanity and divinity. Help us to appreciate the great gift of your Body and your Blood, the key to your Passion and ours. Draw us into your real presence at Mass. Help us to understand that communion with you also means union with all those to whom you give yourself. Make us generous and insightful as we try to walk in your footsteps.

✝ Station 2 ☒ The Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane

REFLECTION:

Jesus, about to undergo a rigged trial, torture and judicial murder, fears what awaits him, as any of us would. He doesn't hide how much he desires the support of his friends and the end of the ordeal, but his whole life has

been a witness of faith in the Father he loves and of love for the Father's other children. He must leave the last word to the Father. However frail his friends, however frail our human nature, he must also maintain hope in the Father. May all who are anxious or lonely be helped by his example and receive his power to triumph over fear.

PRAYER:

Lord, you know by experience what it is to suffer terrible stress and attack. You see in us, and in our world, many kinds of anxiety, depression, loneliness and fear. You know how tempted we can be to run away, evade our responsibilities through drink or drugs, the Internet or other distractions. Help us, in your Holy Spirit, to be clear-eyed and courageous. Keep our faith strong when we are under attack. Help us always to pray with you: "Father, your kingdom come, your will be done – your will, not mine."

✝ Station 3 ☒ Jesus before the Sanhedrin

REFLECTION:

Jesus is not an ordinary person, but he is willing to go the ordinary way. He is in 'the hands of sinful men' and imperfect institutions – as we all are, from time to time, in a world so damaged by original sin. But on the verge of humiliation and then destruction, he claims that the outcome will still be a triumph for his Father, the source of creativity, of fidelity, and of justice. Jesus draws us beyond our present, partly unjust, state, to a better place. God's kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

PRAYER:

Lord, each of us can add to the fairness of the world, or make it less fair, whether in our homes, among our friends, in schools or universities, at work, or in society at large. Open our eyes so that we can see how things really are with us. Give us the courage to be fair, even when it's hard. And strengthen in us the conviction that you will never desert this imperfect world, which you both love and save.

✝ Station 4 ☒ Jesus before Pilate

REFLECTION:

Jesus' life in public and his readiness for suffering and death, stand in contrast to a life of greed, self-preoccupation and abuse of power. In the end, these are not the truth of things – they are a lie, a fantasy, even though millions of people join in their illusion. Pilate is blind to the deepest truth of life: we are most like God, the giver, when we ourselves give, and so share in divine life. To know this truth would have required a change of heart for Pilate – as it does for us.

PRAYER:

Lord, it is from you and from your friends that we must learn the deepest truth of life. Give us the good sense and the determination not to be swayed simply by fashion and popularity when it comes to decisions. Let us not be, as Pilate was, at the mercy of a mob. May we not be dominated by peer pressure or 'going with the flow'. Let us not mistake consensus for wisdom. And may we not let relativism or cynicism dominate our thoughts and actions or allow others to pay the price for our evasiveness.

✝ Station 5 ☒ Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

REFLECTION:

'A cohort' of soldiers – hundreds of them – mobbed and mocked Jesus, like so many Jews and other ethnic minorities have been before and since his death. Scourging and crowning with thorns were forms of torture. To torture someone is to treat them as less than human, less even than an animal. This still happens in many places today. The tortured Jesus stands with and for anyone, without exception, guilty or innocent, to whom this is done. And he offers them life beyond their present suffering.

PRAYER:

Lord of the mistreated, show us how to help those who suffer. Heighten our distaste for every form of cruelty, small or great. Let us never take lightly the way in which life itself is insulted whenever anyone is killed or tortured. Make us resolute in the pursuit of just peace, whether at home or abroad. Let

us see how alien cruelty is to you, to your loving Father and to the Spirit. Give us courage even in the face of contempt.

✝ Station 6 ☒ Jesus takes up His Cross

REFLECTION:

Jesus, carrying the cross from which he will be hanged, is driven out of the city he has loved and on whose behalf he has worked and prayed. He is an outcast, and he will remain like that until he dies. He has been burdened, earlier, with cares and responsibilities: now comes the final, lethal burden. He had said that following him meant taking up a personal cross – love’s burden. Here he is, living it out, not in metaphor but in brute reality. Sooner or later, most of us will encounter a ‘place of the skull’ – a place of seeming barrenness, in which love’s tasks will have to be carried through.

PRAYER:

Lord, you carried with you not only the literal cross, but your care for all the world. Help us to be grateful for your love of us, then and now. Broaden and deepen our compassion for the men and women who ‘labour and are burdened’ in so many ways. Make us creative in seeing how we might help, and generous in carrying it out. Keep us from being discouraged when our efforts seem to fail. And help us to bear our own cross, when that time comes, in following you.

✝ Station 7 ☒ Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His Cross

REFLECTION:

Simon had no say. Simon, like our Lord, was a victim. He was forced to play a part in the dirty work of crucifixion carried on behalf of the occupying Romans. He may, later, have wanted to put the episode right out of his mind. But willing or not, he was being drawn into ‘the work of salvation’. He was part of Jesus’ final offering of himself to the Father, his saving gift to us. Many opportunities for helping our fellow men and women go ‘against the grain’. They come at times and in ways which we would not have chosen, but which cannot wait. May the prospect and power of Christ’s resurrection be our comfort and our hope.

PRAYER:

Lord, you tell us that whatever we do for those in need, we do for you. You also tell us that you will not always be obvious in those in need; the sick or the starving, the gaoled or the depressed, the refugees and strangers, may not seem to match our image of you and this too, has come to be true of many of the indigenous peoples of our world. But they are truly your sisters and brothers. Help us not to ignore them, but to walk with them and lighten their burdens.

✝ Station 8 ☐ Jesus speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

REFLECTION:

The women have compassion for Jesus, and he has compassion for them. Jesus enters in to the circuit of genuine love in the human family. It would have been natural for someone in Jesus' situation to be preoccupied with their own suffering. For Jesus, however, what is natural and normal is to seek our good, to share the Holy Spirit's healing power, to bring us salvation. Like Jesus, we face the challenge to reach out with compassion from our own distress into the distress of others.

PRAYER:

Lord, we all have problems – sometimes deep ones – and we need to face up to them. May we never dismiss offers of help, through pride or shame or imagined self-sufficiency. May we find in our needs a reminder of how our brothers and sisters suffer. All are frail, however secure they may seem to be. All have a claim on the care of the Christ, who called himself the healer of bodies and souls. All may expect that followers of Christ will act in the spirit of Christ. May we not disappoint them.

✝ Station 9 ☐ Jesus is stripped of his garments and nailed to the Cross

REFLECTION:

Clothing shelters us from the elements, maintains privacy, and expresses personality. To be stripped, as Jesus was, is to be denied these things. The stripping also says, 'You are beyond help now': it jeers at the notion of a merciful God. Sometimes we can be tempted to doubt the existence of God or to think that he has abandoned us: the angry atheism that would strip us

of hope and consolation is itself a violence. The crucifixion was also designed to degrade and torture. Yet in its cruelty, it was more an indictment of those who used it than of those who suffered it.

PRAYER:

Lord, too many people suffer violence in everyday life. Our brothers and sisters are victims of physical and emotional abuse, dispossession and exile, starvation and neglect, terrorism and warfare. In our society, violence against the unborn, sexual abuse of the vulnerable, and neglect of the young, the old and the Indigenous are all too common. You were on the receiving end of violence, and it cost you your life. You knew how deeply violent behavior is at odds with the peaceful purposes of your Father. Teach us to be outraged both at the inhumanity of unjust violence, and at its insult to the God of peace. Make us channels of your peace.

✝ Station 10 ☒ Jesus Promises Paradise to the Good Thief

REFLECTION:

In his public life, Jesus was often found in the company of outcasts – with lepers and prostitutes, with outsiders and sinners, or with tax-collectors and soldiers of the occupying forces. It was to be so to the end. He died as a convicted criminal among criminals, all of them outcasts. In the end, though, the verdict that counts most is not society's, but God's. The worst of citizens, like the best, can be met by God. The healing of the heart can begin through the words of a friend, through God's Word, or through the gift of absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To be aided in these ways is the beginning of paradise.

PRAYER:

Lord, it is easy for us to regard some people as outsiders, as enemies, as expendable, but when we do this we are also regarding you as expendable. Remind us, when we need it, how to forgive and how to see the image of God in the face of even the most degraded or different of people. May we regularly receive your abundant mercy in the sacraments. Remind us of the hope of paradise for all which Jesus brought in his life, his death, and his resurrection.

✝ Station 11 ☐ Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other

REFLECTION:

At the foot of the cross, Mary and the disciple John stand for all of us. Jesus had given them much and had asked much of them. Now he consigns each of them to the other's care. Mary is his family; John is his friend. Now they must begin to nurture their own small community, in his name. In the darkness of the afternoon, there is the dawning of the Church. This is the last will of Jesus. The charge of mutual care given by the dying God-man echoes on, even goes on echoing up to our day.

PRAYER:

Lord, when we are open to real relationships we risk being hurt, as happened with Jesus, Mary, and John. May we not stay sealed off from one another for fear of being hurt. You, the wounded Lord, the displayer of scars, commit us to one another's care. Grant that we may especially know the loving embrace of your Blessed Mother. May we be blessed by the company and lasting care of all your holy ones.

✝ Station 12 ☐ Jesus dies on the Cross

REFLECTION:

Watered vinegar is the Roman soldiers' normal drink on duty. The thirsty, dying Jesus needs compassion from those who are near him. To accept the drink is also a way of accepting them. When he says, 'It is accomplished', this means more than, 'I've had enough'; it means that his lifelong work of solidarity with needy humanity has been achieved through his saving service. He has remained faithful to the Father who commissioned him and to the men and women who needed him. When he 'gives up his spirit', this is both a surrender to death and a triumph over death. Now is the hour when he pours out the Spirit and we receive power to be his witnesses.

PRAYER:

Lord, you gave your life so that we might live more deeply, both now and after death. We believe that, like you, each of us has a personal calling

from the Father, and that each of us is sustained by your Holy Spirit. Help us to discover our vocation and embrace it whole-heartedly. Make many of us priests and religious, spouses and parents, and committed single people, all dedicated to your kingdom. Let us know, in sickness and in health, that we have things to offer to the world, so loved by God. May we be your witnesses, as you directed us to be. May we, too, at the end, be able to say, 'It is accomplished.'

✝ Station 13 ☒ The Body of Jesus is brought down from the Cross

REFLECTION:

At the end, Jesus can do nothing at all for himself. He was persecuted as a baby, and persecution has left him only in death. But, as is said in the scriptures he cherished, 'love is stronger than death'. Christ's love goes on, continuing to inspire acts of goodness. Joseph of Arimathaea acts out his love for the One who has died for us all. Here Joseph stands for all of us who are called to continue to love, even in the face of difficulty.

PYAYER:

Lord of life and Lord over death, when they took you down from the cross your friends had to consign you in hope to the care of your Father. When we face our own deaths and the death of those we love, the same challenge remains. May your promise, 'I am the resurrection and the life', hearten all women and all men. We are all pilgrims on this earth and heaven is our true homeland. May we be blessed in the conviction that you are the Way.

