

THE WAY OF THE CROSS – Jubilee of Mercy 2016



Song **He Was Despised (G.F. Handel)**

Introduction

In writing about the Way of the Cross, the French artist Henri Matisse offered an interesting perspective. He said:

‘The Stations of the Cross are not a procession. This work is the deepest drama of mankind. Faced with this drama, the artist cannot remain a spectator. He is obliged to take part in it.’

As we reflect, pray, sing and mime the sad journey of Jesus on the way to his death on Calvary Hill we too are challenged to get involved. We are not mere spectators or actors but pilgrims on a journey with hearts and minds open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and open to change, conversion and renewal.

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy our prayer is that our openness will embrace those from whom we are estranged. As mercy flows from the cross of Christ may we be caught up in a steady stream of compassion and generosity as we journey to the tomb of hope and new life.

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.

Those upset by the ministry of Jesus and his preaching were quick to accuse and condemn him. There are people who 'rattle our cages' from time to time because of what they say or do. It might be because they are different to us. We may hold a racial or social prejudice against them. Maybe their good example embarrasses or threatens us. Blessed John XXIII reminded Christians about **their** historic persecution of the Jews when he said:

"The mark of Cain is stamped upon our foreheads. Across the centuries, our brother Abel was lain in blood which we drew, and shed tears we caused by forgetting your love. Forgive us, Lord, for the curse we falsely attributed to their name as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying you a second time in their flesh. For we knew not what we did.'

Often we get a set against someone we don't even know because of what we read or hear about them. People are condemned out of our mouths when we deal in gossip or innuendo. We may take someone's name out of spite as we look for attention or try to keep the spotlight off our own wrongdoings. This is not Christ-like behaviour. Christians are called to be people of truth, to act for justice and to see the good in others and in that spirit we pray:

All say: God of truth, justice and mercy
Help me to be positive and affirming and non-judgmental.
Where there is beauty – Let me sing
Where there is goodness – Let me praise
Where there is wisdom – Let me listen
Where there is courage – Let me affirm
Where there is wonder – Let me be humble
Where there is loneliness – Let me be present
Where there is suffering – Let me weep
Where there is injustice – Let me cry out
Where there is condemnation – Let me bring integrity
Where there is deafening silence – Let me speak

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Second Station - Jesus is made to bear his Cross

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

Song

Behold the Cross (Bob Hurd)

Behold the cross on which was hung
Life's very Lord, God's only Son;
Mary's own babe, so cold and so still,
Helpless before her on Calvary hill.

Reflection

Christ Jesus, source of mercy,
You take our burdens upon yourself
You suffer with all who bear the cross of suffering
in whatever form it takes
So that with you we can move forward:
From worry and anxiety to trust, from darkness to light.

With you accompanying us, even what pains our heart,
Even our darkness can be made bright
By the inner light of the Holy Spirit.
You stretched out your arms on the cross
And reconciled us to one another and to the Father.
You brought God and humanity together in your body.
Wrap your arms around our broken lives
And restore us to the harmony that exists in you.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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.

The first fall of Jesus under the heavy weight of the cross reminds us of our own weaknesses and failings and how easily we can fall into old ways. We look into our own hearts, examine our conscience and ask for mercy:

I have neglected my relationship with God in prayer
I have made a God of my ambition and my pride
I have spent too little quality time with family and friends

All sing: Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

I have spoken unkindly or untruthfully about others
I have been jealous of the gifts of friends and neighbours
I have been unfaithful in honouring my solemn commitments to others

All sing: Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

Prayer **Psalm 50:1-2**

All say: Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Fourth Station - Jesus meets Mary, his Mother

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

What must that meeting have been like as their eyes met? What a loving exchange of concern and compassion and at the same time expressions of horror and fear. Did Mary remember all the joys and the sorrows that came with bringing the Son of God into the world?

Song **Seacht nDólás na Maighdine Muire (Traditional)**

Reflection **Mary (Pope Francis – Audience 23 October 2013)**

Speaking in general audience in the Vatican last October Pope Francis reminds us of the mixture of the ordinary and the extraordinary in the life of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Perhaps this is why so many find her so accessible in prayer especially in times of need.

MICHEÁL ‘Our Lady’s normal life which served as the basis for the unique relationship and profound dialogue which unfolded between her and God, between her and her Son. Mary’s ‘yes’, already perfect from the start, grew until the hour of the Cross. There her motherhood opened to embrace every one of us, our lives, so as to guide her Son. Mary lived perpetually immersed in the mystery of God-made-man, as his first and perfect disciple, by contemplating all things in her heart in the light of the Holy Spirit, in order to understand and live out the will of God.’

Prayer **Let us pray,**

All say: God of wisdom and providence,
You gave your Son a wonderful mother.
May we turn to her in times of sorrow
May we follow her example of humility
May we feel her reassuring presence at the foot of our cross.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Fifth Station - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his Cross

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

We have no background information on Simon who was conscripted to help Jesus carry his cross. What a difference those extra hands, shoulder and strength made to Jesus as he struggled. Even the presence of Simon at his side must have had some impact. Let us not underestimate the power of a supportive presence or a practical gesture at crucial moments in life. Jesus stands beside us in our time of need as our companion and faithful friend. We are asked to do the same for others.

Song

The Servant Song (Richard Gillard)

Will you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you,
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
we are travellers on the road,
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you,
in the night-time of your fear,
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

Reflection

Jesus, the gift of your tender presence
Companions me without words.
Your kind hearted love carefully rests
On the breast of my ashen sorrow.
Your compassion accompanies me
Like the soft assuredness of moonlight.
Your empathy touches my memories,
Easing painful remembrance of loss.
Your care soothes my aching heart
When it languishes in emptiness.

The members of the Simon Community through their mission and by their name show how the story of Calvary can inspire people to action. We thank God for the many individuals, organisations and groups who help us to carry our crosses in life and show God's mercy and compassion in abundance.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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.

Artists have offered us their pictures of the face of Jesus over the past two thousand years. Where is the face of Jesus to be seen today? The encounter with Veronica leaves us with the image of the suffering Jesus whose face is etched on those who are carrying their cross of pain and suffering today. The true icons of Jesus are presented to us daily as we watch the torment of the victims of famine, war, pestilence and death. Let us take some time to bring these uncomfortable images to mind now as we contemplate the face of Christ today.

The Irish poet Joseph Mary Plunkett, who was executed in 1916, opened our eyes to the presence of Jesus and his Passion in all creation through his beautiful poem 'I See His Blood Upon The Rose'.

I See His Blood Upon The Rose (Michael Joncas)

I see his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice—and carven by his power
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His cross is every tree.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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.

Despite our best resolutions we slip into old ways when faced with temptation and provocation. As we reflect on Jesus falling for the second time we stop a moment and take stock again of what we have done and what we have failed to do again and again as we ask for mercy.

I have passed by my neighbour in their time of need
I have failed to speak up for justice and truth
I have been dishonest in my dealings with others
All sing: Christe, Christe eleison (Taizé)

I have held on to grudges and refused apologies
I have not said sorry to those who I know I have hurt
I have encouraged others to be stubborn and heartless
All sing: Christe, Christe eleison (Taizé)

Prayer **Psalm 50:**
All say: My offences truly I know them;
My sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
What is evil in your sight I have done.

Song **Behold the Cross (Bob Hurd)**

Eyes that won't see, ears that won't hear,
lips that deny the friend once so dear;
slowly he turns and captures your eye,
then passes on to Calv'ry to die

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Eighth Station - Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

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

These women remind us of the common humanity in which we all share.
'Weep not for me,' Jesus said, 'but for yourselves and for your children.'

One Who Weeps (Anselm Grun)

Scripture tells twice of your weeping,
But undoubtedly there were other times
Besides your tears for a friend entombed
And a heartless city swept up in selfishness.
Surely your tender tears continue to emerge
As you look upon this hurting planet today.
Tears for children who are brutally betrayed
And every person's wrenching desolation,
Tears for the world's greed and plunder
And the careless way we treat one another.

Song

The Silence and the Sorrow (Liam Lawton)

Who will come and share my sorrow,
Hold my heart 'til wake tomorrow?
Is there time that I could borrow?
Oh, oh, the silence and the sorrow.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Ninth Station - Jesus Falls a Third Time

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

Today is the day to nail our weaknesses to the wood of the cross of Jesus. As we confess them sincerely we will receive in return the embrace of the one whose love and mercy has no bounds.

All sing: I have been impatient with those who have disabilities
I have been thoughtless in my use of limited resources
I have been careless in my use of the road
Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

All sing: I have taken what does not belong to me
I have been excessive in eating food and drinking alcohol
I have failed to deal with my addictions to alcohol, gambling
and the internet
Kyrie, Kyrie eleison (Taizé)

Song **Only This I Want (Dan Schutte)**
Only this I want, but to know the Lord
And to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.
All of this is loss, worthless refuse to me
But to gain the cross is to gain all I need.
Only this I want, but to know the Lord
And to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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.

Our clothes are often a window into our personality. The superficial elements of life when regarded as essential or vital are like invisible chains. They stop us from being who we are called to be. It is the same with the call to carry our cross. It calls for letting go and allowing ourselves to be stripped of our earthly garments. Saint Teresa of Avila in 'Life Beyond Suffering' inspires us further:

You will see, my brothers and sisters,
What God gives to those he loves best.
See how the prayer of Jesus was answered –
With trials, with sufferings,
With insults and persecutions,
Until at last His life ended on the cross.
These are heaven's gifts in this world,
And God grants them as a sign of affection for us,
To each of us according to the courage and the love
We bear for God.
Fervent love can suffer much,
Tepidity very little.
For my part, I believe that our love is measured
By the crosses we carry.

Intercessions

Let us remember the sick and dying who carry their cross today and cover their fragility with the cloak of our prayers.

For those who are sick, that the healing hand of the Lord may ease their pain, calm their fears and give them hope. In peace let us pray to the Lord:

All sing: Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy

For those who care for the sick, that they may show them the dignity and respect they deserve in their time of trial. In peace let us pray to the Lord:

All sing: Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy

For those close to death, that Christ may hold their hands and lead them to the joy of his kingdom. In peace let us pray to the Lord:

All sing: Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy

Behold ctd. Behold the cross of Christ in our midst:
all those who bear his wounds in their flesh.
Suff'ring for crimes of mercy and peace,
signs of the kingdom on Calvary street.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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.

Behold ctd.

Nails in his hands, nails in his feet,
a traitor kiss upon his cheek;
and his pierced heart, now broken in two,
love crucified for me and for you.

Life Beyond Sufferings (St. Teresa of Avila)

Put yourself at the foot of the cross.
The dying Jesus has been deserted by some,
denied by others.
It is a moment of utter loneliness.
Think of his sufferings;
But more important,
Think of those for whom he is enduring them,
Who it is that endures them,
And the love with which he is bearing them.
Remain with him in the silence of understanding.
Look upon him who is looking upon you
And be grateful
For where you find yourself.
There is no way
You could have deserved
To share those moments with him.

Song

Mother Behold Your Son (Solus)

Mother behold thy son,
Son behold thy mother,
Keep her warm inside your heart and love her like no other .

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

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 Crucified (Joyce Rupp)

Once on the cross, more than enough.
But your crucifixion goes on today
In killings, rapes, and war devastation,
Innocent ones maimed and abused,
Martyred ones speaking out for justice,
Brave ones protecting the defenceless,
All those men and women who die
Working tirelessly for the good of others.
When will your crucifixion end?
Not until everyone is a person of love.

The death of Jesus on the cross of love was the supreme sacrifice. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we participate in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of love from which mercy flows.

Prayer

Jesus, Bread of Life, give me a hunger for justice and peace.
Jesus, Bread of Life, nourish me that I may nourish others.
Jesus, Bread of Life, may I become more like you.
Jesus, Cup of Hope, give me a thirst for truth and honesty.
Jesus, Cup of Hope, fill me with your life-giving energy.
Jesus, Cup of Hope, pour your mercy into my heart.

Song

Above All (Le Blanc/Baloche)

Crucified, laid behind the stone,
You lived to die, rejected and alone.
Like a rose trampled on the ground,
You took the fall, and thought of me above all.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Thirteenth Station - The Body of 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.

Artists have attempted to capture the moment of sadness as the body of Jesus rests in the arms of his Mother. That expression of poignant love is a sign of the bond between our Saviour and the one whose 'yes' made possible our salvation. As Mary stood by the cross she also stood by the disciples of her Son and was with the Twelve when the Church was born on Pentecost.

Michelangelo (Liam Lawton)

You cast in cold marble

Pieta

Sculpted sorrow in serene beauty

Frozen in time

Wounds of love peered through a glass screen.

But love knows not the binds of paralysis

In time and place

The tender gaze of a silent mother,

Whose falling tears

Washing wounds

that harbour revenge

Looking to the heavens

Crying 'why'

Such beauty has to die

For letting go is signed

In tears we cry and weep

No hurt will ever steal

The love our hearts would keep.

Song

The Silence and the Sorrow (Liam Lawton)

Who will come and share my sorrow,

Hold my heart 'til wake tomorrow?

Is there time that I could borrow?

Oh, oh, the silence and the sorrow.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Fourteenth Station - The Body of 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.

The entry of the body of Jesus into the tomb of sadness that first Good Friday became the place from which the glory of the Resurrection was proclaimed after three days. This is the hope that sustains us on our Christian journey and is the reason for our belief that those who have died in Christ will rise with him also in glory. We now remember at the Cross of Salvation those who have died and pray that they will be rewarded with the joyful vision of Christ for all time.

In him, who rose from the dead, our hope of resurrection dawned.
The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality.
Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended.
When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death.
We gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

Song

Holy Darkness (Dan Schutte)

Holy darkness, blessed night,
heaven's answer hidden from our sight.
As we await you, O God of silence,
we embrace your holy night.

Tomb Opener (Joyce Rupp)

Just when the smell of death
Becomes unbearable
And the huge stone blocking light
Seems unmovable,
You send your angels in disguise
To let in the light and refresh the air.
And in our returning to life
We discover that some blockages
Are far too massive
For us to remove by ourselves.

Sweet Jesus who for love of me did bear your cross to Calvary, in your sweet mercy grant to me to suffer and to die with Thee.

Song

Jesus The Lord (Roc O'Connor)

(Please feel free to adapt these resources to suit your own situation – the prayers accompany a small group who mime the 14 Stations very simply.

Pat O'Donoghue, Dublin Diocesan Liturgy Resource Centre – March 2016)

Sieger Köder

