## \*THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR VOCATIONS

## Presentation

When we place the meditation on the Passion of Jesus alongside the reflection on our vocation as Christians or consecrated persons, we do not do it out of convenience. We know very well that Jesus came into the world, sent by the Father, to give his life, the Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins.

He was the light of the world, the light rejected by the darkness, and in every step of his earthly existence, he walked toward his hour, that of death and glorification.

Every Christian is called, not so much to do something, but to walk behind Christ, taking up his own cross, which is that of Jesus, heavy with the sins of the world, not until he has left everything for the Kingdom.

Walking with Christ will practically mean:

- suffering for our brothers and sisters,

- loving our brothers and sisters,

- giving to them our care, our heart, our time, our life.

There are so many ways of expressing the Christian vocation that we do not choose ourselves, or rather, we are called to choose when we receive the divine call.

The situations of the anguish of many of our brothers and sisters are nothing other than expressions of the scandal of sin, they cry out to us the voice of the Father who in Christ calls us to live and to work to overcome sin and death, to express our fraternal solidarity.

In the Passion of Christ, vocations of special consecration find their place: priests, religious men and women, contemplative or apostolic life, deacons, and consecrated laity in the world. This same common Christian vocation loses its authenticity and truthfulness if it is not related to Christ, who still is crucified in the suffering of others.

**INTRODUCTORY PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, for us you have made yourself obedient until death, even death on a cross, for us who continue to close ourselves to the love of the Father, to the Word that the Spirit speaks in our hearts. Help us to understand, in the light that shines from the Cross, the seriousness of our sins and those of our brothers and sisters; help us to respond to your invitation which calls us to bear the sin of the world with you, transforming ourselves into you in daily lives, in your humility and meekness; help us to suffer with our brothers and sisters who stretch out their hands to us, and to offer our whole life with you for them. Amen.

**THE FIRST STATION:**

**PILATE CONDEMNS JESUS TO DIE**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in him.” So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” When the chief priests and the guards saw him they cried out: “Crucify him, crucify him!” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified (Jn 19:4-6.16).

Christ is given by the Father for the salvation of humanity. He gives himself completely, accepting the will of the Father in his life: this becomes his vocation. Every vocation is expressed in the same reality: it is God’s gift to the creature, so that it may attain the fulness of oneself and become a gift to one’s brothers and sisters. Do we value the gift of life? Do we know how to give ourselves to those whom we call *others* and who are none other than our *brothers and sisters*?

Pause for silence.

Lord Jesus, look at our poverty, which presents itself to your justice, to the love that made you a victim for us, and grant that we may become a gift to our brothers and sisters, as you are to all of us*. Our Father.*

**THE SECOND STATION:**

**JESUS ACCEPTS HIS CROSS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

They then took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, ​​in Hebrew, Golgotha (Jn 19:17). Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep silent before sharers, he did not open his mouth (Is 53:4.6-7).

Christ’s gift to us of his life becomes a sacrifice: he came as a lamb sacrificing himself for our sins, for our liberation. We too, if we truly want to give ourselves to others, must learn to take up the poverty of others, to put it on our shoulders and to atone for it with Christ.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, who bears the cross on your shoulders for all of us, grant that we may lovingly offer our daily sacrifices to our brothers and sisters. *Our Father.*

**THE THIRD STATION:**

**JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth (Is 53:7). Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me (Mk 8:34).

The Lord Jesus humbled himself by taking on our nature and presenting himself as the most lowly of all men. With Christ, we are called to seek again the glory of God, to carry out our purification, to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters: it is our via dolorosa, and we proceed with difficulty, often stumbling over our misery. But since the Lord continues to call us, we must keep on going in our journey with strength.

Pause for silence.

O Lord Jesus, our brother, we want to be the comfort of those who are discouraged, the friends of those who feel alone, the support of the poor, the sign of your goodness to our brothers and sisters. *Our Father.*

**THE FOURTH STATION:**

**JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it (Lk 8:21).

Then Mary said: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Simeon had prophesied to Mary that one day a sword would pierce her soul (cf. Lk 2:35). The Virgin, walking along the path stained with the blood of her Son, recalled the many days she had spent with him: they were still together, sharing the extreme suffering for the expiation of our sins. They both said “yes” to the Father’s will, “yes” with their words and with their lives.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, who calls men and women to be laborers of goodness in your vineyard, sustain those who have consecrated themselves completely to you and to their brothers and sisters, and grant that each one of us may generously respond to your call. *Our Father.*

**THE FIFTH STATION:**

**SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. (Lk 23:26).

Christ and a man carry one cross. Whose cross is it? Christ’s or the man’s? It is a cross that can become a tree of life when it is transformed from a sign of shame and sin into a means of purification and expiation. We were not born for the cross, but for life. And yet, in a life marked by sin, we will not reach life without purification.

Pause for silence.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, renew us every day in the grace of Baptism, transform our hearts, because by loving you above all else, we lead those who approach us to your love. *Our Father.*

**THE SIXTH STATION:**

**VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

My face I did not hide from insults and spitting (Is 50:6). Even as many were amazed at him – so marred were his features, beyond that of mortals; his appearance, beyond that of human beings (Is 52:14).

The face of Christ in our hands, the face of Christ in our soul: this is what it means being Christians: to have gentle, serene, meek and humble face, that knows how to share the joy and suffering of others; a face that is marked by the love of the Father. This is our fundamental vocation: to be the reflection of Christ.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, poor, obedient and chaste, we pray for those who consecrate themselves to you in religious life, so that they may be faithful and shine in your Church, as a sign of the holiness and beauty of the Kingdom of God. *Our Father.*

**THE SEVENTH STATION:**

**JESUS ​​FALLS THE SECOND TIME**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain, Like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem.Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted, but he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. (Is 53:3-5).

Around Christ there are bystanders, tormentors, people consumed by hatred, friends who mourn, who reached out if they could. We too could do the same, for we encounter Christ in so many of our brothers and sisters whose extreme poverty or marginalization, ignorance or hunger, and persecution we know. What is our answer? Are we curious, distracted passersby, robbers, or generous Samaritans?

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, rich in mercy, make us pure and strong witnesses of your message of salvation, so that we may find you in our suffering brothers and sisters and love them with your same love. *Our Father.*

**THE EIGHTH STATION:**

**JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children; for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?” (Lk 23:27-28.31).

Now we know what to weep for: a forest that does not want to have flowers or bear fruit; for a life that has shuts itself up in ephemeral satisfactions and indifferent to the needs of others. What will ever become of these dry bones? What judgment awaits me if I do not know how to value my existence in the light of your life, of your death, O Lord?

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, Word of the Father, enlighten and strengthen your priests so that they may be in word and life critical conscience of our faith, and for all men the salt of the earth and the light of the world. *Our Father*

**THE NINTH STATION:**

**JESUS ​​FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

Save me, O God, for the waters have reached my neck. I am weary with crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, from looking for my God. (Ps 69:2,4).

Christ's suffering is so great because his love and mercy for us is so great. Therefore, if the Lord loves us so much, then our selfishness, infidelity and even our sins will never be a reason for him to withdraw his mercy and his desire to forgive us. We too, loved and forgiven by him, are called to bring his love and forgiveness to others.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, a man of prayer, who call to the cloistered life generous souls who dedicate themselves totally to you in contemplation, support these friends of yours that they may carry with you the sins of their brothers and sisters, and always implore for their conversion. *Our Father*

**THE TENTH STATION:**

**JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

The soldiers took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be” (Jn 19:23-24).

The Son of man has nothing; even the burial cloth and the tomb that they will use are not his. He who made all things from nothing, has emptied himself of everything to remind us of the worthlessness of our wealth. We too are called to follow him in detachment: “Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me "(Mk 10:21).

Pause for silence.

O Jesus teacher, who detached from everything and everyone, tirelessly traveled the streets of your land, eager to proclaim the good news, sustain the fate of missionaries, comfort them with the joys of the ministry and the solidarity of the whole Church. *Our Father*

**THE ELEVENTH STATION:**

**JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

When they reached the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:33-34).

Jesus suffers between two robbers, while people mock him at his feet. He remains nailed to his altar. Reduced to helplessness, he overcomes hatred with love: his Mother offers herself with him; a criminal repents; a centurion recognizes him as the Son of God. Our self-righteousness, which often makes us feel distant from sinners, does not distinguish us from the scribes and Pharisees.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, you call us to follow you to show the love of the Father to people, our brothers and sisters; grant that we may discover in the love for our brothers and sisters the sign of belonging to you and the reason for us to be recognized as Christians. *Our Father.*

**THE TWELFTH STATION:**

**JESUS DIES UPON THE CROSS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last (Lk 23:44-46).

Jesus had said that the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life (cf. Jn 3:14.15.17). For it is only when the grain dies that it bears fruit. He died for us, and with his life, he gave us the greatest sign of love. For many reasons, we owe to the Lord not only a little money or a little time: we owe him everything. Paradoxically, it is only when we lose our life for him and for our brothers and sisters that will we find it again in all its richness.

Pause for silence.

O Christ, Lamb of God, who gave yourself on the cross for us, transform our weakness with the strength of your Spirit, so that the totality of the love that unites us to you may reflect in us to the radicality of the choice of the Gospel*. Our Father.*

**THE THIRTEENTH STATION:**

**JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

In order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath… the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out (Jn 19:31-34).

Come, all who pass by the way, pay attention and see: Is there any pain like my pain?

(Lam 1:12).

The darkness of Calvary penetrates deeply into Mary’s heart. To walk the way of the Cross behind Christ is to share with him the bitterness of the dark night of the Spirit. It is there that the soul that has sought him above all else is sublimated. For to you has been granted, for the sake of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him (Phil 1:29).

Pause for silence,

O Suffering Jesus, we pray for our brothers and sisters who are drawn to you by the vocation to share your suffering in sickness. Make them aware of the gift they have received, so that they may always offer it for all men and women. *Our Father*

**THE FOURTEENTH STATION:**

**JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB**

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. *(Genuflect or bow)*

**- Because, by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world**. *(Rise)*

Now, in the place where he had been crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there (Jn 19:41-42).

Our soul is not that empty tomb where no one has been laid: built as the dwelling place of God, it has often become the dwelling place of thieves who have left it bare and desolate. We want to live in the presence of the Lord, to keep his word lovingly in our hearts, to become with him the bread that is broken for the salvation of the world.

Pause for silence.

O Jesus, example of prayer, teach us to pray, to listen to the Father, who, by giving us life, wants to guide us, day after day, to fulfill our personal vocation. *Our Father*

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus, the Lord of life, triumphs over death through his sacrifice of reconciliation. We, who have received from the Lord the gift of life to be children of God, rediscover the full meaning of our existence and overcome of the limits of sin, suffering, and death, only when we believe in Christ, our Savior. But to believe is to entrust ourselves completely to Him; it is to place Him at the center of our lives.

Pause for silence.

O Lord, you who created us in your image and made us partakers of your divine nature, grant that we may make our own the sacrifice that saves us, that we may share in your resurrection, and live out our vocation in your glory.

(in community celebration)

P. And now let us turn to our heavenly Father, the Lord of the harvest, that he may look upon our world in need of liberation and redemption and send good evangelical laborers for the coming of his Kingdom: *Our Father.*

ACCORDING TO THE INTENTIONS OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be.*

FINAL BLESSING

P. The Lord be with you.

A. And with your spirit.

P. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit descend upon all of you who have participated in this rite of the Lord’s Passion.

A. Amen.

P. Go in peace.

A. Thanks be to God.

The celebration ends with an appropriate song.

## Hymn to our Lady of Sorrows

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.

Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword has passed.

O how sad and sore distressed,
Was that Mother highly blest
Of the sole begotten One!

Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent.

For the sins of his own nation
Saw him hang in desolation
Till his spirit forth he sent.

O thou Mother! Font of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord.

Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.

Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.

Let me share with thee his pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torment died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.

By the cross with thee to stay;
There with thee to weep and pray,
All I ask of thee to give.

Virgin of all Virgins best!
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine.