

The Stations of the Cross with Saint Pope John Paul II: On the Path of Ecological Conversion

STATION I JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt." Isaiah 24:4-6

Reflection:

"Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydro-geological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that "flower bed" - which is the earth, our dwelling place."¹

"In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the Earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way."²

Let us pray: O God, we confess that we have fallen into a temptation of believing that we can and should have it all: more income and comfort, more energy consumption, bigger houses and cars. Our addiction to the consumer version of the abundant life is ravaging our fellow creatures and ecosystems and condemning future generations to desolation. Forgive us, O Divine Creator for the wrong that we have done and for the good that we have failed to do. Amen.

STATION II JESUS IS ARRESTED

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"Jesus. . . stood up in the synagogue and read: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he said to them, 'Today - this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" Luke 4:18-22

Reflection:

"Every individual is called upon to play his or her part to ... secure development in peace, in order to safeguard nature itself and the world about us I wish to appeal with simplicity and humility to everyone, to all men and women without exception. I wish to ask them to be convinced of the seriousness of the present moment and of each one's individual responsibility, and to implement - by the way they live as individuals and as families, by the use of their resources, by their civic activities, by contributing to economic and political decisions, and by personal commitment to national and international undertakings."³

Let us pray: God of justice, your son identified himself with the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of his time. Strengthen us, the disciples of Jesus Christ, to take up the cross of our global responsibilities as seekers of justice and agents of healing of God's creation. Amen.

STATION III JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the country you shall possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land." Lev. 25:23-24

Reflection:

"One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are relatively few and those who possess almost nothing are many. It is the injustice of the poor distribution of the good and services originally intended for all."⁴

Let us pray: O God, how often we have caused the living Christ to stumble and fall. It happens each time we acquiesce to unjust laws. As hundreds of millions of desperately poor people are being denied their basic human rights and even life itself, the whole structure of God's creation begins to collapse. Strengthen our baptismal commitment to strive to overcome every form of exploitation and oppression. May your Kingdom come, O Lord, where wealth is measured by how much we can afford to do without, and comfort level by our ease in sacrifice. Amen.

STATION IV JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"I knew of you then only by report, but now I see you with my own eyes. Therefore I yield, repenting in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6

Reflection:

"Today there is a great need to slow down the sometimes hectic pace of our days. Contact with nature, with its beauty and its peace, gives us new strength and it restores us. Yet, while the eyes take in the wonder of the cosmos, it is also necessary to look into ourselves, into the depths of our heart, into the center of our being where we come face to face with our conscience."⁵

Let us pray: O God, we see the face of your Son reflected in all men and women and in the whole universe created through Him and for Him. And yet our human sin and distorted desires have tarnished that divine image. Give us, we pray, new eyes to lay hold of a deeper vision and see the world as you see it. May our works of charity and justice, contemplation and personal holiness serve to wipe the bloody, wounded face of Christ in our world today so that others may see with their own eyes a glimpse of the glory of God. Amen.

STATION V JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"They say to the seers, 'You are not to see,' and to those who have visions, 'Do not produce true visions for us; give us smooth words and illusory visions. Turn aside, leave the straight path and rid us of the Holy One of Israel.'" Isaiah 30:10-11

Reflection:

"Faced with the grave social problems which, with different characteristics, are present throughout America, Catholics know that they can find in the Church's social doctrine an answer which serves as a starting-point in the search for practical solutions. Spreading this doctrine is an authentic pastoral priority. It is therefore important that in America the agents of evangelization (bishops, priests, teachers, pastoral workers, etc.) make their own this treasure which is the Church's social teaching and, inspired by it, become capable of interpreting the present situation and determine the actions to take."⁶

Let us pray: O Lord, you have graced us with your intelligence, wisdom and power. You have called us to exercise leadership for the good of all your creation. And yet, so many times we as the Church and as members of larger society fall short in responding to that call. Diverting our attention away from the search for truth and justice to lesser things, we let you fall. Forgive us and renew in us a commitment to you the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Amen.

STATION VI JESUS IS SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"[Christ Jesus,] though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." Philippians 2:6-8

Reflection:

"In our day, there is a growing awareness that the world peace is threatened, not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources."⁷

Let us pray: O God of compassion, you who embrace and keep close to your heart all human suffering and earth's travails, hold us in your mercy. Give us courage to accept our vulnerability and personal crosses. And free us from the fear of changes to which you call us in our personal lives, our society and its institutions. Amen.

STATION VII JESUS BEARS THE CROSS

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field until everything belongs to them and they are the sole inhabitants of the land!" Isaiah 5:8

Reflection:

"God entrusted the earth to human beings 'to till it and keep it'. When this principle is forgotten and they become tyrants rather than the custodians of nature, sooner or later nature will rebel."⁸

Let us pray: Lord, you fall to the ground crushed by the forces of greed, rampant consumerism and politics without soul. Help us to recognize you in those who carry the heavy load of unjust public policies. May we not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for a more just and sustainable future. Amen.

STATION VIII JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of my brothers, however insignificant, you did for me." Ma 25:40

Reflection:

"Examine what is offered to you as progress. We have to be alert if we are to defend this planet and live on it effectively. Regarding the environmental protection, concerns long ceased to be only for the present moment, because we also have a concern for future generations. We must draw conclusions from the limits and hazards of growth. We must not do all that we are capable of doing. Asceticism, self-restraint, self-denial has suddenly become fashionable again. These virtues are vital to man's survival."⁹

Let us pray: O God of compassion, help us to recognize that we are our brothers' keepers. Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross, may we too work to alleviate the suffering of those who are being crushed by the heavy cross of injustice and violence committed against them and their fellow creatures. Amen.

STATION IX JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." Deuteronomy 30:19

Reflection:

"America faces a time of trial today. Today, the conflict is between a culture that affirms, cherishes, and celebrates the gift of life, and a culture that seeks to declare entire groups of human beings - the unborn, the terminally ill, the handicapped, and others considered "unuseful" - to be outside the boundaries of legal protection. My fervent prayer is that through the grace of God at work in the lives of Americans of every race, ethnic group, economic condition and creed, America will resist the culture of death and choose to stand steadfastly on the side of life. To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger, which oppresses so many human beings; the violence of armed conflicts ... and the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment."¹⁰

Let us pray: O God, we may lament when we see Christ suffering in the poor and embracing the pain of all God's creation. Still, like women of Jerusalem, we should perhaps also weep for our own children who will bear the brunt of global environmental destruction. May our tears of repentance purify our vision and empower us to choose life, for our children, grandchildren and all God's creatures. Amen.

STATION X JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"He was despised and forsaken of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And like one from whom men hide their face. He was despised, and we did not esteem him." Isaiah 53:3

Reflection:

"Around the world, we see the results of exploitation which destroys much without taking future generations into account. Protecting the world's forests, stemming desertification and erosion, avoiding the spread of toxic substances harmful to man, animals and plants, protecting the atmosphere, all these can be accomplished only through active and wise cooperation, without borders or political power plays."¹¹

Let us pray: O gracious God, all too often human life and the rest of your creation are stripped of the integrity, beauty and dignity with which you have endowed them. This happens right before our eyes, and yet we don't recognize it as part of the modern Calvary. Like the Roman soldiers throwing dice for your seamless garment, we may even be willing accomplices in your passion, seeking a short-term gain from ecological destruction of the very fabric of life on our planet. Touch our hearts so that we recognize the wrong that we are doing and change our ways. Amen.

STATION XI JESUS PROMISES HIS KINGDOM TO THE GOOD THIEF

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son." Zechariah 12:10

Reflection:

"False models of progress have led to a threat against the earth's ecological balance. Man-made in the image and likeness of the Creator - is called to be the good shepherd of the environment, not the destroyer of his natural environment that he has become."¹²

Let us pray: O God whose forgiveness is boundless, your Son spoke to you of us when he cried out, "Father forgive them, for then know not what they are doing." Our dismissiveness of the intrinsic dignity of all human life, our obliviousness to the wonder and sacred destiny of all your creation, our misguided models of progress - these are like nails with which we crucify you today on a cross of small visions. May our tears of repentance reawaken us to your abiding presence in which everything lives, moves and has its being. Amen.

STATION XII JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS MOTHER AND THE DISCIPLE

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"As a mother comforts her son, so I will comfort you." Is. 66:13

Reflection:

"Whoever really wants to find himself, must learn to savor nature whose charm is intimately linked with the silence of contemplation. The rhythms of creation are so many paths of extraordinary beauty along which the sensitive and believing heart easily catches the echo of the mysterious, loftier beauty that is God the Creator, the source and the life of all reality."¹³

Let us pray: O God, so many people in our world are forced to walk a *via dolorosa* of unjust policies, violence, poverty and hunger. As this happens, our earth also suffers. Like Mary who comforted Jesus, we too can be consoled, strengthened and reassured of your steadfast love for us through our encounter with the wonder

and beauty of your creation. May it engender in us a greater sense of compassion and solidarity with all our kin in the community of life. Amen.

STATION XIII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"For in him (Christ), God in his fullness chose to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace through the blood of his cross - all things, whether on earth or in heaven." Colossians 1:19

Reflection:

"The seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few."¹⁴

Let us Pray: O God who makes all things new, help us hold on to our faith, hope and love when we feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the daunting challenge of the ecological crisis. Deepen our courage and use us as instruments of the reconciliation and peace that you desire for all your creation. Amen.

STATION XIV JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture:

"Creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God." Romans 8:18-21

Reflection:

"Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, may you become builders of a new world: one that is based on truth, justice, solidarity and love. The challenges that we face are enormous. They require courageous hearts capable of radical faith and trust in God (Rom 4.18)."¹⁵

Let us pray: O gracious God for whom nothing is possible, help your Church to be faithful to you in the midst of adversities. Empower us to be bearers of your dream of justice, peace and harmony for all your creation and prophets of hope in our world today. Amen.

Minister: May the God of justice and peace bless us and keep us, whole and holy, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Minister: Let us go forth, in the power of the Spirit, that God's faithfulness may be known through our love and service.

All: Thanks be to God.

1. General Audience Address, January 17, 2001.
2. The Encyclical "*Centesimus Annus*," 1981.
3. General Audience Address, January 17, 2001.
4. Encyclical "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*," 1988.
5. Noontime Angelus in the Italian Apeonine Mountains, 1993.
6. *Ecclesia en America*, January 26, 1999.
7. Ibid.
8. Homily given in Rome to thousands of farmers, November 12, 2000.
9. Homily at morning prayer, Kevelaer, Germany May 2, 1987.
10. Homily in St. Louis, Missouri, January 27, 1999.
11. Press conference in Antananarivo, Madagascar, April 1989.
12. Homily at World Youth Day, Denver, Colorado, August 14, 1993.
13. Remarks made while visiting the Dolomites Mountains, July II, 1991.
14. Message for the World Day of Peace, January I, 1990.
15. World Youth Day, Czestochowa, August 15, 1991.