

The Stations of the Cross in a Time of Pandemic

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1. Jesus Is Condemned to Death.

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

Jesus stood before Pilate, hearing the words that would seal his fate.
Unjustly accused, abandoned by his friends,
condemned by the religious and political leaders...
Jesus stood alone to face the unthinkable terror of crucifixion.

How vulnerable and alone You must have felt,
Betrayed by corrupt institutions,
Betrayed by your friends who feared for their own safety,
Beaten, tormented and at the mercy of the soldiers who surrounded You.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
Help us remember that you have walked the journey of our frail humanity.
Hear our prayer that our leaders may be responsive and responsible.
Open their hearts, minds and spirits that they may put the needs of the
community above political expedience,
as we face the unthinkable as a nation, church, and world.
Walk with us during this time of loneliness, fear and suffering.
Give us strength to endure along our journey.

Glory be...

2. Jesus Carries His Cross.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,
Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

Sleepless, beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns...
And now Jesus must bear up under the weight of the heavy cross.
His way of sorrow will be a warning to all who would offend those in power.
Shame and humiliation would accompany the guilty.
And what of the innocent One?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 Fill our hearts with compassion and mercy for those who fall ill.
 Keep our hearts free from judging others.
 Give us the courage to challenge our leaders to move
 beyond a mindset that blames others for this pandemic.
 Give us the strength and courage to bear up under the
 restrictions imposed on us for the good of all.

Glory be...

3. 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 weight of it all is too much...
 Weak, tired, beaten, alone...is it any wonder that Jesus would fall?
 He heard the jeers of those who saw him as a criminal.
 He heard the cries of those who loved him
 as he lay in the dirt beneath the weight of the cross.
 How did he find the strength to rise and continue along the road?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 be our companion in times of discouragement.
 Help us to regain our footing
 when we feel oppressed by the trials and stresses we endure.
 As we stand near the outset of this pandemic,
 Prepare our spirits with the strength to continue this journey.

Glory be...

4. Jesus meets his mother.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You
 Because by Your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Mary had been waiting at a spot along the road.
 A few close friends helped her there...a likely location with just
 enough room for her to elbow her way to her Son as he passed by.
 What must it have been like for them to gaze into each other's eyes
 one last time: Jesus seeing the one who had always loved him, supported
 him, encouraged him, believed in him...and Mary's heart, breaking with sorrow

at the sight of her dear son beaten and broken on his way to a horrific death?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 When all that is left is for us to communicate our love for one another,
 Give us the courage to be present for one another.
 Help us hold one another's gaze with
 compassion, kindness and unconditional love,
 in those small every day moments,
 and in those moments of sorrow and tribulation.

Glory be...

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You
 Because by Your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Hungry, weak, faint...
 Jesus was no longer able to continue carrying the weight of the cross.
 And so Simon of Cyrene was compelled by the soldiers...or did he step
 forward--out of concern for a man inhumanly beaten down—
 to do what little he could to ease his burden?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 Give us courage to step forward as Simons within our small corners of the world.
 Give us compassion to help those in need.
 Among the nations and peoples of the world, give us all courage and compassion
 to help one another with resources and expertise.
 Fill our hearts with gratitude for those who step up to ease our burdens:
 For the many health care workers who minister to the sick,
 For emergency responders who hear our cries for help,
 For any and all who reach out to us to lighten our way in these uncertain times.

Glory be...

6. 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.*

Three people were carrying crosses along the way of sorrows that day. Crowds gathered along the way—those who were glad to see criminals executed; those who knew these men as people and cared about them; those who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the authorities. Tensions and emotions ran high.

In the midst of this, a lone single woman broke her way through the crowd to provide some simple relief to Jesus, wiping the sweat and blood from his face. Hers was a simple act of kindness and comfort, offered to Jesus when he was at his most vulnerable, alone and suffering.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
Give us the courage of Veronica to help those in need.
And more than that, Lord, give us wisdom to know when
we need to not step up...when the best we can do for one another
is to keep our distance. Give us patience and perseverance as we
find ways to reach out with support and comfort without adding to this global crisis.

Glory be...

7. Jesus falls the second time.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by Your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Halfway to Golgotha, Jesus falls again. More than the physical weight, he stumbles under the burden of apparent failure. His faith, His God, his mission, his integrity have led Him to this moment? The crowd cajoles and jeers. Those who love him are fearful to speak words of encouragement. He knows this. And somewhere deep within, he draws upon his reservoir of faith. Strengthened, He rises, and continues along the way.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
You who are our source of strength and faith,
companion us on our journey as we stumble along our way.
When our fears, anxieties, loneliness and floundering cause
us to fall, help us to find our grounding in You. Help us to rise again to

face and embrace our day. Help us find the best within ourselves,
help us face each moment, each day, each person...with compassion.

Glory be...

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by Your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Who are these women at the side of the road? They are the women whose efforts have helped support the ministry of Jesus. They have cooked, cleaned, washed, provided hospitality, tended to the sick. Their hearts have long been open to Jesus as the presence of God's kingdom in their midst through His teaching, healing, forgiving; His courageously speaking up for what truly matters in the kingdom of God. And now they weep—they weep in sadness for the inhumanity unjustly foisted upon Jesus. Yet Jesus redirects their sadness: “weep not for me; weep for yourselves and your children.” Weep because their hopes are dashed, their dreams destroyed. What will the future hold?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
as we face what was unimaginable a few months ago,
and an uncertainty that stretches out to the horizon...
Calm our anxieties, Lord.
As our lives and our world are disrupted, as life as we knew it
stops for a longer time than any of us would wish, be our anchor, Lord.
Help us let go of what is not possible in these times as we remain at home.
Help us find ways during our social isolation to build Your kingdom, and when
all we can do is wait, to wait patiently and to trust You for what is to come.

Glory be...

9. Jesus falls a third time.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You
Because by Your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Once again, Jesus collapses into the dirt. Bone-crunching fatigue,
pain from the beatings and scourging the night before,

and an insurmountable weariness overwhelm Jesus as he falls again...and musters the strength one final time to get up and walk to his death on a cross.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 Be our model for steadfastness and strength.
 When we are weary from the journey, help us continue on our way.
 When the leaders of our communities and nations reach the end of their energy,
 sustain their bodies and spirits. When medical workers reach the limits of their energy,
 Infuse them with Your Spirit, Your strength, Your capacity
 to rise and continue along the way.
 As we care for our friends and family who are anxious or ill,
 help us to persevere with kindness and compassion.

Glory be...

10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,
 Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus endures one final humiliation, as his clothes are stripped from his body.
 This final degradation was meant to destroy the dignity of those to be crucified. If the earth could speak, it would cry out in pain that the Son of our Creator was subjected to this final debasement.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 Help us avoid the pitfalls of judgment and stigma.
 Help us avoid the desire to blame others for this virus.
 Help us embrace the dignity and decency of all humanity--
 of all our brothers and sisters around the world who are facing
 the same stresses and strains we experience from this pandemic.
 Deepen in us the conviction that each and all of us—whether healthy or ill—
 have infinite worth and dignity as children of God.

Glory be...

11. 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.*

Jesus' body is violated and no one can stop it.
How can we begin to imagine what it was like for Jesus
to have his body taken and nailed to a cross? What hardness
of heart or wrenching of spirit would be required of the person
whose job was to hammer the nails through another's flesh?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
Keep us keenly aware of the burdens and pain of our brothers
and sisters here and around the globe. Keep our hearts
open to one another. Keep us from closing off to the
pain and suffering at home and abroad.
Lord, do not let our hearts be hardened. Let us instead
seek ways to protect one another and support one another,
for the good of each person and the good of all humankind.
Keep us steadfast in our efforts to encourage governments
and agencies tasked with responding to this virus to act for
the common good, to seek resources for all, and to insist that
we all take steps to support health care systems around the world.

Glory be...

12. Jesus Dies on the Cross.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You
Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

It is finished.
Jesus gives up his spirit, and breathes his final breath.
In that moment, and for three days more, the hopes and
dreams of Jesus' followers were crushed. How could the
disciples hold onto both the travesty of Jesus' death and their
hopes in him as their Savior?

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
Even when our way is darkened by loneliness or fear...
when our anxiety is fueled by the still-rising graph of

the virus' march through our nation and world...
 when resources and staffing struggle to keep up with the virus...
 help us to let go and rely instead upon our trust in You
 to see us through this pandemic to life on the other side.

Glory be...

13. 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.*

The body of Jesus is taken down and placed in his mother Mary's arms.
 The few disciples who could tolerate the abomination of the
 crucifixion step forward to grieve and provide comfort.
 While tears stream down Mary's face, she caresses the body of the
 Son whom she dearly loved. And all gaze upon the body of their Lord,
 broken, beaten. Their hearts and spirits are also broken and beaten by the
 Incomprehensible tragedy of Jesus' death.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 let us not turn away from the face of death.
 Instead, give us the strength and the courage to walk with those who suffer
 unbearable loss.
 Be with us when we experience profound discouragement,
 And give us hope to continue along our journey.

Glory be...

14. 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.*

A well-to-do friend made a tomb available for Jesus.
 He was laid in the tomb—and surely the disciples felt that
 His ministry and mission were laid in the tomb along with his lifeless body.
 It felt like the end...the end of everything they had worked for
 and cared about.

In this time of global pandemic, Lord Jesus,
 Increase our faith.
 Though we may not know what lies ahead...
 though we endure financial hardship...
 though we may not see how we can work for the goals we planned...
 though we may wonder and worry about what life will be like when the pandemic
 has run its course...
 though we may live through the death of those we love and face our own death as well...
 Lord Jesus, increase our faith. Help us to trust in You.
 Help us to rest our lives in Your hands...
 Not as bodies resting in a tomb,
 But as people caressed by You and held close to Your heart.

Glory be...

15. The Resurrection of Jesus.

*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You
 Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

He is alive!
 Three days after his unimaginable death,
 His disciples witness that Jesus is alive.
 The Risen Jesus is present with His disciples as He
 shares a meal,
 breaks bread,
 forgives and affirms them despite their frailties,
 and walks with them along their journey.
 Their hopes are restored!
 He bestows His Spirit upon them,
 so that they, as faith-filled disciples,
 may continue His work, to spread the Good News,
 and serve God's kingdom.

In this time of pandemic and beyond this time, Lord Jesus,
 Help us claim the faith and hope of those first disciples.
 Help us live as people who believe in the promise of the resurrection.
 Fill us with Your Spirit as we continue our journey.
 Grace us as we walk together down roads, some well-traveled and some new.
 Join our lives and work with those first disciples,
 as we serve God's kingdom, with perseverance and hope.

Galvanized by this moment of pandemic,
May we rise with You,
And, roused by Your Spirit, walk into a new day.

Glory be...