

WAY OF THE CROSS

PRAYERS BY CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER

OPENING PRAYER (the Creed): I believe in God...

FIRST STATION *Jesus is condemned to death*

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew 27:22-23,26**

Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

PRAYER

Lord, you were condemned to death because fear of what other people may think suppressed the voice of conscience. So too, throughout history, the innocent have always been maltreated, condemned and killed. How many times have we ourselves preferred success to the truth, our reputation to justice? Strengthen the quiet voice of our conscience, your own voice, in our lives. Look at me as you looked at Peter after his denial. Let your gaze penetrate our hearts and indicate the direction our lives must take. On the day of Pentecost you stirred the hearts of those who, on Good Friday, clamoured for your death, and you brought them to conversion. In this way you gave hope to all. Grant us, ever anew, the grace of conversion.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

SECOND STATION *Jesus takes up his Cross*

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew. 27:27-31**

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

PRAYER

Lord, you willingly subjected yourself to mockery and scorn. Help us not to ally ourselves with those who look down on the weak and suffering. Help us to acknowledge your face in the lowly and the outcast. May we never lose heart when faced with the contempt of this world, which ridicules our obedience to your will. You carried your own Cross and you ask us to follow you on this path (cf. *Mt 10:38*). Help us to take up the Cross, and not to shun it. May we never complain or become discouraged by life's trials. Help us to follow the path of love and, in submitting to its demands, to find true joy.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

THIRD STATION *Jesus falls for the first time*

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the **Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:4-6**

Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross made you fall to the ground. The weight of our sin, the weight of our pride, brought you down. But your fall is not a tragedy, or mere human weakness. You came to us when, in our pride, we were laid low. The arrogance that makes us think that we ourselves can create human beings has turned man into a kind of merchandise, to be bought and sold, or stored to provide parts for experimentation. In doing this, we hope to conquer death by our own efforts, yet in reality we are profoundly debasing human dignity. Lord help us; we have fallen. Help us to abandon our destructive pride and, by learning from your humility, to rise again.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

FOURTH STATION
Jesus meets his Mother

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Luke. 2:34-35,51**

Simon blessed them and said to Mary his mother: “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed”. And his mother kept all these things in her heart.

PRAYER

Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord, you remained faithful when the disciples fled. Just as you believed the angels incredible message – that you would become the Mother of the Most High, so too you believed at the hour of his greatest abasement. In this way, at the hour of the Cross, at the hour of the world’s darkest night, you became the Mother of all believers, the Mother of the Church. We beg you: teach us to believe, and grant that our faith may bear fruit in courageous service and be the sign of a love ever ready to share suffering and to offer assistance.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

FIFTH STATION
The Cyrenian helps Jesus carry the Cross

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew. 27:32; 16:24**

As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

PRAYER

Lord, you opened the eyes and heart of Simon of Cyrene, and you gave him, by his share in your Cross, the grace of faith. Help us to aid our neighbours in need, even when this interferes with our own plans and desires. Help us to realize that it is a grace to be able to share the cross of others and, in this way, know that we are walking with you along the way. Help us to appreciate with joy that, when we share in your suffering and the sufferings of this world, we become servants of salvation and are able to help build up your Body, the Church.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the **Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:2-3**

He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

From the **Book of Psalms. 27:8-9**

You have said, "Seek my face". My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek". Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

PRAYER

Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts which seek your face. Keep us from the blindness of heart which sees only the surface of things. Give us the simplicity and purity which allow us to recognize your presence in the world. When we are not able to accomplish great things, grant us the courage which is born of humility and goodness. Impress your face on our hearts. May we encounter you along the way and show your image to the world.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

SEVENTH STATION
Jesus falls for the second time

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the **Book of Lamentations**. 3:1-2,9,16

I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light. He has blocked my way with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you have borne all our burdens and you continue to carry us. Our weight has made you fall. Lift us up, for by ourselves we cannot rise from the dust. Free us from the bonds of lust. In place of a heart of stone, give us a heart of flesh, a heart capable of seeing. Lay low the power of ideologies, so that all may see that they are a web of lies. Do not let the wall of materialism become unsurmountable. Make us aware of your presence. Keep us sober and vigilant, capable of resisting the forces of evil. Help us to recognise the spiritual and material needs of others, and to give them the help they need. Lift us up, so that we may lift others up. Give us hope at every moment of darkness, so that we may bring your hope to the world.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

EIGHTH STATION
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem who weep for him

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Luke**. 23:28-31

Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us'. For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

PRAYER

Lord, to the weeping women you spoke of repentance and the Day of Judgement, when all of us will stand before your face: before you, the Judge of the world. You call us to leave behind the trivialization of evil, which salves our consciences and allows us to carry on as before. You show us the seriousness of our responsibility, the danger of our being found guilty and without excuse on the Day of Judgement. Grant that we may not simply walk at your side, with nothing to offer other than compassionate words. Convert us and give us new life. Grant that in the end we will not be dry wood, but living branches in you, the true vine, bearing fruit for eternal life (cf. *Jn* 15:1-10).

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

NINTH STATION

Jesus falls for the third time

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the *Book of Lamentations*. 3:27-32

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when he has laid it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust - there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off for ever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

PRAYER

Lord, your Church often seems like a boat about to sink, a boat taking in water on every side. In your field we see more weeds than wheat. The soiled garments and face of your Church throw us into confusion. Yet it is we ourselves who have soiled them! It is we who betray you time and time again, after all our lofty words and grand gestures. Have mercy on your Church; within her too, Adam continues to fall. When we fall, we drag you down to earth, and Satan laughs, for he hopes that you will not be able to rise from that fall; he hopes that being dragged down in the fall of your Church, you will remain prostrate and overpowered. But you will rise again. You stood up, you arose and you can also raise us up. Save and sanctify your Church. Save and sanctify us all.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

TENTH STATION
Jesus is stripped of his garments

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew. 27:33-36**

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you were stripped of your garments, exposed to shame, cast out of society. You took upon yourself the shame of Adam, and you healed it. You also take upon yourself the sufferings and the needs of the poor, the outcasts of our world. And in this very way you fulfil the words of the prophets. This is how you bring meaning into apparent meaninglessness. This is how you make us realize that your Father holds you, us, and the whole world in his hands. Give us a profound respect for man at every stage of his existence, and in all the situations in which we encounter him. Clothe us in the light of your grace.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

ELEVENTH STATION
Jesus is nailed to the Cross

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew 27:37-42**

And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews". Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right hand and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross". So also the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the Cross and we will believe in him".

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you let yourself be nailed to the Cross, accepting the terrible cruelty of this suffering, the destruction of your body and your dignity. You allowed yourself to be nailed fast; you did not try to escape or to lessen your suffering. May we never flee from what we are called to do. Help us to remain faithful to you. Help us to unmask the false freedom which would distance us from you. Help us to accept your “binding” freedom, and, “bound” fast to you, to discover true freedom.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

TWELFTH STATION *Jesus dies on the Cross*

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **John 19:19-20**

Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the Cross; it read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”. Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew 27:45-50,54**

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “This man is calling Elijah”. And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him”. And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit”. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, at the hour of your death the sun was darkened. Ever anew you are being nailed to the Cross. At this present hour of history we are living in God’s darkness. Through your great sufferings and the wickedness of men, the face of God, your face, seems obscured, unrecognizable. And yet, on the Cross, you have revealed yourself. Precisely by being the one who suffers and loves, you are exalted. From the Cross on high you have triumphed. Help us to recognize your face at this hour of darkness and tribulation. Help us to believe in you and to

follow you in our hour of darkness and need. Show yourself once more to the world at this hour. Reveal to us your salvation.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given to his Mother

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew 27:54-55**

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him.

PRAYER

Lord, you descended into the darkness of death. But your body is placed in good hands and wrapped in a white shroud (*Mt 27:59*). Faith has not completely died; the sun has not completely set. How often does it appear that you are asleep? How easy it is for us to step back and say to ourselves: "God is dead". In the hour of darkness, help us to know that you are still there. Do not abandon us when we are tempted to lose heart. Help us not to leave you alone. Give us the fidelity to withstand moments of confusion and a love ready to embrace you in your utter helplessness, like your Mother, who once more holds you to her breast. Help us, the poor and rich, simple and learned, to look beyond all our fears and prejudices, and to offer you our abilities, our hearts and our time, and thus to prepare a garden for the Resurrection.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

V/. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R/. Because by your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to **Matthew 27:59-61**

Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, in your burial you have taken on the death of the grain of wheat. You have become the lifeless grain of wheat which produces abundant fruit for every age and for all eternity. From the tomb shines forth in every generation the promise of the grain of wheat which gives rise to the true manna, the Bread of Life, in which you offer us your very self. The eternal Word, through his Incarnation and death, has become a Word which is close to us: you put yourself into our hands and into our hearts, so that your word can grow within us and bear fruit. Through the death of the grain of wheat you give us yourself, so that we too can dare to lose our life in order to find it, so that we too can trust the promise of the grain of wheat. Help us grow in love and veneration for your Eucharistic mystery – to make you, the Bread of heaven, the source of our life. Help us to become your “fragrance”, and to make known in this world the mysterious traces of your life. Like the grain of wheat which rises from the earth, putting forth its stalk and then its ear, you could not remain enclosed in the tomb: the tomb is empty because he – the Father – “did not abandon you to the nether world, nor let your flesh see corruption” (*Acts 2:31; Ps 16:10 LXX*). No, you did not see corruption. You have risen, and have made a place for our transfigured flesh in the very heart of God. Help us to rejoice in this hope and bring it joyfully to the world. Help us to become witnesses of your resurrection.

All: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

CLOSING PRAYER IN FRONT OF THE CRUCIFIX: The Divine Praises

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.
Blessed be the Name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.
Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints. Amen.