

Dedication

For the men at Jack Mulhall Center,
all others who are addicted and in recovery,
and their families.

Introduction

I wrote these Stations of the Cross out of love for the men afflicted with addiction with whom I work at the Jack Mulhall Center in Cleveland, Ohio, a few days a week. This Recovery House has a capacity of 40 residents, and since September of 2018, it has been a blessing for me to be a part of so many of their lives. I have truly found God in those who have admitted themselves to the residency.

Two weeks before Good Friday of 2019, I was having breakfast with Laura, who has battled addictions. Over the last five years, she has reached out to many other recovering addicts, both men and women, and has been an inspiration to them by the way she has entered the process of recovery. During the meal, I mentioned that I wanted to do something at the Center for Holy Week.

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“Write a Stations of the Cross,” Laura said.

“What?” I responded. “There’s not enough time. Holy Week is just two weeks down the road. I can’t do that!”

I thought the case was closed. However, that day Laura’s suggestion would not leave my mind. Finally, I sat down at my computer and, drawing from conversations and the Twelve Step Program work at the Mulhall Center, started typing. After writing a few stations, I called Laura to ask for her input. She told me not to stop. And so I didn’t.

As a result, on Good Friday, the guys and I at the Recovery House walked the journey

of Jesus to Calvary. At each station, one of the occupants reverently held a candle and then passed it to another man.

People have asked, “How do these people put a substance into their body knowing they could do harm to themselves?” My response has been: “Do you text or know of anyone who texts while driving? Why do people do that when they could possibly hurt or kill themselves and others?”

We all have addictions, and only with the grace of God can we make progress in recovering from them—as I often try to impress on the men. God created all of us in his image and likeness. We—like those addicted to substance abuse—can only grow by surrendering to the power and grace of God.

Ministry with those struggling to break the cycle of addiction can be very rewarding. But it is also very frustrating when I ask, “Where’s so and so?” and the response is: “Father, he’s back on the streets.” I pray for all those men and staff at the Jack Mulhall Center and everyone coping with drug or alcohol abuse.

Thanks, guys at the Center, for helping me discover the presence of God in my life in ways I never could have imagined. It is such a privilege to walk with you.

I also express my gratitude to Sister Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND, who encouraged me to publish this stations booklet and helped to prepare it. She is the author of numerous books on spirituality, and I strongly recommend one of them: *Praying on Empty*.

And finally—thanks to Laura!

What Are the Stations of the Cross?

The Stations of the Cross (or Way of the Cross) have been a popular devotion at least since the sixteenth century, especially during Lent and on Good Friday. They originated when Christians began making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where they traced the steps of Jesus to Calvary. But many people could not travel to the Holy Land. Fourteen stations commemorating events of Jesus’ walk were erected in or near churches so that Christians everywhere could still pray this devotion. Uniting themselves to the suffering of Jesus along the way gave people the strength to bear their own suffering.

The First Station

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, weak from being scourged,
stands before Pilate.

This Roman ruler knows Jesus is innocent
but bows to peer pressure
and issues a death sentence for him.

Pilate is aware that this is something
he should not do,
but his craving for power
and the esteem of the people
is too strong for him to resist.

In the end, Pilate ignores his conscience
and does what he knows he should not do.

**ALL: My Jesus, how often I, too,
have gone along with things
that I know should not be a part of my life.**

**I allowed myself to give in to cravings
that were not only destructive to myself
but also hurt others.**

**It was not Pilate who cast the sentence on me—
it was my own decisions.**

**As I let you look into my eyes,
I know that despite my failings
you look at me with eyes of
love, compassion, and forgiveness.**

Help me to stay close to you always.

**I want to use my freedom to do the right thing,
to choose good over evil
and avoid destroying myself.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Second Station

JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, once your death sentence is given,
the soldiers place the heavy cross
on your beaten and whipped body.

Weary, blood-soaked,
you struggle as it is laid upon you.

Yet you do not hesitate to take up the cross
and bear my failings, sins, and messiness
in my place.

For you, it is always about your Father's will.

Ever faithful to his constant presence in your life,
you begin the journey to Calvary.

**ALL: My Jesus, why would anyone
take up my weaknesses, my addictions?
But out of love for me you do.**

**I know I am called to take up the crosses
of my own life:
the cross of relying on my own power,
the cross of trying to do things my way,
the cross of not loving myself,
the cross of believing I am unable
to turn my life around.**

**Like you, Jesus,
I want to take up the crosses of my life
and find strength from knowing
how much my heavenly Father is with me.**

**I, too, commit myself
to daily giving myself to his will
so that I can reach out and help others.**

**Thank you, Jesus,
for taking up my sins and weaknesses
and carrying them to Calvary.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Third Station

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, you begin the journey to Calvary for me,
one step after another.

Ever so slowly you walk through Jerusalem on to Calvary
as blood oozes out of your body.

The cross is weighty and you are weak.

You fall to the ground.

The cross with my sins lies across your body.

Soldiers strike you and force you to get up and go on.

And you do.

You continue the journey,

difficult as it may be,

because you want us all to see

the love your Father has for every one of us.

If I were the only person who ever lived,

you would carry that cross just for me.

ALL: My Jesus, I have also fallen,
but—unlike you—I sometimes don't get up.

I hear voices saying,
“Stay down”...
“You can't get up”...
“You're a loser”...
“Once an addict always an addict”...
“You'll never turn it around!”

I know your cross had to be heavy, Jesus,
as you lay under it with this fall.

Mine is also heavy,
its weight sometimes unbearable for me to carry.

Jesus, when I fall I am tempted to stay down,
to feel sorry for myself,
to blame others for my addictions

Give me the courage to have your strength.

Let me realize that people need me
and then get up to continue my journey with you.

I unite my sufferings with yours.

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Fourth Station

JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER, MARY

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

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

LEADER: My Jesus, I can't imagine
what went through your mind and Mary's
as your eyes met on this journey to Calvary.

So often the two of you were together and shared love.

You must have talked frequently
about how God was acting in your lives.

Mary lived by only one motto:
to do what God asked.

Her "yes" brought God into the world
through a Virgin-Mother,
for nothing is impossible for God.

From the moment of your conception,
Mary was devoted to you.

And now she walks to Calvary with you.

ALL: Lord God, help me to live by Mary's example.

**I sometimes wonder if I can overcome
my addictions,
my failings,
my falls,
and my weaknesses.**

**Like Mary, I want to do your will.
I need to follow her way and trust you.**

**Although I don't always understand what you ask,
I need to never give up.**

**Help me, Jesus,
to always seek the help of Mary,
your mother who is also my heavenly mother.**

**With her assistance and yours,
I can grow stronger in living as you wish
and overcome all the pressures and addictions
that are a part of my life.**

For nothing is impossible for God.

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Fifth Station

SIMON HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS

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

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

LEADER: You try, Lord, to complete the journey,
but the weight of the cross is too much.

You need help.

The soldiers grab Simon, a bystander,
and shove him toward you
to assist you in carrying my sins on that cross.

Rather than pushing Simon away,
you allow him to help you.

What a gift Simon was to you,
and what a gift your cross and death are for me!

Because there was someone there to help,
you were able to go on to give your life on Calvary.

**ALL: Jesus, how I wish I had been Simon
to repay you a little
for all the love and forgiveness
you have given me!**

**I ask that I may accept the support you give me
as I struggle with my addictions.**

People have been and will be present to assist me.

**Let me open myself up to others,
my sponsors, and the Twelve Steps.**

I pray I can accept the help of those who challenge me.

**I also pray I may be receptive
to the greatest gifts you give me—
your love and forgiveness.**

**And as I learn to see your help in my life,
may I help others to come to know you,
including all my brothers and sisters
who suffer from their addictions.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Sixth Station

VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, your face is covered with sweat and blood
from the crown of thorns.

A woman with a heart full of compassion for you
bursts through the soldiers and crowd
to wipe your face with her veil.

With no fear of the soldiers,
she dares to come to your aid.

Without wondering what others will think of her,
she allows herself the freedom to reach out to you.

And for her love, compassion, and sympathy,
you graciously leave the image of your face
on her cloth.

ALL: Jesus, I, with all my addictions,
want the boldness and self-assurance
to take that initial step toward you.

Why do I hesitate?

Why do I fail to do what I know I should do—
namely to run toward you?

I have also been given what Veronica received.

At my conception,
I was made in your image and likeness.

When discouraged,
when depressed,
when it appears there is no hope,
help me to not be afraid
to walk through the garbage
that tells me I should not go to you.

Let me reach out to you.

I know you will never refuse me,
for I am your beloved child.

I long to be united to you. Help me!

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Seventh Station

JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, with every step under the hot sun
you grow weaker still.

Despite Simon's help,
you sink to the ground a second time.

This gives you some relief,
and it would be easier to stay there.

But again, with difficulty,
you rise to continue your dreadful journey.

You will not give up.

I wonder how you can keep going on
with the weight of my sins and addictions
on your shoulders.

Only love for me and your Father impels you.

ALL: **How many times have evil spirits and addictions
caused me to fall?**

**I get tired of failing, Jesus,
but you press on and give me hope
by carrying my addictions.**

I must get back up and turn to you.

It is easy to think that when I fail on my journey,
my efforts are useless.

After taking one step forward,
I've taken two steps backward.
But I have to keep going.

Do not let me forget
that you are always walking with me.
Then I can keep trying.

Like your second fall, there will be days
when everything seems impossible to bear
and I will want to return to the false substances.

I wonder how I will keep moving.
Lord, always give me perseverance
and trust in your ways.

When I realize that you do not abandon me,
I can have hope.

Help me, Jesus, never to forget that—
even when I fall—
you are right there with me
and can help me rise.

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Eighth Station

JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

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

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

LEADER: Many, many people are following you
on this journey to Calvary, Lord,
where you will give your life for me.

The pain must be getting unbearable,
each step like a step in cement.

Yet in the midst of those steps,
you take time to reach out to the women along the way
and tell them,

“Do not weep for me
but for yourselves and your children!”

Even in your sufferings,
you pay attention to others.

Knowing that Jerusalem will soon be destroyed,
you show compassion to the women.

Truly you are a God who never ceases to love us.

ALL: Jesus, you are so different

from others I encounter in my life.

Often I hear judgments tossed around,
and some are about myself and my addictions.

I'm tempted to speak hateful words to those critics
who do not know what I experience
with the cravings of my life.

They don't know if I am wallowing in regrets,
especially concerning people I have hurt.

But you, Jesus, speak words of compassion to me
and restore my dignity.

Daily I need to dwell on your presence.

I need to concentrate not on negative things
others say about me,
but on your words of love, forgiveness,
and healing.

What a difference your difference can make for me!

May I always find hope in you
so I may give hope to others.

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Ninth Station

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

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

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

LEADER: A third time, Jesus, you fall.

You lie completely drained, your face in the dirt,
blood all around you,
and yet knowing what God the Father asks of you.

Somehow you manage to get up
and take the final steps toward the hill of Calvary
where you will lay down your life for me.

Why?

Why do you continue?

Remarkably, you do,
but only because you know God
is with you in this ordeal.

ALL: Jesus, I do not know how you did it.

**While I may often hear
that I am not worth your sacrifice—
and sometimes even say it to myself—
I know I am.**

**Never would you have created me
if you didn't think I was valuable.**

**I, too, have fallen
and often because I thought
I could go on with my life on my own strength.**

How delusional I can be!

**Sometimes in my addictions,
I fall because of hurts and regret.**

**But, Lord, never let me feel that
the results of my addictions or any of my sins
is greater than your love.**

**Despite what has happened in the past,
your love allows me to begin again
and carry on.**

There is always hope!

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Tenth Station

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

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

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

LEADER: The soldiers remove your garments, Jesus—
a final act of humiliation for you.

Now you are attached to nothing.

You stand there naked for all to see,
you, our Lord and Savior.

All you have left is the trust of your Father in heaven
and the support of your family and faithful friends.

The only thing you can do is give yourself
in hopes that your Father will not forsake you.

ALL: Jesus, what an example you are for me!

In my failings, I have held on to so many things—
things that I felt I needed to find life, to find peace.

It is difficult to let go of them now
and allow people to see me for who I truly am—
a beloved child of yours.

Strip me, Lord, from the cravings
for alcohol, drugs, wealth, power, and prestige.

Release me from my pride, selfishness,
and stubborn independence.

Rather, let me be clothed with your love,
with the warmth of your and your mother's presence,
and the hope that comes from you.

Jesus, instead of attaching myself to harmful things,
may I always attach myself to you.

In doing so, I separate myself
from what keeps me from being
a sign of hope to others.

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Eleventh Station

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, I cannot even begin to imagine
the pain you experience
as the soldiers stretch out your arms
and drive nails through your hands
and then another nail through your feet.

A cruel and horrendous death you endure for me—
and only out of love.

People who have already walked away
from the gruesome scene
can only hear the pounding of the nails
in the distance.

But for you, my Lord and my God,
the pain is real,
and you choose not to escape it.

ALL: Jesus, am I worth your love
that endures this much agony?

I cannot get out of my mind that somehow I am.

**I cannot stop believing
that I need to return that love.**

**As I look at the crucifix,
I resolve to live my life with hope.**

**I also resolve to live with gratitude
for all the pain and suffering you endured for me.**

**Like the people who left Calvary,
I sometimes want to walk away
from the difficult recovery program,
thinking I know better.**

**Help me to persevere,
turning to your love for strength.**

**Thank you, Jesus,
for taking on my sins and addictions
and nailing them to your cross.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Twelfth Station

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, you suffer on the cross for three hours.

During this time,
you bequeath Mary to us as our mother.

You also promise the criminal crucified beside you
that he would be in heaven that day
for believing in you.

It is now about noon
and darkness is coming over the earth.

Suddenly you shout:
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!”

You ask your Father to forgive those who crucify you
for they do not know what they are doing.

Finally, you cry out, “It is finished,”
and you breathe your last.

Lord, Jesus, have mercy on me.

PLEASE KNEEL OR SIT AND PONDER
THE DEATH OF JESUS FOR A FEW MINUTES.

**ALL: Jesus, like the good thief, I believe in you,
and you offer me forgiveness, too.**

**Your compassion overwhelms me.
How can I repay you?**

**I hear you telling me that your life is not over
but continues through me, your precious child.**

**You trust me to carry on your work
despite all of my failings and addictions.**

More than ever I now trust you.

**You were human like me and faced temptations,
but what God asked of you
was more important than anything else.**

**In all of my temptations, Jesus,
I need to turn to your Father as you did.**

His grace is with me always and in all ways.

**I ask not to fear the future
but to embrace my failings and addictions,
knowing I can die to them
because you are always with me,
as you promised.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Thirteenth Station

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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

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

LEADER: It is over, Jesus.

A friend asks Pilate for permission
to take your body down from the cross
for proper burial, and it is given.

Another friend helps prepare your body for the tomb.

Outwardly, there was nothing glorious about your death.
You were executed like a criminal.

Mary, your faithful mother,
holds your body one last time.

What must she have felt?
What went through her mind?
What did she do after all she had endured that day?
What would be her future?

Mary must have felt anguish
but also some gratitude,
for the death of her son
gave life to the world and to me.

ALL: Lord, I know many people are now out of my life
because of my addictions.

**I cannot change the past—
I can only live in the present
and open myself to your graces
to make the changes I need to make in my life.**

**I need to come to your mother, Mary,
and ask her help.**

Can a mother forget her son or daughter?

**I need to spend time with you daily
in gratitude for the blessings of the past
and with hope for what awaits me in the future.**

**Lord Jesus, help me make you
a part of my life every day.**

**Keep all those that I have hurt
in your love and protection.**

**For all that has been in my life, Lord, thank you—
and for all the future opportunities you give me
to open myself up to you, I say: “Yes!”**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified

ALL: Have mercy on us.

The Fourteenth Station

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

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

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

LEADER: Jesus, your life is not over;
it continues on in me and in others.

I trust you. I really do.
I have never doubted you.

Oh, I have stumbled along the way
and given in to cravings and temptations.

But please, please believe me:
I have never doubted you and never will.

I am looking to you and will never stop believing in you
because you are my Savior and constant companion.

I know there have been times
when my dreams were shattered and things fell apart
because of my addiction
and I felt there was no hope.

But I pray things will be different now.

They place your body in the tomb,
but your Father will raise you from the dead
with a new and glorious body.

He also wants to raise me up from the dark
to live fully both here and hereafter.

**ALL: I believe what you have said, Lord Jesus,
but while I am willing, I am weak.**

I am messy and have failed.

But you are right.

**There is hope because you will not give up on me,
though I do not understand
why you continue to be right beside me
as I journey in life.**

**There is a time for everything, Lord,
and now is the time for me to bury
all that leads me away from you in my addictions
and to rise with you to a new and greater life.**

**All you ask of me is to live my life
open to your graces
and to trust in you.**

**Without you, Lord,
I do not know where to turn.
So I give myself to you and your graces.**

LEADER: Lord Jesus crucified,

ALL: Have mercy on us.

Closing Prayer

LEADER: I see, Lord Jesus, that my life is not complete
because you are depending on me
to carry on your work of mercy and love.
Give me the grace to accept every moment of my life
with openness to what you are asking of me.
Let me walk on with trust in others like my sponsors
and above all with complete trust in you.
May I no longer seek peace and happiness
in the substances I have used
but rather in my life with you.
No matter where I am, you are with me.
Lord Jesus, thank you.
Thank you for my life, for sticking by me.
While others may have given up on me,
you do not and never will.
Thank you, Jesus, thank you.
Without you, I can do nothing.

ALL: Amen.

Fr. Robert Kraig is a retired Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Cleveland. After serving as a pastor for decades, he continues to serve in parish life. He also works with those in alcohol and drug abuse recovery at the Jack Mulhall Center for Sober Living in Cleveland, Ohio. "I value the work of those in recovery so much," Fr. Bob states. "In many ways I have found the presence of God among these people in ways I could never have imagined. I am grateful this opportunity came about in my retirement."

