

# Bearing the Cross Today

by Ann Naffziger

## Opening Prayer

*(All rise as the ministers enter and process to stand in front of the crucifix while facing it.)*

**All: In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to teach us how to live  
with great love and compassion.  
In the end, you were crucified  
for your faithfulness to your Father  
and his laws of love.**

**All: We gather to commemorate your suffering  
on that last day in Jerusalem  
so that it will not have been in vain.  
You faced your death with great courage and acceptance  
and we want to learn from that.**

**Leader: We, too, have crosses to carry in our own lives.  
Teach us how to carry them  
with dignity and endurance  
as you did.**

**All: Amen.**

# Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Leader 1: Pontius Pilate sensed that there was something unusual about this prisoner who had been brought before him (Mt 27:11-26). Pilate was reluctant to condemn Jesus, realizing that he had been handed over “out of jealousy,” and warned by his wife that Jesus was innocent. Yet in the face of a crowd that threatened to become violent, Pilate literally washed his hands of the situation and declared himself not responsible for Jesus’ death, even as he ordered Jesus to be flogged and then crucified.

All: **Christ Jesus, give us the strength and courage to speak out and act against injustice.**

Leader 2: Pontius Pilate did not have the strength to stand up to evil and so he became an accomplice to it. He took the easy way out and gave in to what the crowd wanted rather than rendering justice. He could have set Jesus free. Instead, he condemned him to a torturous death.

Two thousand years later, we must ask ourselves: have we sometimes been an accomplice to evil because we did not stand up to it? Have we remained silent or reacted out of fear rather than standing up with courage when popular opinion condones intolerance, hatred, or violence? Have we condemned Jesus all over again, by condemning others?

All: **Jesus, help us to stand firm for peace and compassion when fear, hatred, or rage threatens to sweep us away.**

## Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Leader: The Second Station: Jesus takes up his cross.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Leader: Jesus never asks us to do anything that he wouldn't do himself. He forgave those who crucified him. He welcomed the outcasts, and he did not pass judgment on the woman caught in adultery. He even took up his own cross, a heavy load of wood for someone who has already been beaten, mocked, and spit upon, and he begins to carry it himself.

All: **Christ Jesus, forgive us for laying crosses  
on the shoulders of other people.**

Leader 2: Jesus said "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:23-24). We worship a God who became human and did not attempt to escape any of the physical pain or mental anguish that humans experience. We all have our own crosses to bear: injury or illness, the loss of a loved one, unemployment, a housing crisis, a major move, worry for a parent or a child. We can bear them knowing that Jesus knows what it is like.

All: **Lord Jesus, give us the strength to bear our own crosses.  
Help us to know your presence with us in our pain.**

# Jesus Falls for the First Time

Leader: The Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time.  
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

Leader 1: For Jesus' friends and followers who had seen him teaching and working miracles with such authority, watching him fall under the weight of his cross must have been terribly distressing. A man in the prime of his life just a day earlier is now so frail and weak that he crashes to the ground. He had fed 5,000 hungry people, cured paralytics, and raised Lazarus from the dead, but now he falls, unable to muster the strength to stay on his feet. This is a very, very human Jesus.

All: **Christ Jesus, we, too, sometimes falter  
under the weight of the crosses we must bear.  
When we do fall, give us the strength to rise up again.**

Leader 2: God the Father doesn't send angels to bear Jesus up. No, God allows him to fall without coming to his rescue. If we couldn't believe in Jesus' humanity before this, we are able to see it now. Like anyone else in that situation, Jesus was crushed under the weight of something no human could bear.

All: **Jesus, help us to know that you never abandon us,  
even when we fall under the weight of the crosses  
we must bear.**

# ✝ Bearing the Cross Today

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## Opening Prayer

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on that last day in Jerusalem  
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You faced your death  
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and we want to learn from that.

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## Station Introduction

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

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

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## ❶ Jesus is Condemned to Death

- 1: Christ Jesus, give us the strength and courage  
to speak out and act against injustice.
- 2: Jesus, help us to stand firm for peace and  
compassion when fear, hatred, or rage  
threatens to sweep us away.

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## ❷ Jesus Takes Up His Cross

- 1: Christ Jesus, forgive us for laying crosses  
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to bear our own crosses. Help us to know  
your presence with us in our pain.

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## ❸ Jesus Falls for the First Time

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- 2: Jesus, help us to know that you never abandon us,  
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of the crosses we must bear.

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## ❹ Jesus Meets His Mother

- 1: Mary, teach us to stand as a witness to the  
suffering of others,  
so that they know they are not alone.
- 2: Mary, Mother of Sorrows,  
teach us your compassion and love  
for all those who are suffering.

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## ❺ Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

- 1: Everyone in this world has a cross to bear,  
visible or invisible. Help us to be more aware  
of those carrying heavy burdens  
so that we may help them on their road.
- 2: Jesus, may we be witnesses  
of compassion and mercy  
as we share the burdens of others.

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## ❻ Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

- 1: Thank you, Lord, for all the people who have not  
been afraid to be near me in my times of suffering  
and have helped to ease my pain.
- 2: Help me, Lord, to recognize your face  
in the faces of all those  
who are suffering and in anguish.  
Grant me the courage to reach out to them.

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## ❼ Jesus Falls for the Second Time

- 1: Jesus, you know the pain of people who are still  
being tortured today. May we do everything in  
our power to intervene.
- 2: Jesus, help us to see and respond to  
those experiencing great suffering  
so that in responding to them we respond to you.

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## 8 Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

- 1: Give us the courage, Lord,  
to speak out against injustice  
and to stand by the suffering victims.
- 2: Lord, let us never become so hardened  
that we are not moved in  
the face of another person's pain.

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## 9 Jesus Falls for the Third Time

- 1: Jesus, grant that we may provide strength  
for others who have fallen.
- 2: Jesus, grant us the strength to rise up  
and continue on our paths when we have fallen.

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## 10 Jesus is Stripped of his Garments

- 1: Jesus, open our eyes to how you are being  
stripped of your dignity even now when the least  
of your brothers and sisters are stripped of theirs.
- 2: Lord Jesus, help us to see how we contribute to  
your passion by causing others to suffer.  
Grant us the courage and the integrity  
to change our ways.

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## 11 Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

- 1: Jesus, grant that we may never grow callous  
to your suffering in this world today.
- 2: Jesus, give us the strength to stand with those  
who are in pain so that they may know  
at least the comfort of our presence.

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## 12 Jesus Dies on the Cross

- 1: God, help us to know your presence with us,  
even in our times of deepest darkness.
- 2: Jesus, give us the strength to go on,  
even in our times of deepest despair.

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## 13 Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

- 1: Mary, Mother of Sorrows,  
thank you for your faithfulness.
- 2: Mary, Mother of Sorrows,  
give us courage and fortitude  
in the face of unspeakable pain.

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## 14 Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

- 1: God of life and God of death,  
let us know your presence  
when we feel that life will never be able to  
come out of death.
- 2: God of life and God of death,  
give us hope and trust in the resurrection,  
even in our darkest moments.

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## Closing Prayer

Jesus, help us to see your face  
in the lives of those who are struggling.

May we always look to you for strength  
as we endure our own trials.

We ask that you grant us trust  
that suffering and death  
will not have the last word  
because of your death and resurrection.

We pray this all in your name.

Amen.



We gather to commemorate  
your suffering  
on that last day in Jerusalem  
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You faced your death with  
great courage and acceptance  
and we want to  
learn from that.

The First Station  
**Because by your  
holy cross,  
you have  
redeemed the world**

Christ Jesus,  
give us the strength  
and courage  
to speak out  
and act against injustice.

Jesus, help us to stand firm  
for peace and compassion  
when fear, hatred, or rage  
threatens to sweep us away.

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