

A Sinner climbs Calvary with Jesus

INTRODUCTION

You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

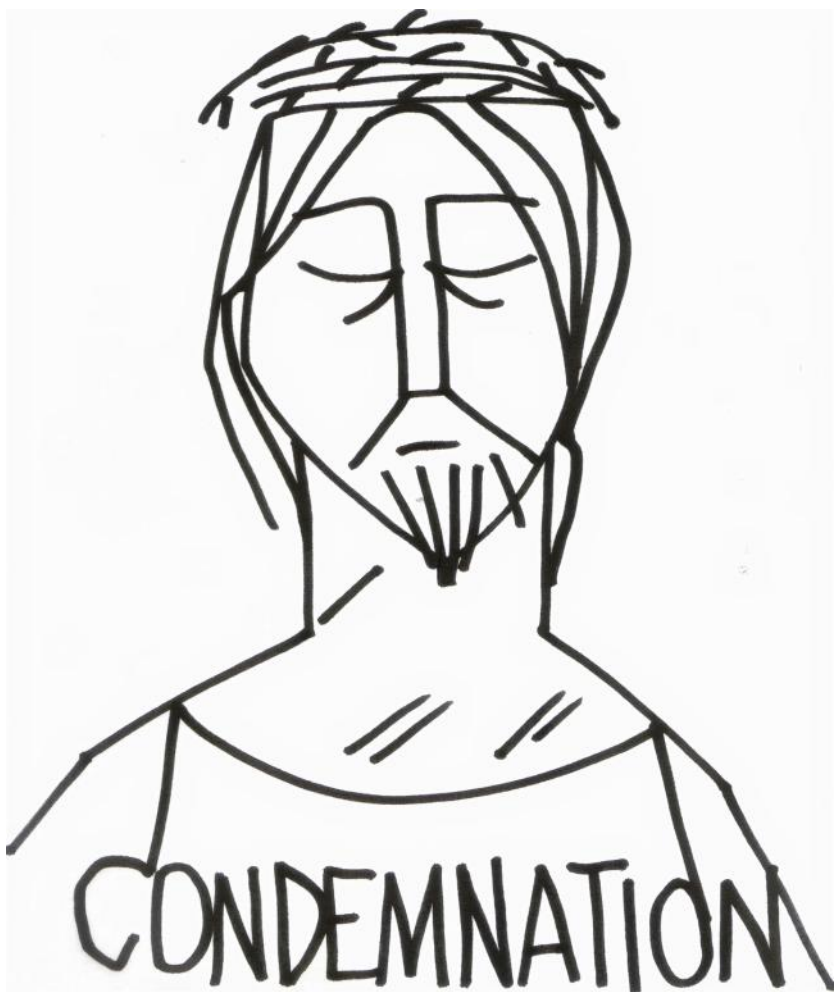
(Micah 6, 8)

The exercise of meditating on Jesus' way of the cross is a traditional means to personal growth in that humility so necessary in the Christian life. The person who unites himself in the depths of the heart with the suffering of the Lord --even more, experiences that suffering in daily life-- will be more ready to do right and to love goodness.

The way of the cross is not just another devotional prayer. The pilgrim who walks with Jesus the road to Calvary is a sinner in need of salvation. And the world of every age is a world longing for its redemption. That is why to live the way of the cross is to intercede for humanity, it is to make the cause of our neighbor our own.

Let us walk, then, the torturous path to the place of execution. It is the road to a new heaven and a new earth. It is a work of love and the final victory over evil.

Way of the Cross composed by James Gibson, C.R., with citations from the Bible, Revised Standard Version. Illustrations by Gary Young, C.R.



First Station

Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

*Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and
who would have thought any more of his destiny?
..He was cut off from the land of the living, and
smitten for the sin of his people. (Is 53, 8)*

Reader: Pilate washes his hands. He thinks: What can I do to prevent this injustice? The just person has no recourse when the one who can defend him, doesn't. The unborn child, the grandmother who can no longer walk, the youth who's looking for a way out of a broken family -- who will defend them, when those who have the capacity to help, will not?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you stand condemned by religious people and the civil powers of this world. Do not let us Christians stand by silently while so many of our brothers and sisters suffer unjustly; because in not defending the life you gave to us, we have condemned you once more.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *We shall live with the Lord.*



Second Station
Jesus carries his cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6, 14)

Reader: What is the cross? It is all torture, hate and human cruelty. It is the word that wounds, the look that makes fun of anyone. For some, it is war and terrorism and genocide in the name of God. For others, it is the sickness or poverty that day by day wastes away the body and the mind. In community life, it takes the form of aggressive silence or simply non-cooperation. For the Christian, the cross is grace, when it is united to the cross of Jesus. There is no resurrection without Calvary.

Prayer: Jesus, the cross is heavy, the road is long. Our spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Give us the strength to go up with you to Calvary.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



WEAKNESS

Third Station
Jesus falls the first time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

*Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see
whether there is any suffering like my suffering,
which has been dealt me when the Lord afflicted me
on the day of his blazing wrath. (Lam 1, 12)*

Reader: There is no pain like humiliation, whether it be that of the wife slapped by the hand or the infidelity of her husband, or that of the brother whose name is brought down by community gossip. When we kick someone who's already down, we have reduced that person to an animal. But when we encourage the sinner, when we embrace the forgotten and marginal member of our community, we have restored the dignity of a daughter or a son of God. It is Christ whom we are lifting to his feet.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, so many times we have left you on the ground by not loving our neighbor. Make us recognize in everyone the dignity of the children of God, so that all of us may stand together to face our daily struggles.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

SURRENDER



Fourth Station
Jesus meets his mother

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

*Children, too, are a gift from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb, a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children born in one's youth.*
(Ps 127, 3-4)

Reader: How can you call a "gift" the child who brings such anguish to his mother? Yet the mother is only a mother when she gives of herself to the extreme, for her children. And Mary, feeling in her heart every cruelty inflicted on the person of Jesus, will one day experience just as deeply his resurrection. In the person of Mary you and I are called to participate in the way of the cross of her Son, who told us: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

Prayer: Holy Mary, Mother of God, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus. Help us to welcome him and to love him in the person of troublesome children, the sick or elderly member of our community, confused young people and everyone despised or ignored by our world.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

UNION



Fifth Station
**Simon helps Jesus
to carry the cross**

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

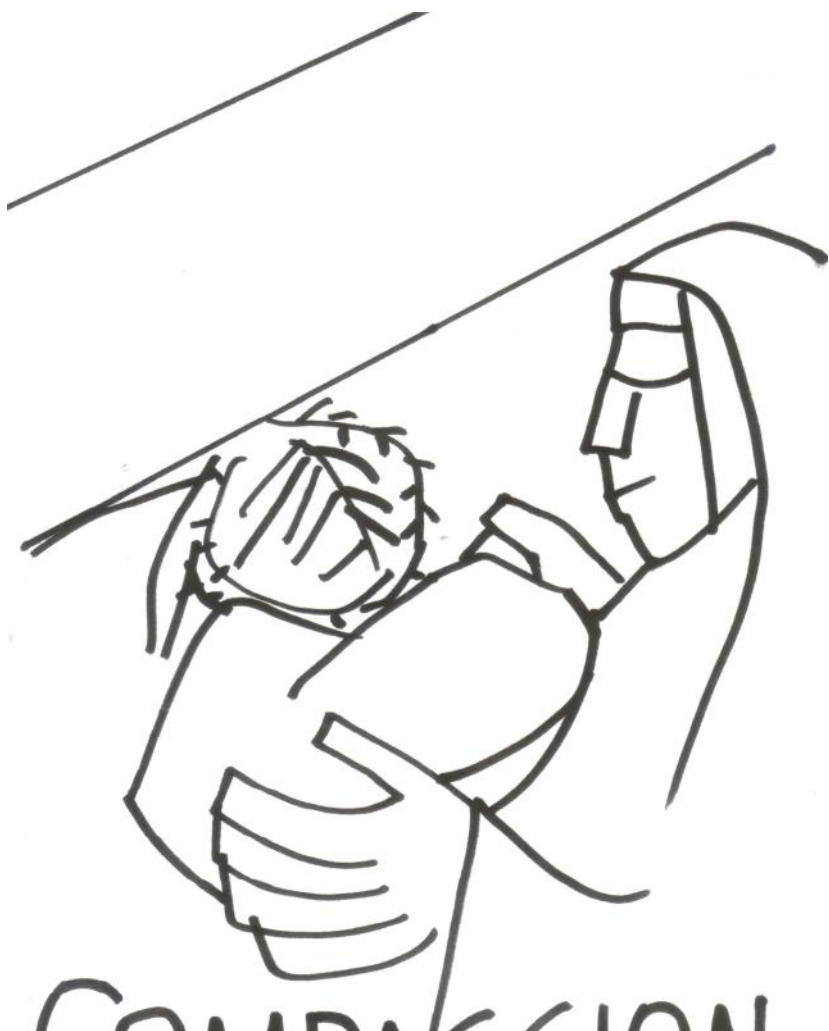
Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6, 2)

Reader: We should all enjoy the privilege that was Simon of Cyrene's: to be forced to carry Jesus' cross. And we do have that privilege! Every time we forget about our weariness and the frustrations of our daily labors in order to lighten the burden of another, we are bearing the cross of Jesus himself. Even though we may not like it, this sacrifice on our part will bring us peace and happiness: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Prayer: Jesus, our Brother, let us feel in our own flesh your constant striving to love without reserve. When loving our neighbor becomes most difficult, may the memory of your cross be our strength.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



COMPASSION

Sixth Station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

My being thirsts for God, the living God.

When can I go and see the face of God?

(Ps 42, 3)

Reader: According to tradition, the face of Jesus remained etched on the cloth of a woman from the crowd who did him an act of mercy along his long ascent of Calvary. How could one recognize the face of God himself amid the sweat and the grime which disfigured it? How can one recognize the image and likeness of God in the soul stained by sin, or in contemporary voices clamoring to remove the Lord's name and teachings from the world he created? We, like the woman called Veronica, must learn to face the evil of our world, not with a vengeful violence but with the tender touch that heals and which reveals to us the very face of the Lord.

Prayer: Jesus, turn towards us your gaze of compassion and heal the wounds caused by our sins, so that we may be for the world a reflection of your love.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



WOUNDEDNESS

Seventh Station
Jesus falls a second time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

*God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong,
and God chose the lowly and despised of the world,
those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing
those who are something. (1Cor 1, 27-28)*

Reader: Every stumble of the Son of God in his struggle to bring to completion the plan of the Father, is a sentence against today's world. If the poor man from Nazareth bites the dust, it is because that's what was decided upon by the powers that be. If there's still poverty in this age of a global economy, it's because that is a necessary condition for maintaining the wealth of a privileged few. However, one cannot escape the truth that the fallen figure of Jesus is teaching us: weakness is the way to salvation.

Prayer: Lord, do not let us turn our eyes from your scandalous humiliation. Teach us to look for means of solidarity with the weak of the world, so that their Calvary may be transformed into new life for our fragile humanity.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

CONSOLATION



Eighth Station

Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children.”

(Lc 23, 27)

Reader: Certainly we are moved by the suffering of innocent people. But the reaction which Jesus expects when we see this frightening scene is not weeping but rather change and conversion. The remorse which we feel every Good Friday will mean nothing to us if it is not accompanied by a firm purpose of amending our hearts. This change will be recognized in a new attitude with our brothers in community, spouse, classmates or our companion at work; in a renewed involvement in the Church and in the lives of our sisters and brothers at the periphery of society.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we weep, seeing your body doubled over in pain when a young person dies, when the elderly are abandoned, when children are abused. Disturb the tranquility of our conscience so that our love for you may be seen in our works.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



FAILURE

Ninth Station
Jesus falls a third time

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why so far from my call for help...?

All who see me mock me;

they curl their lips and jeer;

they shake their heads at me:

“You relied on the Lord, let him deliver you;

if he loves you, let him rescue you.” (Ps 22, 2. 8-9)

Reader: Many of us can overcome a failure or some disgrace; we hold our heads up and keep on. But when life continues to beat us down, we can begin to question even the existence of God. Faced with this helpless and desperate situation, we call to mind the vision of Jesus-- friend of the poor, Savior of the world-- thrown to the ground by the weight of sin. He slowly lifts himself, and still he carries us on his shoulders.

Prayer: My Jesus, relying on my own strength I keep falling down on the path of life. By your passion, lift my spirit, that I might find peace in following your heavenly Father's will.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

ABNEGATION



Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

*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.*

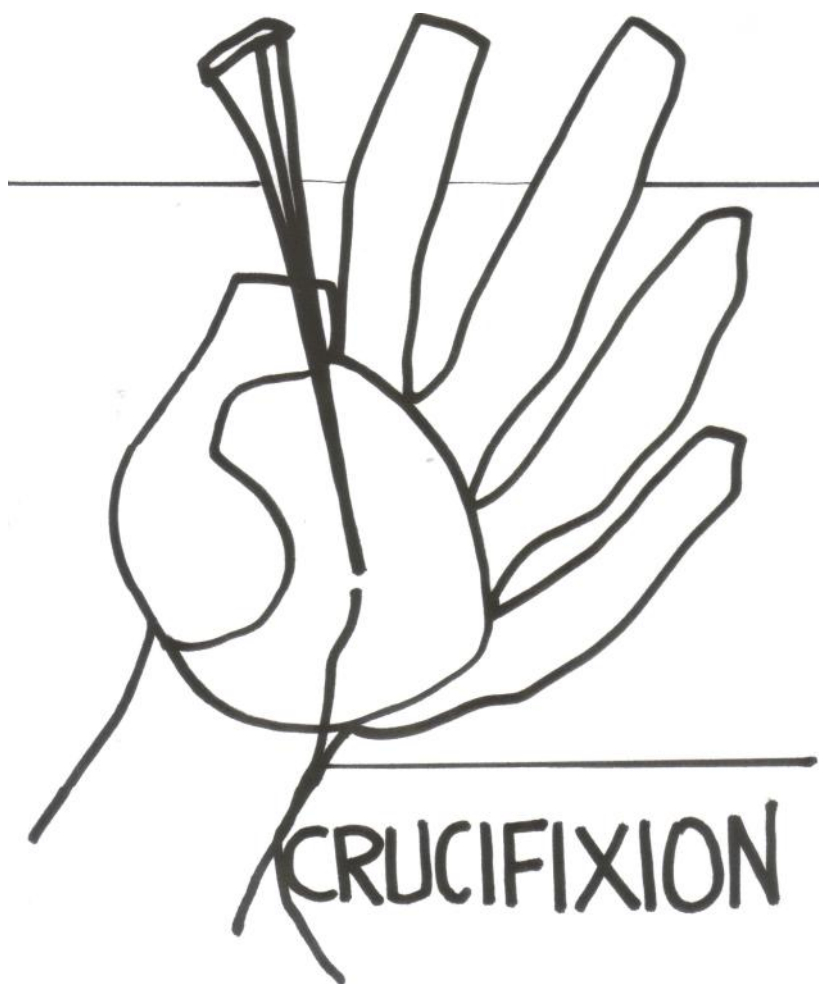
(Phil 2, 6-8)

Reader: Having left aside his divine glory by becoming human, Jesus is now stripped even of the little clothing he is wearing-- the ultimate indignity. Jesus suffers this humiliation without complaint, thus teaching us that the value and dignity of the person are not measured by the exterior. In today's world, how often do we measure ourselves by the label we are wearing —boss, superior, nationality, neighborhood, political persuasion. Our God, in the shameful disguise of a naked criminal, offers to every man and woman true human dignity in union with him.

Prayer: Lord, strip me of all that is unnecessary in my life. With you at my side, I will try to look into the heart of every person. I will not let the hateful comparisons and prejudices of the world rob my sisters and brothers of the divine image that is their inheritance.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

We thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted; yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured.

He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. (Is 53, 4-5)

Reader: The nails assured two things: that Jesus would die, and that his agony would be long and painful. There are many nails which today are bleeding the body of Jesus: the forceps that pull a human being from the mother's womb before it can survive on its own; and the syringe whose aim is to take away the pain of the sick person by taking his life; the bullet shot from any gun, on the street or in battle; the efficient means of executing the death penalty on the guilty and the not guilty; the words and looks which kill even the ones we love; and the drugs and alcohol by which one takes his own life. Jesus has made our wounds his own: and by his stripes we have been healed.

Prayer: Oh wounded Jesus, forgive us, your people, for the hurt we have so pitilessly inflicted upon you. Grant that the wood of death may be changed for us into the tree of life.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*



SALVATION

Twelfth Station
Jesus dies

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

...he took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ... For as often as you eat this bread and drink of the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. (1Cor 11, 24. 26)

Reader: *Mysterium fidei.* The sacrament of our faith. Jesus did not leave us a religion to be practiced but rather a mystery to be lived. It is not enough to read many pages of the Bible, listen to long sermons, or multiply prayers and songs to the Lord. The journey of the Christian is summed up in this paschal mystery: to die with Christ in order to rise with Christ. The moment in which Jesus surrendered his body and his spirit to his Father, the Church was born and the world learned what it means to LOVE.

(Pause for silent meditation)

Prayer: Jesus, we do not understand God's mysterious plan for you and for us. We just say "Thank you", because by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the savior of the world.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

MISERY



Thirteenth Station
**Jesus is taken down
from the cross**

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

(Job answered and said:) "Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record... But as for me, I know that my vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him, and from my flesh I shall see God..." (Job 19, 23. 25-27)

Reader: Imagine the heart of the Mother, broken in pieces at seeing the evil which God has permitted to befall his only-begotten Son. This is the human question which begs for an adequate answer: Why do the innocent suffer? Indeed, the fact that 2000 years after this sad story came to pass the name of Jesus resounds to the farthest corners of the earth, is due to this: the faith and hope of Mary, and ours with hers, have not been disappointed. God is faithful, and is not slow to aid the humble who trust in him.

Prayer: Lord, fill us with the faith and hope shown by Mary when she received in her arms your lifeless body. May your sacrifice of love move us to effective action on behalf of those who suffer most the misfortunes of life.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

MORTIFICATION



Fourteenth Station
Jesus is buried

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*

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

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. (Rom 6, 4)

Reader: The tomb is not the end of the story. It is the necessary bridge to a new mode of existence. A battered body had to rest among the dead so that Jesus of Nazareth would show himself as a new presence, in his Church and in every person baptized in his Name. That is why the baptism of every Christian should be a burial: the old self with its corruption by sin must be buried once and for all, so that in our new being the face of Christ risen may shine. We only have to enter the tomb with Jesus. How much of myself am I willing to bury beneath the earth?

Prayer: Jesus, you are the Word of God, you are Life itself. We are afraid to enter the darkness of death. We cannot even glimpse the other side of the grave. We pray with contrite heart that this meditation of your sorrowful pilgrimage may give us the courage to carry our cross to the end of life's journey.

Leader: *If we die with the Lord,*

All: *we shall live with the Lord.*

CONCLUSION

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. (1Cor 15, 17)

The only solid reason we can have for making this act of prayer which we call "the way of the cross" is this: Jesus is risen. The resurrection of Christ explains Calvary. Throughout human history until today, it is the force which inspires the struggle for human rights and the reason why giving up one's life for another makes sense.

The testimony of the gospels is the testimony of the Christian who has just walked with Christ to his end: the tomb is empty. Death itself has died. Jesus lives, and his life is ours.

Prayer: O RISEN LORD, the Way, the Truth and the Life, make us faithful followers of the Spirit of your resurrection. Grant that we may be inwardly renewed, dying to ourselves in order that you may live in us.

May our lives serve as signs of the transforming power of your love. Use us as your instruments for the renewal of society, bringing your life and love to all and leading them to your Church.

This we ask of you, Lord Jesus, living and reigning with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever. Amen.

RESURRECTION



