

Welcome

Minister

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

Minister

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

Lector

A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him. But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and handed Jesus over as they wished

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, standing before the governor, who tries three times to oppose the will of the people, and finally decides not to decide. I see you standing before the crowd; they are asked three times and each time they decide against you. The crowd, in other words, everyone and no one. Hidden in the throng, we lose our individuality; we become the voice of a thousand other voices. Even before we deny you, we deny ourselves, diluting our own responsibility in the seething tide of a faceless crowd. And yet we are responsible. Misled by the rabble-rousers, by the evil that insinuates itself with a deceitful and deafening voice, it is we, all humanity, who condemn you.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord,
keep watch over our decisions,
bring them clarity by your light,
and lead us to ask the right questions.
Evil alone never doubts.
Trees that sink their roots in the ground,
wither, if watered by evil,
but you have set our roots in heaven,
and our branches on earth, to know and follow you. *****Music*****

Minister

SECOND STATION
Jesus receives his cross

Lector

[Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, crowned with thorns as you receive your cross. You accept it, as you always accept everything and everyone. They burden you with its wood, heavy and rough, yet you do not rebel, you do not reject that unjust and humiliating instrument of torture. You take it up and begin to walk, carrying it on your shoulders.

How many times have I rebelled in anger against burdens I have received, viewing them as heavy or unjust. That is not your way. You are only a few years older than I – nowadays we would consider you still young – but you are accepting. You take seriously what life offers you, every opportunity it presents, as if you wanted to go to the very heart of things, to discover that there is always something beyond appearances, something remarkable and meaningful. Thanks to you, I understand that this is a cross of salvation and liberation, a cross that bears me up whenever I stumble, a yoke that is easy, a burden that is light.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord,
that in the light of the cross, the symbol of our faith,
we may accept our sufferings and, enlightened by your love,
embrace our own crosses, made glorious by your death and resurrection.
Give us the grace to look back on the story of our lives
and to rediscover in them your love for us.

Music

THIRD STATION
Jesus falls for the first time

Lector

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, making your way to Calvary bearing our sins. I see you fall, hands and knees on the ground, in pain. With what great humility did you fall! And what great humiliation you now endure! Your human nature, your true manhood, is clearly seen in this fragment of your life. The cross you carry is a heavy one. You need help to carry it, but when you fall to the ground, no one helps you. Instead, people make fun of you, they laugh at the sight of a God who falls. Perhaps they are disappointed, perhaps they had a mistaken idea of who you are. Sometimes we think that having faith in you means never falling in life. Together with you, I also fall, and my ideas with me, those ideas I had about you. How fragile they were!

I see you Jesus, as you grit your teeth and, in complete surrender to the love of the Father, you get up and resume your journey. With these, your first, faltering steps beneath the cross, Jesus, you remind me of a child taking his first steps in life. Losing his balance, he falls and cries, but then keeps going. He trusts in the hands of his parents and does not give up. He is afraid but he keeps walking, because trust is stronger than fear. By your courage, you teach us that our failures and falls must never halt our journey, and that we always have a choice: to give up or to get up, in union with you.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, give us young people
the courage to get up after every fall,
as you did on the way to Calvary.
Grant that we may always appreciate
the great and precious gift of life,
and that our failures and falls
may never be a reason for throwing it away.
We know that if we trust in you,
we will be able to get up again
and find the strength to keep going,
always. *** **Music*****

FOURTH STATION
Jesus meets his mother

Lector

Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Mary, as you look at your poor child. He bears on his back the marks of the scourge and he is forced to carry the weight of the cross; soon, no doubt, in his exhaustion he will fall beneath it. Yet you knew that, sooner or later, this would happen. It was prophesied to you, but now that it is taking place, everything is different. That is how things are: we are always unprepared before the harsh realities of life. Mary, now you are sorrowful, as any woman would be in your place, but you do not despair. Your eyes are undimmed; you are not forlorn and downcast. You are radiant even in your sorrow, because you have hope. You know that this journey of your son will not be a one-way trip. You know, you feel, as only mothers can feel, that soon you will see him again.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord: help us always
to keep before our eyes the example of Mary,
who accepted the death of her son
as a great mystery of salvation.
Help us to act with our gaze fixed on the good of others
and to die in the hope of the resurrection,
conscious that we are never alone
or abandoned by God or Mary,
the loving mother ever concerned for her children.

Music

FIFTH STATION
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

Lector

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus

Minister

MEDITATION

Every day we experience any number of encounters and conflicts, especially those of us who are young people. We continually encounter new experiences and new people. In unexpected meetings, in accidental events, in strange surprises, there are hidden opportunities to love, to see the best in our neighbors, even those who seem different from ourselves.

At times, Jesus, we feel like you, abandoned by those we thought were our friends, crushed by a heavy burden. Yet we must not forget that there is a Simon of Cyrene ready to carry our cross. We must remember that we are not alone and, in that realization, we will find the strength to take up the cross of those around us.

I see you, Jesus: now you seem to be experiencing a bit of relief. You manage, momentarily, to catch a breath, now that you are no longer alone. I also see Simon. Who knows if he has realized that your yoke is light, and if he appreciates the meaning of this unexpected event in his life.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, to give each of us the courage
to be like Simone of Cyrene,
who takes up your cross and follows in your steps.
May each of us be sufficiently humble and strong
to take up the crosses of those whom we meet.
Grant that, when we feel alone,
we may recognize on our journey a Simon of Cyrene
who will halt and help bear our burden.
Grant that we may see the best in every person,
and be open to all different kinds of encounter.
I ask that each of us may unexpectedly
find himself or herself walking at your side. *****Music*****

SIXTH STATION
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Lector

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, wretched and barely recognizable, treated like the least of men. You walk, faltering, to your death, your face bleeding and disfigured, yet, as always, meek and humble, looking up. A woman steps out of the crowd to see at close hand that face of yours which, perhaps, had spoken so often to her soul and which she loved. She sees its pain and wants to help. They do not let her pass, there are so many of them, all too many, and they are armed. But to her, none of that matters; she is determined to reach you and for a moment she manages to touch you, caressing you with her veil. Hers is the power of tenderness. Your eyes meet for a second, face meets face.

We know nothing about that woman, Veronica, or her story. She earns heaven with a simple gesture of charity. She approaches you, sees your suffering face and loves it even more than before. Veronica does not stop at appearances, which today are so important in our image-conscious society. She loves, unconditionally, a face that is unsightly, marred, unlovely and imperfect. That face, your face, Jesus, in its very imperfection, shows the perfection of your love for us.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Jesus, grant me the strength
to approach others, to approach every person,
young or old, poor or rich, friends or strangers,
and to see your face in all those faces.
Help me never to hesitate in coming
to the aid of my neighbor, in whom you dwell,
even as Veronica came to help you on the way to Calvary. ***Music***

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls for the second time

Lector

By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people... Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain .

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, fall once more before my eyes. By falling again, you show me that you are a man, a true man. And I see you get up again, more resolute than before. You do not get up with pride; there is no pride in your gaze, there is love. In continuing on your journey, getting up after each fall, you proclaim your resurrection. You show that you are ready, once again and always, to bear on your bleeding shoulders the burden of human sin.

By falling again, you sent us a clear message of humility. You fell on the ground, on that *humus* from which we "humans" are born. We are dust, we are mud, we are nothing in comparison to you. But you want to become like us, and now you show yourself close to us, with our troubles, our weaknesses, the sweat of our brow. Now, on this Friday, as often happens to us, you overwhelmed by sorrow. But you have the strength to go forward, you are not afraid of the difficulties that lie ahead, and you know that at the end of your struggle there is heaven. You get up precisely to get there, to, open before us the gates of your kingdom. What a strange king you are, a king lying in the dust.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, grant that we may be ready to get up after falling,
that we may learn from our failures.

Remind us that, when it is our turn to make mistakes and fall,
if we but stay with you, and hold fast to your hand,
we can learn to get up again.

Grant that we young people may bring to everyone your message of humility,
that future generations may open their eyes to you
and learn to understand your love.

Teach us to help those who suffer and fall beside us,
to wipe away their sweat, and to stretch out a hand to lift them up.*****Music*****

EIGHTH STATION
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Lector

A number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will 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?"

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you and I hear you, Jesus, as you speak to the women whom you meet on the way to your death. Each day you would meet any number of people; you would approach everyone and talk to all. Now you speak with the women of Jerusalem, who look at you and weep. I too am one of those women. But you, Jesus, speak words of warning that for me are striking: they are so concrete and direct. At first, they might appear harsh and severe, but that is because they are so direct. Nowadays we are used to a world where people beat around the bush. A cool hypocrisy veils and filters what we really mean. We are unwilling to correct others. We prefer to leave them to their own devices, not bothering to challenge them for their own good.

Whereas you, Jesus, speak to the women like a father, also admonishing them. Your words are words of truth and they are forthright for the sole sake of correction, not judgment. Yours is a language different from the one we speak. You always speak with humility and you go straight to the heart of the matter.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, grant that,
together with the women and men of this world,
I may become ever more charitable
towards those in need, even as you were.
Give all of us the strength to go against the grain
and to enter into authentic contact with others,
building bridges and not enclosing ourselves in the selfishness
that leads us to the solitude of sin. *****Music*****

NINTH STATION

Jesus falls for the third time

Lector

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, as you fall for the third time. Twice now you have fallen, and twice you have got up. By now, there are no limits to your struggle and your pain. Now, in this third and last fall, you seem completely overwhelmed. How many times, in everyday life, do we fall! We fall so often that we lose count. Yet we always hope that each fall will be the last, because we need the courage of hope to face suffering. When a person falls that many times, ultimately all strength fails and all hope vanishes.

I imagine myself beside you, Jesus, as you make your way to your death. It is hard to think that you are the Son of God himself. Someone has already tried to help you, but now you are exhausted, at a stand-still, paralyzed: it seems that you cannot possibly go any further. Unexpectedly, however, I see you get up, straighten your legs and your back, despite the weight of the cross on your shoulder, and begin to walk once more. Yes, you are walking to your death, but you want to do so to the very end. Perhaps this is love. What I understand is that it makes no difference how many times we will fall; there will always be one last time, perhaps the worst, the most terrible trial, when we are called to find the strength to endure to the end of the journey. For Jesus the end is the crucifixion, the apparent absurdity of death, which nonetheless reveals a deeper meaning, a more sublime purpose, that of saving us all.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, grant us every day
the courage to go forward on our journey.
Grant that we may receive to the very end
the hope and the love that you have given us.
May everyone confront the challenges of life
with the strength and the fidelity which were yours
in the final moments of your journey
to death on the cross. *****Music*****

TENTH STATION
Jesus is stripped of his garments

Lector

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, naked, as I have never seen you before. They have stripped you of your garments, Jesus, and are casting dice for them. In the eyes of these men, you have lost the last shred of your remaining dignity, your one possession on this, your journey of suffering. At the beginning of time, your Father had sewn garments for men, to clothe them in dignity; now men strip that garment off your back. I see you, Jesus, and I see a young migrant, his body ravaged, who arrives in a land that all too often is heartless, ready to strip off his garment, his one treasure, and to sell it. To leave him alone with his cross, like yours, alone with his disfigured skin, like yours, alone with his eyes brimming with tears of pain, like yours.

Yet there is something we often forget about dignity. It is found beneath your skin; it is part of you, and it will always be with you. All the more, at this moment, in this nakedness.

I see you and I understand the grandeur and the splendor of your dignity, the dignity of every man, which no one will ever be able to erase.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, grant that all of us may acknowledge
the dignity belonging to our nature,
even when we find ourselves naked and alone before others.
Grant that we may always see the dignity of others,
respect it and defend it.

We ask you to grant us the courage needed
to understand ourselves as more than the clothing we wear,
and to accept our own nakedness.

It reminds us of our poverty,
with which you fell in love, even to giving your life for us. *****Music*****

ELEVENTH STATION
Jesus is nailed to the cross

Lector

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing".

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, stripped of everything. They wanted to punish you, an innocent person, by nailing you to the wood of the cross. What would I have done in your place? Would I have had the courage to acknowledge your truth, my truth? You had the strength to bear the weight of the cross, to meet with disbelief, to be condemned for your provocative words. Today we can barely swallow a critical comment, as if every word was meant to hurt us.

You did not stop even before death. You believed deeply in your mission and you put your trust in your Father. Today, in the world of Internet, we are so conditioned by everything that circulates on the web; there are times when I doubt even my own words. But your words are different; they are powerful in your weakness. You have forgiven us, you held no grudge, you taught us to offer the other cheek and you kept going, even to the total sacrifice of yourself.

I look at your wounds and I realize, now, that I would not have had your strength. But I am seated here at your feet, and I strip myself of all hesitation. I get up in order to be closer to you, even if by a fraction of an inch.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, that in the face of good
I may be ready to recognize it,
that in the face of injustice I may find the courage
to take my life in my hands and to act differently.
Grant that I may be set free from all the fears
that, like nails, immobilize me and keep me far
from the life you have desired and prepared for us.

*****Music*****

TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the cross

Lector

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent".

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus, but this time I would rather not see. You are dying. You were beautiful to behold when you spoke to the crowds, but now all that has come to an end. I do not want to see that end; all too often I have averted my gaze, I have become almost accustomed to flee pain and death. I have become numb to them.

This is a great mystery, Jesus. You love us by dying, by suffering abandonment, by bestowing your spirit, by doing the Father's will, by withdrawing. You remain on the cross, and that is all. You do not try to explain the mystery of death, the destruction of all things. You do more: you cross over it completely in body and spirit. A great mystery. One that continues to question us and to unsettle us. It challenges us and it invites us to open our eyes and to see your love even in death, indeed even starting from death itself. It is there that you loved us as we really are, truly and inevitably. It is there that we grasp, however imperfectly, your living and authentic presence. We will always thirst for this: for your closeness, for your being God-with-us.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord, open my eyes
to see you also in suffering, in death,
in the ending which is not the real ending.
Upset my complacency by your cross: shake off my drowsiness.
Challenge me always by your disturbing mystery,
that overcomes death and grants life.

*****Music*****

THIRTEENTH STATION
Jesus is taken down from the cross

Lector

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Minister

MEDITATION

I see you, Jesus. Now you are no longer there, on the cross. You have gone back from where you came, laid upon the lap of the earth, upon the lap of your mother. The suffering is now past, vanished. This is the hour of mercy. Your lifeless body continues to speak of the strength with which you faced suffering; the meaning that you gave it is reflected in the eyes of those still there at your side and will always remain there in love, given and received. Before you, and before us, opens a new life, heavenly life, marked by the one thing that resists and remains unbroken by death: love. You are here with us at every moment, at every step, in every uncertainty, in every shadow. While the shadow of the tomb lengthens on your body, held in the arms of your mother, I see you and I am afraid, yet I do not despair. I trust that the light, your light, will shine once again.

Lector

PRAYER

I ask you, Lord,
keep hope ever alive in us,
and faith in your unconditional love.
Grant that we may continue, our hearts inflamed,
to fix our gaze on eternal salvation,
and thus find refreshment and peace on our journey.

*****Music*****

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

Lector

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Minister

MEDITATION

No longer do I see you, Jesus, now all is dark. Long shadows fall from the hills, and the Shabbat lamps light up Jerusalem, outside homes and within. They beat against the gates of heaven, closed and impregnable: for whom is all this solitude? Who can sleep on a night like this? The city is filled with the sound of children crying, mothers singing, soldiers making their rounds. The day is dying and you alone are sleeping. Are you sleeping? And on what bed? What blanket hides you from the world?

From afar, Joseph of Arimathea followed your steps, and now, with quiet steps, accompanies you in your sleep, withdraws you from the stares of the indignant and malicious. A sheet enfolds you in the chill of death and dries your blood, sweat and tears. From the cross you descend, but lightly. Joseph carries you on his shoulders, but you are light: you no longer bear the burden of death, of hatred and anger. You sleep as you did on the warm straw when you were wrapped in swaddling clothes and another Joseph held you in his arms. Just as there was no room for you then, so now you have nowhere to lay your head. Yet on Calvary, on the stiff neck of the world, there grows a garden in which no one had yet been buried.

Where have you gone off to, Jesus? Where have you descended, if not into the depths? Where if not in a place still untouched, in an even tighter cell? You are caught in our snares, imprisoned in our sadness. Like us, you walked on the earth, and now, like us, under the earth, you make room for yourself. I would like to run far away, but you are there within me. I need not to go out to seek you, because you are knocking at my door.

Lector **PRAYER**

I ask you, Lord, who revealed yourself not in glory
but in the quiet of a dark night.
You who see not the surface, but in secret,
entering into the depths.
From the depths, hear our voice:
grant that, in our weariness, we may find rest in you,
seeing in you our nature,
and in the love of your sleeping face,
the beauty we have lost. *****Music*****

Please stand for the Our Father.....

Final Blessing