

Journey of Faith



In Short:

- The Way of the Cross has roots in the early Church.
- The traditional fourteen stations mark the path of Jesus' passion and death.
- Following Jesus requires us to carry our own crosses.



"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Matthew 16:24

Following Jesus involves more than being kind or going to Mass every week. To follow Jesus, we must follow his way of the cross.

A prayer that helps us understand what this means is the Way (or Stations) of the Cross. Fourteen scenes (or crosses) help us reflect on and follow in the steps Jesus took on his way to his death.

The Way of the Cross reminds us of Jesus' suffering and reminds us that we are not alone in our own suffering. Being called to live and love like Christ means we will have our own crosses to bear. The Way of the Cross reminds us that by carrying these crosses we are following in the footsteps of Christ.

The Way of the Cross

Ron was starting his sophomore year with the same group of friends he'd had forever. Normally they'd just hang out at school, go to soccer practice, and then go to someone's house. Their parents always knew where they were and that they were having fun.

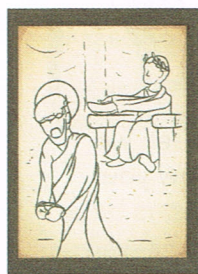
But now it seemed like there was just one thing Ron's friends liked to do—get drunk. Ron was lying to his parents, forgetting homework assignments, skipping practice. And he was miserable.

He needed new friends. Ron knew that's what he had to do. But doing the right thing meant losing the friends he'd always had. It also meant starting over and the possibility of being all alone.

"Christian prayer loves to follow the way of the cross in the Savior's steps. The stations... trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world."

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- What would you advise Ron to do?
- What would you do in a similar situation?



I. Jesus Is Condemned to Death

"[The crowd] only shouted the louder, 'Crucify him.' So Pilate...released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified."

Mark 15:14–15

Jesus, you faced those who judged and condemned you, but you did not hate. You struggled with fear and humiliation, yet you continued your mission. *How often do I judge others instead of looking at myself? How often do I stay quiet when I should speak up?*

Jesus, teach us to tolerate criticism and ridicule when we stand up for what is right. Give us the courage to continue our mission.



II. Jesus Bears His Cross

"Carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull."

John 19:17

Jesus, when you took the cross upon your shoulders, you did it willingly. You showed us your true power. You trusted the will of your Father. You continued on, despite your tremendous burden. *How often do I give up in my daily struggles? When have I been afraid to trust God's plan?*

Through your Holy Spirit, strengthen us so that we carry our daily crosses without complaining or losing heart. When we feel ready to give up, teach us to turn to you for encouragement and understanding. Open our eyes so we may see you in the faces of those who care for us.



III. Jesus Falls the First Time

Jesus, the burden of the cross caused the blood to flow from your wounds and the strength to flow from your body. You fell to the dust, but you pulled yourself up.

Exhausted and suffering, you shouldered your cross; you continued to struggle forward. *When have I tried to find an excuse to give up my cross or pass it off to someone else?*

Teach us to stand back up when we fall, when we get off the right track, when we fail to follow your footsteps. When we land in the dust, guide us back to you. Keep us away from the false gods that will tempt us with comfort and ease. Show us how to forgive ourselves and to cling to our faith and our hope in you.



IV. Jesus Meets His Mother

Jesus, you experienced your mother's indescribable pain as she looked at you in your anguish. You gazed with compassion on her ravaged face. You understood that there is no greater human suffering than the pain of a parent losing a child. *How have my parents supported me carrying my crosses?*

Teach us to cherish those we love. Remind us never to take them for granted. Instill in us the courage to show our love and express our feelings. Give us hearts that are grateful for the chance to share our lives with loving friends and family.



V. Jesus Is Helped by Simon

"They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian...to carry his cross."

Mark 15:21

Jesus, you shared your burden with Simon, showing that we all need help at times. *When have I offered to help share another's burden?*

Often we are asked to help or to serve, but we refuse. Sometimes we are offered help, but we choose not to accept. Help us to appreciate that all who positively touch our lives are part of your plan.



VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Jesus, what great courage it must have taken for Veronica to defy the soldiers and offer you comfort! *When have I gone against the popular to do the right?*

What we do for others, we do for you. When we have the courage to comfort someone or welcome a lonely classmate into our circle of friends, we are offering you comfort and friendship. Give us vision and wisdom, that we may find you in the face of every person we meet.



VII. Jesus Falls a Second Time

Climbing with your heavy burden, Lord, your body gave out once more. You showed us that it's all right to fail sometimes. *Do I handle my failures with grace and courage?*

Teach us to look with understanding upon the failings of others. May we be slow to criticize and judge but quick to offer our help!



VIII. Jesus Speaks to the Women

"Jesus turned to [the women] and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children.'"

Luke 23:28

Lord, it is the women who are deeply saddened by your suffering. But you told them to weep for their own oppression. *How do I look at those who have less than me?*

Teach us to look with compassion upon the suffering of those around us, especially those without status or power. Help us to act justly and become more aware of the injustice that surrounds us.

IX. Jesus Falls a Third Time



Jesus, the burden of your cross overpowered you once more. With your last ounce of strength, you pulled yourself up. *Do I use my courage to get up again and again when I fall? How often do I blame God for sending tragedy into my life?*

Lord, you give us hope, yet we too often choose despair. Teach us to be a people of hope even when the weight of our crosses seems unbearable.



X. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

"They took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier."

John 19:23

Jesus, you suffered through the humiliation of being stripped of your clothes. Yet, you did not hate those who humiliated you. *How do I respond when humiliated?*

Teach us not to lash out at or seek to get even with those who hurt us. Give us the courage and the wisdom to forgive—again and again.



XI. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

"There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle."

John 19:18

Jesus, with each blow of the hammer, the burning metal penetrated your flesh. You endured that agony for love. *What am I willing to suffer for the love of God?*

Loving Christ, help us not to crucify others by cruel words or unkind actions. Teach us to act and react lovingly, to build up your body instead of tearing it apart.



XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross

"Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'; and...he breathed his last."

Luke 23:46

Jesus, you showed us how to give life and love through the ultimate sacrifice. *What does this mean for me?*

You gave everything for us, but sometimes we withhold things from you. Help us to understand that by your death you show us how to die and rise each day.



XIV. Jesus Is Buried in the Tomb

"After [Joseph] had taken [Jesus'] body down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb."

Luke 23:53



XIII. Jesus Is Taken From the Cross

"[Joseph] came from the Jewish town of Arimathea and was awaiting the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."

Luke 23:51–52

Jesus, you taught us to trust in you even when everything seemed hopeless. Those at the foot of your cross remained, even though they were shaken. *Do I remember to hope in you even when I'm shaken?*

Loving Christ, often we are weak in our faith as we see suffering and death in the world. Teach us that from loss and grief can come growth and redemption. Help us to bring light to the dark places in our world.

Jesus, since it was almost time for the Passover, your broken body was hurriedly wrapped in a shroud, rushed to the tomb, and left on a stone slab. Obeying the Jewish law, no one took time to clean and anoint your body. *Do I take the time to remember the oppressed and forgotten?*

Lord, teach us to remember that death cannot destroy real love. Nor can it destroy faith or hope. These things are much greater than death.

Some people pray a fifteenth station, the Resurrection of Christ. Write a brief prayer or reflection to use if you were going to pray this station.

Which of the stations today was the most difficult for you to respond to? Why?



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