

The Parish of Up Holland and Dalton

Meditation of the
Stations of the Cross

by Ela Powalska



God so loved the world that he gave his
only Son, so that everyone who believes in him
may not perish but may have eternal life.

John 3: 16



The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

*We adore you oh Christ and we bless you,
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

'Crucify him! They said. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted' (Luke 23:21,24) Judge...I am a judge. Every minute in my life I am judging others. How often do my judgmental opinions hurt people, my opinions cause distress, how many people have I wounded? Forgive me my Lord, I am like Pilate. I wash my hands because I fear to be unpopular with my boss, my government, my community. How often I am silent when I should speak openly and honestly?

My judgement, condemns you to death Lord ...forgive me.



The Second Station: Jesus accepts the cross

*We adore you oh Christ and we bless you,
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

Jesus in His teaching explained many things to people, but He did not answer the most troubling question: Why the cross, why the suffering? Someone thinking only of themselves, will not understand the cross. The cross is a curse for them and will be rejected. The Saviour's words about a sweet yoke and light burden will remain obscure for them.

Long ago, scientists noticed how some little birds catch small branches in their beak as they set off across the sea. Why are they doing such a thing they wondered? It makes their flight much more difficult than it already. The puzzle was solved when it was noticed that these little creatures, tired from many hours of travel, were dropping the branch onto the surface of the sea, resting on it and then continuing their arduous journey.

Lord Jesus you took up your cross before your arduous journey from death to new life.

Lord, in my journey, give me the grace to understand my cross



The Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

*We adore you oh Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

Jesus falls for the first time. There are three such stations of the cross that are called the fall of Jesus. But they should be called the rise of Jesus because He fell only from exhaustion, muscle fatigue, loss of balance. What caused His standing was pure love. Today, the world is fascinated by others falling. We love to see sin, to show others falling. We want all the details, different angles, and all in the name of public interest – that is the truth, that is how we are. The Book of Revelation says that Satan is an accuser, because he accuses our brothers day and night. He concentrates people's attention on sin so and presents it as an insurmountable wall. All the failings of the world, the sin of Adam and Eve, Cain, all betrayals, killings, blasphemies, all the totalitarianism, all the abomination of human sinfulness is washed away in a drop of Christ's blood.

Lord, let me stand up every time I fall and wash me in your Holy blood.



The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his Mother

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
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Mary probably received words that are most painful for every mother – your son is of his mind! Satan wanted to penetrate her soul with the sword of painful slander, but she remembered Elizabeth’s words filled with the Holy Spirit spoken years earlier: blessed is the fruit of your womb! She believed God, even when Her Son was crushed with suffering on the way of the cross. She could not save Him from hands of the torturers, but she gave Him something no one else could – understanding and trust. She alone in this crowd believed that this Passion was inscribed in the vastness of God’s plan It is so important to see your neighbour, your brothers and sisters, your parents from the perspective of the Creator’s intentions. This is why a mother or father leaves an adult child to fulfil God’s call, when spouses pray for each other even in a crisis of love, even in distress. In fact, you can only love your son, friend, father or neighbour by the way of the cross. By offering your beloved one to God.

Abraham, who offered his son, Mary Mother of God who gave up her Son to the cross, teach us how love those most precious to us by allowing them to fulfil God’s plan.



The Fifth Station: Symon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross

*We adore you oh Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

In the strict sense Simon did not carry a cross. He was carrying only a heavy piece of wood because, to truly carry the cross, you must desire it, you must want it. Jesus always said: 'if anyone wants to follow me let him deny himself and take up his cross'. And Jesus yoke was not Simon's; it wasn't his business, soldiers forced him to carry it. The foundation of carrying the Cross of Christ is our agreement, our "yes", our acceptance. That is why every way of the cross begins with a question: Do you want it?

Once, a very seriously ill boy I met at Christies Hospital asked his Mum: "Mummy why does it hurt so much? The woman answered with a question: "What if the Lord Jesus asked you to suffer with him carrying His cross, would you agree?". "Yes" – the boy replied "well – said his Mum – He asked you."

How would I answer his Mother's question?

*Oh Lord, let me be ready when you ask the question, give me
the courage to take up my cross and follow you.*



The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

Many felt sorry for Christ, but only Veronica came to wipe his face. Maybe it was her that John was thinking about, when he wrote in his letter, '*let us not love in word and language, but in deed and truth*'. How easy it is to lose Christianity in lofty theory and beautiful formulations. It is possible to love the world, humanity, the Church and not love anyone. Sit down and write the names of those we love, then cross out the mother, father, brother, child, friend, because the even pagans love their nearest and dearest. How many people would remain on your card?

Years ago, an unusual advertisement appeared in one of the newspapers. A soldier holding a watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier wanted to thank an unknown woman who wiped sweat from his face on a hot summer day. Then, standing at attention, he could not say a word. Now he wanted to show her gratitude. How much love is in a gesture of wiping the face of a helpless man? Jesus will remember all who have ever done this for Him.

Oh Lord, let me be like Veronica and love the world in action as well as word.



The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

We don't like when someone falls. Then it disturbs the rhythm of others, you need to stop and raise them. Falling disturbs the momentum of life, impedes progress. Unwanted children, the old and the sick, they impede progress, disturb lives, and the world has found ways to deal with them, ways like abortion and euthanasia. The world has no time for those who fall, complain, make demands, are needy. The world is in a hurry, the world has a busy schedule. The world loves progress and wants the church to be progressive too, wants the church to keep up with this crazy race.

Christ is different, He wants the Church to bless all people, the weak and the non-productive, the needy and the unwanted, because they are the very people He came to serve, the ones he commands us to serve, the ones who will truly be with him in paradise.

Lord, give me the courage to slow down, stop and help others when they fall, to be with the unloved and the unpopular, and serve them in Your name.



The Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

Some people cry when their team loses the match, others cry when they fail the exam. For some the drama is to gain weight, for another scratched paint on the car. We have many problems and new ones are constantly coming. We often don't remember what we mourned a year ago. Jesus reminds the women of Jerusalem of what is obvious, but often forgotten: we really have only one problem; death and the choices we make in this life.

Many people through the centuries have trodden the path of this life. Where are they now, where are their problems? They were worried about lost money, broken glass, quarrels with the neighbor. Where are these worries now? We often don't remember the names of our great grandparents. Where did they live, what were their joys and sorrows? The same will happen to us one day. Only a special few will leave behind a significant legacy. For most of us, after a few years, nothing will remain. Then only one thing will be important: did we count on God? Did we love him? Did we live His Gospel every day?

*Lord, help me to focus on the eternal and find my place with you
in paradise*



The Ninth Station: Jesus falls a third time

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

The third fall. It would have been a great temptation to give up, not to get up any more. There might have been a thought: 'let them kill me here, let what is going to happen, happen. I can't do this anymore. Many people come to this place; when they fall for the hundredth, thousandth time, plunging into alcohol addiction, drugs, crime, when they suffer constant abuse. Then the thought appears: I can't do it anymore. I will not rise again. Why confess it, since sin will return anyway. And I tried. I did retreats and pilgrimages. The scriptures say: the human heart is like an abyss. And in these vast spaces of the human interior lies what is most dangerous to humankind - pride. The theologian Father Alexander Fedorowicz once said: *'It is better for a person to fall into serious sins than to be in a state of overwhelming pride.'*

Therefore, sometimes on our Way of the Cross comes a fall, and we feel cannot get up anymore. But Christ is with us and He will raise us up, just like he raised Lazarus. Whoever endures to the end will be saved.

Jesus, give me the strength to endure to the end, to get up even when I feel I cannot continue. Raise me up Lord!



The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of His clothes

*We adore you oh Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

They watched, peeked, eavesdropped and put him to the test. Finally, they ripped off his robe, and they didn't find what they were looking for. They found only love, only truth and goodness. Purity of heart gives courage and freedom. Blessed and happy are those who rejoice in the truth. You can hear it in their words, in their personal confessions, in their secret places. You will only find God's life in them.

So many people are afraid of what will appear, something will be revealed, that some dark secret will be brought to the light of day. What should we do about this? Crucify it, drown in baptismal water. Purify it with the blood of the Savior. This path is very clear; confession, penance, freedom. Those who really die with Jesus have nothing to fear. They do not need title, clothes, achievements. They do not need successes. They know that treasure is a white pebble on which their name is written. The name of a pure soul.

*Jesus, when I am stripped bare let me be in the likeness of you,
pure, white and without spot of sin.*



The Eleventh Station: Jesus is crucified

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

God nailed to the cross. This is shocking but also a great sign of His love for us. God has nailed himself into our lives. So that his love cannot be torn away. He said: I am with you all the days until the end of the world. In our Churches priests raise white bread above the heads of the faithful to remind us that this is the Body given for us. Every day, Christ is waiting to absolve his wounded children everywhere. Day and night Jesus waits in the Tabernacle, for hundreds of years He has reminded you of His love by the sign of the cross. God nailed to the world, God nailed to our villages, our cities, our Churches. Sometimes someone may ask: Jesus, hug me, embrace me. But this is not enough for him. He is nailed to our lives with love. For good and for bad, for our eternal salvation.

*Loving Christ, nailed for me, to me, make your presence known
in my life and guide me to salvation.*



The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you
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When Jesus was dying on the cross, maybe someone thought that he was deliberately giving up his life. He did so many wonderful things, and now everything is over. So many people He could have healed, fed, resurrected, and yet He was stopped by the intrigue of evil people. Everyone remembered that when He traveled with his disciples on the roads of Palestine, He always overtook them, He was always in a hurry. And now, without breath, without life, without movement He hangs on the cross. But that is not true, he did not simply hang there. He crossed the threshold of death and continued to carry his Gospel of hope into a new life, a new kingdom. When people looked at the dead Jesus, at His dead body, He was already in the abyss, heralding the deliverance of the dead.

Lord, help me to die to the world and transcend it in faith, hope and love; help me to die to myself and live in you.



The Thirteenth Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

*We adore you O Christ, and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

You can be with Jesus because you need health and happiness. You can be with Him so that others know and admire you for it. You can look to Him for meaning in your life or spiritual order and harmony. Like the rich young man from the Gospel, he can be asked for a prescription for eternal life. But in all these cases you are with yourself rather than with Christ. To be with Jesus is primarily to be with him like Mary at the thirteenth station of the Way of the Cross. She hugs her Son's body, though He no longer teaches, feeds, or heals. There is only pain and words left: the end, hopelessness, death. No memories here will comfort you, no dreams will help you. What to do? Jesus left us at this station; do not be afraid, believe only, whoever endures to the end will be saved.

Lord, when all around me is darkness, when hope is gone and only pain remains, give me the faith to know your salvation is sure.



The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you
by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world*

To enter the world full of salvation, you have to leave everything here on earth. That is why we lose our whole life: carefree childhood, colorful youth, children who leave the family home, we must finally leave work, lose health, say goodbye to friends. Anna Kamieńska wrote: The history of man is exile from many paradises, it is another gate closing behind us, forever and forever. There are no returns. Never.

Someone will say, it's scary, everything is taken from us. Taken away? Everyone has two paths: a beggar and a sower. The former gathers his miserable property in his beggar's bags. The bags are big, weigh on him heavily, and he doesn't part with them even for a moment, though it's really just rubbish. But we can also be like a sower who goes through life and generously throws the seeds of their talents, work and love into the field of God's Kingdom. At the end of life, the bag is empty. But the fields were sown abundantly.

The tomb of Christ is the first seed of the new garden of life, and all the cemeteries of the world are sown fields of the New Earth. Christ's tomb is the first at which the world's end gives way to the world's beginning.

O Lord, we end the way of the cross today, but tomorrow morning we will meet again at the same grave. But it will be

empty, because death will have been overcome by new life.
New life in you.

*Whoever does not know the way to the sea, follow the river. Let
the person who seeks the path to God, resurrection, and life
follow the cross. **Amen***

