



The Holy See

WAY OF THE CROSS
AT THE COLOSSEUM

MEDITATIONS BY HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

GOOD FRIDAY 2003

OPENING PRAYER

The Holy Father:

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

The *Way of the Cross* on Good Friday, 2003.

The *Way of the Cross* of the ecclesial community of Rome,
gathered at the Colosseum,
this tragic yet glorious monument of imperial Rome,
a silent witness to power and dominion,
a testimonial to moments of life and of death,
where cries of blood (cf. *Jn 4:10*) seem still to ring out,
together with words of peace and forgiveness.

The *Way of the Cross* in the Twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate
as Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Universal Church.
By God's grace, in these twenty-five years
of my pastoral ministry
I have always been present for this meeting,

a true *Statio Urbis et Orbis*,
 a meeting of the Church in Rome
 with pilgrims gathered from throughout the world
 and with the millions of faithful who follow the *Way of the Cross*
 on radio and television.

This year too,
 by the Lord's renewed mercy,
 I walk with you once more, in faith,
 along the path that Jesus walked from the praetorium of Pontius Pilate
 to the summit of Calvary.

Via Crucis, the *Way of the Cross*,
 a symbolic embrace between Jerusalem and Rome,
 the City which Jesus loved,
 where he gave his life for the salvation of the world,
 and the City of the See of the Successor of Peter,
 who presides over the Church in charity.

Via Crucis, a way of faith:
 in Jesus, condemned to death,
 we see the Judge of the universe;
 in Jesus as he carries his Cross, the Saviour of the world;
 in Jesus crucified, the Lord of history,
 the very Son of God.

Good Friday evening,
 a warm and restless night of the first full moon of spring.
 We gather here in the Lord's name.
 He is present in our midst, just as he promised (cf. Mt 18:20).
 And with us too is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

She stood on the hill of Golgotha
 as the Mother of the dying Son,
 as the Disciple of the Teacher of truth,
 as the new Eve standing beneath the tree of life,
 as the woman of sorrow,
 the companion of the "man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3),
 Daughter of Adam, Our Sister, Queen of Peace.

As the Mother of Mercy,
 she bends over her children
 who still face dangers and exhaustion,
 to see their sufferings,
 to hear the cry arising from their afflictions,
 to bring them comfort and to renew their hope of peace.

Let us pray.

Brief moment of silence

Father most holy,
 look upon the blood flowing from the Saviour's pierced side;
 look upon the blood shed by the many victims
 of hatred, of war, of terrorism,
 and in your mercy, grant that the course of world events
 may unfold according to your will, in justice and in peace,
 and that your Church may devote herself with quiet confidence
 to your service and to the liberation of mankind.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. **Amen.**

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. **Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.**

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:14-15

But the crowd shouted all the more, "Crucify him".

*So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd,
 released for them Barabbas;
 and having scourged Jesus,
 he delivered him to be crucified.*

MEDITATION

Pilate's verdict was pronounced under pressure from the priests and the crowd. The sentence of

death by crucifixion was meant to calm their fury and meet their clamorous demand: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Mk 15:13-14). The Roman praetor thought he could dissociate himself from the sentence, washing his hands of it, just as he had already distanced himself from Christ's words identifying his Kingdom with the truth, and with witness to the truth (Jn 18:38). In both instances Pilate was trying to preserve his own independence, to remain somehow "uninvolved". So it may have seemed to him, on the surface. But the Cross to which Jesus of Nazareth was condemned (Jn 19:16), like the truth he told about his Kingdom (Jn 18:36-37), had to strike deep into the Roman praetor's soul. All this was, and is, a single reality, in the face of which one cannot remain uninvolved, on the sidelines.

When Jesus, the Son of God, was questioned about his Kingdom and, because of this, was judged guilty by men and condemned to death, his final testimony began: he was about to demonstrate that "God so loved the world..." (cf. Jn 3:16).

We have this testimony before us, and we realize that we are not allowed to wash our hands of it.

ACCLAMATION

Jesus of Nazareth, condemned to death on the Cross,
faithful witness to the love of the Father.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

Jesus, Son of God, obedient to the will of the Father,
even unto death on a Cross.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

*Stabat Mater dolorosa,
iuxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendebat Filius.*

SECOND STATION

Jesus takes up his Cross.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:20

*After they had mocked him,
they stripped him of the purple cloak,
and put his own clothes on him.
And they led him out to crucify him.*

MEDITATION

The execution, the implementation of the sentence, is beginning. Christ, condemned to death, must be burdened with the Cross just like the two other men who have received the same punishment: "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Is 53:12). Christ draws near to the Cross, his body atrociously bruised and lacerated, blood running down his face from his head crowned with thorns. Ecce Homo! (Jn 19:5). In him we see all the truth foretold by the Prophets about the Son of man, the truth proclaimed by Isaiah about the servant of Yahweh: "He was wounded for our transgressions... and by his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5).

In him we see also the amazing consequence of what man has done to his God. Pilate says: "Ecce Homo" (Jn 19:5): "Look what you have done to this man!" But there seems to be another voice speaking as well, a voice that seems to be saying: "Look what you have done, in this man, to your God!"

It is very moving to hear this voice from centuries ago, as it blends with the voice coming to us from what we know in faith. Ecce Homo!

Jesus "who is called the Messiah" (Mt 27:17) takes the Cross upon his shoulders (Jn 19:17). The execution has begun.

ACCLAMATION

Christ, Son of God,
you reveal to man the mystery of himself.

R. *Christe, eleison.*

Jesus, Servant of the Lord,
by your stripes we have been healed.

R. *Christe, eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur nomen tuum;
 adveniat regnum tuum;
 fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
 Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
 et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
 sed libera nos a malo.

Cuius animam gementem,
 contristatam et dolentem
 pertransivit gladius.

THIRD STATION

Jesus falls the first time.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. **Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.**

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:4-6

*Surely he has borne our griefs
 and carried our sorrows;
 yet we esteemed him stricken
 smitten by God, and afflicted.
 But he was wounded for our transgressions,
 he was bruised for our iniquities;
 upon him was the chastisement that
 made us whole,
 and with his bruises we are healed.
 All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have turned every one to his own way;
 and the Lord has laid on him
 the iniquity of us all.*

MEDITATION

Jesus falls under the weight of the Cross. He falls to the ground. He does not resort to his superhuman powers, he does not resort to the power of the angels. "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt 26:53). He does not ask for that. Having accepted the cup from the Father's hands (Mk 14:36) he is resolved to drink it to the end. This is as he wills it. And so he has no thoughts of any superhuman force, although such force is at his disposal. Those who saw him when he showed his power over human infirmities, crippling diseases and even death itself, may well, in their grief, have wondered: "What now?" "Is he repudiating all that?" In a few days the disciples on the road to Emmaus would say: "We had hoped" (cf. Lk 24:21). "If you are the Son of God...." (Mt 27:40), the members of the Sanhedrin were to fling at him. And the crowd would yell: "He saved others but he cannot save himself" (Mk 15:31: Mt 27:42).

He accepts these provocations, which seem to undermine the whole meaning of his mission, his teaching, his miracles. He accepts them all, for he is determined not to combat them. To be insulted is what he wills. To stagger and fall under the weight of Cross is what he wills. He wills it all. To the end, down to the bitter end, he is faithful to what he had said: "Not my will, but yours be done" (cf. Mk 14:36, etc.).

God will bring forth the salvation of humanity from Christ's falling beneath the weight of the Cross.

ACCLAMATION

Jesus, meek lamb, Redeemer,
you bear the sin of the world.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

Jesus, our companion at times of suffering,
you share in our human weakness.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

O quam tristis et afflicta

fuit illa benedicta
mater Unigeniti!

FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his Mother.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

From the Gospel according to Luke. 2:34-35, 51

*Simeon said to Mary, his mother,
"Behold, this child is set for the fall
and rising of many in Israel,
and for a sign of contradiction,
that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.
And a sword will pierce through your own soul also"...*
His mother kept all these things in her heart.

MEDITATION

The Mother. Mary meets her Son along the way of the Cross. His Cross becomes her Cross, his humiliation is her humiliation, the public scorn is on her shoulders. This is the way things are. So it must seem to the people around her, and this is how her own heart reacts: "And a sword will pierce through your soul also" (Lk 2:35). The words spoken when Jesus was forty days old are now fulfilled. They are now completely fulfilled. And so, pierced by that invisible sword, Mary sets out towards her Son's Calvary, her own Calvary. Christian devotion represents her with this sword penetrating her heart, in paintings and sculpture. Mother of sorrows!

"You who shared his suffering!", say the faithful, who know in their hearts that the mystery of this suffering can be expressed in no other way. Although this pain is hers, striking deep in her maternal heart, the full truth of this suffering can be expressed only in terms of a shared suffering - 'com-passion'. That word is part of the mystery; it expresses in some way her unity with the suffering of her Son.

ACCLAMATION

Holy Mary, our Mother and Sister in the journey of faith,
with you we call upon your Son Jesus.

R. Kyrie, eleison.

Holy Mary, you did not hesitate along the way to Calvary,
with you we call upon your Son Jesus.

R. *Kyrie eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

*Quae maerebat et dolebat
pia mater, cum videbat
Nati poenas incliti.*

FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the Cross.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:21-22

*They compelled a passer-by,
Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country,
the father of Alexander and Rufus,
to carry his Cross.
And they brought him to the place called Golgotha,
which means the place of the skull.*

MEDITATION

Simon of Cyrene, called upon to carry the Cross (cf. Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26), doubtless had no wish to do so. He was forced to. He walked beside Christ, bearing the same burden. When the

condemned man's shoulders became too weak, he lent him his. He was very close to Jesus, closer than Mary, closer than John who - though he too was a man - was not called upon to help. They called on him, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as we learn from the Gospel of Mark (Mk 15:21). They summoned him, they compelled him.

How long did he continue to resent being forced into this? How long did he continue to walk beside this condemned man, all the while making it clear that he had nothing in common with him, nothing to do with his crime, nothing to do with his punishment? How long did he go on like that, torn within himself, a barrier of indifference standing between him and the Man who was suffering? "I was naked, I was thirsty, I was in prison" (cf. Mt 25:35-36), I carried the Cross. "Did you carry it with me?" "Did you really carry it with me to the very end?"

We do not know. Saint Mark simply records the names of the Cyrenian's sons, and tradition has it that they were members of the Christian community close to Saint Peter (cf. Rom 16:13).

ACCLAMATION

Christ, Good Samaritan,
neighbour to the poor, the sick, the lowly.

R. *Christe, eleison.*

Christ, Servant of the Eternal Father, you consider done to you
every act of love towards the exile, the outcast, the stranger.

R. *Christe, eleison*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

*Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
in tanto supplico?*

SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:2-3

*He had no form or comeliness
that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

MEDITATION

Tradition has bequeathed us Veronica. Perhaps she is a counterpart to the story of the Cyrenian. As a woman, she could not physically carry the Cross or even be called upon to do so, yet in fact she did carry the Cross with Jesus: she carried it in the only way possible to her at the moment and in obedience to the dictates of her heart: she wiped his Face.

Tradition has it that an imprint of Christ's features remained on the cloth she used. This detail seems fairly easy to explain: since the cloth was covered with blood and sweat, it would preserve traces and outlines.

Yet this detail can have a different meaning if it is considered in the light of Christ's words about the last days. Many will then ask: "Lord, when did we ever do these things for you?". And Jesus will reply: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (cf. Mt 25:37-40). In fact the Saviour leaves his imprint on every single act of charity, as he did on Veronica's cloth.

ACCLAMATION

Face of the Lord Jesus,
disfigured by pain, resplendent with God's glory.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

O Holy Face,
imprinted on every act of love.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur nomen tuum;
 adveniat regnum tuum;
 fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
 Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
 et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
 sed libera nos a malo.

Quis non posset contristari
 Christi Matrem contemplari,
 dolentem cum Filio?

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls the second time.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.
 R. Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

From the Book of Lamentations. 3:1-2, 9, 16

*I am the man who has seen affliction
 under the rod of his wrath;
 he has driven and brought me
 into darkness without any light...
 He has blocked my ways with hewn stones
 he has made my paths crooked...
 He has made my teeth grind on gravel,
 and made me cower in ashes.*

MEDITATION

"I am a worm, and no man, scorned by men, and despised by the people" (Ps 22:6). The prophetic words of the Psalmist are wholly fulfilled in these steep, narrow alleys of Jerusalem in the final hours before the Passover. We know that those hours before the feast are unnerving, the streets teeming with people. This is the context in which the words of the Psalmist are being fulfilled, even though nobody gives this a thought. Certainly it passes unnoticed by those who jeer, those for whom this Jesus of Nazareth, as he now falls for the second time, is a laughing-stock.

And he wills all this, he wills the fulfilment of the prophecy. And so he falls, exhausted by all the effort. He falls in accordance with the will of the Father, a will expressed in the words of the Prophet. He falls in accordance with his own will: "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Mt 26:54). "I am a worm, and no man" (Ps 22:6). Not even an Ecce homo here (Jn 19:5), but something much less, much worse.

A worm creeps along the ground, whereas man, like a king among creatures, walks above it. A worm will gnaw even at wood: like a worm, remorse for sin gnaws at man's conscience. Remorse for the second fall.

ACCLAMATION

Jesus of Nazareth, you became an outcast among men,
in order to ennoble all creatures.

R. Kyrie, eleison.

Jesus, servant of life,
crushed by men, yet raised up by God.

R. Kyrie, eleison.

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Iesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum.

THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Luke. 23:28-31

*But Jesus turning to them said,
 "Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me,
 but weep for yourselves and for your children.
 For behold the days are coming when they will say,
 blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore
 and the breasts that never gave suck.
 Then they will begin to 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?"*

MEDITATION

Here is a call to repentance, true repentance, and sorrow at the reality of the evil that has been committed. Jesus says to the daughters of Jerusalem who are weeping at the sight of him: "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk 23:28). One cannot merely scrape away at the surface of evil; one has to get down to its roots, its causes, the inner truth of conscience.

This is precisely what Jesus means to say as he carries his Cross: he always "knew what was in man" (cf. Jn 2:25) and he continues to know it. That is why he must always be for us the closest onlooker, the one who sees all our actions and is aware of all the verdicts which our consciences pass on them. Perhaps he even makes us understand that these verdicts have to be carefully thought out, reasonable and objective (for he says: "Do not weep"), while at the same time bound up with all that this reality contains: he warns us of this because he is the one who carries the Cross.

Lord, let me know how to live and walk in the truth.

ACCLAMATION

Lord Jesus, knowing and merciful,
 the Truth leading us to life.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

Lord Jesus, the compassionate one,
 whose presence eases our pain in the hour of trial.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur nomen tuum;
 adveniat regnum tuum;
 fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
 Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
 et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
 sed libera nos a malo.

Tui nati vulnerati
 tam dignati pro me pati,
 poenas mecum divide.

THE NINTH STATION

Jesus falls the third time.

V. Adoramus te Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

From the Book of Lamentations. 3:27-32

*It is good for a man that he bear
 the yoke in his youth.
 Let him sit alone in silence
 when he has laid it on him;
 let him put his mouth in the dust,
 there may yet be hope;
 let him give his cheek to the smiter
 and be filled with insults.
 For the Lord will not
 cast off for ever,
 but, though he cause grief, he will
 have compassion according to the abundance of
 his steadfast love.*

MEDITATION

"He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (Phil 2:8). Every station along this Way is a milestone of that obedience and self-emptying. We appreciate the scale of that self-emptying when we begin to ponder the words of the Prophet : "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6).

We can appreciate the extent of that self-emptying when we see Jesus falling for the third time under the Cross. We can appreciate it when we meditate on who it is falling, who it is lying in the dusty road under the Cross, at the feet of a hostile crowd that spares him no insult or humiliation... Who is it who has fallen? Who is Jesus Christ? "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (Phil 2:6-8).

ACCLAMATION

Jesus Christ,
 You tasted the bitterness of the earth
 in order to turn our cries of pain into a song of joy.
 R. *Christe, eleison*

Christ Jesus,
 you were humbled in the flesh
 in order to ennoble all creation.
 R. *Christe, eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur nomen tuum;
 adveniat regnum tuum;
 fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
 Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
 et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
 sed libera nos a malo.

*Eia Mater, fons amoris,
 me sentire vim doloris
 fac, ut tecum lugeam.*

THE TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:24

*The soldiers divided his garments among them,
casting lots for them,
to decide what each should take.*

MEDITATION

As Jesus is stripped of his clothes at Golgotha (cf. Mk 15:24, etc.), our thoughts turn once more to his Mother. They go back in time to the first days of this body which now, even before the crucifixion, is covered with wounds (cf. Is 52:14). The mystery of the Incarnation: the Son of God takes his body from the Virgin's womb (cf. Mt 1:23; Lk 1:26-38).

The Son of God speaks to the Father in the words of the Psalmist: "Sacrifice and offering you desired not; but a body you have prepared for me" (Ps 40:7; Heb 10:5). A man's body is the expression of his soul. Christ's body is the expression of his love for the Father: "Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do your will, O God'" (Ps 40:7; Heb 10:7). "I always do what is pleasing to him" (Jn 8:29). With every wound, every spasm of pain, every wrenched muscle, every trickle of blood, with all the exhaustion in its arms, all the bruises and lacerations on its back and shoulders, this stripped body is carrying out the will of both Father and Son. It carries out the Father's will when it is stripped naked and subjected to torture, when it takes unto itself the immeasurable pain of a humanity profaned.

The human body is profaned in any number of ways.

At this Station we must think of the Mother of Christ, because in her womb, in her eyes and in her arms the body of the Son of God was most fully adored.

ACCLAMATION

Jesus, sacred body,
still violated in your living members.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

Jesus, body offered in love,
still divided in your members.

R. Kyrie, eleison.

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur nomen tuum;
 adveniat regnum tuum;
 fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
 Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
 et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
 sed libera nos a malo.

Fac ut ardeat cor meum
 in amando Christum Deum
 ut sibi complaceam.

THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:25-27

And it was the third hour, when they crucified him.

And the inscription of the charge against him read:

"The King of the Jews."

And with him they crucified two robbers

one on his right and one on his left.

MEDITATION

"They have pierced my hands and feet, I can count all my bones" (Ps 22:16-17). "I can count...": how prophetic were these words! And yet we know that this body is a ransom. The whole of this body, its hands, its feet, its every bone, is a priceless ransom. The Whole Man is in a state of utmost tension: his bones, his muscles, his nerves, his every organ and every cell, is stretched and strained to breaking-point. "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself"

(Jn 12:32).

These words express the full reality of the crucifixion. And part of this reality is the terrible tension penetrating Christ's hands, feet and every bone: driving its way into the entire body which, nailed like a mere thing to the beams of the Cross, is about to be utterly annihilated in the convulsive agony of death. And the whole of the world which Jesus wills to draw to himself enters into the reality of the Cross. The world is dependent on the gravitational pull of this body, which inertia now causes to sink lower and lower.

The Passion of Christ Crucified lies precisely in this gravitational pull.

"You are from below, I am from above" (Jn 8:23). From the Cross he says: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

ACCLAMATION

Christ, crucified by hatred,
made by love a sign of reconciliation and peace.

R. *Christe, eleison.*

Christ, by your blood shed on the Cross,
you have ransomed man, the world, the universe.

R. *Christe, eleison .*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
cordi meo valide.

THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the Cross.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:33-34, 37, 39

*And when the sixth hour had come
there was darkness over the whole land
until the ninth hour.*

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice:

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?",

which means:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

When the centurion, who stood facing him,

saw that he thus breathed his last, he said:

"Truly this man was the Son of God".

MEDITATION

Here we have the greatest, the most sublime work of the Son in union with the Father. Yes: in union, in the most perfect union possible, precisely at the moment when he cries: "Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani" - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46). This work finds expression in the verticality of his body stretched against the perpendicular beam of the Cross and in the horizontality of his arms stretched along the transverse beam. To gaze upon those arms one would think that in the effort they expend they embrace all humanity and all the world.

They do indeed embrace it.

Here is the man. Here is God himself. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

In him: in those arms outstretched along the transverse beam of the Cross.

The mystery of the Redemption.

Nailed to the Cross, pinned in that terrible position, Jesus calls on the Father (cf. Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46; Lk 23:46). All his words bear witness that he is one with the Father. "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30); "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9); "My Father is working still, and I am working" (Jn 5:17).

ACCLAMATION

Son of God, remember us,
at the hour of death.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

Son of the Father, remember us,
and by your Spirit renew the face of the earth.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

*Vidit suum dulcem Natum
morientem desolatum
cum emisit spiritum.*

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:42-43, 46

*And when evening had come,
Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council,
who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God,
bought a linen shroud,
and took the body of Jesus down from the Cross.*

MEDITATION

When the body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross and laid in his Mother's arms, in our mind's eye we glimpse again the moment when Mary accepted the message brought by the angel Gabriel: "And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name

Jesus; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:31-33). Mary had replied simply: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), as though even then she wanted to give expression to what she now experiences.

In the mystery of the Redemption, grace - the gift of God himself - is interwoven with a "price" paid by the human heart. In this mystery we are enriched by a gift from on high (Jas 1:17) and at the same time "bought" by the ransom paid by the Son of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Acts 20:28). And Mary, who more than anyone was enriched by gifts, pays all the more. With her heart.

Inseparable from this mystery is the extraordinary promise spoken of by Simeon during the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple: "And a sword will pierce through your heart, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:35).

This promise has also been fulfilled. How many human hearts bleed for the heart of this Mother who has paid so dearly!

Once again Jesus lies in her arms, as he did in the stable in Bethlehem (cf. Lk 2:16), during the flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:14) and at Nazareth (cf. Lk 2:39-40). Pietà.

ACCLAMATION

Holy Mary, Mother of inexpressible sorrow,
with you we open our arms to Life himself,
and humbly beseech him:

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

Holy Mary, Mother and associate of the Redeemer,
in communion with you we open our arms to Christ,
and filled with hope we call upon him.

R. *Kyrie, eleison.*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
 Crucifixo condolere,
 donec ego vixero.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is placed in the tomb.

V. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. *Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

From the Gospel according to Mark. 15:46-47

*Joseph of Arimathea,
 wrapped the body of Jesus in the linen shroud
 and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock.
 And he rolled a stone
 against the door of the tomb.
 Mary Magdalene
 and Mary the mother of Joseph
 saw where he was laid.*

MEDITATION

From the moment when man, as a result of sin, was driven away from the Tree of Life (cf. Gen 3:23-24), the earth became a burial ground. With as many burial places as there are men. A great planet of tombs.

Close to Calvary there was a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea (cf. Mt 27:60). In it, with Joseph's consent, the body of Jesus was placed after being taken down from the Cross (cf. Mk 15:42-46 ff.). They laid it there in haste, so that the burial might be completed before the feast of Passover (cf. Jn 19:31), which began at sunset.

In one of the countless tombs scattered all over the continents of this planet of ours the Son of God, the man Jesus Christ, conquered death with death. O mors! Ero mors tua! (First Antiphon of Morning Prayer for Holy Saturday). The Tree of Life from which man was banished as a result of sin is set before mankind anew in the body of Christ. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever, and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn 6:51).

Though our planet is constantly being filled with fresh tombs, though the cemetery in which man, who comes from dust and returns to dust (cf. Gen 3:19), is always growing, nonetheless all who gaze upon the tomb of Jesus Christ live in the hope of the Resurrection.

ACCLAMATION

Lord Jesus, our resurrection,
in the new tomb you destroy death and grant life.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

Lord Jesus, our hope,
your body, crucified and risen,
is the new Tree of Life.

R. *Kyrie, eleison*

All:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;
et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

*Quando corpus morietur
fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria. Amen.*

The Holy Father addresses those present.

At the end of his address, the Holy Father imparts the Apostolic Blessing.

V. Dominus vobiscum

R. *Et cum spiritu tuo.*

V. Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

R. *Ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.*

V. Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini

R. *Qui fecit caelum et terram.*

V. Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus,

Pater, et Filius, et X Spiritus Sanctus.

R. Amen.

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