

Prayer before each station:

WE ADORE YOU, O CHRIST, AND WE BLESS YOU  
FOR BY YOUR HOLY CROSS YOU HAVE REDEEMED THE WORLD

THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

The judges said that Jesus must die. They thought they were doing the right thing. But God has said, "You shall not murder." People who judge others are often wrong. "Do not judge," says Jesus. How many people die unjustly? How many die from drugs or hunger? How many are beaten or neglected? How many die in war? How many, like Jesus, are given to death by people who think they are doing the right thing?

THE SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

Jesus was made to carry his own cross. No one likes the crosses that he or she must bear. No one likes problems and pain. But there are burdens that no one can take away from us. They won't go away. They must be carried. Even kids have problems that are very big and very difficult to carry. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to become my follower, let that person take up the cross each day and follow me." With God's help we carry our cross, just as Jesus did.

THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS A FIRST TIME

Jesus falls down, but he begins again. The soldiers push him to get going. They don't wait. They don't give him a chance. Many people are rushed and pushed. No one waits for them to get ready, to learn, to practice, to be sure which way to turn. Of course they fall. We all do. We fall. We fail. We stumble. We do things wrong. But we, too, get up. We begin again.

THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Mary did not run and hide like the disciples did. She was not afraid to be with Jesus, because she was his mother. She could not carry his cross for him, but maybe her presence gave him strength. Mothers worry about the troubles of their children. They want the world to be gentle and not mean. And yet they do not want their children to be afraid to meet the problems of the world. Like Mary, they are with their children during bad times, to give them courage.

#### THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Jesus tried, but he just could not go on alone. Someone had to help. No one can travel their road without help. Simon did not know Jesus. He was just part of the crowd. Maybe he had other things he wanted to do that day. But he helped. No matter where we are, we see people who need help. Jesus said, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Do we make people beg us for help? Do we need to have people force us to help? Do we miss all the chances to help Jesus carry his cross?

#### THE SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

There was blood and spit on his face, and sweat, and maybe tears. Jesus was ugly, and many would not look at him. Veronica stepped up and wiped his face. It did not make his injuries less painful. It did not save him from death. But her courage must have brought him comfort. He knew that someone was trying to help. Someone was on his side. They say that Jesus left a picture of his face on her towel. He surely left his image in her heart, for that is what Veronica's name means--"true image." She had learned Jesus' message, "Love one another as I have loved you." Now she was following his example.

#### THE SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

Jesus was still a young man when he was condemned to death. But now Jesus was at the end of his strength. He fell again. There are so many things to pull us down, to make us give up, to make us become tired or frustrated or hopeless. Most people don't want a leader who falls down. Who will follow Jesus now? Who will believe that his weakness is strength, and the strength of his enemies is weakness? Once before, when many followers left him, he asked the apostles, "Do you also wish to go away?"

#### THE EIGHTH STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

As Jesus struggles through the streets of Jerusalem, he meets a crowd of women who begin to cry. Jesus says to the women, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Jesus knows that those who follow him will have to share his suffering. They will have sickness and failures and disappointments like everyone. But they will also suffer because they will refuse to take part in sin. People who do not want to give up sin, and many who just do not understand, will turn against the followers of Jesus. They will suffer as he suffered, because his enemies will become their enemies.

#### THE NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

Jesus is almost at the end of the road. Why does he stumble now? Perhaps his feet do not want to take him closer to death. Of course he does not want to die. Last night, in the garden, he had prayed, "Father, for you all things are possible. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want be done!" Jesus' strength is failing. It is only with God's help that he can go on. It is only with God's help that any of us can go on. It doesn't matter how often he has fallen. It doesn't matter how many people have failed him. It doesn't matter how fearful and lonely he is. He gets up and moves on. God will not fail him.

#### THE TENTH STATION: JESUS IS UNDRESSED

Jesus owns nothing now, not even his clothes. But Jesus has not lost his dignity. He is not ashamed to stand naked before God. Jesus holds nothing back. He is willing to let them take everything away rather than give up the work God has called him to. No wonder his followers have deserted him! It is hard to see a great messiah here. It is hard to think this man, naked and penniless, will rule from David's throne. That is how we all must be ready to meet God--not hiding behind fancy clothes and toys and cover ups, but as we truly are. God does not judge us by things we own or wear. God does not reward us with things. God is the only gift. Is it enough for us?

#### THE ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

How hard it is to bear physical pain! And here are people nailing a man to a cross, on purpose. In this upside-down world, many of us cause pain. People laugh at what they should condemn. They turn away when they should help. They scorn the goodness of others. They yawn in the face of a friend's excitement. All of these nails cause pain to Jesus, because he is the savior who takes the pain of the world and makes it his own. He takes away its power. In the mystery of suffering is buried the mystery of redemption.

#### THE TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Jesus is raised up on the cross so that all people can be drawn to God through him. Jesus says little. He is thirsty. He comforts a man dying beside him. He asks his mother and his friend John to care for one another. He asks God to forgive those who have brought him to the cross. In the darkness he calls out to God, who seems to have abandoned him. Everything is gone now, except his life. That, too, he gives freely. He prays, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Then Jesus dies.

THE THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN OFF THE CROSS

Mary and a few of Jesus' friends gather and weep. They are brokenhearted. What will become of Jesus' dreams, his vision, his work? Everything is finished, ruined. It does not make sense. It does not seem right. All they can do now is trust God. Trust and weep. The suffering of Jesus is over, but their own suffering is not. So do we all suffer with every friend or relative who dies. Some day I will die. My parents, too, will die, and others that I love. But like Jesus, they are called to live with God in glory.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION: THE BODY OF JESUS IS BURIED

The enemies of Jesus think they have won. His followers are disappointed. He was not the kind of messiah they had wanted. Jesus had not ended war and sickness. He had not ended hunger and meanness and other problems. They did not know that Jesus would rise on the third day and be with them again. So they were discouraged. Even today many people are disappointed with Jesus. He seems to have left so much work unfinished. We follow a Messiah who expects us to help with his work. One day the work of Jesus will be finished. For nothing can keep his message from changing the world. At that time, all who shared in his life will share in his glory. We will remember this when our road is difficult, and it will give us hope.