

## Introduction

We want to take part in this Way of the Cross in profound union with Jesus. Attentive to the words of the Gospel, we will soberly meditate on some of the *thoughts and feelings* present in the mind and heart of Jesus at that time of trial.

We will also consider some of those challenging situations which – for better or worse – are typical of our own time. By allowing them to *resonate* within us, we will show our desire to *imitate* our Lord Jesus Christ in his Passion.

## *Prayer*

*O Father, who willed to save mankind by the death of your Son on the cross, grant that we who have known on earth the mystery of his love, may be his witnesses, in our words and actions, in our daily lives, before all those whom you place on our path.*

*Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

**FIRST STATION**  
**Jesus is condemned to death**  
*Intimacy, betrayal, condemnation*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

I just celebrated Passover with my disciples. I had eagerly desired this: my last Passover, before the passion, before my return to you! But then something went wrong. The devil put it in the heart of one of my disciples to betray me. In the garden of Gethsemane he came up to me. With a sign of love he said, "*Greetings, Rabbi!*". And he kissed me. How bitter was that moment!

During the meal, I asked you, Father, to protect my disciples in your name, that they may be one, as we are one.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

Jesus, even more than your first disciples, we are weak in faith. We too risk betraying you, while your love should make us love you all the more.

We need prayer, watchfulness, sincerity and truth. That is how our faith can grow. A faith which is strong and full of joy.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

May your body and blood, Lord Jesus, protect us for eternal life. May this miracle take place for our priests who celebrate the Eucharist and for all of us, the faithful who approach the altar to receive you, the living bread come down from heaven.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**SECOND STATION**  
**Jesus takes up his cross**  
*"Numbered with the transgressors"*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

The soldiers of the governor surround me. For them, I am no longer a person but a thing. They want to toy with me, to mock me. So they dress me up as a king. There is even a crown, a crown of thorns. They strike my head with a reed. They spit on me. They lead me off.

I keep thinking of the striking passage of the prophet Isaiah about the Servant of the Lord. It says that he had no appearance of beauty; he was despised; he was a man of sorrows; he was like a lamb led to the slaughter; he was cut off from the land of the living; he was beaten to death. I am that Servant, sent to reveal the greatness of God's love for man.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

You, Jesus, were *"numbered with the transgressors"*. Among the first generation of Christians, simply because they spoke openly of you, Peter and John, Paul and Silas were cast into prison. This has happened repeatedly throughout history.

In our day too, men and women are imprisoned, condemned and even slaughtered for the simple reason that they are believers or engaged in promoting justice and peace. They are not ashamed of your cross. For us they are wonderful examples to imitate.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Lord Jesus, you strengthen inwardly all who suffer persecution. May the fundamental right of religious freedom spread throughout the world. We thank you for all those who, like "angels", give marvelous signs of your coming Kingdom.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**THIRD STATION**  
**Jesus falls beneath the cross**  
*"Behold the Lamb of God"*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

I stagger as I take my first steps towards Calvary. I have already lost a lot of blood. It is hard for me to bear the weight of the wood I have to carry. And so I fall to the ground.

Someone helps me up. I see people all around me. Surely there are some who love me. Others are just curious bystanders. I think of John the Baptist, who at the beginning of my public life, said: *"Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*. Now the truth of those words is revealed.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

O Jesus, on this day we must not be like the Pharisee who sings his own praises, but like the tax collector who does not even dare to look up. So in trust we ask you, Lamb of God, to forgive our sins, in thought and word, in what we have done and what we have failed to do.

As we ponder the weight of your cross, we will not be ashamed to make the sign of the cross on our bodies: *"It is an effective aid: free for the poor and effortless for the weak. For it is a grace from God"*.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

**Your Son shared our human life**

*We give you praise, Father most holy, because time and time again through the prophets you taught us to look forward to salvation. We praise you because you so loved the world as to send us your only-begotten Son. To accomplish your plan of redemption, he shared our human nature in all things but sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart joy.*

Thank you, Father!

**HYMN** *(All together)*  
*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**FOURTH STATION**  
**Jesus meets his Mother**  
*A sword will pierce your soul*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

My Mother is part of the crowd. My heart is racing. I can only catch a glimpse of her. Blood is streaming down my face.

When I was just forty days old, I was brought to the Temple to be presented according to the Law of Moses. A prophet spoke to my father and mother. His name was Simeon. He took me in his arms. He said that I would be a "*sign of contradiction*"; and he told my mother that "*a sword will pierce your soul*". Those words have now become a searing reality, for her and for me. Today my presentation is complete.

**MARY'S RESPONSE** *(All together)*

*"O my God-sprung Son, you are dragged by the hands of this evil generation and you bear it; you came to be thrown into chains and willingly let yourself be led by them, you who are the liberator of the enchained human race from its chains! ... How devastated I am! Speak, say a word to me, O Word of God the Father, do not pass by in silence before your handmaid, who became your mother".*

Jesus, the drama played out between you and your mother in a street of Jerusalem makes us think of so many dramatic family situations in our world. No one is spared: mothers, fathers, children, grandparents. It is easy to judge, but it is more important to put ourselves in the place of others and to help them as best we can. This we will try to do.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Holy Mary, mother of Jesus and spouse of Joseph, we ask you to accompany our Church as it works to bring your message to families. Intercede for the Pope, the Bishops, priests and all those directly engaged in its labors. May they be docile to the Holy Spirit and carry out their mission with wisdom. May they keep in mind the words of the Psalm: "*Mercy and truth will meet*". At the wedding feast of Cana, you said to the servants: "*Do whatever he tells you*". Sustain all Christian spouses and parents, called to bear witness to the beauty of a family inspired and guided by the words of Jesus.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**FIFTH STATION**  
**The Cyrenean helps Jesus carry his cross**  
*Returning from the fields*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

All around me I hear shouting. They have forcibly laid hold of a labourer who was passing by, perhaps by chance. Without much explanation they force him to shoulder my burden. I feel relieved. They tell him to walk behind me. Together we will go to the place of execution.

More than once, when proclaiming God's kingdom, I had said: "*Whoever does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple*". But now this man is carrying my cross. Perhaps he doesn't even know who I am, yet he is helping me and following me all the same.

**OUR RESPONSE IN PRAISE OF SIMON** *(All together)*

Lord, perhaps for some of us, too, our first encounter with you occurred in a completely unexpected way. But then it grew.

Let us consider it a great grace that there are still *Cyreneans* in our midst. They carry other people's crosses. They do it with perseverance. They are motivated by love. They put into practice Saint Paul's command: "*Bear one another's burdens*". In this way they protect their brothers and sisters.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Lord Jesus, you told us that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive*". Make us ready to be "Cyreneans" to others. May those who see our way of life find encouragement, as they watch us striving to cultivate all that is beautiful, just, true and essential. May the frail see us as humble, for we too are frail in so many ways. Those who receive tokens of our generosity will realize that we too have a thousand reasons to be thankful. Even those who cannot run can simply stand and wait, for they are dear to us. They will find us ready to slow our pace: we do not want to leave them behind.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**SIXTH STATION**  
**Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**  
*Women Disciples*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

There are many women in the crowd. Kindness inspires one of them to come and wipe my face. This makes me think of so many other encounters. One was just a week ago. I went to dinner in Bethany, as the guest of my friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Mary anointed by feet with perfume made of pure nard. I said, to her surprise, that she should keep it for my burial.

I can also remember sitting beside the well in Sychar. I was tired and thirsty. A Samaritan woman then came by, carrying a water jar. I asked her for water. I spoke to her about water which springs up to eternal life. She seemed to be waiting for this gift, to open her heart. She wanted to tell me everything about herself. I saw her, in amazement, delving into her conscience. And she returned home speaking of me and saying: "Could he be the Messiah?"

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

Jesus, this evening, in our midst, there is a significant presence of women. In the Gospel women have an important place. They looked after you and the apostles. Some of them were present at your passion. And they would be the first to bring the news of your resurrection.

The *feminine genius* impels us to a faith full of love for you. All the saints teach us this. We want to follow in their footsteps.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Lord Jesus, the proclamation of the faith in the world and the progress of Christian communities are largely sustained by women. Protect them as witnesses to that happiness born of an encounter with you, a happiness which is the mysterious secret behind their lives. Protect them as a radiant sign of motherhood at the side of the little ones, who, in their hearts, become the greatest.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**SEVENTH STATION**  
**Jesus falls the second time**

*"Do not be far from me"*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

It is not simply physical weariness. There is something deeper I have to endure. Last night I prayed long and hard to the Father, stretched out on the ground. My sweat was like drops of blood. My death was already upon me. Now I am sharing the ultimate, painful experience of every human being near death. Thank you, my Father, for sending an angel from heaven to comfort me at that moment!

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

Jesus, how much pain lies deep within those many souls racked by loneliness, abandonment, indifference, illness, or the loss of a dear one!

Boundless too are the sufferings of those trapped in painful situations, those who hear only lying and hateful words; those who encounter hearts of stone which cause tears and lead to despair.

The human heart – the heart of each one of us – awaits something completely different: the protection of love. You, Jesus, teach this to us and to all people of good will: *"Love one another, as I have loved you"*.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Be open, my heart. Be as expansive as God's own heart. Be open to bringing hope. Be open to caring. Be open to listening. Be open to pouring balm upon every wound. Be open to bringing light to those living in darkness. Protect and console, today, tomorrow and always.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore



## EIGHTH STATION

### Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

*"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world"*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

#### JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS *(Presider)*

Just a few days ago, I entered Jerusalem. A small crowd of disciples was there to welcome me. They even greeted me with the words: *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"*. For all its simplicity, that moment was also most solemn. And yet the Pharisees showed their displeasure. The joy did not stop me from weeping at the sight of the city. Now as I make my weary way towards Golgotha, I hear the cries of women weeping for me as they beat their breasts.

#### OUR RESPONSE *(All together)*

Perhaps today too, Jesus, looking at our cities, would have cause to weep. We too can be blind, failing to see the path to peace which you point out to us.

But now we realize the summons contained in your words in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"*. And in your words to the disciples: *"You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."*

#### LET US PRAY *(Presider)*

Lord God, you have called us to the heavenly Jerusalem, God's dwelling-place among men. There, you have promised, every tear will be wiped from our eyes. Death, mourning, weeping and pain will be no more. You will be our God and we will be your people. Protect our hope that, after the toil of our sowing in tears, we will come at last to the joy of the harvest.

#### HYMN *(All together)*

##### Santa Madre

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**NINTH STATION**  
**Jesus falls the third time**  
*The "journey" of Jesus*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

My earthly journey is now at an end. When I was born, my Mother laid me in a manger. I lived almost my whole life in Nazareth. I immersed myself in the history of the Chosen People.

On my journey as the One sent by the Father, I preached the breadth of his love, which overlooks no one; the length of his love, which is faithful in every generation; the height of his love, a hope which triumphs over death itself; and the depth of his love, which sent me to call not the righteous, but sinners.

Many heard and followed me, becoming my disciples; others did not understand. Some even fought me and ultimately condemned me. But at his moment I am called, more than ever, to reveal God's love for all mankind.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

Jesus, in considering your love and the love of the Father, we wonder if we risk becoming beguiled by the world, which can only see your passion and death as "*folly and scandal*", and not "*the power and wisdom of God*". Could it be that we Christians are lukewarm, while your love is a mystery of fire?

Do we realize that *before God came among us, we did not even know who God was?* When you, the only-begotten Son, came into our world, *God who had formed us in his image, let us look up to him and promised us the Kingdom of heaven. How then will we not love the one who loved us first?.*

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

Lord God, we dare to call you "*our Father*". To think of ourselves as *children* is a marvelous gift for which we are eternally grateful. We know, Father, that we are but a speck of dust in the universe. You have granted us a great dignity, you have called us to freedom. Free us from all forms of slavery. Do not let us wander far from you. Father, protect each of us. Protect every man and woman on the face of the earth.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**TENTH STATION**  
**Jesus is stripped of his garments**

*The robe*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

I stand in silence. I feel humiliated by so apparently banal an act. I was already stripped hours ago. I think of my Mother, who is here. My humiliation is also hers. Once more her heart is pierced. To her I owe the robe which was torn from me, which is a sign of her love for me.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

Lord, your robe makes us think of a moment of grace and so many violations of our human dignity.

The grace is that of Baptism. A newly-christened child is told: *"You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself with Christ. See in this white garment a sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.* Here is the deepest truth about human life.

Yet the love which you protect each creature also makes us think of appalling realities: human trafficking, child-soldiers, slave labor, children and adolescents robbed of their souls, wounded in their deepest being, barbarously violated.

You urge us in humility to beg forgiveness of all who have suffered these atrocities, and to pray that the conscience of those who darkened their lives will at last be stirred. In your presence, Jesus, we renew our resolve to *"overcome evil with good"*.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

*"Blessed indeed is the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the path with sinners, nor abides in the company of scorners, but whose delight is the law of the Lord, and who ponders his law day and night. He is like a tree that is planted beside the flowing waters, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves shall never fade; and all that he does shall prosper"*.

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**ELEVENTH STATION**  
**Jesus is nailed to the cross**  
*The supreme "throne" of God's love*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS** *(Presider)*

They are driving nails into my hands and feet. My arms are outstretched. The nails excruciatingly pierce my flesh. I am immobilized in body, but free in heart, with the same freedom with which I went forth to my passion. Free, for I am full of love, a love which embraces all.

I look at the men who are crucifying me. I think of those who have ordered them to do this: "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*". Beside me are two other men condemned to crucifixion. One of them asks me to remember him when I come into my kingdom. Yes, I tell him, "*Today you will be with me in Paradise*".

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

We gaze at you, Jesus, as you are nailed to the cross. And our conscience is troubled. We anxiously ask: When will the death penalty, still practiced in many states, be abolished? When will every form of torture and the violent killing of innocent persons come to an end? Your Gospel is the surest defense of the human person, of every human being.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

*Lord Jesus, to teach us how to offer our lives in love you embraced the cross; at the hour of death you heard the plea of the penitent thief. Sinless Saviour, you were numbered with the transgressors and submitted to the judgement of sinners.*

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**TWELFTH STATION**  
**Jesus dies on the cross**  
*"Christ, we need you" (Paul VI)*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**JESUS' WORDS ON THE CROSS** *(Presider)*

Jesus cried with a loud voice, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*. Then, turning to his Mother, he said, *"Woman, here is your son!"*, and to the disciple John, *"Here is your mother"*. He said, *"I am thirsty"*. He said, *"It is finished"*. And finally, *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"*.

**OUR RESPONSE** *(All together)*

On the cross, Jesus, you prayed. That was the way you experienced the supreme moment of your call and mission.

In that hour you turned to your Mother and to the disciple John. Through them, you also turned and spoke to us. We were entrusted to your Mother. You asked us to welcome her into our lives and to be protected by her, even as you were.

It impresses us deeply that, during an agony which lasted for hours, you cried out to God in the words of Psalm 21, words which express the sufferings but also the hopes of the just.

The evangelist Luke recounts that, at the moment of your death, you said, *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"*. The Father's response will be your resurrection.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

- *Christ, we need you, to know ourselves and our destiny.*
- *We need you to discover the true basis of human fraternity, the foundations of justice, the treasures of charity, the supreme good of peace.*
- *We need you, the great bearer of our sorrows, to know the meaning of suffering.*
- *We need you, the conqueror of death, to set us free from despair and denial.*
- *Christ, we need you, to learn true love and to advance, in joy and with the strength of your love, along our weary way, until at last we encounter you, the beloved, the awaited, blessed for all ages.*

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**THIRTEENTH STATION**  
**Jesus is taken down from the cross**  
*The royal way for the Church*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

From the Gospel according to Matthew *(Presider)*

*"The centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus... said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'. Many women were also there ... Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee".*

OUR RESPONSE *(All together)*

- *"In you, Jesus – word made flesh – we are called to be the Church of mercy.*

- *In you – who chose to be poor – the Church is called to be poor and the friend of the poor.*

- *As we contemplate your face, our own cannot be different than yours.*

- *Our weakness will be strength and victory, only if it reveals the humanity and meekness of our God".*

LET US PRAY *(Presider)*

*"Father, extend to the whole human family the kingdom of justice and peace which you have prepared through your only-begotten Son, our king and saviour. Thus the blessing of true peace will be granted to humanity; the poor will find justice; the afflicted will be consoled and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed in him, our Lord and our God, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever".*

HYMN *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore

**FOURTEENTH STATION**  
**Jesus is placed in the tomb**  
*Protected for ever*

*(Presider):* We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

*(All together):* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**THE FEELINGS OF TWO FRIENDS OF JESUS** *(Presider)*

The bodies of those condemned to crucifixion were judged unworthy even of burial. Yet two men of standing, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, were concerned to protect the body of Jesus.

“How fortunate for you and me” – Joseph tells us – “that we became disciples of Jesus! Before I was a secret disciple. But now I have found great courage. I even approached Pilate to obtain Jesus’ body. More than out of courage, I did it out of affection and joy. I am happy to have provided a new tomb hewn in the rock. To all of you I say: Love our Saviour!”

Nicodemus could well add: “I first met Jesus by night. From him I was invited to be born from above”. Only slowly did I come to understand his words. Now I am here to honor his body. I readily brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes. But in fact Jesus did much more for me: he brought new fragrance to my life!”.

**MARY SPEAKS TO OUR HEART** *(All together)*

“John stood close to me. Beneath the cross my faith was sorely tried. As in Bethlehem and then in Nazareth, now once more I ponder these things in silence. I have put my trust in God. My hope, the hope of a mother, is not spent. You too need to trust! For all of you I implore the grace of a strong faith. And for those experiencing dark days, consolation”.

**LET US PRAY** *(Presider)*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.*

*Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.*

**HYMN** *(All together)*

*Santa Madre*

Santa Madre, Deh! Voi fate,  
che le piaghe del Signore,  
Siano impresse nel mio cuore