

Stations of the Cross for the Persecuted Christians



Opening Prayer

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Father, in your mysterious providence, your Church must share in the sufferings of Christ your Son. Give the spirit of patience and love to those who are persecuted for their faith in you, that they may always be true and faithful witnesses to your promise of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



First Station



Leader: The first station of the cross,
Pilate condemns Christ.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

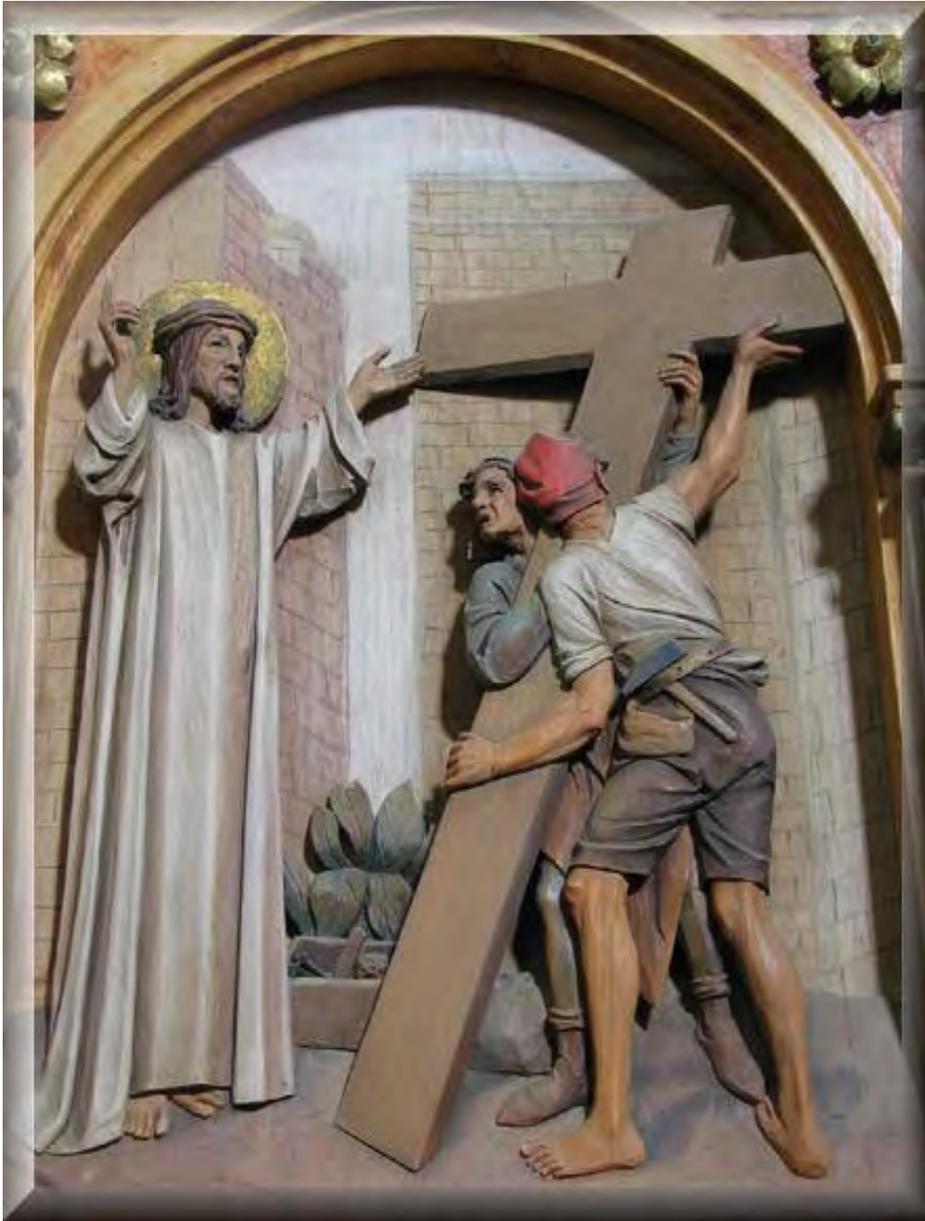
Reader 1: “The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.” Luke 23:24-5

Reader 2: Christ was condemned because of his fidelity to God’s will. In China, priests and bishops are unjustly sentenced and imprisoned because of their fidelity to the Vicar of Christ. They remember always the words of Jesus to Peter, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” We remember especially Bishop Su Zhimin, who has been missing since his reported detention by government authorities in 1997. Tyrants may wield temporal power, but Christ, robed in purple and wearing a crown of thorns, is the true King of heaven and earth. We pray in a special way for those who dare to speak the truth of the Gospel in a land which thirsts for Jesus’ message of justice and peace.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you willingly stood before those who would condemn you so that we might be saved. Help us to imitate your perfect obedience to the Father and stand in solidarity with those who suffer persecution because of their faith in you. In a special way we remember all bishops and priests, sisters and nuns, lay men and women in China who risk their lives and their freedom to remain faithful to the Successor of Peter. Grant them strength, perseverance, and unfailing hope in you.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Second Station



Leader: The second station of the cross,
Jesus accepts his cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “And carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.” John 19:17

Reader 2: We live in a country which is predominantly Christian. Few of us have ever truly had to bear our cross alone. Jesuit Father Kinley Tshering is the only Catholic priest from Bhutan, but he cannot live among and serve the people of God in his homeland. He must live in India and quietly visit Bhutan to occasionally provide spiritual care to its small Catholic community. He longs to return to the land of his birth and serve God’s people, but Buddhism is Bhutan’s state religion and its government does not tolerate other religions. Christ began by carrying the cross alone. We pray that Fr. Kinley, and all those who risk their lives for the sake of the Gospel, may be granted the strength to carry the cross that has been entrusted to them.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you bore the cross that we might be given life eternal. Help me to bear without complaint the cross placed on my shoulders. Teach me to stand in solidarity with those who walk the way of the cross alone. Merciful Savior, strengthen the Christian community in Bhutan that vocations may flourish and the Faith be firmly planted. May your cross be an anchor and a support for your faithful people.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Third Station



Leader: The third station of the cross,

Jesus falls the first time.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “The slave is no greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name.” John 15:20-21

Reader 2: The Christian community in Sudan struggles to survive. Millions have been displaced by civil war. Thousands have been taken captive, forced into slavery, physically tortured and forced to renounce their faith in Christ. We pray in a special way for Bishop Macram Max Gassis, the Bishop of El Obeid, who cannot remain in his diocese, because he dares to speak against slavery and forced conversions.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you were willing to be held captive and suffer for our sins that we may live in the freedom of God’s children. Grant us the charity to pray for those held captive or exiled because of their faith in you. Holy Redeemer, protect all of your children from captivity, slavery and religious persecution.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Fourth Station



Leader: The fourth station of the cross,

Jesus meets his mother.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

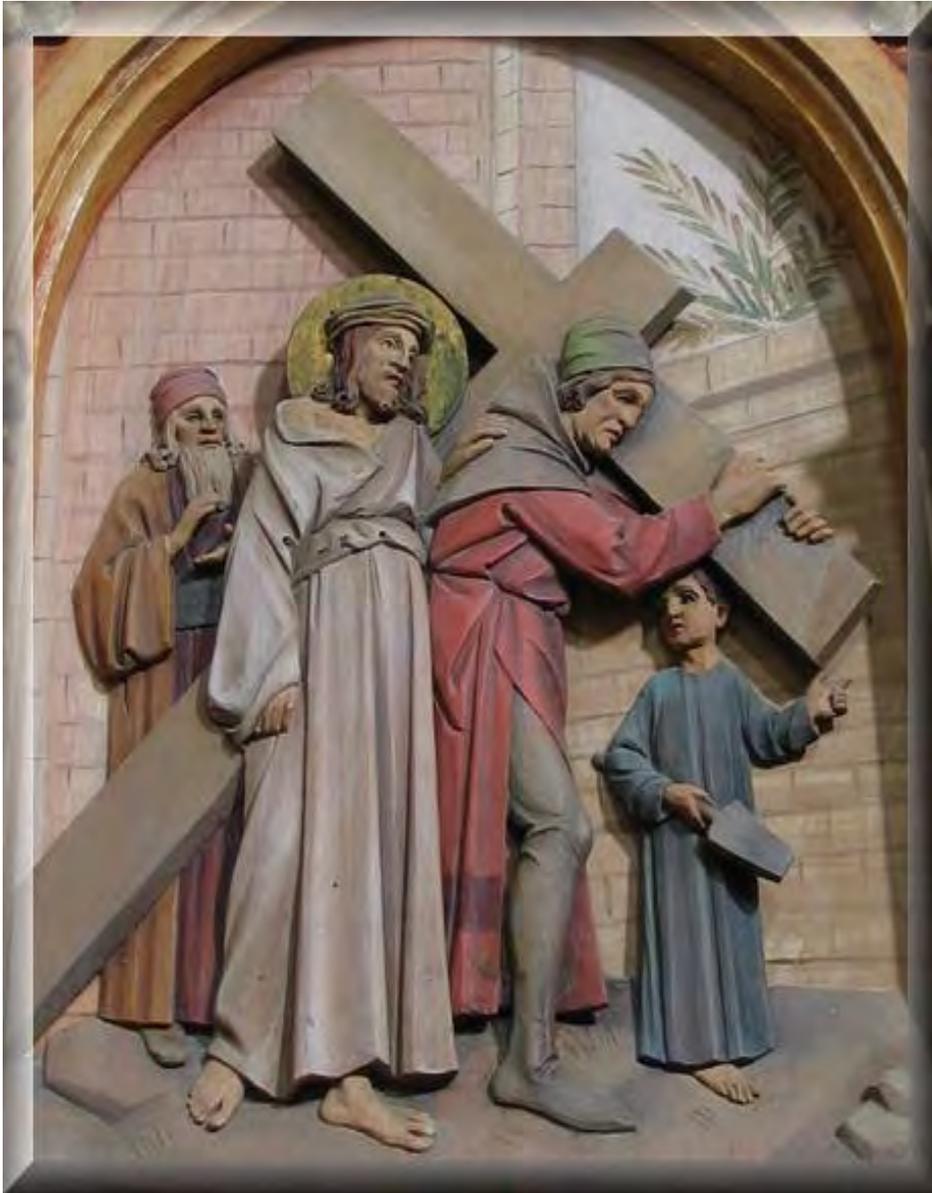
Reader 1: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ John 19:26-27

Reader 2: In India, that land that became home to Mother Teresa, Christians continue to suffer for their faith in Christ. The challenges to the existing social order that Christianity presents seem to be a threat to some of those embracing other religions. Works of mercy, done solely out of Christian charity, often are mistaken for attempts at religious conversion. Acts of violence erupt. Churches are burned, priests and religious are killed, and the faithful are beaten. We pray for Christians suffering in India, especially the Church in the State of Orissa which has endured great suffering because of its fidelity to the Gospel.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you showed us how we should love one another. Help us to respond, however possible, to the needs of those who are in need of your mercy. Let our voices speak for those who are voiceless, sing for those deprived of singing your hymns, and pray for those prevented from speaking the name of Jesus. Good Shepherd and Lord of all, protect in a special way, those who serve you in the land evangelized by St. Thomas and St. Francis Xavier.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Fifth Station



Leader: The fifth station of the cross,
Simon helps carry the cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon;
this man they pressed into service to carry his cross.” Matthew 27-32

Reader 2: Simon was forced to carry the cross which did not belong to
him, but rather to all of us. The Church in Somalia has been devastated,
and Christ’s faithful flock scattered. Those who dare to teach and
preach the Gospel are killed. Christian relief organizations are
prohibited from sharing the faith which inspires their good works. The
Christian community of Somalia bears the weight of the cross each day.
We pray that freedom of religion will be restored to her people.

Leader: Lord Jesus, in Simon we meet a man who unexpectedly was
forced to carry the cross of Christ. Provide us with the strength to
endure the hardships life presents to us in solidarity with the persecuted
Christians of Somalia. Lamb of God, we ask you lift the burden of
persecution from your people in Somalia, that they may once again serve
and praise you without fear of repercussion.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Sixth Station



Leader: The sixth station of the cross,

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

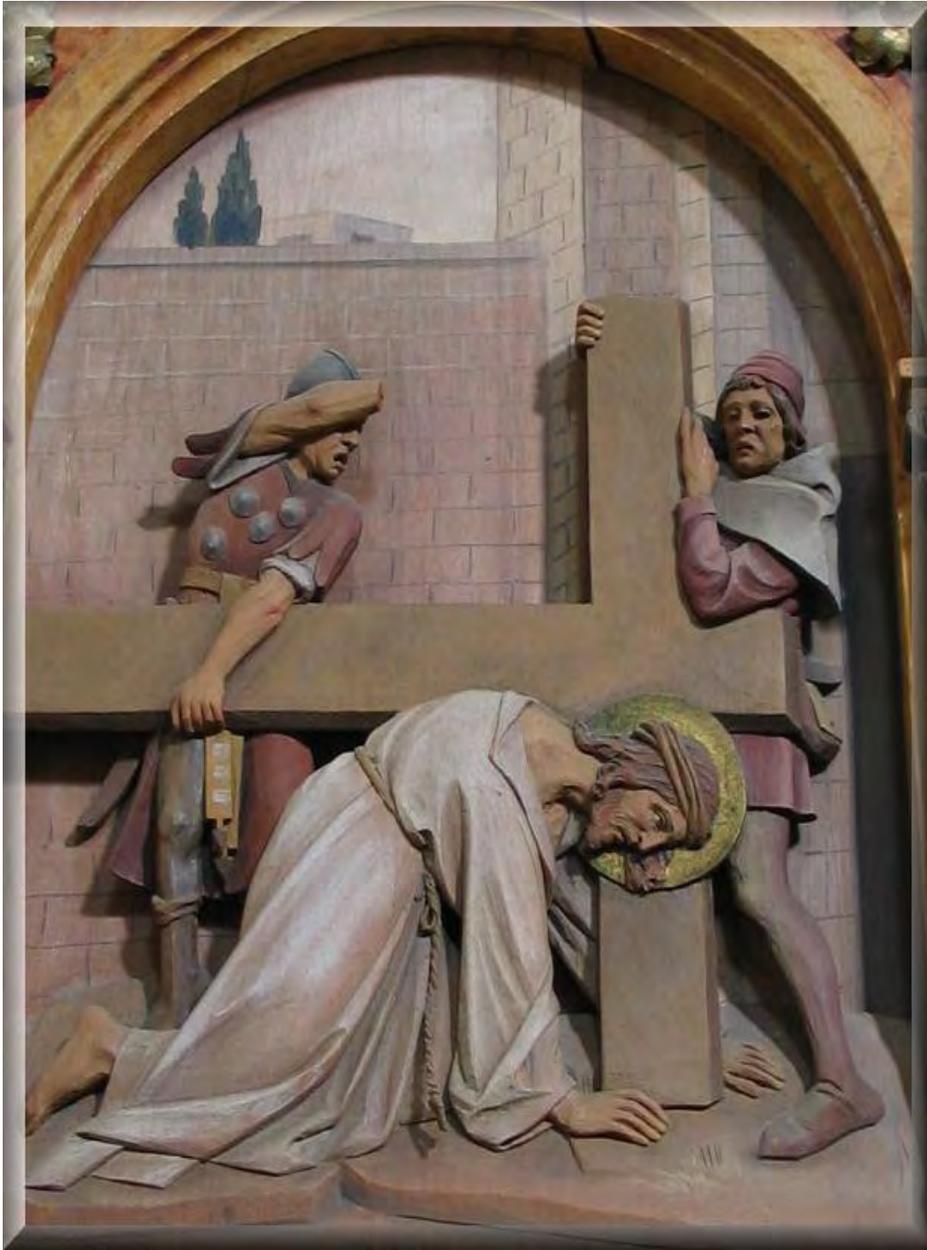
Reader 1: “Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8

Reader 2: Veronica stands out because of her charity. She dared to step forward and care for the one others were mocking as he was marched to his death. In Vietnam, the Catholic Church is not allowed the freedom to provide social and educational services. Priests and bishops are sometimes not permitted to travel within the country. While the situation is slowly improving, Christians have yet to experience religious freedom. We pray that Christians in Vietnam will soon be permitted to serve God’s people without restriction.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you give us the example of Veronica to inspire us to serve others, even if we must take great risk to do so. Guide us in your ways of charity and give to each of us the heart of a servant. Son of Man, support all of those who strive to serve you and your people in Vietnam.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Seventh Station



Leader: The seventh station of the cross,

Jesus falls the second time.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:6-8

Reader 2: In order that we might have eternal life, Christ did not avoid being humbled. The Church in Venezuela is warned to keep silent by an oppressive government. Bishops are warned against speaking out on political and human rights issues. Church buildings are vandalized. Intimidation tactics are used against those who are faithful to the Church. We pray that the Church in Venezuela will again be free to preach the Gospel in every context.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you did not resist those who sought to humble you in the midst of your followers. Strengthen us, that we may be able to endure courageously the persecution we experience because of our faith in you. Son of God, come to the aid of the Church in Venezuela during this dark night in her history.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Eighth Station



Leader: The eighth station of the cross,
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children.’” Luke 23:27-28

Reader 2: Indeed, the women of Jerusalem were among the early followers of Christ. Today, the Christian community in the Holy Land continues to diminish due to war, oppression and subtle religious persecution. We pray for Christians in Israel, Gaza and the entire Holy Land, that they may be able to remain in their homeland and practice the Faith freely.

Leader: Lord Jesus, the people Israel were the first to know you. May we, too, seek to know you more fully each day of our lives. Jesus of Nazareth be with your people in the Holy Land. Protect them from all harm, and allow them to once again flourish in the land of their forebearers.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Ninth Station



Leader: The ninth station of the cross,

Jesus falls the third time.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

Reader 2: How difficult it can be to suffer alone. It is even more challenging to suffer in the midst of a crowd. Jesus made his way through the streets of Jerusalem, falling under the weight of the instrument of his death. Jesuit missionary to Madagascar, Father Sylvain Urfer was deported to France on grounds that his entry visa had expired, although he had lived in Madagascar since 1974 and held a permanent visa since 1992. Fr. Sylvain is known for his religious zeal and concern for human rights. We pray for the Church in Madagascar, that missionaries may be free to work in the fields of the Lord.

Leader: Lord Jesus, detractors did not hesitate to force you to endure suffering and humiliation because of your obedience to God’s will. Grant us the ability and desire to remain steadfast in faith and diligent in service even when criticized by others. Continue to provide missionaries and vocations to the Church in Madagascar so that what your people won at great price may not be lost.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Tenth Station



Leader: The tenth station of the cross,

Jesus is stripped of his garments.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

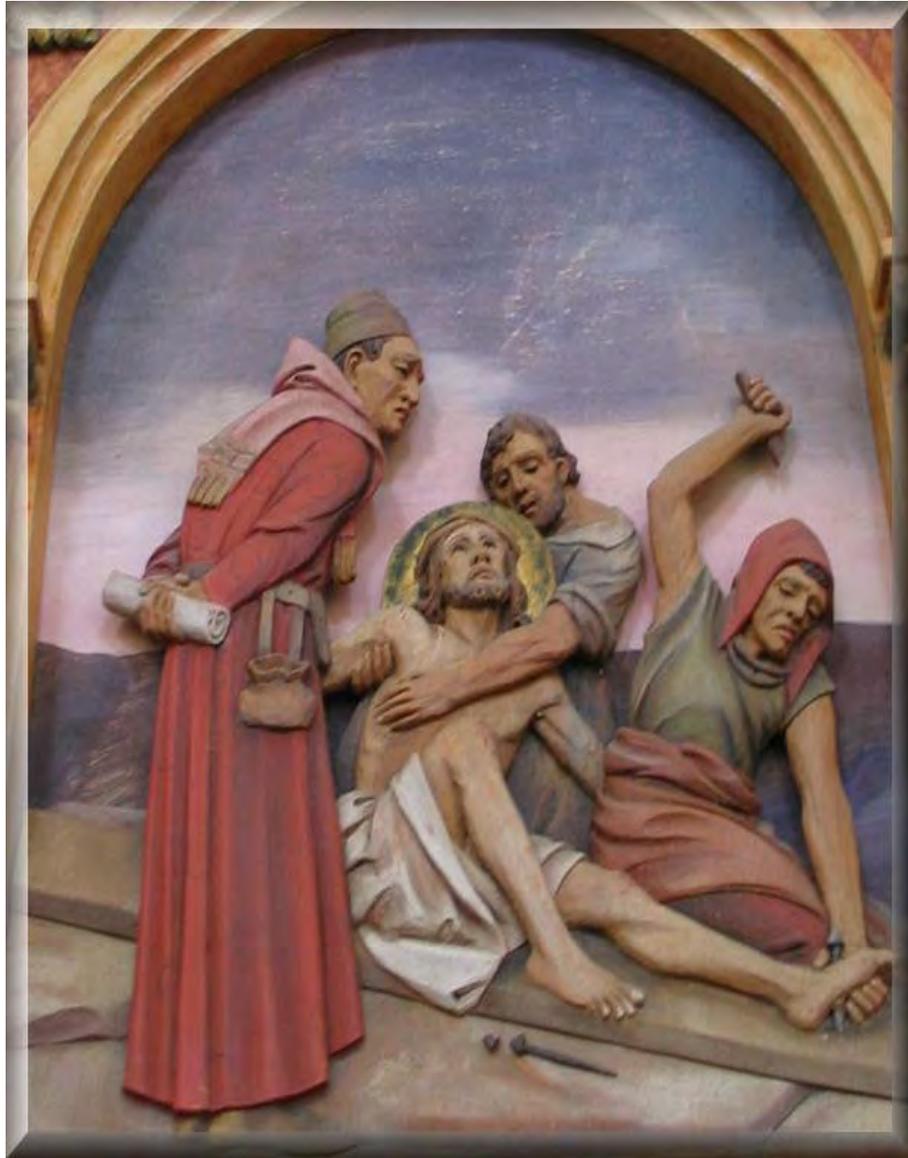
Reader 1: “When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier.” John 19:23

Reader 2: Christians in Pakistan are stripped of their dignity, and their belongings are divided up among their persecutors. The family of Sr. Sarah, a Dominican Sister, was threatened by an angry mob when they refused to give their only daughter in marriage to a Muslim. Their home was burned, their livestock and belongings stolen. The family, reduced to poverty, now relies on the goodness of others in order to survive in a village far from their home. We pray for the Church in Pakistan, that she may be protected from all harm.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you were stripped of all earthly possessions, but you did not lose the dignity which belongs to you alone. Allow us to see the inherent worth of each person. Lord of all, come to the aid of the persecuted Christian community in Pakistan during their time of need.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Eleventh Station



Leader: The eleventh station of the cross,
Jesus is nailed to the cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “They crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.” John 19:18

Reader 2: Jesus was crucified as a common criminal, despite the fact that he was not a criminal, nor is he common. In fact, Jesus Christ is the universal savior of humankind. It is only through him that we can be saved. In Belarus, the Catholic Church is hardly tolerated by the government. Missionary priests and sisters from neighboring Poland are frequently expelled at the whim of government officials. We pray that holy priests and religious continue to find ways to enter the country and serve the Church in Belarus.

Leader: Lord Jesus, as you hung on the cross, you taught us the importance of being in solidarity with those who suffer. Let us continue to offer prayer and support for Christians everywhere who suffer because of their faith in Christ. We pray now for the Church in Belarus, that she may continue to be served by devout priests and religious, and that the faithful will not lose the faith which has sustained them through trials and tribulations.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Twelfth Station



Leader: The twelfth station of the cross,
Jesus dies on the cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.” Matthew: 15:37-38

Reader 2: The earth cries out in pain to see one of her sons or daughters suffer for the sake of Christ. Death is the price that Jesus paid so that we might live. In Iraq, the Christian community continues to experience a slow death. Day by day, more Christians leave this land which has been home to a sizable Christian community since the early Church. Persecution, subtle forms of oppression and violence cause many Christians to abandon their homeland. We pray that the faithful remnant remaining in Iraq, as well as those in exile, hold firmly to their faith until the day comes when they can worship freely.

Leader: Lord Jesus, your death did not mean the end. Rather, it was the beginning. Help us to understand that death is not an end for those who have faith. Holy Redeemer, provide encouragement to the Christian community of Iraq, that they may again live out their faith fully in the sight of all.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Thirteenth Station



Leader: The thirteenth station of the cross, Jesus is taken down from the cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: “Now there was a virtuous and righteous man named Joseph who, though he was a member of the council, had not consented to their plan of action. He 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 23:50-52

Reader 2: Virtue and righteousness are qualities for which all should strive. Joseph of Arimathea not only possessed, but lived out these qualities. How do we react when we see others in need? Let us ask our Lord to help us perform works of mercy whenever and wherever we are able. The Church in Nigeria has for generations provided education, medical care and other social works for the people of that nation. In recent years, radical Islamic government officials have prevented these works from being done, and have threatened those who attempt to continue their ministry. We pray for the Church in Nigeria, that the faithful will again be allowed to perform the works of mercy that are described in the Gospel.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you never failed to respond to human need, even if it meant facing the scorn of legal authorities and the criticism, ridicule, and hatred of many. Merciful Savior, grant fortitude to all who, despite persecution, continue to perform good works in your Holy Name. Source of all goodness, change the hearts of all who attempt to prevent your love from being shared with those most in need.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Fourteenth Station



Leader: The fourteenth station of the cross,
Jesus is placed in the tomb.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: "Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed." Matthew 27:59-60

Reader 2: Jesus was placed in the tomb. Many thought that was the end of the story, but God had other plans; plans that involve each of us. In the United States, there is a growing indifference towards the Faith. There are attempts to eliminate Christianity from the public forum. We pray that our faith not be hidden in the tomb, but rise to new life with in each of us and within our land.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you went to the grave that we might receive the gift of life. Be with us as we strive to live out our faith in a manner which inspires others to embrace your cross. Merciful Savior, continue to protect our right to religious freedom and make us advocates for all who suffer for their faith in you.

All: Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...

Conclusion:

Leader: Let us pray the Apostles' Creed for the intentions of the Holy Father.

I believe in God....

Lord Jesus, our Way of the Cross is ended. Be with us now as we go forth to carry your message of hope and salvation to the world. May we find our life and our joy in the glory of the cross.

All: Amen.

