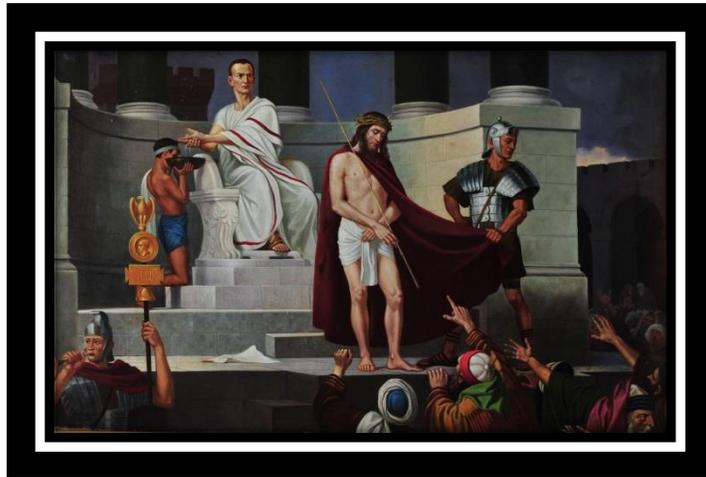


The Stations of the Cross

Reflections by Bishop Daniel R. Jenky, CSC.

The journey you are about to make is filled with the richest possible meaning and awesome spiritual significance. Together with our Redeemer we will walk to Calvary. With Mary, with the beloved disciple, and with the holy women we will watch and pray. Today and every day may we deny ourselves, take up our own crosses, and follow the way of the Lord from the victory of the cross to the glory of the resurrection.

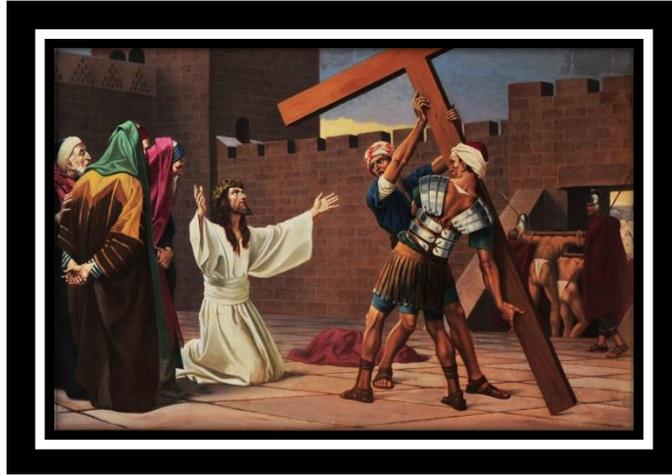
Prayer: Almighty and Eternal God, accept our prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the sacrifice of your Beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we recall His most sacred Passion, pour Your Holy Spirit into our hearts that everything we say and do may be for the glory of Christ and the service of our neighbor. We ask this, through Christ our Lord. Amen



The 1st Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death by Pilate

Try to imagine what Jesus had already suffered prior to coming before Pilate. He was betrayed by a friend, arrested, and taken into custody, even though He was innocent and had committed no crime. He was mocked, scourged, spat upon and even crowned with a wreath of thorns that pressed into His head, causing great pain and loss of blood. Now, He received an unjust sentence of death from Pontius Pilate, who knows that Jesus is an innocent man and does not deserve it. In perfect obedience to His Father, Jesus accepts the death sentence, is seized by the soldiers, and led out to begin the agonizing journey to Calvary.

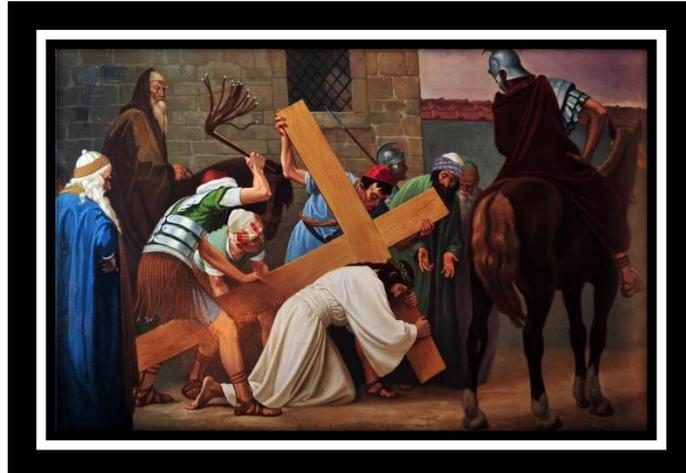
Prayer: Gentle Lord, You allowed Yourself to be condemned without uttering a word. Wholly innocent, You stood where we belong and accepted the punishment we deserve. Change our hearts according to Your will, and help us to die to sin and be born again in grace. May Your obedience bring comfort to those in captivity and new hope to those suffering persecution. O Christ, You are the Savior of the world. Amen.



The 2nd Station: Jesus Accepts His Cross

The cross is a large and heavy one, not simply because of its physical composition, but because all of our sins are attached to it. Every heartache and pain, every injustice and illness, every oppression and poverty, every human misery is attached to this cross. Jesus gladly receives all of these crosses in His own cross and carries them out of His perfect love for each of us. When He reaches His destination on Calvary, our sins and hardships will be there with Him. When He is nailed to the wood of the Cross that will be transformed into the tree of life for all who believe, the Lord will destroy the lasting effects of sin and death.

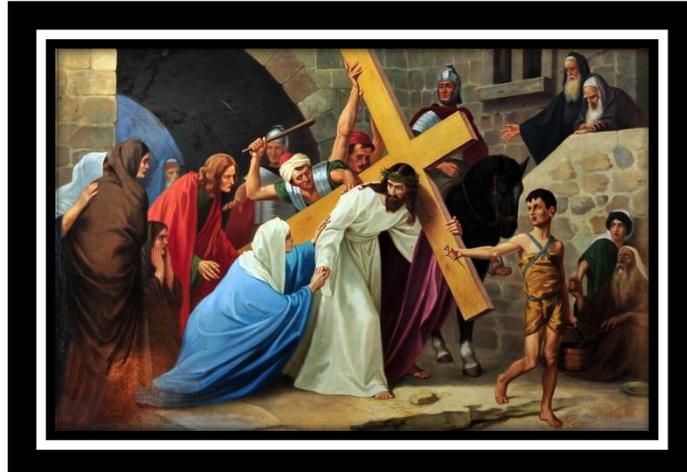
Prayer: Gracious Lord, how can we ever adequately thank You for taking up the cross on our behalf? Help us to accept in faith whatever trials and burdens You may send. Teach us to be patient with the faults of others and at peace in the face of trouble, for Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. O Christ, You are the Savior of the world. Amen.



The 3rd Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

Already, Jesus falls under the awful weight of the cross. He has just begun the journey and Golgotha is still so far away. He is weak from the blows He has received, and the soldiers continue to strike Him and insult Him. They force Him up quickly so that He will not experience any relief or any opportunity to lie in the dirt to rest for a moment. The crowd insults Him and enjoys the spectacle unfolding before them. Finally, Jesus gets up and continues on His way, because His work is not yet finished.

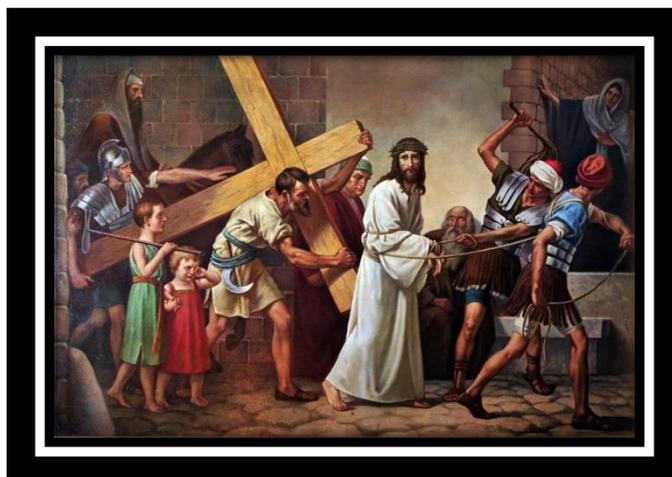
Prayer: Grieving Lord, this falling shows the great weight of our sins. Good Shepherd, forgive our many falls from grace and help us to feel sorrow for the pain we have caused others. Help us to imitate Your obedience and rise up with renewed commitment to face our responsibilities.



The 4th Station: Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother

The meeting of Jesus and His mother Mary was brief but intense. Mary stood before her Son helplessly, recalling the words that Simeon foretold long ago. “A sword will pierce Your heart.” Jesus gazes into Mary’s eyes, and without speaking a word, assures His mother that the Lord God will not let this suffering be in vain. Jesus feels His mother’s anguish and gives her the silent assurance that the giving of His life for all was the Father’s means to give salvation and eternal life to all those who believe. Silently communicating her love for Jesus, Mary returns to her place in the crowd.

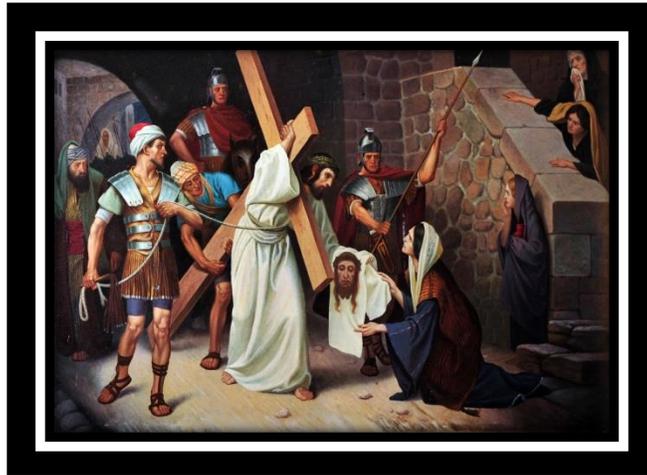
Prayer: Incarnate Lord, You are the Son of God and the Son of Mary. When Your eyes met those of Your most holy mother, she shared fully in Your anguish and knew Your pain. As the first and greatest of all Your disciples, she was faithful to You from the crib to the cross. Give us the strength and courage Mary had at that terrible moment, so that we may be Your witnesses before the world. May the prayers of the sorrowful Mother shield us from evil and protect us in temptation.



The 5th Station: Simon helps Jesus to carry His cross.

The cross now becomes too much for Jesus to bear, so the soldiers grab a bystander, Simon to help Jesus carry His cross. While Jesus carries the more significant burden, Simon plays an important part in the Passion of our Lord. In helping Jesus carry this wood, Simon serves as an example for all who contemplate this awkward scene. We, too, are called to be Simon, to help our brothers and sisters carry the weight of their hardships and difficulties. Simon was transformed by this unexpected experience. We, too, will be transformed by our acts of good will to all who are in need of our assistance.

Prayer: Afflicted Lord, help us to notice the needs of others and assist those heavily burdened in this world. Give us the determination to seek out those in trouble and assist them with our time, talent, and treasure. May we give freely, expecting nothing in return except to be enriched by Your abundant grace and peace.



The 6th Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Once again, someone steps out of the crowd to bring Jesus some relief from His agonizing walk. Veronica, another bystander, takes her veil and begins to wipe the spittle and blood from the face of Jesus. While it isn't much relief from His horrible pain, Jesus accepts this gesture of kindness. In return, He leaves the perfect imprint of His holy face on Veronica's veil, stunning those who witnessed this blessed miracle. In this brief encounter, the Lord increased the faith of those who saw for themselves that he was indeed the Son of God. In the midst of all the chaos and shouting, healing and truth flowed out to those who saw the glory of God displayed before their very eyes.

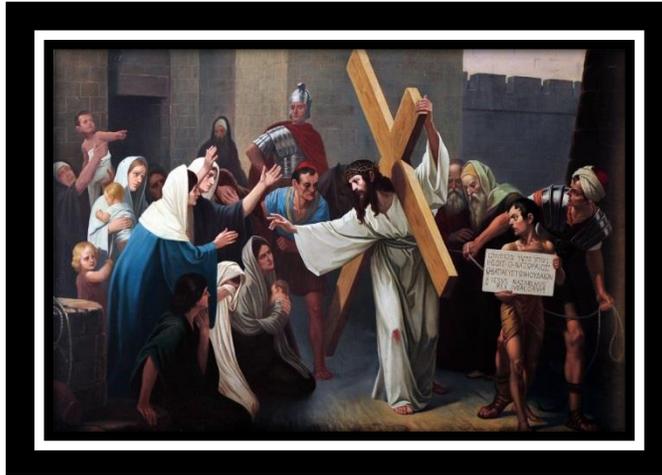
Prayer: Sorrowing Lord, Your holy face was bruised and disfigured, covered with blood and spittle. May the image of Your great suffering be branded upon our hearts and seared into our souls. Help us always to leave the imprint of Your love on all those we meet. Like Veronica, may we be bold in our service so that we may see You face to face in paradise.



The 7th Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Jesus falls beneath the heavy weight of the cross a second time. It is difficult to see Jesus struggling in the condition He is in. Very tired and in excruciating pain, Jesus has lost a tremendous amount of blood already. It is a miracle in itself that He has not already died from His physical ordeal. Again the soldiers show no mercy, quickly forcing Him up out of the dirt and onto His feet. How much more can Jesus take? The soldiers whip Him with their cords, and the sting jolts Jesus as He Once more begins to move slowly to Golgotha, now visible before Him.

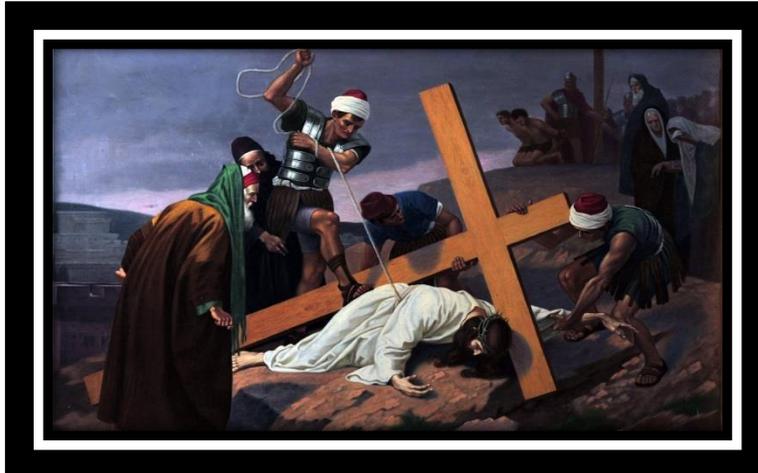
Prayer: Zealous Lord, beaten and abused, You were crushed so that we might be lifted up. When evil surrounds us and seems to prevail, teach us to be resolute in faith and unwavering in hope. We have nothing to fear, for by Your steadfast fidelity You have conquered all things.



The 8th Station: Jesus Comforts the Women of Jerusalem

As Jesus drew nearer to the place where He was to be crucified, a group of women stepped out from the crowd to express their sorrow for Him. Motivated by good intentions, they wanted Jesus to know that there were people who believed in His innocence. Jesus once again accepted the gesture of kindness, but also said to them: “Weep not for me, but rather for your children.” This statement reminds us that Jesus was not suffering this agony by Himself. He was doing this for all those who were bound by sin and suffering. This suffering Jesus had to conquer by His death, so that we could all be free children of God.

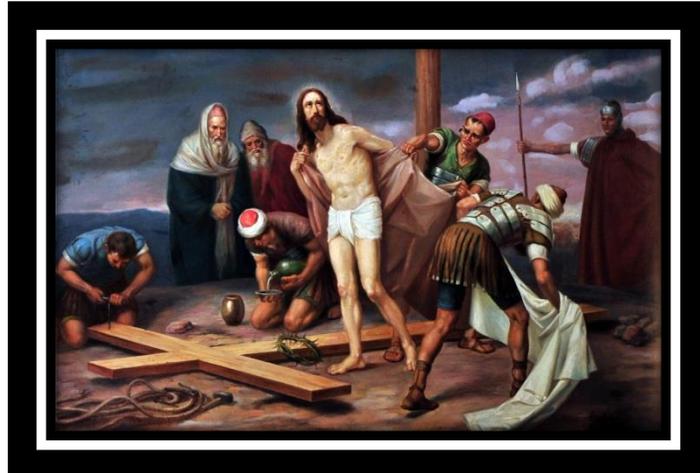
Prayer: Compassionate Lord, even in Your agony, You reach out to comfort others. Teach us to notice the pain of our neighbors and help us to be good to all those in trouble. Pardon us for our past indifference and use us to relieve the sorrow of those who mourn.



The 9th Station: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

The weight of the cross causes Jesus to fall a third and final time. Jesus has lost so much blood that He has hardly any strength left. The time has come for the moment of crucifixion, and the soldiers prepare for the task of carrying out the execution. They help Jesus to His feet while the crowd continues to taunt Him. They hurl insults at Him, but Jesus utters not a word in return. The hour has come, and with trust in His Father, Jesus enters into silent prayer.

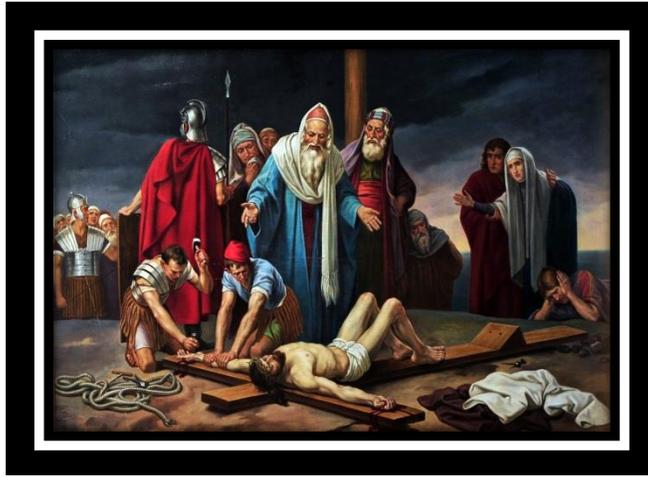
Prayer: Good Lord, fallen on the ground, exhausted, scorned, defenseless before Your persecutors, You lie bleeding in the dust, unable to stand, as soldiers curse You and strike You in Your terrible weakness and misery. You endured this torture to heal all that is broken in creation. May Your selfless sacrifice change our lives and win our love.



The 10th Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

After His painful journey, Jesus finally reaches Golgotha, where His execution will now be carried out. The soldiers strip Jesus of His garments, continuing to taunt and humiliate Him. Some of the soldiers began to roll dice to see who would get the cloak of Jesus. After enduring this public humiliation, Jesus was ordered to lie down on the cross, and He was prepared for the awful agony of what was about to be done to Him.

Prayer: Humble Lord, just as You first emptied Yourself of glory to share our life, so now are You stripped of everything so that we might be boundlessly enriched. As Your clothing is torn from Your flesh, Your many wounds are reopened and Your blood flows afresh. May we imitate Your obedience and learn to discipline our selfish sensuality.



The 11th Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Imagine what being crucified must have been like; the agony of nails being pounded through Your hands and feet, pain shooting through every part of Your body. The crown of thorns was left in place, and the wounds from the scourging were open and bleeding. As the soldiers completed their grizzly task, they left Jesus to die. Let this scene burn in our hearts and minds when we question God's love for us. As scripture tells us: "There is no greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for a friend."

Prayer: Holy Lord, by Your glorious wounds, we are healed. Every blow of the hammer is excruciating torture for You and terrible agony for Your mother. You embraced the humiliation of the cross so that we may know the splendor of heaven. May Your precious blood plead on our behalf and wash away all our sins.



The 12th Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

After hanging on the cross for about three hours, Jesus finally delivered His spirit, bowed His head and died. His mother, Mary, was present along with a few others, keeping vigil with Jesus. His death brought with it a sense of relief that His horrible agony was at last finished. A soldier pierced the side of Jesus with a lance, and blood and water flowed. A centurion in the crowd cried out: “Surely this man was the Son of God.” The news spread quickly throughout the surrounding towns, and some of the chief priests and soldiers became very much afraid.

Prayer: Loving Lord, from the cross You gave Mary as our mother, You forgave the ignorance of the soldiers, You thirsted for souls, and surrendered to the will of Your Father. You died so that we could live forever. Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.



The 13th station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Because it was the preparation day for the Sabbath, Pilate ordered that the body of Jesus be taken down from the cross. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two of Jesus' followers, removed the body of Jesus and placed it into His mother Mary's arms. Much anguish came over Mary as she held in her arms the dead body of her son. This is the same Son she cradled joyously in the manger at Bethlehem. This is the same Son she presented in the temple. Mary had shared so many wonderful and happy times with Jesus, and now He was lying dead in her arms. The woman who had laid His small, life-filled body on the hay in the manger now had to lay His dead and wounded corpse on the hard stone in the tomb. Of all the people who were present at Jesus' death, Mary most truly understood these terrible moments.

Prayer: Sweet Lord, Mary who carried You in her womb and nursed You at her breast now holds Your lifeless body in her arms and covers Your face with her flowing tears. No one ever loved You as she loved You, and no sorrow is like her sorrow. Your Blessed Mother is the preface of all Your miracles, the strength of believers, and the refuge of sinners. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.



The 14th station: Jesus is buried in the tomb

Mary, Joseph and Nicodemus brought the body of Jesus to the tomb and prepared it for burial. Mary arranged the body with fragrant aloes and spices and wrapped it with cloth and linen. When they completed their work, the stone was rolled in place and the tomb was sealed. Because the chief priests recalled what had been said about Jesus, they demanded that soldiers be assigned to guard the tomb so that it would be impossible for someone to steal the body and claim that Jesus had been raised. Pilate granted their wish, and two guards were placed near the tomb. Now it was getting dark, and the time for waiting was to begin. According to scripture, Jesus was not yet finished with His work.

Prayer: Merciful Lord, by Your three days in the tomb, You sanctified the graves of all those who have fallen asleep, overturned the citadel of Satan, and opened the way for us to the eternal joys of heaven. There was no sepulcher that could ever hold You, no guards who could imprison You, or stone that could impede Your glorious resurrection. Jesus, You are an eternal spring and a sun that never sets.