

SCIAF Stations of the Cross 2021

Opening Reflection and Prayer

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis presents a powerful vision of sisterhood and brotherhood, inspired by his patron St Francis of Assisi. The Pope challenges all people of goodwill, “in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others,” to, “prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words.”

Throughout his ministry, Jesus gave hope and healing to the ignored, and restored those eliminated from society to the people of God. As we pray our Stations today or tonight, we contemplate Jesus as one who was so often ignored himself, and finally singled out for elimination on the cross.

As we walk with him, and with all who will suffer with him until the end of the world, we pray for the grace to plant in our hearts the friendship and fraternity, which will flourish in the Kingdom of God. We pray in a special way for the people of South Sudan, the world’s youngest nation, that their suffering will yield a harvest of life and hope.

Opening Prayer

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ came to reveal
the innermost secrets of your heart,
showing us your dream of a humanity forged in unity.
As he sat at the Last Supper he prayed for that unity, and died for it on the cross.
Help us to work to make that dream a reality,
a human race which is one as you are one.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Leader:

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

“That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.” Luke 23: 12.

A mysterious reconciliation occurs between Herod and Pilate: friendship replacing suspicion and rivalry. The patient goodness of Jesus in the face of ridicule had drawn out the poisonous sting of bitterness.

Lord Jesus, your healing presence reveals the folly of rivalry between brothers, and brings balm to the soul. Help all those consumed by hatred – especially those engaged in civil war – to walk once more in the way of peace.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Second Station: Jesus accepts his cross

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"And when they had mocked him, the soldiers took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him." (Mark 15:20)

For these soldiers this was just another day, another job, either to be carried out with resignation, or enjoyed with the cruelty of those whose hearts have been hardened with cynicism. Jesus accepts their mockery and roughness, swallowing up the weariness and anger in an ocean of love.

Lord Jesus, help us to find patience and understanding even for those who are hardest to like. Let us remember that everyone is some mother's son or daughter, and all are the children of God.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*"He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap" (Psalm 113:7)*

Jesus seems so alone: poor and needy. Yet he rises up. Was it the sight of his mother on the road ahead, which gave him strength and reminded him of his dignity as a beloved son?

Lord Jesus, raise up your precious children – especially the poorest – through the hands of mothers, father, grandparents and teachers, whose love warms the bones of the weary.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law." Galatians 4:4

Mary gave Jesus the gift of life itself, but more specifically also his heritage – his human nature, his DNA, and his membership of the people of Israel, allowing him to fulfil the prophecies as the messiah. Here her gift is simple presence: a tenderness only a mother can know.

Lord Jesus, help us to remember that we are not saved alone but as a people. May our bonds with kin and nation inspire us to work for the common good of all.

All:

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"They seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus." (Luke 23: 26)

Luke reports that people from Cyrene were in the crowd at Pentecost, the first Africans to hear the powerful preaching of Peter and the apostles. Was Simon among them, bursting with pride at having helped Jesus along the road?

Lord Jesus, we bless you for your choice of Africans as among the first to hear the Resurrection Gospel: Alexandrians, Cyrenians and Ethiopians. May the Spirit who blows with such power through the Church in Africa breathe life into your universal family.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar - and to God what belongs to God'." (Mark 12:17)

In the ancient world, the coins which bore the image of the ruler were an essential means of projecting power and authority over a territory. Jesus had taught that humans bear only one image: the image and likeness of God, giving us the dignity of sons and daughters. Jesus' image, imprinted on Veronica's veil, gives powerful witness to this truth.

Lord Jesus, by becoming one of us you gave us a family resemblance with God – when we look at a human face we see the face of God. Help us to truly serve you in others.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." (Matthew 3:9)

Jesus falls on the harsh stony road, abandoned. He seemed to be cursed, not just by luck but by God himself: did God not promise to raise up his prophets? Yet Jesus showed that God treasures the weakest, and from the hardest of stones raises up his children.

Lord Jesus, help us to realise that those who are poorest are closest to your heart. Make us your helping hands, since you, O Christ, have no body now but ours.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Leader:

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children." (Luke 23: 27-28)

Jesus has been silent until now, like a sheep dumb before its shearers, but now he begins to speak – rather, to teach. He will do so right up until his last breath. His words,

coming from the very depths of human experience, enlighten us, form us and liberate us.

Lord Jesus, continue to teach us as you did while you walked among us, by word and example. Inspire all teachers to grasp the liberating power of their own vocation.

All:

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." (Exodus 19:4)

During his ministry, Jesus always raised up those seen as weak – the sick, those with disability, the excluded and abandoned – setting them on the road to freedom and giving them the dignity of disciples and heralds of the Kingdom. Here God his Father raises him up, giving him the strength for the final steps to Calvary.

Lord Jesus, you never looked with pity and condescension on weakness, instead you saw potential. Remove from our hearts the desire to give a hand out rather than a hand up: make us more like you.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothing

Leader:

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"The king asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless... Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth'." (Matthew 22:11-13)

This puzzling parable makes sense if we apply it to Jesus himself: stripped of his clothes, silent, bound, ejected from the city to die outside the gate. Jesus is truly in solidarity with the most wretched, weeping for them and with them.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you did not cling to your equality with God, but emptied yourself to stand with us when we are most vulnerable. May you clothe the naked with the robe of righteousness.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Eleventh Station: Jesus is crucified

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'." (Luke 23:34)

Jesus the teacher speaks seven words of wisdom and comfort from the cross: promising paradise, fulfilling the scriptures, founding a new family of faith. Here, he calls on God's mercy for those who are about to end his life.

Lord Jesus, your life was lived entirely for others, even on the cross. You are God's mercy personified. Help us to look beyond our own worries and trials, that in our brokenness we may serve the broken.

All:

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

Leader:

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." (John 19:34)

The Fathers of the Church have gifted us many mystical interpretations of the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus: Baptism and Eucharist, humanity and divinity, death and life. As we mourn the death of Jesus, we ponder quietly the wonder of this sign and its meaning.

Lord Jesus, we pray for the suffering people of South Sudan, bathed in the blood of civil war. May the mighty White Nile River, which flows through the country's heart, wash away hatreds and hurts, and irrigate a bright and abundant future.

All:

I love you Jesus, my love above all things;

**I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*"Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid."
(Luke 23:52-53)*

Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, would have wanted to be here along with Mary, to carry with tenderness the body, which he had once brought to the Temple to present to the Lord. His place is taken by another Joseph, another tender yet brave man of dreams, to show that gentleness and care know no bounds.

Lord Jesus, help us to be the Josephs of today: dreamers, fathers, mourners and friends, building a Kingdom of hope in the darkness.

All

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14)

All is silent now. When someone dies we often say, "at least their suffering is over: they are at peace." The mourners could not have imagined the peace brought by the death of this man, a cosmic reconciliation of all in God: ready to burst forth on Easter morn.

Lord Jesus, you did not simply speak of peace, you brought it about by your saving death. Tear down the walls of hostility, banish the poison of rivalry, uproot the weeds of hatred, that your Kingdom may overtake us and bring us to life.

All:

**I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Concluding Prayer

God our Father,
your Son's passion and death showed forth a new world,
where the walls of hatred are broken down.
Help us to be instruments of your peace for our brothers and sisters.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the intentions of our Holy Father Pope Francis:
Our Father
Hail Mary
Glory Be