

Adapted from "The Stations of the Cross with St. John Paul II"

On the Path of Ecological Conversion

WAY OF THE CROSS - Season of Creation – Week IV

Throughout his pontificate, in his preaching and teaching, St. John Paul II consistently emphasized the gravity of the environmental crisis and the urgent need for the Church to respond to its moral and spiritual dimensions. He said that “we must encourage and support ‘**the ecological conversion,**’ which has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading.” Let us be inspired and challenged by his prophetic message, and may these Stations of the Cross nourish our commitment to care for the earth, both personally and as a community of faith.

At every Station:

Leader: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.*

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

Station I: CHRIST CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Scripture: *Isaiah 24:4-6*

“The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt.”

Reflection:

“Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth’s habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydro-geological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that ‘flower bed’—which is the earth, our dwelling place.”

Prayer

O God, we confess that we have fallen into the temptation of believing that we can and should have it all: more income and comfort, more energy consumption, bigger houses and cars. Our addiction to the consumer version of the abundant life is ravaging our fellow creatures and ecosystems and condemning future generations to desolation. Forgive us, O Divine Creator, for the wrong that we have done and for the good that we have failed to do. Amen.

Station II: JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

Scripture: Luke 4:17-21

“He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”

Reflection:

“Every individual is called upon to play his or her part ... to safeguard nature itself and the world about us.... I wish to appeal with simplicity and humility to everyone, to all men and women without exception... to ask them to be convinced of the seriousness of the present moment.”

Prayer

God of justice, your son identified himself with the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of his time. Strengthen us, the disciples of Jesus Christ, to take up the cross of our global responsibilities as seekers of justice and agents of healing for God’s creation. Amen.

Station III: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Scripture: *Leviticus 25:23-24*

“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.”

Reflection:

“One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are relatively few and those who possess almost nothing are many. It is the injustice of the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all.”

Prayer (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 28, 1988)

O God, how often we have caused the living Christ to stumble and fall. It happens each time we acquiesce to unjust laws. As hundreds of millions of desperately poor people are being denied their basic human rights and even life itself, the whole structure of God’s creation begins to collapse. Strengthen our baptismal commitment to strive to overcome every form of exploitation and oppression. May your Kingdom come, O Lord, where we measure wealth by how much we can afford to do without, and comfort level by our ease in sacrifice. Amen.

Station IV: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Scripture: *Isaiah 66:13*

“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”

Reflection:

“In contact with creation a person can better understand the eternal values upon which life is built. These are, among others, values of beauty and truth, of simplicity and love, of fidelity and solidarity.”

Prayer

O God, so many people in our world walk a *via dolorosa* of

unjust policies, violence, poverty and hunger. Along this way, our earth also suffers. Like Mary who comforted Jesus, we too can be consoled, strengthened and reassured of your steadfast love for us through our encounter with the wonder and beauty of your creation. May creation engender in us a greater sense of compassion and solidarity with all our kin in the community of life. Amen.

Station V: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS

Scripture: Matthew 25:40

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Reflection:

“There is a growing threat to the environment, to the vegetation, animals, water and air. Sacred Scripture hands us the image of Cain who rejects his responsibility: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Bible shows the human person as his brother’s keeper and the guardian of creation which has been entrusted to him.”

Prayer

O God of compassion, help us to recognize that we are our brother’s (and sister’s) keepers. Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross, may we too work to alleviate the suffering of those crushed by the heavy cross of injustice and violence committed against them and their fellow creatures. Amen.

Station VI: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Scripture: Job 42:5-6

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Reflection:

“Today there is a great need to slow down the sometimes hectic pace of our days. Contact with nature, with its beauty and its peace, gives us new strength and it restores us. Yet, while the eyes take in the wonder of the cosmos, it is also necessary to look into ourselves, into the depths of our heart, into the center of our being where we come face to face with our conscience.”

Prayer

O God, we see the face of your Son reflected in all men and women and in the whole universe created through him and for him. And yet our human sin and distorted desires have tarnished that divine image. Give us, we pray, new eyes to lay hold of a deeper vision and see the world as you see it. May our works of charity and justice, contemplation and personal holiness serve to wipe the bloody, wounded face of Christ in our world today so that others may see with their own eyes a glimpse of the glory of God. Amen.

Station VII: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Scripture: *Isaiah 5:8*

“Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!”

Reflection:

“In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the Earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way.”

Prayer

Lord, you fall to the ground crushed by the forces of greed, rampant consumerism and politics without soul. Help us to recognize you in those who carry the heavy load of unjust public policies. May we not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for a more just and sustainable future. Amen.

Station VIII: JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:19

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

Reflection:

“The world faces a time of trial today. Today, the conflict is between a culture that affirms, cherishes, and celebrates the gift of life, and a culture that seeks to declare entire groups of human beings—the unborn, the terminally ill, the handicapped, and others considered ‘unuseful’—to be outside the boundaries of legal protection. My fervent prayer is that ... every person will resist the culture of death and choose to stand steadfastly on the side of life. To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger ... the violence of armed conflicts...and the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment.”

Prayer

O God, we may lament when we see Christ suffering in the poor and embracing the pain of all God’s creation. Still, like the women of Jerusalem, we should perhaps also weep for our own children who will bear the brunt of global environmental destruction. May our tears of repentance purify our vision and empower us to choose life, for our children, grandchildren and all God’s creatures. Amen.

Station IX: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

Scripture: Isaiah 30:10-11

“[They] say to the seers, ‘Do not see’; and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.’”

Reflection:

“The lack of interest in politics on the part of so many people reveals their sense of helplessness in the struggle for good.”

Prayer

O Lord, you have called us to exercise leadership for the good of all your creation. So many times we fall short in responding to that call. Diverting our attention away from the search for truth and justice to lesser things, we let you fall. Forgive us and renew in us a commitment to you, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Amen.

Station X: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Scripture: *Isaiah 53:3*

“He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.”

Reflection:

“Around the world, we see the results of exploitation which destroys much without taking future generations into account. Protecting the world’s forests; stemming desertification and erosion; avoiding the spread of toxic substances harmful to man, animals and plants; protecting the atmosphere; all these can be accomplished only through active and wise cooperation, without borders or political power plays.”

Prayer

O gracious God, all too often human life and the rest of your creation are stripped of the integrity, beauty and dignity with which you have endowed them. This happens right before our eyes, and yet we don’t recognize it as part of the modern Calvary. Like the Roman soldiers, we may even be willing accomplices in your passion, seeking a short-term gain from

ecological destruction of the very fabric of life on our planet. Touch our hearts so that we recognize the wrong that we are doing and change our ways. Amen.

Station XI: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Scripture: Zechariah 12:10

“[W]hen they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

Reflection:

“Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God.”

Prayer

O God whose forgiveness is boundless, your Son spoke to you of us when he cried out, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.” Our dismissiveness of the intrinsic dignity of all human life, our obliviousness to the wonder and sacred destiny of all your creation, our misguided models of progress—these are like nails with which we crucify you today. May our tears of repentance reawaken us to your abiding presence in which everything lives, moves and has its being. Amen.

Station XII: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Scripture: Philippians 2:6-8

“[Christ Jesus,] though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”

Reflection:

“Clearly, an adequate solution cannot be found merely in a better management or a more rational use of the earth’s resources.... Rather, we must go to the source of the problem and face in its entirety that profound moral crisis of which the destruction of the environment is only one troubling aspect.”

Prayer

O God of compassion, you who embrace and keep close to your heart all human suffering and earth’s travails, hold us in your mercy. Give us courage to accept our vulnerability and personal crosses. And free us from the fear of changes to which you call us in our personal lives, our society and its institutions. Amen.

Station XIII: THE BODY OF JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN

Scripture: *Colossians 1:19-20*

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

Reflection:

“Today, some Catholics are tempted to discouragement or disillusionment. They are tempted to cry out to the Lord: why does God not intervene; why does He let us see ruin and misery; why does God permit evil? Our trust can falter; we can lose patience with God... we can find our dependence upon God burdensome rather than liberating. We too can ‘harden our hearts.’

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: openness to the Lord—a willingness to let him transform our lives—should produce a renewed spiritual and missionary vitality among Catholics. Jesus Christ is the answer to the question posed by every human life.”

Prayer

O God who makes all things new, help us hold on to our faith, hope and love when we feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the daunting challenge of the ecological crisis. Deepen our courage and use us as instruments of the reconciliation and peace that you desire for all your creation. Amen.

Station XIV: JESUS' BODY IS BURIED

Scripture: *Romans 8:19-21*

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Reflection:

“A radical challenge facing the human family is to use the earth’s resources wisely and responsibly which means with respect to the limits to which these resources are necessarily subject. To do this is to respect the will of the Creator.”

Prayer

O gracious God, for whom nothing is impossible, help your Church to be faithful to you in the midst of adversities. Empower us to be bearers of your dream of justice, peace and harmony for all your creation and prophets of hope in our world today. Amen.

Station XV: JESUS CHRIST IS RISEN

Scripture: *Revelation 21:1-5*

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem ... prepared as a bride adorned for

her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more...’ And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’”

Reflection:

“In this rediscovered harmony with nature and with one another, men and women are once again walking in the garden of creation, seeking to make the goods of the earth available to all and not just to a privileged few, as the biblical justice suggests.”

“Catholics and all citizens of the world, you have such a tradition of spiritual generosity, industry, simplicity and sacrifice that you cannot fail to heed this call today for a new enthusiasm and a fresh determination.

Prayer

We praise you and give you thanks, O powerful God, for Jesus Christ is indeed risen. May we fan into flame the gifts we have received, mindful that you gave us no cowardly spirit, but one of power, love and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:7). May we as the Body of the Christ take up his mission, healing and sanctifying this world so that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Amen.

For the Intentions of the Holy Father:

Our Father – Hail Mary - Glory

Marian Hymn: Regina Coeli or Ave Maria of the Institute

