

MARY'S *Way* of the *Cross*



M Fathers and Brothers
MARYKNOLL

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Opening Prayer

One popular tradition holds that the first Way of the Cross was prayed by Jesus's mother, Mary, as she followed his long walk to Calvary. For years after, it is said, she would retrace those steps — praying as she remembered how he suffered, reliving his Passion at every point. What must it have been like? What went through her mind? We can only imagine. But in that imagining, we find a way to pray more deeply the most important journey in human history: Christ's agonizing walk to his death.

The Way of the Cross is a way of a wrenching heartbreak, but it is also a way of hope, of darkness leading to light, for it leads inevitably toward Easter and the miracle of our redemption.

And so we pray:

*Lord Jesus, you took up your cross
and walked the road to Calvary for me.*

Every step was an act of pure love.

*This day, I walk with you and with your Mother,
remembering her sorrow and witnessing your sacrifice.*

*Help me to follow your Way — a way of mercy,
a way of surrender, a way of love.*

*Your Way of the Cross reminds me of the weight
I carry as I go through life.*

But I know I do not walk alone.

You are with me.

*In my journey,
may I always trust in your abiding presence
and draw consolation from the steadfast faith
of your blessed Mother.*

*I pray to remember always what you gave for me
and to cherish more deeply the depth and breadth of your love.*

Amen.

I. The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Die

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

I remember the light, that morning light in Jerusalem.
The bright sun on the walls and the street. I hurried to the
city center, my head down, praying simply for strength. I
heard shops opening, children laughing, mothers calling
out to each other. I passed women on the way to the well. I
saw them often, but that day I looked away, shading my eyes
from the sun — and from their piercing, curious looks.

When I got there, the square was already full.

I moved behind a pillar, into the shadows, looking for a
familiar face, someone, anyone. There he was: John. He saw
me and made his way across the square and reached out to
take my hand.

There was noise. The crowd stirred. Someone
came out of the main building, one of the men being
sentenced. He could barely stand. His face was bloody.
His robe was ripped and stained. It couldn't be. But then I
recognized the cloth.

Yes. It was Jesus.

I opened my mouth to cry out. But John pulled me
closer. "Say nothing," he whispered.

Pilate, came out, spoke, but he was too far away. I
couldn't understand what he said.

Then John whispered to me.

"They are taking him to Calvary."

My son would be crucified.

They took Jesus away. The crowd started to move.
I had no choice. I followed where they went and prayed.



*Jesus,
When I think of how much you suffered for me,
I pray for all who suffer injustice in our world today,
those beaten down by life, bruised by poverty,
those who hunger for dignity and hope.
Give me the strength and courage to stand with them,
As your mother stood with you.
Open my heart
to love as you loved,
to care for those no one else cares about,
today and always.*



*At the cross her station keeping,
stood the mournful mother weeping,
close to Jesus to the last.*

II. The Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Before we had gone far, I heard a shout, then another, and the sound of wood being dragged on stone. I turned. The guards brought out a cross to where Jesus stood and dropped it to the ground. They shouted at him, "Pick it up!" He bent, then knelt, straining. He couldn't lift it. Again: "Pick it up!" He could barely stand. The guards were impatient. Two of them lifted the cross and placed it on one of my son's shoulders. He staggered, caught his breath.

He steadied himself. And the walk began. I watched him try to move, each step an effort.

I realized: my son was not the first to carry that cross. The wood was stained with dried blood, rain, dirt. And holes — places that once held nails. Jesus pulled the cross, step by step. I heard again the scrape of wood on stone. The crowd blocked my view. But I heard everything — the dragging of the cross and the voices of the guards. Shouting, accusing, laughing.

I closed my eyes and prayed.



Jesus,

*When I imagine the weight of the cross,
I see you carrying the weight of the world —
all of our burdens and failings,
our betrayals and sins.*

*You once said, "Take up your cross and follow me."
Whatever cross I carry, I know it cannot begin
to compare with yours.*



*Help me, Lord — walk with me on my own journey,
so that I can bear my cross with courage and with faith,
staying close to you, like your mother,
and remembering all that you gave for love of me.*



*Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
all his bitter anguish bearing,
now at length the sword had passed.*

III. The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

The crowd stopped. A woman screamed. John moved ahead of me to see what was happening. I followed. He tried to shield me. I made my way to the front. I needed to see.

Jesus was on the ground, pinned under the cross. I saw him move, trying to manage the weight. The soldiers spit at him, cursed him. One pulled out a whip and struck his cheek. A thin thread of blood streamed down his face. Jesus got up on one knee, took a breath, looked up, closed his eyes. I'd seen that so often before.

My son was praying.
He opened his eyes, struggled and then stood. The soldiers kicked him, tried to trip him, to make him fall again. He managed to stay on his feet and keep walking.
Then John was by my side. "Are you sure you want to stay," he whispered. I nodded. "Let's go."
I tightened my grip on John's hand.
We walked on and prayed.



*Jesus,
How often I stumble and fall,
when the weight of life becomes too heavy to bear.
But on your way to Calvary,
you showed us how to keep going,
even when we think we can't.
I pray for the strength to endure,
the faith to prevail.
Help me to keep getting up,
even when the weight of what I carry seems too much.*



*Oh how sad and sore distressed
was that mother highly blessed,
of the sole-begotten One!*

IV. The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

The morning light had turned into heat.
The guards were pushing us out of the way, away
from the walls and the shade and into the street. I lost my
footing and held on to John's hand. The cloth slipped off
my head and I bent to catch it and when I stood up straight,
there he was.

My son.

Jesus.

He was almost close enough to touch. I reached out
my hand and tried to say his name.

Jesus.

His face was smeared and bloody. His head was
covered with twigs — no, thorns. His hair was soaked. His
cheek was still bleeding from the guard's whip.

How I wanted to make it all stop.

Jesus looked at me, then looked up, closed his eyes,
took a deep breath. He looked at me again. Our eyes met.
The guards shouted at him. "Go!" Jesus moved his lips. I
couldn't hear him. But I understood what he was saying.
"Mother...mother."

Then his eyes looked past me, to John. Jesus started
to speak again. And the guards pulled him away.

I bowed my head and prayed.



My Jesus,

It is almost too much to bear.

*Mary, the one who was there when your earthly life began —
the one who said "yes" in Nazareth,
who traveled to Bethlehem,*



*who fled with you to Egypt,
and sought you in Jerusalem —
she followed you even to Calvary.*

She never wavered.

*When the journey is hard and I feel overwhelmed,
I pray for the quiet courage and faith of your mother,
Mary, your first disciple, who never left your side.*



*Christ above in torment hangs;
she beneath beholds the pangs
of her dying glorious Son.*

V. The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

There was a shout, and a voice cried out. "No!"

I strained to see. A guard grabbed a man in the crowd and pulled him into the street. He screamed at him. "Do it!" The man pulled away, then stumbled. He stopped. He saw Jesus, sagging under the weight of the cross.

The man from the crowd was much larger than Jesus. I don't know where he came from. His eyes went from Jesus, to the guard, then to the cross. The guard cracked his whip again, so the man bent, picked up the bottom of the cross, took a breath, nodded to Jesus, and they started walking.

With two men, the walking became faster. That meant they would get to Calvary sooner.

The street was crowded with spectators, workers, people with places to go. They tried to walk around the guards and Jesus. Shopkeepers stopped, looked, shook their heads and looked away. Mothers with children hurried by.

John urged me. "Let's go." He took my hand, we moved on, and I prayed.



My Jesus,

*When I pass others who are struggling
under the weight of the world,
help me to remember the stranger you met on the way, Simon.
When I see people in need,*



*open my eyes help me to see you.
Give me the strength to help others with their crosses,
and to accept help from others
with my own.*



*Is there one who would not weep,
whelmed in miseries so deep Christ's dear Mother to behold?*

VI. The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

The man who had been helping Jesus was told to drop the cross and go. He rested it on the ground and backed away. Jesus was again alone.

Sweat and blood fell from his brow.

But then a woman pushed through. The guards couldn't stop her. I recognized her. She had followed Jesus for years, since the beginning. She stood in front of my son and took the cloth from her head and offered it to him. He looked at her, helpless. He couldn't let go of the cross. She reached up and pressed her cloth to his face.

He pulled away and, for a brief moment, I could see again the face of the son I knew and loved. The face I'd seen in

Cana,

in Capernaum, on hilltops, preaching.

Jesus.

He blinked. He seemed relieved. Then the guards reached out and pulled the woman away, pushing her back into the crowd.

Jesus was straining under the weight of the wood. But he took a breath and walked on. I looked for the woman, but she had disappeared.

I looked at the road, where the dragging of the cross had left a long scar on the stones, and closed my eyes and prayed.



Jesus,

*Like the woman with the cloth, Veronica,
I want others to be able to recognize you,
to see you, to love you.*



*Guide my actions and my words,
and open my heart,
so I can make you truly present
to those who long to see your face.
May I follow in the devoted steps of your mother,
who in Bethlehem was the first to see your face
and the first to show it to the world.*



*Can the human heart refrain
from partaking in her pain,
in that Mother's pain untold?*

VII. The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Suddenly, he stopped. My son could barely breathe. The heat and the wounds and the weight were too much. Jesus fell to one knee, lost his balance and fell again to the ground.

"Stop!" A woman cried out, "You're killing him!" The guards laughed. The one with the whip cracked it on the ground and spit at Jesus. "Nazarene!," he shouted, "You want to die now and save us the trip?!" The crowd laughed.

I looked from Jesus to John. John closed his eyes, bowed his head. His lips moved in prayer.

A tear began to run down his cheek.

I reached up and wiped it away.

He looked at me and his lip trembled. He whispered to me. "Do not" — his voice broke — "Do not be afraid."

He paused. "Do you remember?"

Two guards went to Jesus, screaming. They pulled him to his feet. They said something. I couldn't hear. My son just exhaled, gripped the wood, and walked on.

"Do not be afraid," I said to John. He gripped my hand. We walked on together and prayed.



Jesus,

*when I think of the times you struggled and fell,
I remember how you shared in everything we are —*

Our struggles, our setbacks, our pains.

But still you kept going, even when you

knew what was to come.

And then there is your mother.



*Mary walked beside you throughout your life,
From your first steps as a child
Until your last steps, on the way to Calvary.
Help me, Jesus, when I find it hard to keep going.
Guide my steps and give me the grace to move on,
to persevere
in prayer, in trust, in faith.*



*For the sins of His own nation
saw Him hang in desolation,
all with bloody scourges rent.*

VIII. The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

We turned a corner. There was a small group of women there, some young, some older. I had seen them before. They came often to hear Jesus preach. That morning, one of them carried a young baby in her arms, nursing as she crouched on the road. She was so young. She begged the guards to let my son rest, to let him go. She cried uncontrollably.

Jesus stopped. For the first time, I heard him speak.
His voice was weak.

“Don’t,” he began, coughed and then took a breath. “Don’t weep for me.” Every word was an effort. His eyes moved to the other women. “Weep for yourselves.” A guard ran over, raising his whip. My son looked at the young mother. “Weep for your children,” he said. The guard yelled at him. “Nazarene! Walk!” Jesus took a breath, shifted the weight on his shoulder.

I looked at the woman, her baby, the faces around them. My heart ached. The young mother saw me. I could see the agony in her eyes. Did she see it in mine?

I tried to speak. Words wouldn’t come.
I saw the back of my son’s head. Then he disappeared into the crowd. There were too many people.
Towering over us, the wood of the cross was all I could see, as I took a deep breath and prayed.



Jesus,
*How many people did you pass on the road to Calvary?
How many of them did you know?*



*How many had a story to tell — about a life changed,
a sickness healed?
All because of you.*

*My Lord, you have changed my life.
I want to be more than just a spectator by the side of the road,
More than a face in the crowd.
I pray to have a more compassionate heart, like your mother.
Help me to follow where you lead, to live what you taught,
and to love all those I meet on the way.*



*Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
she beheld her tender child,
till His Spirit forth he sent.*

IX. The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Ahead, I could see them: two other crosses, with
two men nailed to the wood. They were so still. But I saw
one tremble and begin to weep. He called for help. This,

I told myself. This is what is coming.

Then it happened. Once more, Jesus fell. He tried
not to cry out, but I heard one word. "Abbah!" Someone
yelled. "Take up your cross, Jesus! Take up your cross and
walk!"

The guards laughed. Then there was the crack of the whip.
Another cry, this time from a child. I looked to see where
it came from. It was a little boy with his father. The father
bent down, whispered in his ear, pointed at Jesus. The boy
couldn't stop crying. The father took him by the hand
and disappeared in the crowd.

The guards again taunted Jesus, yelled at him.

Nearby, a shopkeeper stood in a doorway, watching. He
was wearing an apron. A guard walked over and wiped his
hands on the apron, staining it with sweat and blood. I saw
Jesus look up and see the crosses. He never lowered his
head again. He stood, slowly, then walked on, his eyes fixed.

He knew where he needed to go.

So did I. I felt the tears welling up
and continued to pray.



Jesus,

How you must have wanted to give up.

*Every step, every fall
just made the journey more difficult,
and your mother's agony more painful.*



*When I struggle and fall,
give me the strength to keep going,
to rise and move on
and trust always in your unfailing love.*



*O, thou Mother, fount of love,
touch my spirit from above,
make my heart with thine accord.*

X. The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of his Garments

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Suddenly, we stopped.

Jesus had reached the end. Calvary. The guards took the cross from him and threw it on the ground.

One of them grabbed the robe that Jesus wore and pulled it from his shoulders, then tugged at the rope around his waist. The cloth dropped. My son stood there, unprotected, unclothed. Naked.

John pulled me aside, turned me away. The crowd moved back, some looking away. I needed to see. His body was covered with wounds, bruises, scars, patches where blood had dried. I felt a tear run down my cheek. What had they done to him? How could they do this? He was so thin, so frail. Helpless. His legs trembled. He looked at the guards then looked up, at the two men on their crosses, who were staring down at him. His lips moved. His eyes closed. He prayed.

I remembered hymns, prayers, psalms we had said together.

“I cry aloud to God...”

I felt John’s arms pull me closer.

“I cry to God to hear me...”

I closed my eyes and prayed.



Jesus,

You stood with us, as one of us, and shared everything.

*In this moment, we see
not only what the soldiers have done to you,
but what we have done to you.*



*How you suffered for us!
How did your mother endure the anguish
of watching her son be humiliated like this?
Lord, in moments when I feel ashamed and unprotected,
vulnerable and hurt,
help me to recall how you suffered,
remembering always that I am a beloved child of God.*



*Make me feel as you have felt;
make my soul to glow and melt
with the love of Christ our Lord.*

XI. The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Now, everything changed. The soldiers grabbed his wrist and threw my son to the ground. He landed with his back on the wood of the cross. I closed my eyes. But I heard everything. The sound of the nails being thrown on the dirt, the mocking of the guards, the murmuring of the crowd.

Then the first strike. Hammer hitting metal. Again. And again. And again. A cry. I knew. It was Jesus. The guards said something, laughed again, and it repeated. I covered my ears. John leaned in. "This is too much. Do you want to leave?" I shook my head. "No."

Then they raised the cross. He didn't move. Was he already dead? But then he raised his head, looking at the crowd, searching. I stepped forward. John tried to pull me back. I couldn't stay away. I knew he was looking for me.

I walked to the foot of the cross. I reached out my hand to touch the wood. The splinters, so hard beneath my hand. My fingers gently touched his bruised, bloodied feet. I looked at the ground. His blood had begun to pool in the dirt. I raised my eyes. It was midday and the light was fierce. And the heat, the relentless heat. I squinted. But I couldn't look away. Jesus looked at me, as he had so often, so many times. That tender, trusting, loving look. A look that said, "I know. I understand."

I gazed up at that face. All I could do was pray.



*Jesus,
You preached love and mercy,
Compassion and hope,
Yet your final hours were agony,*



*a lamb led to slaughter.
So many fled in fear,
But your mother stayed.
My Lord, you opened your arms in surrender.
Give me the courage and the grace
to open my arms in love for others,
to give all that I can.*



*Holy Mother, pierce me through;
in my heart each wound renew
of my Savior crucified.*

XII. The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Time seemed to stop. I don't know how long we were there. After a little while, the crowd began to drift away. Clouds moved in. The blazing Jerusalem light gave way to shadow. It looked like it would rain.

The other men struggled, cried, but soon they became quiet and still.

I kept wishing, praying, hoping that it would end.

And then it did. My eyes went from my son's face, to the other men beside him, and then to the ground.

I noticed the earth that held the wood of the cross, the muddy dirt around it, mud made from so much blood. It was too much to bear. I closed my eyes. Remember this, I whispered. Remember. I began to weep.

Then I heard him cry out. I looked up and saw his face, his eyes wide open, his lips praying. He struggled, tried to get one more breath, and then it was finished. His body went limp. It was over.

I fell to my knees, and the tears would not stop. John crouched beside me. His arms wrapped around me.

His body was shaking. I realized he was weeping, too.

I prayed that my son's agony was finally over.



Jesus,

*Your final hours were brutal —
Filled with unbearable pain for you
and unending sorrow for your mother.*

*I think of all the mothers
who have watched their children suffer and die,
All who have walked with them, stood by them,*



*Prayed for them,
And then had to let them go.
Lord, I pray that Mary will bring them
solace, consolation and peace,
to help them know they are not alone.*



*Let met share with you his pain,
who for all my sins was slain,
who for me in torments died.*

XIII. The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

We were suddenly alone.

The people had left. The guards had work to do. But someone asked me what we wanted to do with Jesus's body.

I looked at John. "We will take him," he said. I didn't understand. He told me a friend, a follower of Jesus, was going to provide a tomb for him. He would be there soon to help.

They took my son's body down from the cross and were going to leave him on the ground but pleaded with them. "Please," I whispered. I reached out my arms to take him. They let me hold him one last time. He was still warm.

He looked like he was just asleep. Those eyes, I thought. Those eyes that had grown wide at the sight of camels when he was a child, those eyes that had laughed at weddings and wept at funerals, those eyes that could stare for hours at the waters lapping at the bottom of fishing boats. They were at rest.

The words of the psalm came back to me. How often we had prayed this together.

"In peace I will lie down and fall asleep, for you alone, Lord, make me secure."



Jesus,

*Your suffering is over,
but the sorrow goes on for all those who loved you,*



especially your mother.

*I think of all those who grieve today,
those who are mourning a friend, a spouse, a parent, a child.*

So often we can't find the words to say.

*Lord, I pray at this moment for all those who seek you,
those who feel suddenly lost and alone,
those who hunger for hope.*

Be with them in their moment of need.

*Help me to help them
to know your comforting presence in their lives.*



*Let me mingle tears with thee,
mourning Him Who mourned for me,
all the days that I may live.*

XIV. The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

*I adore you, O Christ, and I praise you,
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*



His name was Joseph.

He arrived with his workers at Calvary, and they said they
were there to take Jesus to a nearby tomb.
We walked a short distance and they spread clean linen on
a piece of stone and rested his body there.
Some of the women who had been
following Jesus joined us.
We washed him, cleaned him, anointed him.
The scent of myrrh filled the space and brought back
memories of so many others I had buried this way.

Joseph. I remembered the night we laid him to rest. Jesus
was with me then, as John was with me now.

We covered my son in clean white cloth.
I bent to kiss his head. I thought I had shed every tear.
But I a memory came back to me, from the first night I held
him in my arms, an old lullaby I'd learned as a child.
It came to my lips again. "Good night," I sang. "Good night."
I rested my head on his hands, wrapped in linen, and wept.

A few moments later I was standing
outside the tomb with John.
We watched two guards
roll a stone over the entrance.

I stood there, staring at the stone, at the guards.



The hour was growing late.
The light was fading.
I offered a final silent prayer and looked again at John.
His face was weary and worn.
He didn't know what to say, what to do.

"He told us," he said.
"Jesus told us last night.
'Take courage.'"

I put my arms around him.
"Always," I whispered. "Always."
We began the long walk back through Jerusalem.
Sabbath was about to begin.

Closing Prayer

As we finish walking this Way of the Cross, we remember Mary — who first retraced these steps, holding in her heart the memory of her Son's suffering. Like her, we have paused at each moment of Christ's Passion, imagining what she saw, what she felt, and how deeply she believed that God's plan was unfolding even in tragedy.

We have followed Jesus along this agonizing path — a path of heartbreak, yet also a path of profound hope. For every dark step leads toward the light of Easter, to the miracle of resurrection, and to the promise of our redemption.

May the reflections we have shared draw us closer to Christ, deepen our compassion, and strengthen our trust in God's enduring love. And as we leave this prayer, may we carry with us the peace, courage, and hope that flow from the cross.

And so we pray:



Jesus,

*Mary said "Yes" and accepted God's will for her life.
She carried her own cross on the road to Calvary,
walking with you every step of the way,
with a mother's sorrow,
and a mother's love.*

*Your first disciple, she is a model for all of us —
a model of courage and obedience,
a model of perseverance and humble prayer.*

*Help me, Lord, to follow her way,
just as she followed yours.*

*Keep me always close to you
until that moment when my own earthly journey is done
and I pray to rest forever in your peace.*



Amen.

