

## STATIONS OF THE CROSS OF THE HOLY FACE

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### **PREPARATORY PRAYER**

O adorable Face of my Jesus, humbly prostrate in Thy presence, I prepare myself to contemplate Thee upon the path of Calvary, in the sufferings and humiliations which Thou hast endured for my sins. Inspire me with the same sentiments of faith, of love and of compassion, with which our Lady of sorrows, and the pious Veronica were overwhelmed. I purpose to compensate Thee, in as much as in me lies, for the sufferings and outrages which are caused Thee every day by blasphemers against Thy Name and by sinners who profane Sunday. Why cannot I, O Jesus, mingle my tears with Thine, and give Thee the whole of my blood in expiation for so many crimes? Penetrate me, at least, with the thoughts of Thy Divine Heart; cast upon my soul the light of Thy countenance, that, touched with the unction of Thy Spirit, it may draw forth abundantly treasures of grace and salvation, from out Thy sacred wounds.

### I

#### **Jesus is condemned to death.**

The sentence pronounced against our Saviour was as unjust as it was ignominious. He was led as a criminal before a pagan judge, He, the King of heaven, the sovereign judge of angels and of men! He was condemned to suffer the penalty of death as a factious man and a blasphemer, He, who was innocence and goodness itself.

Let us admire His perfect submission. According to sister Saint-Pierre, when Pilate pronounced this terrible sentence, the Face of Jesus preserved the serenity habitual to it, and lost nothing of its calm and sweetness. His adorable Face did not blush, because He knew that He was accomplishing the will of His Father, and that by submitting to this unjust death, He would obtain our salvation.

O Jesus! grant that whilst practising my faith I may never blush at Thy doctrine nor at Thine example, but that I may perform my duties with a calm and serene countenance, and in the peace of a good conscience, being unmoved by mockery, and not fearing the injustice of those who can kill the body but who can do nothing to the soul, so that hereafter, when I appear before Thy tribunal, Thou mayst not need to blush for me before the angels, and that I may be admitted into the number of Thine elect.

## II

### **Jesus is laden with his Cross.**

A double burden is laid on Jesus; first the heavy wood of His Cross, the instrument of his punishment, with which His executioners brutally load His shoulders, and secondly the ignominious burden of our iniquities, which He takes upon Himself in order to expiate them. The latter cross is the more painful; He feels the grief and the shame of it. His Face is sorrowfully bowed down, like that of a man in disgrace, laden with maledictions, condemned to bear a weight of ignominy. He blushes at the stigma inflicted on Him by the crimes with which He is covered. But as a great act of reparation is in question and one in which the glory

of His Father and our salvation are concerned, He lovingly accepts it all.

It is just, O Jesus! that I should bear the weight and the shame of my sins. Give me a contrite and humble heart; that interior disposition which the Prophet asked of Thee, and which Thou hast promised not to reject; that, appropriating to myself the merits of Thy adorable Face, I may make amends for the contempt I have shown for Thy law, and the shame my sins have caused Thee.

### III

#### **Jesus falls beneath the weight of His Cross.**

The Holy Face has already endured many outrages and sufferings. Here, it is a fresh outrage which is inflicted upon it; Jesus falls upon the ground, He wounds Himself by the violence of His fall, and when He rises, His august Face is soiled with mud, with dust and with blood, which excites the mocking laughter of the crowd, and the raillery of His enemies.

O Jesus! Thou dost thus expiate my weakness, my want of courage in bearing my cross, my criminal attachment to the pleasures and to the goods of this world, which are nothing more than a little mud and vile dust. Make me stronger, more mortified, more generous, in order that I may aspire more and more to the riches of grace and the eternal treasures which Thou dost promise me in Heaven.

## IV

### **Jesus meets His holy Mother.**

Our blessed Lady of Dolors here finds herself face to face with the Man of sorrows. The mother gazes on the Face of her Son. What an aspect it bears! No one else could have recognised Jesus! His beautiful and radiant Face is obscured, soiled, and like to that of a leper! The sight pierces the heart of the Blessed Virgin. She falls into the arms of the holy women who accompany her. On His side, Jesus has recognised His mother; their eyes have met. Those two souls, already so closely united, have found in their common anguish a more intense and still stronger element of attraction. They have embraced, clinging together as though they had been fused into one, to offer one and the same sacrifice, and to form but one and the same victim.

O Jesus! O Mary! admit me into the community of your sacrifice. May I contemplate you! May I love you! And may I imitate you! May I share in your sentiments and in your inmost feelings! May I never be separated from your trials, and your sufferings here below, in order that I may merit to be united with you for ever, and to see you face to face in eternity!

## V

### **The Cyrenean helps Jesus to carry His Cross.**

A pious stranger, who was passing by, comes to the aid of Jesus Christ. This unexpected auxiliary is not allowed to be with-out a recompense.

To show Him how grateful this service is to His Heart, Jesus turns from time to time towards him, and shows him His Face. Then, from that kind and grateful Face issues a ray of light, which touches the heart of the Cyrenean, enlightens him, inflames him, and strengthens him in the labour of love, which he has undertaken.

O Jesus! behold me ready to follow Thee, and to serve Thee. What obstacle could avail to hinder me?... The seductions of hell?... the mockery of the world?... the murmurs of the flesh and of the senses?... the attractions of pleasure?... Ah! to serve Thee is to reign. To aid Thee in Thy work of reparation is a happiness and a glory. Only, do Thou look upon me. One of Thy glances, falling from Thy adorable Face on the face of my poor soul, is worth more to me than an empire; it is a ray of celestial joy, it is Paradise itself.

## VI

### **A pious woman wipes the Face of Jesus.**

This courageous woman is a perfect pattern for the adorers of the outraged Face of Jesus. See how resolutely she advances, with a firm and intrepid heart, in spite of the disdain of the crowd and the brutality of the executioners. Arrived in the proximity of the Saviour, in presence of that obscured and disfigured Face, of which she, nevertheless, perceives the majesty and divine beauty, she feels herself to be moved with compassion, respect and love. Detaching the soft white veil made of fine Egyptian linen, which covers her face, she applies it to, and spreads it gently over the Face of Christ. She wipes it and solaces it. It is more than a homage which she renders it, it is a real service which soothes its sufferings, refreshes it and revivifies it. We know what was the reward which Jesus granted her. He left her, when she

retired from Him, that precious impression of His Face possessed by the Vatican and venerated by the whole world, that veil of which we here possess an authentic facsimile, and which will for ever be the object of a sacred devotion.

O Jesus! I envy the happiness of that heroic woman. Grant that I may procure for Thee the like homage of reparation. But what Thou didst for Veronica will not suffice for me. Grant me, in addition, that Thy divine features may be impressed upon my soul, disfigured and obscured with sin. Render to it its first innocence and all the splendour of thy grace.

## VII

### **Jesus falls on the ground a second time.**

Jesus, like to a victim bearing the wood for the sacrifice, is a prey to weakness and exhaustion. He falls down a second time with His Face to the ground, being un-able to rise. He remains unaided, stretched out, powerless, and given up to the tender mercy of His executioners, who, furious and impatient, raise Him up again, while inflicting heavy blows upon Him. His meek and modest Face is not spared; they find a cruel pleasure in adding fresh wounds to it and making it bleed still more.

Behold the image of the blasphemer and the impious who make game of the seeming weakness of the Church, who outrage it in its doctrine and who persecute it in its ministers. To outrage the Church, to outrage the Holy Father, to outrage priests and religious, to outrage the servants of God and good Catholics, is to strike Jesus in the Face, to wound His adorable countenance.

O God! be our protector, behold the insolent pride of our enemies. Look on the Face of Thy Christ which they outrage. And Thou, adorable Face, show Thyself to the Heavenly Father, disarm His anger; let the Church be delivered and triumphant; let blasphemers themselves be saved.

## VIII

### **Jesus consoles the daughters of Israel who follow him.**

Those daughters of Israel are the picture of Christian souls devoted to good works, who, with the eyes of faith, seeing Jesus in the poor, Jesus in His suffering members, Jesus in the priest, Jesus in the Eucharist, Jesus in the Church, are ready to serve Him on all occasions, and to follow Him generously, even along the path to Calvary. The holy women receive a very sweet recompense. Jesus pauses, turns His adorable Face towards them, and through the cloud of sorrow with which it is covered, bestows on them a smile of approbation together with words of consolation and holy counsel.

O Jesus! inspire us with zeal for good works and the heroic courage of holy love. We do not desire, in compensation, either the treasures of this world, or earthly consolations; grant to us only some of the spiritual joys and instructive inspirations which flow from Thy Face upon those who contemplate it and do it homage. Shed them more and more upon us; grant that we may make haste to walk along the way of perfection and of salvation.

## IX

### **Jesus falls for the third time.**

It is for the third time that our Lord inflicts on His adorable Face this species of suffering and of humiliation. The first fall was occasioned by the weight and the shame of our sins, the second was caused by our weakness; in this His third fall, He expiates our discouragement, those cowardly and criminal weaknesses which ruin souls and lead them little by little into the abyss of despair. Reaching Calvary and perceiving the place of His punishment, Jesus immediately thinks of the innumerable poor sinners who, failing in faith and in confidence, refuse to have recourse to the sacraments of His Church, render His Passion and His death useless, and cast themselves in despair into eternal misery. This thought fills Him with profound sorrow and cruel depression. As in His agony in the garden, He falls prostrate on His Face, bathed in sweat, exhausted and almost dying.

O Jesus! Thy weakness is my strength and my support. I have recourse to the merits of Thy Holy Face, have pity on me, preserve me from despair. No, whatever may happen to me, I will not be discouraged any more, I will not despair. The sight of Thy adorable Face, the symbol of mercy and of reparation, will be my hope for ever.

## X

### **Jesus is despoiled of His raiment.**

Jesus is here the figure of the first sinner. After his fall, Adam was ashamed of himself; he endeavoured to hide from the eyes of God and to flee far away from His irritated Face. This is the reason why Jesus submits to the ignominious spoliation which His executioners inflict upon Him by tearing off His garments, and above all by snatching away that virginal robe, without seam, which had been woven for Him by his august mother. Then Jesus closes His eyes through shame and sorrow. His adorable Face is moved and troubled. He longs to withdraw from the gaze of His Heavenly Father.

O Jesus! rather turn away Thy eyes from the sight of my sins, do not look upon the sad state to which my soul is reduced. Give back to it its robe of innocence and the beauty of grace, in order that with youth renewed and worthily clothed, it may more perfectly reproduce Thy features, and rejoice Thy eyes.

## XI

### **Jesus is nailed to the Cross.**

Stretched upon the tree of sacrifice, Jesus holds out His hands and His feet. The executioners transpierce them and nail them to the wood by dint of violent and brutal efforts. The blood gushes forth and flows abundantly. In vain He seeks repose by leaning His Head upon the Cross. The thorns of His crown, which the executioners have left upon Him, and which He will keep until the end, sink more and more deeply into His flesh and make Him suffer dreadful

torments. His adorable Face, upon this bed of ignominy, nevertheless maintains its serenity and peace; it is turned towards heaven and pleads our cause. Jesus does not curse, He does not murmur; He prays, He adores, He loves, He suffers sweetly and in silence. The expression of His Face is that of the Lamb; He is really the Lamb of God, giving His blood and His life to efface the sins of the world.

Who then can henceforth separate us from the love of a God so good ?... Persecution ?... The sword ?... Death ?... With our eyes fixed on the loving Face of the Divine Crucified, let us say with the apostle, "I am nailed to the Cross with Christ my Saviour, I will live and die in Him."

## XII

### **Jesus dies on the Cross.**

Let us contemplate the agonised Face of the Redeemer, raised on the cross, suspended between heaven and earth. Before breathing its last sigh, that merciful Face raises its eyes to the Heavenly Father, imploring of Him our pardon, "Father, forgive them." Then it bends down towards Mary, whose children Jesus makes us in His stead. "Behold Thy children." Then towards St John, the beloved disciple, giving to him the mother, who is also to be ours. "Behold thy mother." Lastly it turns towards the crucified thief on his right, promising him an immediate entrance, together with the just, into heaven. "To day Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It fixes its gaze upon its executioners themselves, not in order to curse them, but to bless them and to ask for them the grace of conversion and of salvation which it obtains.

O dying Face of Jesus, so mercifully inclined upon the Cross, I implore Thee as thy disciple and a child of the Church, above all as a sinner, to give me a share in the benediction of that supreme moment; do not refuse me the greatest blessing of all, even though I am utterly unworthy of that sweet kiss of peace which shall reconcile me with Thy Father, and assure me His friendship forever.

### XIII

#### **Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given up to His Mother.**

Our Lady of sorrows knows the worth of the incomparable treasure which is confided to her. She contemplates, one after another, the wounds of the Divine Crucified, His hands and His feet pierced by the nails, His open side, His head torn and wounded. But the tender eyes of the Virgin rest more especially upon the Face of the Redeemer, cold and inanimate as it is now. She gazes on His dim eyes, His closed mouth, His pale features, that mute and insensible physiognomy which death has disfigured, but in which the glory of the Divinity and the splendour of the Father are, as always, reflected. What a touching and sublime contemplation! And she who contemplates Him thus, is it a mother? Is it an archangel? Is it a seraphim? It is all these in Mary, and it is something far more. Never was such holy reparatory adoration offered to the Face of Jesus.

O Blessed Virgin, our Lady of the Seven Dolours, associate me with your sentiments, obtain for me that by means of an assiduous and profound meditation, I may penetrate more and more deeply into the hidden mysteries of that adorable Face, in order that I may draw from it, for

myself and for the souls who are dear to me, the treasures of merit and of satisfaction contained in it.

## XIV

### **Jesus is placed in the sepulchre.**

The disciples and the holy women embalm the body of their dear Master. They take care to wrap it in a white winding sheet, and upon His adorable Face they reverently place a shroud which covers and entirely conceals it. This sepulchral shroud will preserve the impress of the inanimate Face of the Saviour, and will, later on, become an object greatly venerated by the Church. And now let us also, draw near to the tomb of Jesus. Let us enter therein in thought and in heart. Let us do homage to His winding sheet, to the spices used for His sepulchre. Let us above all honour that precious shroud enriched by the Holy Face with a privilege similar to that which decorates the veil of Veronica.

O adorable Face of my Jesus, hide me in Thy sacred wounds and in Thy divine obscurity. May I be of the number of those of whom the Prophet King says, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Face, far from all earthly sounds and worldly agitations! May my dwelling be in Thy tomb and in Thy tabernacle! May I hide myself there, may I die there, may I be buried there with Thee, through a mortified and annihilated life, so that I may merit hereafter to share in the joy of Thy Face, when it shall shine in the splendour of the resurrection.

### **On Returning to the Altar.**

O amiable Face of my Jesus, I thank Thee for the graces with which Thou hast favoured me during this exercise. Attract me more and more towards Thee. Ravish my heart in order that I may never cease to contemplate Thee, to love Thee, and to render to Thee the homage which is Thy due. I consecrate to Thee my life. Whilst waiting until I can follow Thee once more upon the way to Calvary, I will apply myself to walk in Thy presence, and to make, of every one of my actions, an offering of praise and of reparation. O adorable Face, be my treasure in my needs, my strength in weakness, my light in doubts, my consolation and my guide in this valley of tears. My supreme recompense will be that which Thou hast promised me of seeing Thee hereafter as Thou art, and of sweetly enjoying Thy ineffable perfections throughout eternity. Amen.

