



Solidarity Way of the Cross

Lent 2017



WOMEN AT THE HEART OF CHANGE

The Way of the Cross offers us the opportunity to accompany Jesus in his march toward death and his burial. This was not a defeat, however, as death had no power over him. Jesus the Christ is risen. He is living.

Like Jesus, every day, women are carrying the Cross in our world. Women of courage denounce the injustices, inequalities, violence, abuses and contempt that burden them. They look toward a better future and continue their march with hope. This Way of the Cross offers you an opportunity to show your solidarity with women and men who are working to build a world of dignity, respect, justice, peace and equality.

"As far as personal rights are concerned, there is an urgent need to achieve real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic State. This is a matter of justice but also of necessity." Saint John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, June 29, 1995, n. 4.

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First Station
Jesus is condemned to death

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!'" (John 19:15)

Meditation

The loving look of Mary is a comfort for Jesus as he faces the crowd that demands his death. He knows that he can count on the love and support of his mother. Mothers of the whole world, never underestimate the power of your love for your children. Even in the darkest moments, this love, like the love of Jesus, continues to radiate and fill your children.

Quote

"Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves." Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, n. 288.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, help us to honour our mothers who have carried us, sometimes with great difficulty, and who have so often given us the courage to move forward.

Second Station
Jesus carries his cross

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull." (John 19:16-17)

Meditation

Jesus begins his walk on the road to Calvary with the humility of one who has chosen to go forward because of his love for humanity. Let us think about the cross of exclusion, oppression and injustice being carried, relentlessly and collectively, by women from so many countries. Let's look at Afghanistan where, at the height of the war, schools that teach girls were a common target for violent attacks. Even today, despite progress made in

educating girls in that country, they remain largely left behind compared to boys.

Quote

"Education is essential to unlocking human potential. . . . Improving access to education for women will not only redound to a fuller realization of their potential and greater professional opportunities, but is also a key to better educated future generations." Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Holy See's Apostolic Nuncio to the United Nations, Statement before the Commission on the Status of Women, March 18th, 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray silently for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, open our eyes and our hearts to the reality of Afghan girls and women, for whom access to education remains difficult because of social norms that do not respect their fundamental rights.

Third Station
Jesus falls for the first time

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Meditation

The women following Jesus hold their breath when they see him fall under the weight of the cross. When they see Jesus get back up, they know, deep in their hearts, that his suffering has meaning. Just like Jesus, Indigenous girls and women in Canada also carry the burden of all forms of violence, yet they constantly get back up to demand justice. Are we listening to their demands?

Quote

I think of the "women overwhelmed by the burden of life and by the tragedy of violence, of women enslaved by the oppression of the powerful, of children forced into inhuman labour, of women obliged to surrender in body and in spirit to the greed of men. May they begin as soon as possible a life of peace, of justice, of love." Pope Francis, Angelus of August 15th, 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray silently for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, help us to be attentive to the thirst for justice of Indigenous women, here and elsewhere, and to support them in their demands.



Fourth Station
Jesus meets his mother

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.” (John 19:26-27)

Meditation

When Mary’s gaze meets that of Jesus, she feels the intensity of her son’s pain within herself. Yet, even at that moment, he cares about his mother’s well-being. How can she accompany her child on the path of suffering and death, when her whole being howls with pain and injustice? How does one accept the unacceptable? Can we imagine the suffering of mothers who so tenderly rock their children, who watch them with hope and pride as they grow, and then see them torn from their arms by war?

Quote

“[Mary] is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God’s love.” Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, n. 286.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, infinite goodness, salve the broken heart of mothers all over the world who see their children suffer and die because of war.

Fifth Station
Simon helps Jesus to carry his cross

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

“As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.” (Luke 23:26)

Meditation

A group of women accompany Jesus on his climb to Calvary. Injustice is a cross borne too often by women alone because of certain discriminatory laws. The arrival of Simon reminds us that even in the darkest hours, we are never alone. Who accompanies victims of genital mutilation in their suffering and their thirst for emancipation? Think of those girls and women who see their dignity, integrity, health and sometimes even their lives threatened by unacceptable customs.

Quote

“Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated. . . . I think of the reprehensible genital mutilation of women practiced in some cultures, but also of their lack of equal access to dignified work and roles of decision-making.” Pope Francis, *The Joy of Love*, n. 54.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, give us the perseverance to accompany the women who are struggling to change laws, customs and practices that keep them in a situation of inequality.

Sixth Station
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

“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.” (Isaiah 53:3)

Meditation

Veronica cannot stifle the suffering that besets her heart at the sight of Jesus. Strengthened by all the love she has for him, she decides to brave the soldiers and push through the crowd to approach him. With a very simple gesture born of infinite kindness, Veronica wipes the mutilated face of her Saviour and reminds us of the inherent strength found in courage. Let us think about all those courageous women who, like Veronica, brave the storms of life. Let us open our hearts to the women who care for our children, our sick, our elderly, yet whose work is undervalued and underpaid.

Quote

"Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights. Even so, we constantly witness among them impressive examples of daily heroism in defending and protecting their vulnerable families." Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, n. 212.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, provide support for all the women who courageously brave opposition, hostility and violence so that they can go to meet you. We pray that the love they bear for you may illuminate our hearts and allow us to follow your path of compassion.

Seventh Station

Jesus falls for the second time

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Meditation

The women who follow Jesus, who see him fall again under the weight he is carrying, suffer in their flesh. Their hearts fill with hope when he gets back up. Jesus continues his march out of love for humanity. Every day, millions of women see their families suffer because of war. These women — such as Hayfa, a 32-year-old Syrian widow and mother of four — find the strength to rise up and support their families and communities with love and courage. Hayfa tells us: "A woman in Syria is not weak. She is capable of doing everything she can to preserve her dignity."

Quote

"A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments,

witnesses of tenderness, dedication and moral strength." Pope Francis, General Audience, January 7th, 2015.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, give us the strength to support the women of Syria and South Sudan whose lives have been shattered by wars that are tearing their countries apart, but who are nonetheless messengers of peace and hope.

Eighth Station

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.'" (Luke 23:28)

Meditation

During the exchange with the women of Jerusalem, Jesus implores them to worry about their families above all else. When they hear these words, do these women feel the blessing of having children and being able to raise them in love and peace? Let us pay tribute to all the women who dare to rise up to defend their role as mothers in the face of injustice and domination. Let us keep in our hearts all those who do not have access to the blessing of giving birth or must do so in conditions that put their lives and those of their children at risk.

Quote

"Transcending the established norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way he honoured the dignity which women have always possessed according to God's plan and in his love." Saint John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, June 29, 1995, n. 3.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, give us the courage to support the women who seek to participate fully in fulfilling the potential of their families and ensure that all women have access to dignified and safe conditions in which to give birth.

Ninth Station

Jesus falls for the third time

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4)

Meditation

The women feel great sorrow at the exhaustion of Jesus. Has God forsaken him? When he gets up, their hearts are illuminated by a conviction: Jesus is sacrificed for the salvation of humanity. Let us open our hearts to the resilience of women who for generations have been working to have their rights recognized. We can only imagine their inner strength, and also the exhaustion they must sometimes feel from confronting injustice.

Quote

Women face "various forms of exclusion and exploitation," in particular when they "are deprived of economic resources and restricted in their ability to exercise their political rights and participation. . . . Such multi-faceted violence and exclusion [is] a major impediment to integral human development." Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Holy See's Apostolic Nuncio to the United Nations, speech before the United Nations General Assembly, October 10th, 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, teach us to take the side of marginalized and excluded women so that their dignity will be recognized and respected.



Photo: Caritas Internationalis

Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take." (Mark 15:24)

Meditation

The soldiers coldly undress Jesus under the gaze of Mary, who shudders at the sight of her son's battered body. The humiliation of Jesus, stripped of his dignity, wounds her deeply in her very flesh. In the same way, humanity as a whole suffers when any woman is abused, raped, humiliated and dehumanized. Do we hear the call for help from our sisters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are the victims of violent and systematic sexual attacks?

Quote

"We must condemn sexual violence against women and remove the barriers that prevent their full integration into social, political and economic life." Pope Francis' prayer intentions for May 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, give us the courage to defend our sisters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo afflicted by sexual violence and to support them in their demands to put an end to these violations of their person and their rights.

Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." (John 19:25)

Meditation

Can we imagine Mary Magdalene who, at the foot of the cross, hears the dull thud of the hammer, driving nails into the flesh of her Lord? In silence she bears the suffering caused by the sight of the crucified body of Jesus and remains with him in his last hours. Even today, many women are reduced to silence. Just think about

the thousands of silent victims of human trafficking. The vast majority of them are girls and women who are used for sexual exploitation. Uprooted from their families, and sometimes from their countries, they live, invisible, under the yoke of their torturers. Will we be able to speak out loud and clear for their freedom?

Quote

“At the foot of the cross, at the supreme hour of the new creation, Christ led us to Mary. He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother, and our people read in this maternal image all the mysteries of the Gospel. The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood. Mary, who brought him into the world with great faith, also accompanies ‘the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’ (Rev. 12:17).” Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, n. 285.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, forgive us if we have ignored the voices of women. Help us to listen to them and make it so our footsteps will fall into step with theirs in their march for justice and equality.

Twelfth Station Jesus dies on the cross

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

“When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30)

Meditation

The women accompanying Jesus saw in him hope for peace and salvation for their people. Thus it was with great sadness that they watched him die on the cross. Think of the women in the world who lose their loved ones and their livelihoods because of conflict. They do not escape the brutal acts that wars give rise to, especially since women are generally the ones who stay behind to protect the home and care for the children and the elderly. In 2017, women continue to be largely under-represented in peace and reconciliation processes. If their voices are not taken into account, how can they contribute to building a peace that represents their reality and responds to the aspirations of their families?

Quote

“The recognition of the vital role of women in preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacekeeping missions and peace-building processes, as well as their growing pres-

ence in policy-making bodies and advocacy groups, must be translated into action to unleash skills and capacities that allow women to bring order out of chaos, community out of division, and peace out of conflict.” Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Holy See’s Apostolic Nuncio to the United Nations, Statement before the Commission on the Status of Women, March 18th, 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, we ask you to help women who are affected by conflict to always keep their hopes alive and that they might be able to participate as equal partners in peace processes.

Thirteenth Station Jesus is taken down from the cross

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

“After these things, Joseph of Arimathea . . . asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body.” (John 19:38)

Meditation

The women who had traveled with Jesus since Galilee observe with emotion Jesus’ body being taken down from the cross. They surround Mary, who holds tightly onto her son’s body for a long time; she understands that the events that had been announced to her are now completed. In the painful solitude of mourning, the women support her and share her suffering. Women have always been able to come together to discuss, to support one another, to dream, to build and sometimes to cry. Faced with the indifference of their families, their friends, their communities and sometimes the world, in the face of exclusion and injustice, the strength of women radiates every time they come together.

Quote

“[W]ith her pierced heart, [Mary] agrees in that painful moment to give birth to all of us. And from that moment on she became our Mother . . . the one who takes care of us and is not ashamed of us: she defends us.” Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, September 15th, 2016.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, in the face of the globalization of indifference, teach us to support women who rise above their grief to seek justice and the fulfillment of your will.

Fourteenth Station Jesus is laid in the tomb

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

"The women who had come with him from Galilee . . . saw the tomb and how his body was laid." (Luke 23:55)

Meditation

The women make sure that Jesus receives an honourable burial. How many mothers have to carry their children to the tomb? And how many of them, like the mothers of refugees who have disappeared at sea, cannot accompany their children to their final resting place? Every day, hundreds of women try to flee their country with their children, often in dangerous conditions, hoping to offer them a better life. Can we imagine their anguish as they contemplate the road awaiting them, and their suffering when faced with the death of those they hold most dear?

Quote

"Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism. 'Individual' means 'what cannot be divided.' Mothers, instead, 'divide' themselves, from the moment they bear a child to give him to the world and help him grow. It is they, mothers, who most hate war, which kills their children. Many times I have thought of those mothers who receive the letter: 'I inform you that your son has fallen in defense of his homeland. . . .' The poor women! How a mother suffers! It is they who testify to the beauty of life." Pope Francis, General Audience, January 7th, 2015.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, make us instruments of solidarity so that women do not have to weep for their children who are victims of war and indifference.

Fifteenth Station Jesus rises from the dead

Celebrant

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



Scripture

"Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." (Mark 16:9)

Meditation

The resurrection of Jesus calls upon us to live differently. Jesus chose Mary Magdalene to reveal the good news that he is alive. Are we listening to the good news of peace and hope brought by women? Do we know how to recognize the true value of the paths that they open for us? Women from all over the world are working to convey faith and hope despite the obstacles and prejudice they face daily. They are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our grandmothers, our aunts and our friends. Let us pay tribute to them, and let us thank them, from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for having given us so much and continuing to do so, thank you for what you are, and thank you for what you bring to the Church and the whole world.

Quote

"But why, Francis asked, 'is it primarily women who pass on the faith?' The answer is found once again in the testimony of the Blessed Virgin: 'Simply because the one who brought us Jesus is a woman. It is the way that Jesus chose. He wanted to have a mother: even the gift of faith passes through women,' as it passed 'to Jesus through Mary.'" Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, January 26th, 2015.

Prayer

Celebrant

Let us pray in silence for a few moments.

Let us pray together

Jesus, lead us in your path, and open our hearts to the wisdom and love of the women who illuminate our lives, our families and the ways toward peace.

Amen



Photo: Caritas Internationalis



“Hope means to keep living amid desperation and to keep humming in the darkness. Hoping is knowing that there is love, it is trust in tomorrow, it is falling asleep and waking again when the sun rises. In the midst of a gale at sea, it is to discover land. In the eyes of another, it is to see that you are understood. As long as there is still hope there will also be prayer. And you will be held in God’s hands.”

Henri Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, Ave Maria Press, 1995.

