

## JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

It is after ten in the morning. The trial is moving to its close. There has been no conclusive evidence. The judge knows that his enemies have handed Jesus over to him out of envy, and he tries an absurd move: a choice between Barabbas, a criminal accused of robbery and murder, and Jesus, who says he is Christ. The people choose Barabbas, and Pilate exclaims: *What am I to do then, with Jesus? (Mt 27:22).*

They all reply: *Crucify him!*

The judge insists: *Why, what evil has he done?*

Once again they respond, shouting: *Crucify him! Crucify him!*

Pilate is frightened by the growing uproar. So he sends for water, and washes his hands in the sight of the people, saying as he does so: *I am innocent of the blood of this just man; it is your affair (Mt 27:24).*

And having had Jesus scourged, he hands him over to them to be crucified. Their frenzied and possessed throats fall silent. As if God had already been vanquished.

I see you, Lord, already beaten up and bruised by betrayal from those you still call friends. And I watch the authorities wash their hands of the injustice, and I hear the frenzy of news hit the streets like a poor game of telephone.

Seeing you like this makes me recall the times that I've hungrily set my ear to hear the latest and then felt that wave of self satisfaction by passing along the scoop. I love that feeling of being 'in the know'. Exaggerations and embellishments add to my own emotional perceptions and color the latest intel with fiery red. Names and accusations, guesses about others' intentions, conclusions that I'm morally superior to others all taint the words and label them as 'gossip'.

**Kneeling:** Lord, first of all, I have to ask: how could you forgive me for such disloyalty? I don't understand your mercy, but I still beg for it now. Holy Spirit, wake me up to your presence when I'm about to gossip, and free me from its trap. Grant me the fortitude to choose the satisfaction of pleasing God instead of the social satisfaction of gossip. Let the telephone chain end with me. I go to Mary, my mother, for guidance.

*Hail Mary...*



## **JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS**

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Offering no resistance, Jesus gives himself up to the execution of the sentence. He is to be spared nothing, and upon his shoulders falls the weight of the ignominious cross. But, through love, the Cross is to become the throne from which he reigns.

The people of Jerusalem and those from abroad who have come for the Passover push their way through the city streets, to catch a passing glimpse of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. There is a tumult of voices, and, now and then, short silences: perhaps when Jesus fixes his eyes on someone.

I see you, Lord, as you take up your cross. I hear you say, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me (Mt 16: 24)". I also hear those false judgments against you, as if you are a blasphemer claiming divinity.

Seeing you like this makes me think about the fact that you are actually totally innocent, even more innocent than a newborn babe. It helps me to consider your innocence, in fact, by picturing you when you were newly born, the Word made flesh, 100% needy, in a stable, and being cared for by loving parents in order to survive this vicious world. I do not deserve that you came to live among us, making it easier for me to choose to walk with you. I thus help you carry your cross, which is now my cross as well.

**Kneeling:** Lord, guard me against the prince of lies, who has his PhD in half truths and convinces me too easily that there must be fire wherever and whenever there is that smoke of rumors. Just because rumors go viral about you betraying Jewish laws does not make those rumors true. In fact, I now make this act of faith in you: I believe that you are God, the One God, the Triune God, and that you are indeed the fulfillment of the Law. I go to Mary, my mother, to show me a path forward in faith.

*Hail Mary...*



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## JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

The worn out body of Jesus staggers now beneath the huge Cross. His most loving Heart can barely summon up another breath of life for his poor wounded limbs.

To right and left, Our Lord sees the multitude moving around like sheep without a shepherd. He could call them one by one by their names, by our names. There they are, those who were fed at the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, those who were cured of their ailments, those he taught by the lakeside, on the mountain and in the porticoes of the Temple.

A sharp pain pierces the soul of Jesus; Our Lord falls to the ground exhausted.

I see you, Lord, as you fall down. You have taken all sins, my sins included, upon you and the weight of so many offenses against your Father's beneficent will drag you low to the ground.

Seeing you like this makes me recall my many falls, my many sins, most of which are repeat offenses over my short lifetime. What seemed easier at the time (giving into laziness, countless hours of vain daydreaming, blaming my parents, teacher or sibling for something that was primarily my own doing) comes into clear focus now as the harder way forward for me. Obeying your Father's gracious will and asking for your generous help to do the right thing now seems to be the easier path, the lighter yoke.

**Kneeling:** Lord, I've been taught that sin carries its own punishment. In the classroom of life experience, I've learned about those negative repercussions of my choosing to offend you. Help me to learn from life's many teachers: my parents, my school teachers and mentors, and also from the Holy Spirit who molds me to be like you through the circumstances and events of my day-to-day life. I go to Mary, my mother, to teach me to be docile enough to learn from life's many teachers.

*Hail Mary...*



# JESUS IS MET BY HIS BLESSED MOTHER

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

No sooner has Jesus risen from his first fall than he meets his Blessed Mother, standing by the wayside where He is passing.

With immense love Mary looks at Jesus, and Jesus at his Mother. Their eyes meet, and each heart pours into the other its own deep sorrow. Mary's soul is steeped in bitter grief, the grief of Jesus Christ.

*O all you that pass by the way, look and see, was there ever a sorrow to compare with my sorrow! (Lam 1:12).*

But no one notices, no one pays attention; only Jesus.

*Simeon's prophecy has been fulfilled: thy own soul a sword shall pierce (Lk 2:35).*

I see you, Lord, being consoled by your Blessed Mother, the Immaculate Conception. I see how you treat your mother with utmost reverence, respect and unconditional love.

Seeing you like this makes me wish that my mom was immaculate, but she is as imperfect as I am. Many times, she gets under my skin and makes me want to rebel. But if I am honest with myself, then an imitation of this scene would mean that I have to become a better child, more like you, showing gratitude for everything my mother has sacrificed and continues to sacrifice for my sake.

**Kneeling:** Lord, I imagine that by the time I'm 33, like you were at your Passion, I'll know how to appreciate my parents. Wake me up to the opportunities that you give me now, at my age, to express my gratitude and my love to each of my parents, before it is too late. Lend me as much patience as I need to love my parents, knowing that they are not perfect. You know that they're not perfect and yet you still love them unconditionally and forgive so readily. I go to Mary, your mother, to learn to voice an apology to my own mother.

*Hail Mary...*

## SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Jesus is exhausted. His footsteps become more and more unsteady, and the soldiers are in a hurry to be finished. So, when they are going out of the city through the Judgement Gate, they take hold of a man who was coming in from a farm, a man called Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, and they force him to carry the Cross of Jesus (cf. Mk 15:21).

In the whole context of the Passion, this help does not add up to very much. But for Jesus, a smile, a word, a gesture, a little bit of love is enough for him to pour out his grace bountifully on the soul of his friend.

I see you, Lord, accepting help from Simon, the outsider from Cyrene. You could continue to carry your cross by yourself, but your humble spirit leads you to accept help graciously.

Seeing you like this makes me recall all the times I err on the side of self-sufficiency. Sometimes I cheat rather than ask the right person for help. I also see how the crowd stare at Simon and this makes me recall the times when I join in 'canceling' an outsider. At times a classmate acts or looks somehow 'uncool' and my clique of friends excludes him or her from sitting with us or from trying to join our conversation. You've seen me, Lord, when I've literally stepped to close a circle from a new student standing there, to leave him or her on the outside.

**Kneeling:** Lord, forgive me from 'canceling' you when I reject your presence in a fellow child of God. Holy Spirit, grant me your gifts of fortitude and understanding to be open to friendship with everyone, to be open to finding your divine goodness in every person I encounter, and most especially in the outsider. Holy Spirit, help me to share the life and love of Jesus with those around me

this year. I go to Mary, my mother, to learn to see each child of God with the eyes of her Son.

*Hail Mary...*



## **VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

A woman, Veronica by name, makes her way through the crowd, with a white linen cloth folded in her hands, and with this she reverently wipes the face of Jesus. Our Lord leaves the impression of his Holy Face on the three parts of that veil.

The beloved face of Jesus, that had smiled upon children and was transfigured with glory on Mount Thabor, is now, as it were, concealed by suffering. But this suffering is our purification; the sweat and the blood, which disfigure and tarnish his features, serve to cleanse us.

I see you, Lord, express such gratitude to Veronica as she wipes blood, sweat and tears from your face and onto her veil. That veil thus becomes a treasure, a relic.

Seeing you like this makes me wonder at how infrequently I console you, how little penance I offer you. I call myself your disciple, your follower, and yet most of my prayers and thoughts are still focused on myself. Seeing how the crowds shy away from Veronica makes me think of the time I shy away from a potential friend just because he or she is somehow walking to the beat of a different drum than me.

**Kneeling:** Lord, in your encouraging presence, I ask myself: how much do I dare to walk to the beat of your drum, regardless of what others would think of me? How could I follow in step to your expectations of me, rather than the expectations of popular crowds and today's fads? Is there anything I'm doing to please my friends or my girl- or boyfriend that, at the same time, is not pleasing to you? Holy Spirit, grant me your gift of counsel to discern how I can be more myself and better follow my own conscience. I go to Mary, my mother, as a model of penance.

*Hail Mary...*



## JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Outside the walls of the city, the body of Jesus again gives way through weakness, and he falls a second time, amid the shouts of the crowd and the rough handling of the soldiers.



Infirmity of body and bitterness of soul have caused Jesus to fall again. All the sins of men –mine too– weigh down on his Sacred Humanity.

I see you, Lord, as you fall for a second time. Despite the addition of Simon's strong arms and legs, and despite the consolations offered by your Mother and by Veronica, you still fall again! And then you get up to begin again.

Seeing you get up again makes me think of all the grace you give me to live purity and yet how many times I fall into sins of impurity. I ask your forgiveness for any lust-filled thoughts or actions I may have committed by myself or with another person. I ask you to share your temperance with me, and also for more fortitude so I can begin again.

**Kneeling:** Lord, help me to communicate charitably with my friends and girl- or boyfriends, so that all my relationships in life can be more pure. To include you as part of each relationship means to include charity in each relationship. Holy Spirit, wake me up when I'm imagining something unworthy of my dignity, or watching or listening to something that is an occasion of sin. And bring me, Lord, to that plane of purity that is bigger than human sexuality, namely to do everything with greater purity of intention, to do each act primarily for the glory of God. I go to Mary, my mother, as I beg for more purity.

*Hail Mary...*



## JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Among the people watching Our Lord as he passes by are a number of women who are unable to restrain their compassion and break into tears...

But Our Lord wishes to channel their weeping towards a more supernatural motive, and he invites them to weep for sins, which are the cause of the Passion and which will draw down the rigour of divine justice: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children... For if they do these things to the green wood, what shall be done to the dry?* (Lk 23:28,31)

I see you, Lord, as you console the weeping women of Jerusalem. I see the unconditional love with which you look each woman in the eyes; even through her tears, you see her as a person.

Seeing you like this makes me think how bad I am at looking people in the eyes and of giving each person my full attention. Seeing those women makes me think about how easily I too get drawn into drama, instead of giving my full attention to the #1 drama in human history, which is that you are giving your life for us. I too often choose my own drama and foment the drama through gossip and sometimes with unnecessary tears to manipulate my parents or teachers to give into my emotional desires.

**Kneeling:** Lord, grant me the grace of seeing each person with your loving eyes, as you see them. Help me to recognize each person as made in your image and likeness. Help me to serve you in each person I encounter this year. And please, let's together de-escalate the drama whenever possible. Let my tears be tears of joy for finding you gazing at me, or let them be tears of sorrow for when I offend you. I go to Mary, my mother, to weep in ways that help save souls.

*Hail Mary...*



# JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Our Lord falls for the third time, on the slope leading up to Calvary, with only forty or fifty paces between him and the summit. Jesus can no longer stay on his feet: his strength has failed him, and he lies on the ground in utter exhaustion.

I see you, Lord, as you fall for a third and final time. Even with Simon's help, it takes you an awfully long time to get back up. I also see the expression on Simon's face, eager to push alongside you. It looks like he's doing all the work, but I know he could never do that without you beside him. Maybe it's you who accompanies him.

Seeing you like this makes me think of all the many hours I spend pushing papers and trying to study. I realize now that the value of my work and studies comes from doing it beside you and for your sake. Just like Simon, who was already on his way home from a long day, I often think that I don't have time to spend with you. In the end, my time with you is what gives purpose and meaning to everything else I do today, including my studies.

**Kneeling:** Lord, help me to make time each day to spend alongside you, in prayer and in work transformed into prayer. Holy Spirit, grant me the strength to stop working when I should stop, and to push harder to work well when it's better that I push. Help me to avoid activism, by finding the one thing necessary in being with Christ. I go to Mary, my mother, to remind me to set aside time to pray.

*Hail Mary...*



# JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

The soldiers strip Christ of his garments. *From the soles of his feet to the top of his head, there is nothing healthy in him: wounds and bruises and swelling sores. They are not bound up, nor dressed, nor anointed with oil (Is 1:6).*

The executioners take his garments and divide them into four parts. But the cloak is without seam, so they say: *It would be better not to tear it, but let us cast lots for it to see whose it shall be (Jn 19:24).*

Thus, Scripture is again fulfilled: *They divided my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots (Ps 21:19).*

I see you, Lord, as the soldiers strip you of that tunic Mary made for you. In the act, they rip away some of your skin that had become glued to your garment by dried blood.

Seeing you like this makes me think of how I place excessive value on clothes, accessories, and the stuff I own. I would have to count the hours by dozens, or hundreds, to tally up the time I've spent on such vanities, including scrolling through images on screens as well as looking at myself in the mirror. How little time, in contrast, I spend pondering what you think about me, how much you love me, how you've made me so beautifully and thus so beautiful.

**Kneeling:** Lord, I thank you for the bodily person you've made me, for making me just as I am. And, I'm sorry for all the petitions when I've asked you to have made me more like someone else instead. Help me to express myself well and to communicate my dignity to those around me, so as to share more of your good will with them. Holy Spirit, help me to go deep in my understanding of myself; don't let me settle for superficiality. And, wake me up when I fall into that terrible vice of envy, when I find myself comparing myself to anyone else. I go to Mary, my mother, who is a good mother to me, just as I am.

*Hail Mary...*

## JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Now they are crucifying Our Lord, and with him two thieves, one on his right and one on his left. Meanwhile, Jesus says: *Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Lk 23:34).*

It is Love that has brought Jesus to Calvary. And once on the Cross, all his gestures and all his words are of love, a love both calm and strong.

With a gesture befitting an Eternal Priest, without father or mother, without lineage (cf. *Heb 7:3*), he opens his arms to the whole human race.

With the hammerblows with which Jesus is being nailed, there resound the prophetic words of Holy Scripture: *They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones, and they stare and gloat over me (Ps 21:17-18).*

I see you, Lord, as they drive nails through your flesh and bone. What could possibly relieve such pain?! Yet, you offer no protest to each blow; so great is your love for souls, for my soul! I know that you have suffered and died, as if just for me.

Seeing you like this makes me tear up to think of all those biting remarks I've made that tear away at someone's reputation and dignity. At the time, I tend to glory in sounding so clever. The price of a sarcastic comment hardly seems worth it now.

**Kneeling:** Lord, grant me a share in the fruit of the Holy Spirit called kindness. Kindness is not a weak virtue at all, though it kind of sounds weak, because it requires great strength of spirit. Heal any of my insecurities at their root, so that my thoughts about other people, and thus my words, can be kind ones. Grant that I may see each person with your eyes, Lord, and that I may take up their intentions as my own. Let me alleviate some of your pain with my acts of penance. I go to Mary, my mother, to repent for all the sins of

omissions of acts of charity and kindness.

*Hail Mary...*



## **JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

At the foot of the Cross stands his Mother, Mary, with other holy women. Jesus looks at her; then he looks at the disciple whom he loves, and he says to his Mother: *Woman, behold thy son*. Then he says to the disciple: *Behold thy mother* (Jn 19:26-27).

The sun's light is extinguished and the earth is left in darkness. It is close on three o'clock...

Then, knowing that all things are about to be accomplished, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, he says: *I am thirsty* (Jn 19:28). The soldiers soak a sponge in vinegar and, placing it on a reed of hyssop, they put it to his mouth. Jesus sips the vinegar, and exclaims: *It is accomplished* (Jn 19:30). The veil of the temple is rent, and the earth trembles, when the Lord cries out in a loud voice: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Lk 23:46). And he expires.

I see you, Lord, as you breathe your last breath. You, who are King of the whole universe, not just King of the Jews as the sign says, mysteriously express your authority here at Calvary by willingly becoming subject to the earthly law of Death.

Seeing you like this, while knowing that you have indeed risen and are alive now, makes me hope for eternal life, forever with you, in total fulfillment and the forever kind of happiness. I hear you again tell me how the eye has not seen nor ear heard what you have ready for those of us who love you.

**Kneeling:** Lord, grant me all the reminders, guidance and time that I need to be really ready to embrace you fully at the time of my death. Holy Spirit, grant me all of your gifts and fruits so that I take advantage of every opportunity for communion with Our Lord in the Eucharist while here on earth. Help me pay attention at Mass, and at other times of adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament, so that I develop a palate for the divine. I go to Mary, my mother, so that each Hail Mary prayed on my earthly pilgrimage may prepare me for my heavenly abode. Blessed Mother, pray for me now and at the hour of my death.

*Hail Mary...*



## **JESUS IS LAID IN THE ARMS OF HIS BLESSED MOTHER**

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Mary stands by the Cross, engulfed in grief. And John is beside her. But it is getting late, and the Jews press for Our Lord to be removed from there...

Having obtained from Pilate the permission required by Roman law for the burial of condemned prisoners, there comes to Calvary a councillor named Joseph, a good and upright man, a native of Arimathea. *He has not consented to their counsel and their doings, but is himself one of those waiting for the kingdom of God (Lk 23:50-51).* With him too comes Nicodemus, the same who earlier visited Jesus by night; *he brings with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight (Jn 19:39).*

These men were not known publicly as disciples of the Master. They had not been present at the great miracles, nor did they accompany him on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But now, when things have turned bad, when the others have fled, they are not afraid to stand up for their Lord.

Between the two of them they take down the body of Jesus and place it in the arms of his most holy Mother. Mary's grief is renewed.

I see your body, Lord, as it is lowered into the maternal arms of Mary, your mother. She is now my mother because you have given her to me.

Seeing you like this makes me realize how I too can take comfort in Mary's arms. And, I see that over the sins that bring me death she still weeps. Her tears and those of all the saints invite me into the communion of saints, where I can share in their merits.

**Kneeling:** Lord, bring me deeper and deeper into communion with you, in your Life, your Passion, your Death, and your Resurrection. Bring me into deeper communion with your creatures, but especially that pinnacle of creation which is the human person. Fill me with your life and love such that it overflows naturally to those around me; in this way fill my soul with apostolic zeal and charity in action. Help me to love myself properly by accepting wholeheartedly your unconditional love for me. I go to Mary, my mother, to intercede for me for increases in faith, hope and charity.

*Hail Mary...*





## JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Very near Calvary, in an orchard, Joseph of Arimathea had had a new tomb made, cut out of the rock. Since it is the eve of the solemn Pasch of the Jews, Jesus is laid there. Then Joseph, rolling a great stone, closes the grave door and goes away (Mt 27:60)

Jesus came into the world with nothing; so too, with nothing – not even the place where he rests – he has left us.

The Mother of Our Lord – my Mother – and the women who have followed the Master from Galilee, after taking careful note of every thing, also take their leave. Night falls.

I see your body, Lord, inside the dark tomb. And then I see the light.

Seeing you like this makes me think about the fact that you are no longer there, that the tomb could not keep you bound to this earth. I overhear the Jewish soldiers say that those of us who are your disciples are the ones who have stolen and hidden your body. But I know better because I know you. You are Truth itself. I therefore proclaim my faith in you, as I do at every Sunday Mass. Help me to pay attention to the faith that I proclaim each Sunday in the Creed.

**Kneeling:** *The Nicene or Apostles' Creed*