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Mission Stations of the Cross for Youth



I STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



Pilate said, "What harm has this man done? I have found no case against him that deserves death, so I shall have him punished and then let him go." But they kept on shouting demanding that he should be crucified. Pilate then gave his verdict that their demand should be granted and he handed Jesus over to be crucified. (Luke 23:22-24)

Leader:

Jesus' "crime" is to take seriously the mission described in Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free..." Jesus calls both rich and poor to build a world where all live as brothers and sisters in love and justice.

Group:

Jesus, we stand with you before Pilate fearless of the world's judgment, as we watch you embrace the heavy cross for love of us. Your life of love and commitment to the poor is the true standard for judging success. Help us accept our daily cross with trust and faith in you. Amen



II STATION: JESUS IS MADE TO CARRY HIS CROSS



Carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull, or as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha. (John 19:16-17)

Leader:

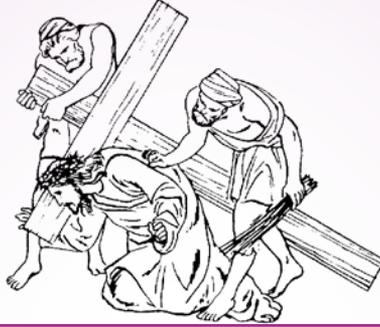
The Cross of Jesus is a weapon entrusted to Missionaries sent to proclaim the Good News. The Cross of Jesus is where we find truth, learn humility, dedication and love. Jesus encourages us to carry our daily cross, knowing that in the future, it will be a sign of glory.

Group:

Lord Jesus, we watch you embrace the heavy cross for love of us. Help us alleviate the crosses of people as we struggle for justice alongside the poor. Amen



III STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME



I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. (Ps 118:13-14)

Leader:

Jesus stumbles and falls on the way to Golgotha. He shares the helplessness of those who come face-to-face with their own human limitations, for they are malnourished, overworked, underpaid, illiterate and abused. He reassures us that he will be there when we fall under the weight of our cross.

Group:

Exhausted from your ordeal Lord Jesus, we learn from you. Help us embrace our human frailty, for it is God who saves and your love that help us overcome our failures. Amen



IV STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



After they had presented their son Jesus in the Temple, Simeon, a just and holy man, blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many and to be a sign that will be opposed -- and a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:34-35)

Leader:

Mary, you are fully present to Jesus and walk in solidarity with him and all oppressed, disadvantaged children. You are the model of the Christian call to assist those who struggle from poverty, suffering or abuse.

Group:

Through the example of Mary we see clearly God's face. Help us to see in Mary a reflection of your loving and tender compassion toward us. Amen



V STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS



As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they enlisted him to carry Jesus' cross. (Matthew 27:32)

Leader:

The helping hand of another person reminds us of Jesus' words that when we feed, host, or shelter another person, we are doing the same for Christ. When we lift unjust burdens from others, we are lifting the same burdens from Jesus' shoulders

Group:

Jesus, you protected widows, the defenseless and the poor from the abuse and misfortune. Help us take the side of those most vulnerable, by sharing in their burdens. Amen.



VI STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



When was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:38-40)

Leader:

Veronica is the image of people who are not intimidated in the face of abuse, prejudice, and suffering. She sees dignity even in the disfigured face of this condemned criminal. In the faces of the poor, the ugly, and the disfigured, Veronica sees the true image of God.

Group:

Through Veronica, help us see God's face in those the world rejects. Give us, we ask You, the courage and dedication to suffer with those who are in need, the least of your people. Amen.



VII STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes waste away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. (Ps 31:10-11)

Leader:

Crushed to the ground by the heavy wood of the cross, Jesus is the sign of the many people who day in and day out are under the heavy weight of poverty and suffering, of unemployment and hunger.

Group:

May we all have the courage to change our lives, to live simply so that others may simply live, and that with your strength in our hearts the richness of your gifts may dwell in all. Amen.



VIII STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for." But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:17-23)

Leader:

How courageous were the women throughout Jesus' passion. Women show their courage in society and in the church, even in the midst of struggles of appreciation of their gifts. Jesus wants all people to reach their full potential as human beings created in God's image.

Group:

Lord Jesus, you weep with those who weep. Help us to recognize the talents and contributions that often go unnoticed and un-rewarded. Deepen our faith, so that we may see you in our brothers and sisters beaten down by injustice and greed. Amen.



IX STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME



The Lord does not faint or grow weary. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31)

Leader:

We know how hard it is to get up when things do not go well in life, or when severe challenges await us. A whole list of things weigh heavily on us. Like Jesus, we choose to be faithful to the end.

Group:

Jesus, you have not called us to be successful; you have called to be faithful. At those times when we feel most defeated and want to give up, strengthen us with your encouragement and help us always rise up and follow you in a spirit of true service. Amen.



X STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2Cor 12:9-10)

Leader:

Jesus stands naked, stripped of his clothing, of every shred of human dignity, like the peoples of today who are violated by torture, abuse, exploitation, and irreverence. Jesus teaches us from that Cross that his dignity does not depend on the quality of his clothing, but upon God. His power cannot be taken away.

Group:

Lord Jesus, stripped of everything, you stood exposed to the jeers and contempt of the people whom you loved. You stand with all whose bodies and personal integrity have been abused and exploited. Clothe us with genuine love of others, that we might see them as temples of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



XI STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:33-34)

Leader:

Jesus is thrown down upon the cross. In the midst of this cruel scene, Jesus' greatest gift is forgiveness, for we at times do not know what we do. This cross, foolishness and scandal becomes triumph and sign of victory for those who follow Christ. If we die with Jesus, we also live with him.

Group:

Lord Jesus, you have told us that we too must accept our crosses. Accept us today, as we bring forgiveness and healing in the lives of the people around us. Amen.



XII STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?..." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he had died in this way, he said "Truly this man was the Son of God." (Mark 15:33-39)

Leader:

Jesus dies the way he has lived: "Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors... do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you." In his death, Jesus has broken the hold of sin and death over us, and asks us to continue to free people from death, in his name. Greater love than this no one has, than to lay down one's life for all.

Leader:

Jesus, make us instruments of the world's healing. In each Eucharist you give us glimpses of the God-nourished society of love, unity and mutual healing that the whole world is meant to become. We continue your mission of freeing the human family from suffering and injustice that result from sin. Amen.



XIII STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS



Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, went boldly to Pilate and asked permission for the body of Jesus to be taken down from the cross. When Pilate learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth and took the body down. (Mark 15:42-46)

Leader:

Mary finds the strength to hold Jesus for the last time in her arms. Here is a true reflection of God's love: not status, power and wealth, but a whole life dedicated to healing people and sharing God's Reign with all. How many mothers go through the same feelings when they bury their children because of war, killings, drugs, abuse, hunger and death?

Group:

Standing in awe before your broken and lifeless body, we believe that your death on the Cross brought new life to humanity. Help us to give generously of ourselves in all that we do for you, that God's will be achieved in our lives. Amen.



XIV STATION: JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB



They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:40-42)

Leader:

Jesus' body is wrapped in a shroud and placed in a nearby tomb, but in three days God will raise him to new life. We can embrace no grater act than to plunge into the mission of the risen Lord and be witnesses of his presence in the world. "Release those bound unjustly, untie the bonds of slavery, set free the oppressed, break every yoke; share your bread with the hungry, cloth the naked, do not turn your back on your own."

Group:

When all seems lost, Jesus, you empower us to follow your example and inspire us to follow in your mission. Help us to empty ourselves of self concerns that we might see your hand in our personal failures and your Word that brings humanity to live as one family, brothers and sisters in Jesus. Amen.

(Some assistance from Xaverian Missionaries USA:
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Stations of the Cross Activities for Youth

To the teacher/catechist:

Putting important events into a context makes them relevant for youth. Rather than simply reciting the Stations of the Cross as a stand alone one-time event, why not make this ancient Catholic tradition come alive for your youth?

Here are some activities and reflections for your youth to undertake prior to participating in the Stations of the Cross:

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Stations of the Cross date back as far as the 4th Century. Have groups of students research the historical context of the origin of this important Catholic event using the following:

- Research the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.
- Look into the life and times of Pontius Pilate to discover why he was caught between politics and religion.
- Construct a map of old Jerusalem showing the route taken by Jesus from Pilate's palace to the hill of Calvary. Note the distances involved. What is surprising about what you have discovered?
- Research how the Stations of the Cross evolved from the time of Egeria, a female pilgrim who recorded a description of early pilgrimages or processions to holy sites in Jerusalem, to the present day.
- Religious fanaticism was very much alive in Jesus's time. What was the meaning of messiah to the people of the time?
- Jesus spent his entire life in Judea. What was every-day life like for the average person of his time? Customs, food, religious observances, commerce, travel, farming etc.

DRAMA

The Praying of the Stations of the Cross lends itself to dramatic interpretation. Students can "perform" each station by creating a live montage of each station with or without props. Have students create the scene and then "freeze" in place while the prayers are being recited. This works well in a school situation in front of the whole school population. It is also appropriate in a Parish Church environment, and can bring new reverence to parishioners.