

# Creating Your Own Justice Stations of the Cross

## DIRECTIONS

**Begin** by having a group discussion about the stations of the cross, their history and their meaning. (You may want to copy and distribute “Background Information on the Stations of the Cross,” located on page 2.) Be sure to discuss the way in which the suffering of Jesus is linked to our own suffering and the suffering of those in our local community and in the global community.

**Next**, distribute the three thematically-focused stations of the cross (pages 3-6) included with this unit; give the group time to read them. Invite group members to share their reflections on these.

**Explain** to the group that they will be working together to create their own unique stations of the cross. Decide if the group wants to do one theme for all 14 station (examples: AIDS Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ and The Way of the Cross of a Migrant), or an overall “social justice” theme, with a variety of different social justice issues (example: Justice Stations of the Cross of Jesus Christ).

Divide the group into smaller groups made up of at least two people each. Give each small group one station to reflect on.

If the group has chosen one social justice theme to be used for all 14 stations, ask each small group to make a connection between one aspect of the social justice theme with their particular station. (For example, if your group’s chosen theme is the death penalty, one aspect of it may be the state execution of juveniles.)

If the group has chosen an overall “social justice” theme, ask each small group to make a connection with a contemporary social justice issue (it may be local or global) with their particular station.

Leave a period of time for brainstorming. If the group has chosen an overall “social justice” theme, be sure that each small group chooses a different social justice issue.

## Ask each small group to complete the following tasks:

*(Note: If your group has the time and resources—Internet access for research, old magazines for images, scissors, glue, paper—these tasks may be completed in one session; if not, assign these tasks to be completed for the next group meeting.)*

- Locate an image or images—these may be cut out of a magazine or downloaded from the Internet, or may even be personal photos—that represent your chosen social justice issue.
- Do some background research on your chosen social justice issue and prepare a brief background page or fact sheet that explains the issue and its impact on people in the local/global community. (If you are working on one overall issue, each group should do some background research on their chosen aspect of it.)
- Compose a short prayer about the social justice issue and those whose suffering is related to it.
- Write the title of your station at the top of a large piece of paper. Next, glue or tape your image underneath it. Beneath the image, attach your prayer. And finally, beneath the prayer, attach your background page or factsheet.

Once all of the small groups have completed putting together their particular station, have them **present their station** to the larger group. Ask them to explain why they chose the particular social justice issue (or aspect of the larger issue) and how it relates to their particular station.

**Arrange the Stations of the Cross in a prominent place** in your school or parish. Set a time or times to pray them.

**Make an announcement** to the larger school/parish community that your group has created a Justice Stations of the Cross and indicate their location. Invite them to use the Justice Stations of the Cross as part of their Lenten devotions.



## Creating Your Own Justice Stations of the Cross (continued)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross, sometimes called the “way of the cross,” have a long history. This form of devotion began in the 1500s, and in recreating Jesus’ passion and death, was a way to bring the events of Christ’s life into the people’s lives. The Stations of the Cross are usually placed at intervals around the walls of a church, although they are also found in the open air, especially on roads leading to a church or shrine. They are:

- I. Jesus is condemned to death
- II. Jesus carries his cross
- III. Jesus falls for the first time
- IV. Jesus meets his mother
- V. Simon helps Jesus carry his cross
- VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
- VII. Jesus falls the second time
- VIII. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
- IX. Jesus falls the third time
- X. Jesus is stripped of his garments
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross
- XII. Jesus dies on the cross
- XIII. Jesus is taken down from the cross
- XIV. Jesus is placed in the tomb

For centuries, the stations of the cross have helped Christian people reflect on the mystery of the suffering and death of Jesus in an intimate way. Sometimes communities and groups have taken to the streets, pausing at hospitals, jails, courthouses, war memorials, and shelters to reflect on the ways in which Jesus continues to suffer in the midst of us. For several years, a group in Washington DC has walked from the Capitol to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. In doing so, they make visible the connection between the overwhelming burdens of debt and economic injustice carried by the world’s most impoverished communities and the cross that was carried by Jesus.



# Justice Stations of the Cross of Jesus Christ

By John Bucki, SJ

## 1. Jesus is condemned to death

Jesus is trapped by the same system that brings us the death penalty, the harshness of life in prison, political prisoners, torture, white collar crime, racial profiling, the criminalization of the poor, and all of the inequities of our world's criminal justice systems.

## 2. Jesus is made to carry his cross

Jesus carries his burden as do all those who work the land, labor for low wages, struggle to find work, care for their children and family, worry over their debts, strive for their children, attend poor schools, are abused by their bosses, or in any way struggle to make it in this world.

## 3. Jesus falls the first time

The burden that crushes Jesus can be compared to the burdens of today—the burden of debt that crushes the poor economies of the world, the unequal distribution of resources which stifles development for many people and nations.

## 4. Jesus meets his mother

Jesus looks on his mother with love and sees all the pain and possibility of relationship, deep family love and fidelity, abuse and violence, mutual loving care, separation and divorce, loneliness and community.

## 5. Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

Jesus' story becomes Simon's story as well. Globalization can be both a burden and a relief, a freedom and a limit. Jesus and Simon are both victims and helpers. Good and evil play out as their lives are connected.

## 6. Jesus falls the second time

The burden that crushes Jesus is unfair, as are the economic and political inequalities of our day—wages, resources, schools, rights, power, savings, taxes. Our systems are often unfair.

## 7. Veronica wipes the faces of Jesus

This "small" act of charity is a most wonderful action of great compassion. It seems to be all that Veronica can do at the moment, yet the injustice remains. She cannot stop the suffering of Jesus. The compassion of Veronica calls out for social change, for an end to injustice, for a new way of living together.

## 8. Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem

Women bear the burdens of the world in a special way. They disproportionately struggle under the injustices of our systems. The experience of women throughout the ages calls us to end the injustices. It calls us to a new heaven and a new earth, to a new way of being sisters and brothers.

## 9. Jesus falls the third time

The burden that crushes Jesus is like the burden of materialism. Every time the world worships things before people, power before justice, and consumption before the spirit, we lose what it means to be human and alive.

## 10. Jesus is stripped of his garments

This radical loss of everything continues to be felt in the lives of all the poor—those without enough food, clothing, shelter, education, respect, dignity, human rights, and community.

## 11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

Jesus is a person of active nonviolence, yet here he comes to know violence against his person—the same violence that is seen in our wars and preparation for war, in the violence on our streets and in our homes, in our weapons of mass destruction, in ethnic cleansing, in genocide, in all these countless examples of violence.

## 12. Jesus dies on the cross

Power and control are dominant values in our world, yet Jesus loses all of these things that the world considers important. But at the same time, in Jesus nailed to a cross, we see a person of great freedom and compassionate love and a special awesome power—the power of the suffering God crying out for justice.

## 13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

Jesus is radically stripped of everything. He is a human person whose rights and dignity have been taken away. In Jesus, we see all the women and men of our world who still seek their basic human rights—the right to food, water, clothing, shelter, education, political freedom, development, justice, etc.

## 14. Jesus is placed in the tomb

Jesus is carefully placed into the earth, an earth that is the divine creation, a planet that we so often abuse as we waste resources, as we seek profit before all else, as we consume without awareness, and as we disrespect the awesome beauty that is God's gift.



# AIDS Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ

By Sister Kay Lawlor, M.M.M., Kitovu Hospital, Masaka, Uganda

**Opening Prayer:** We adore you, O Christ, as you carry your cross along the dusty roads of Masaka, Uganda. We make the way of the cross in the homes and at the bedsides of those with AIDS. We bless you because through this suffering you have redeemed the world.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death.

He sits shocked, unable to speak. His hands tremble. Marko has just been told he has AIDS. "I'm going to die," says.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross.

He is weighed down with the knowledge that he has AIDS. How will he tell his family? What will happen to his children? He tells his brother, sells some land, arranges for his children. It's hard. It's a heavy cross Vincent carries.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time.

He cannot stand alone. The abscesses are too painful. Peter is too weak. With help he makes it home and to bed where he begins the difficult task of regaining strength, so he can pick up the cross of living with AIDS and continue his journey.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets His Mother.

She lies there waiting for her mother to return. Regina has just learned that she has AIDS and is dying. She wants to tell her mother. As they meet, a look of pain and love passes between them. "I have slim" [as AIDS is known in Africa]. Her mother takes her in her arms and they weep.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.

Richard has so many decisions to make. How can he go on? When his brothers come, he tells them he is too scared to go on. They comfort him, arrange to take him home, plan transport so he can return for treatment.

**6<sup>th</sup> Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.** She lies there, too weak to clean herself. Her clothes are dirty and soiled because the diarrhea is almost constant now. She's alone, pushed into a corridor so the smell won't disturb others. A young nurse comes, washes her and changes her clothes. Rose smiles.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Second time.

He has begun to have diarrhea and no longer wants to eat. Sleep doesn't come and he's afraid. The illness is getting worse. Peter has to stop work. It's hard to keep living with AIDS.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

Jane has no land. Mary has no milk for her baby. Scovia's husband sent her away when he learned she has AIDS. Juliet was put out of her rented room. Betty works in a bar to support her children, providing favors for men to get food for them. The plight of poor women and AIDS. Jesus weeps.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

His head feels as if it's bursting. Nothing brings relief. Peter lies in bed unable even to open his eyes. As the end nears, relatives arrive to move him from his rented room where he suffered alone for many months. One more step along the way.

## 10<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.

They put her out of the house and kept her clothes, saying they wouldn't fit her wasted body. They told her to go to her grandmother's to die. Once there, she was again rejected—stripped of all, even her right to belong. Juliet was returned to the hospital like an unwanted commodity.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.

He cannot move. Finds it hard to breathe. Must wait for someone to care for him totally. An AIDS-related brain tumor has nailed James to his bed. His mother keeps watch.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Rose, Peter, John, Alecha, Kakande, Joseph, William, George, Grace, Paulo, Goretti . . . Jesus' body dying of AIDS.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross.

The wailing begins. The car reaches the homestead. As men rush forward to carry Paulo's shrouded body, a woman comes from the house. She reaches out to touch the body of her son.

## 14<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb.

A grave is dug on hospital land—only staff for mourners. Her nine-month-old child cries, not understanding. The grave is filled. All go away. Rose is dead.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Station: The Resurrection.

We wait!

"AIDS Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ" was originally published in *A Maryknoll Book of Prayer*, published by Orbis Books. This book may be purchased at the following web site address: <http://www.maryknollmall.org/description.cfm?ISBN=1-57075-447-0>  
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# The Way of the Cross of a Migrant

## I. Jesus is Condemned to Death.

Jesus, you are sentenced unjustly by your enemies. I know what you must feel. Many of us have been condemned to a slow death, because of thinking and because of taking our inspiration from the Bible and its message. Our children are already condemned to death because they carry on their backs part of the external debt, condemned to die because of the deterioration of health services, condemned to die illiterate because education is becoming the privilege of the few.

*Reader:* Jesus is unjustly condemned.

*All:* Help us, who have been unjustly condemned.

## II. Jesus Carries His Cross.

Jesus, you accepted the cross for us. I also have many crosses, seven crosses of responsibility, to be exact, seven children to raise without a father, without a husband, and without any help. Seven children suffering from malnutrition. Thanks be to God, I have obtained, if only for three months, a job as a domestic, which will allow me to survive and keep them alive.

*Reader:* Jesus, we need your help to be able to go on.

*All:* Give us the faith to not become disheartened.

## III. Jesus Falls the First Time.

Jesus falls under the weight of the cross. Help us not to fall under the weight of our crosses of each day: poverty, discouragement, ups and downs, a lack of hope. We the migrants go from one side to the other in this country and, because many times we have fallen, we are not welcome.

*Reader:* Lord, you who fell under the weight of the cross.

*All:* Help us not to be bitter.

**IV. Jesus Meets His Mother.** The eyes of Jesus and those of his mother meet. I remember the last time I saw my family. I also remember the hopeful aspect of those of us who went out in search of a better future. I knew the way would be long and uncertain.

*Reader:* Mother, patron of those tempted by despair.

*All:* Help us to find in your face the comfort Jesus found there.

## V. Simon, the Cyrene, Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.

They say that Simon was converted after helping Jesus with the cross. Jesus, please convert me while I carry my crosses with yours. Let us not fall in our search and lead us to conversion, following the example of so many others who do not grow weak in the struggle.

*Reader:* Jesus, helped by Simon.

*All:* Teach us to carry our cross with dignity.

## VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Veronica sees your bleeding face. She wipes it with her new handkerchief. So the impression of your face remains on the handkerchief, but even more, your suffering is imprinted on her heart. I remember the suffering face of so many migrants that I meet in the city.

*Reader:* Lord Jesus who suffered so much injustice.

*All:* Impregnate our hearts and our lives with your love and your strength.

## VII. Jesus Falls the Second Time

Jesus, the weight of the cross is too much and you fall again. My cross is very heavy, also, Lord. It is so hard. People call me “vagrant” and “lazy” as if I were a criminal. I want to return to my town, but I cannot, because the situation there has become even worse.

*Reader:* Jesus who got up the second time.

*All:* Don't let them marginalize me because of my condition as a migrant.

## VIII. Jesus Speaks to the Weeping Women of Jerusalem.

Jesus, you are suffering, but even so you speak to the women of Jerusalem who weep and who know your pain. You comfort them. Jesus, we need you, still today, to speak to these women who suffer, to these women who weep to see their children eating so little or working in the streets under inhuman conditions. We need you to speak to the women who have to sell their bodies in order to survive or who are exploited at their work.

*Reader:* Jesus, you who comforted the women of Jerusalem.

*All:* Comfort today also those who weep.



## The Way of the Cross of a Migrant (continued)

### IX. Jesus Falls the Third Time.

Jesus, your cross is so heavy, like mine, but you inspire me to continue on. My cross becomes so heavy when they tell me, "There is no work here. Return to your town, to your country, because here you are a nuisance." And I can't do anything in the face of this.

*Reader:* Lord, forgive them.

*All:* Because they know not what they do.

### X. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments.

Jesus, you lost the very last of your possessions. They have taken everything from me, also: the land that I worked, the trust in the organization that worked for my rights, the possibility of having access to health and education services.

*Reader:* Jesus, stay with me and help us not to fall into the pit of despair.

*All:* Help those of us who have nothing except our faith.

### XI. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Jesus, it is so cruel and unjust, what they did to you. Now they nail us, the migrants, to the cross of poverty, of marginalization, of ignorance and of the scarce opportunities for work. I have so many questions to ask: Why so many loans of millions of dollars? Why spend so much money on arms and armies? Why do only some have access to health, education and work?

*Reader:* Jesus, you were the first to combat despair.

*All:* Help us to not despair.

### XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Jesus, on your cross you united the divine with the human. You died accused of inciting the people, of being political, of being revolutionary. If you began a revolution, it was a revolution of love. Don't allow us to die, hating.

*Reader:* Jesus, you gave your life for us, but not in vain.

*All:* May the life of so many migrant brothers and sisters not be in vain.

### XIII. Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

Your mutilated body is taken down from the cross and placed in the arms of your mother. Jesus, I know what a mutilated body is. I have held in my arms the body of a friend who was assaulted and killed when we tried to come to the United States. What can we do? We have to have faith that death is not in vain and believe in the resurrection.

*Reader:* Jesus, mutilated by soldiers.

*All:* Teach us to forgive those in this society who mutilate our hope, our dreams and our bodies.

### XIV. Jesus is Buried in the Tomb.

Those whom you loved so much buried you. They can return your body to the earth, but they cannot destroy your spirit. You will rise. You give us the hope that we also will be raised from the dead.

*Reader:* Jesus, who died and rose from the dead.

*All:* Help us to have faith in your death and resurrection.

### XV. Resurrection

They killed the body but they cannot kill the spirit. Jesus, you said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Help us to have the strength to continue our journey, to fight against despair, to be freed from oppression and from sin.

*Reader:* We adore you, Oh Christ and we bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

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