

# The Way of the Cross



*Cover:* Crucifixion art by Ivanka Demchuk, an artist out of Lviv, Ukraine who focuses on **modern reflection of sacred art**.

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# The Way of the Cross

From the Way of the Cross meditations for Good Friday 2025,  
led by Pope Francis before his passing.

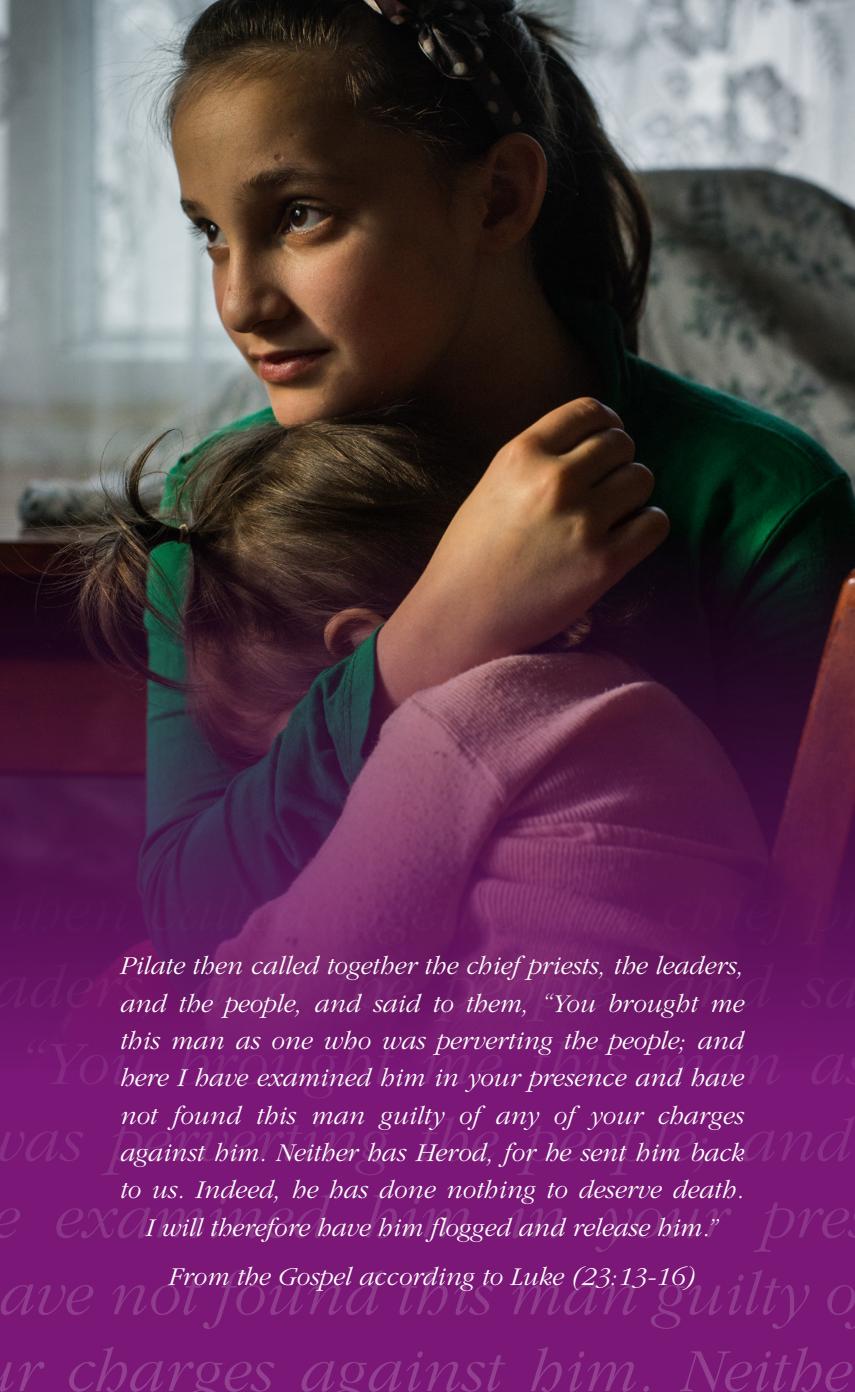
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IN MEMORY OF POPE FRANCIS  
1936-2025



*As we take time to sit with Jesus and reflect on His passion, we remember Pope Francis, the generous heart he had for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Catholic Church, as well as his deep compassion for those who are greatly impacted by war and oppression. We pray with these photos from Ukraine, for peace and hope to reign on the world this Lenten season.*

*The reflections in this booklet are Pope Francis' final reflections on the Way of the Cross, read on Good Friday 2025.*



*Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:13-16)*

## == FIRST STATION ==

### Jesus Is Condemned To Death



The way of the cross, Jesus, is a possibility that we have already too many times failed to consider.

Let us admit it: we have been prisoners of the roles we choose to continue playing, fearful of the challenge of a change in the direction of our lives. Yet you are always there, silently standing before us, in every one of our sisters and brothers exposed to judgement and bigotry.

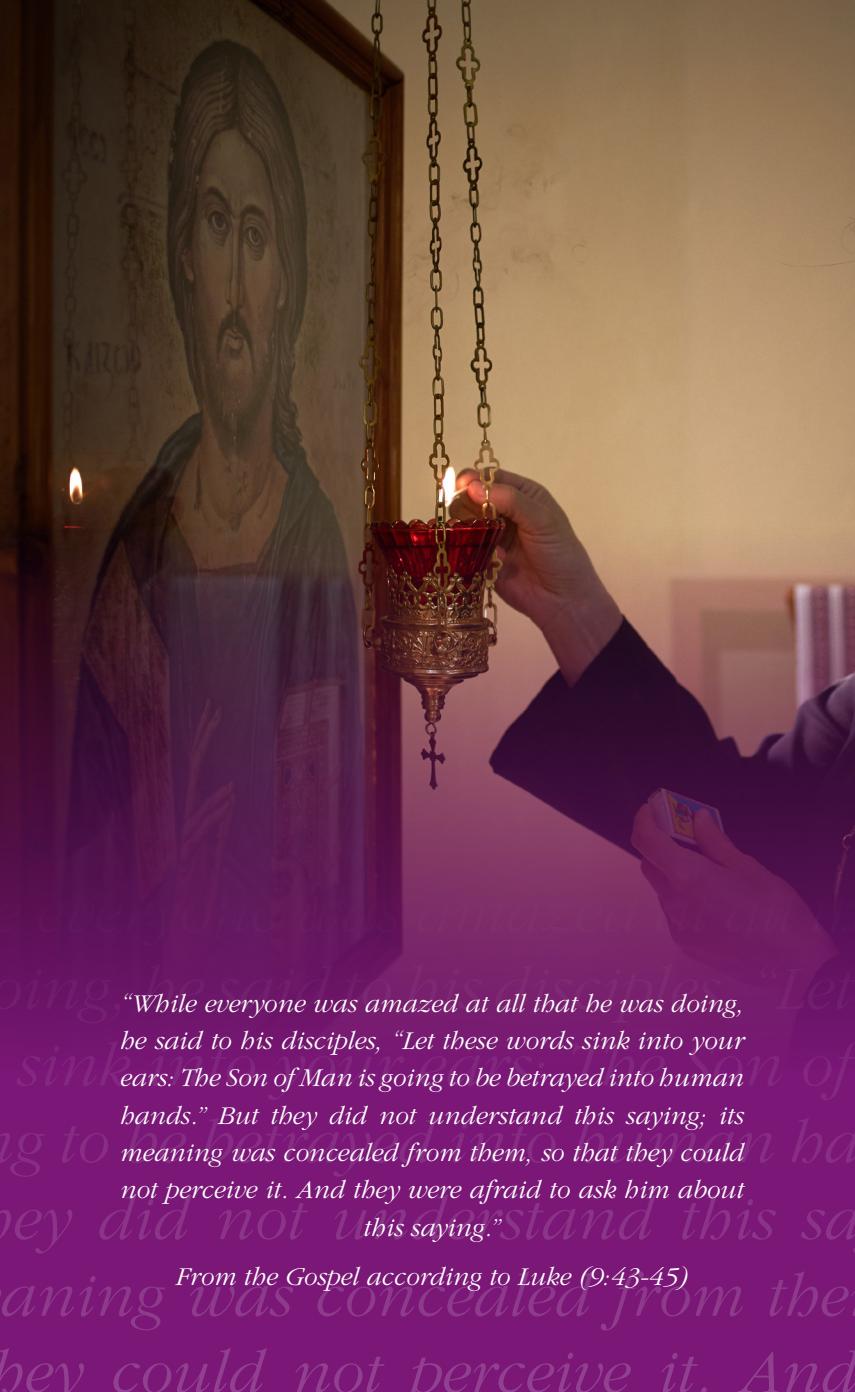
Let us pray, saying:  
***Open my heart, Jesus!***

When I see someone I have already judged,  
***Open my heart, Jesus!***

When my certainties are simply prejudices,  
***Open my heart, Jesus!***

When I am harsh and unbending,  
***Open my heart, Jesus!***

When goodness quietly attracts me,  
***Open my heart, Jesus!***

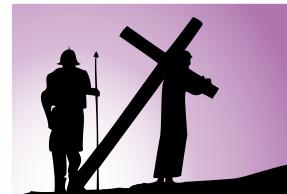


*“While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, “Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.” But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.”*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (9:43-45)*

## ===== SECOND STATION =====

### Jesus Carries His Cross



The way of your cross, Jesus, is not only uphill. It is also your descent towards those whom you loved, towards this world that God loves. It is a response, an acceptance of responsibility. The cross has its price, as do all the deepest bonds, the greatest loves.

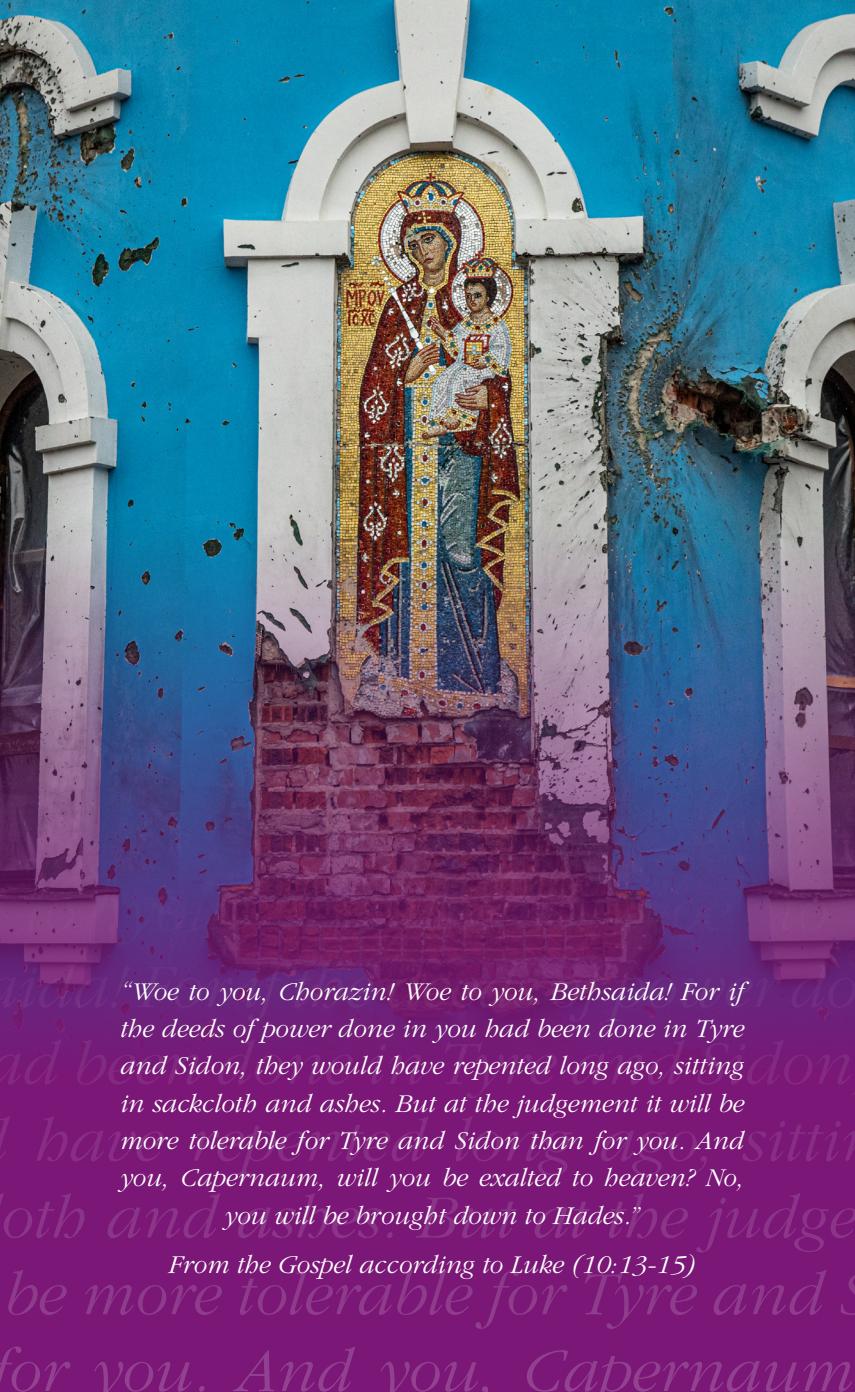
Let us pray, saying:  
***Deliver us from weariness, Lord!***

If we feel burdened by life,  
***Deliver us from weariness, Lord!***

If we lack the will to help others,  
***Deliver us from weariness, Lord!***

If we seek excuses to shirk our duties,  
***Deliver us from weariness, Lord!***

If we have talents and skills to share,  
***Deliver us from weariness, Lord!***



*“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But at the judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.”*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (10:13-15)*

## THIRD STATION

### Jesus Falls The First Time



Your life, Jesus, is a parable: on the soil of our lives, you never fall in vain. Even at that first fall, your disappointment was soon interrupted by the joy of remembering the disciples whom you had sent out: they returned from their mission and told you of the signs of the Kingdom of God.

Let us pray, saying:  
***May your kingdom come!***

For those who think they have failed,  
***May your kingdom come!***

To challenge an economy that kills,  
***May your kingdom come!***

To restore strength to those who have fallen,  
***May your kingdom come!***

In a world of competition and competitors,  
***May your kingdom come!***



*Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (8:19-21)*

## FOURTH STATION

### Jesus Meets His Mother



From the moment she was asked to welcome you in her womb, she turned to you. She bent her ways to yours. This was not a sacrifice but a continuous discovery, all the way to Calvary.

Let us pray, saying:  
***Behold my Mother!***

Mary listens, then speaks,  
***Behold my Mother!***

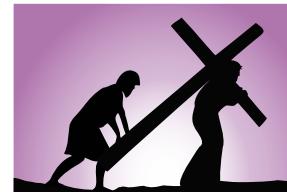
Mary asks and reflects,  
***Behold my Mother!***

Mary sets out with determination,  
***Behold my Mother!***

Mary rejoices and consoles,  
***Behold my Mother!***

## FIFTH STATION

### Jesus Is Helped By Simon of Cyrene



We believe, Lord, that the reason we remember Simon's name was because that unexpected event changed him forever. After that, he never stopped thinking of you. He became part of your body, a first-hand witness of how you were unlike any other condemned man.

Let us pray, saying:

***Alter our course, Lord!***

When we go our own way, eyes averted,  
***Alter our course, Lord!***

When news reports do not disturb us,  
***Alter our course, Lord!***

When faces become statistics,  
***Alter our course, Lord!***

When we never find time to listen,  
***Alter our course, Lord!***

*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.*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:26)*



While he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

*From the Gospel according to Luke (9:29-31)*

## ===== SIXTH STATION =====

### Veronica Wipes The Face of Jesus



Our hearts are changed by the sight of your face, which I long to contemplate and cherish. You deliver yourself into our hands, day by day, in the face of every man and woman we meet, a living reminder of your Incarnation.

Let us pray, saying:  
**Jesus, impress your memory upon us!**

If our faces are expressionless,  
**Jesus, impress your memory upon us!**

If our hearts are indifferent,  
**Jesus, impress your memory upon us!**

If our actions are divisive,  
**Jesus, impress your memory upon us!**

If our choices cause hurt,  
**Jesus, impress your memory upon us!**



*And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'"*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (15:2-6)*

## ===== SEVENTH STATION =====

### Jesus Falls The Second Time



When we turn our hearts to you, who fall and rise again, we experience a change of course and a change of pace. A conversion that restores our joy and brings us safely home.

Let us pray, saying:

***Raise us up, God, our salvation!***

We are children who cry at times,  
***Raise us up, God, our salvation!***

We are adolescents who feel insecure,  
***Raise us up, God, our salvation!***

We are adults who have made mistakes,  
***Raise us up, God, our salvation!***

We are elderly people who still want to dream,  
***Raise us up, God, our salvation!***



*A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:27-31)*

## ===== EIGHTH STATION =====

### Jesus Meets The Women Of Jerusalem



It is your path, Jesus: an uphill path, a path on which the apostles abandoned you, while the faithful women — the mothers of the Church — continued to follow you.

Let us pray, saying:

***Jesus, grant us a maternal heart!***

You filled the Church's history with holy women,  
***Jesus, grant us a maternal heart!***

You disdained arrogance and domination,  
***Jesus, grant us a maternal heart!***

You embraced and consoled the tears of mothers,  
***Jesus, grant us a maternal heart!***

You made women the messengers  
of the resurrection,  
***Jesus, grant us a maternal heart!***

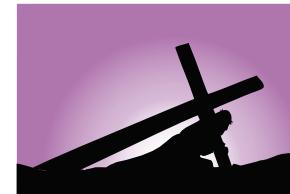


*[Jesus] said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (7:44-49)*

## ===== NINTH STATION =====

### Jesus Falls The Third Time



Who are you, Jesus, who forgives even sins? Fallen to the ground on the way of the cross, you are the Saviour of this earth that we tread, this earth from which we were made. Here, on this earth, you continue to shape us, like a skillful potter.

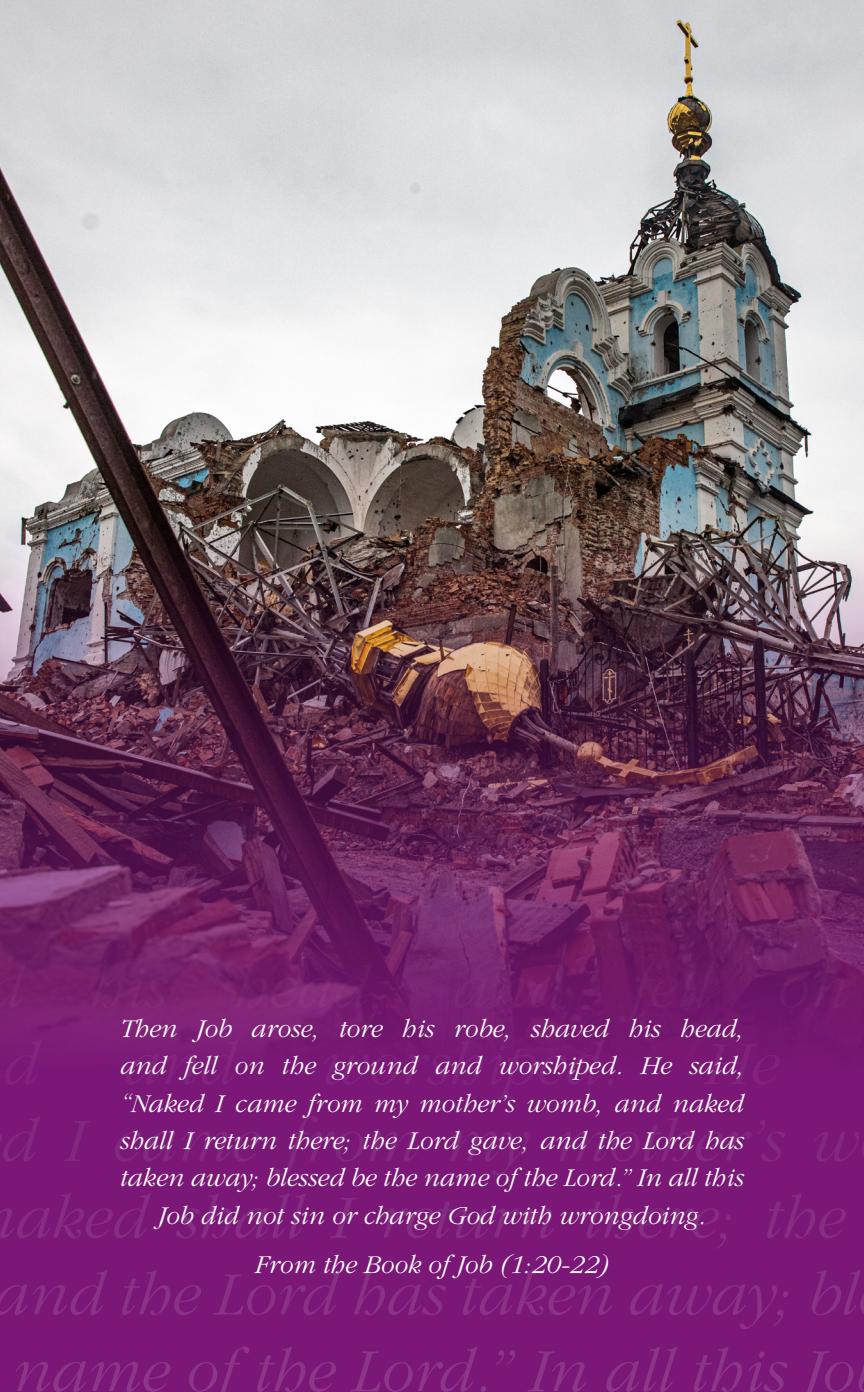
Let us pray, saying:  
**We are clay in your hands!**

When it seems that nothing can change, remind us,  
**We are clay in your hands!**

When conflicts seem interminable, remind us,  
**We are clay in your hands!**

When technology tempts us to feel all-powerful,  
remind us,  
**We are clay in your hands!**

When prosperity estranges us from the earth,  
remind us,  
**We are clay in your hands!**



*Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.*

*From the Book of Job (1:20-22)*

## ===== TENTH STATION =====

### Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments



You want to reveal yourself completely even to those who kill you; you look upon those who strip you of everything as loved ones given to you by the Father. There is something greater here than the patience of Job, greater even than his faith.

Let us pray, saying:

***Grant peace and unity to your Church!***

Lord Jesus, you see your disciples divided,  
***Grant peace and unity to your Church!***

Lord Jesus, you bear the wounds of our history,  
***Grant peace and unity to your Church!***

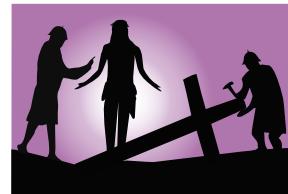
Lord Jesus, you know how frail is our love,  
***Grant peace and unity to your Church!***

Lord Jesus, you wish us to be members of your body,  
***Grant peace and unity to your Church!***



## ===== ELEVENTH STATION =====

### Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross



Not even on the cross are you stripped of your freedom: you decide why and for whom you are there. You are attentive to both the men crucified with you: you let slip the insults of one and you hear the plea of the other.

Let us pray, saying:  
***Teach us to love!***

When we are strong and when we are not,  
***Teach us to love!***

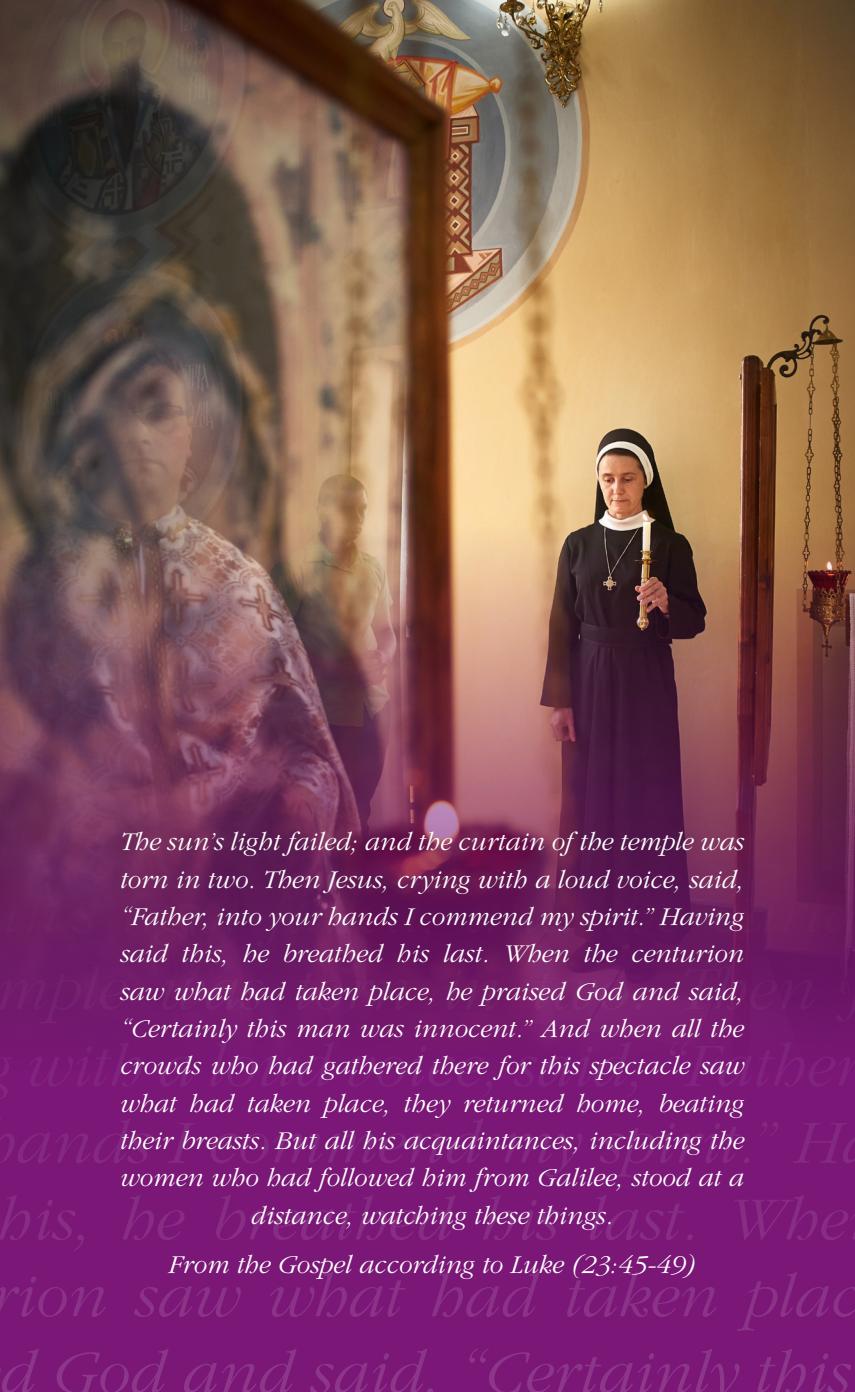
When we are bound by unjust laws or decisions,  
***Teach us to love!***

When we are at odds with those uninterested  
in truth and justice,  
***Teach us to love!***

When we are tempted to despair,  
***Teach us to love!***

*Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 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."*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:32-34)*

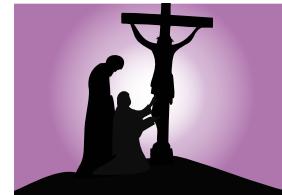


*The sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:45-49)*

## ===== TWELFTH STATION =====

### Jesus Dies On The Cross



Jesus, grant that we, who all too often regard you from a distance, may always be mindful of you, so that when at last you come, death itself may find us alive.

Let us pray, saying:  
**Holy Spirit, come!**

We have kept our distance from the Lord's wounds,  
**Holy Spirit, come!**

We have turned away from our brothers  
and sisters in need,  
**Holy Spirit, come!**

We have regarded the merciful and the poor  
in spirit as losers,  
**Holy Spirit, come!**

Believers and non-believers stand  
before your cross,  
**Holy Spirit, come!**

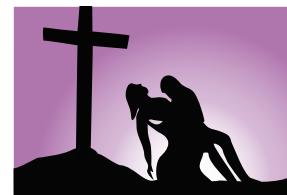


*Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:50-53)*

## ==== THIRTEENTH STATION ====

### Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross



You are now in the hands of Joseph of Arimathea, one who “was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God.” You are now in the hands of someone who continues to hope, one of those who refuse to think that injustice always prevails.

You break the bonds of the inevitable, Jesus.

Let us pray, saying:

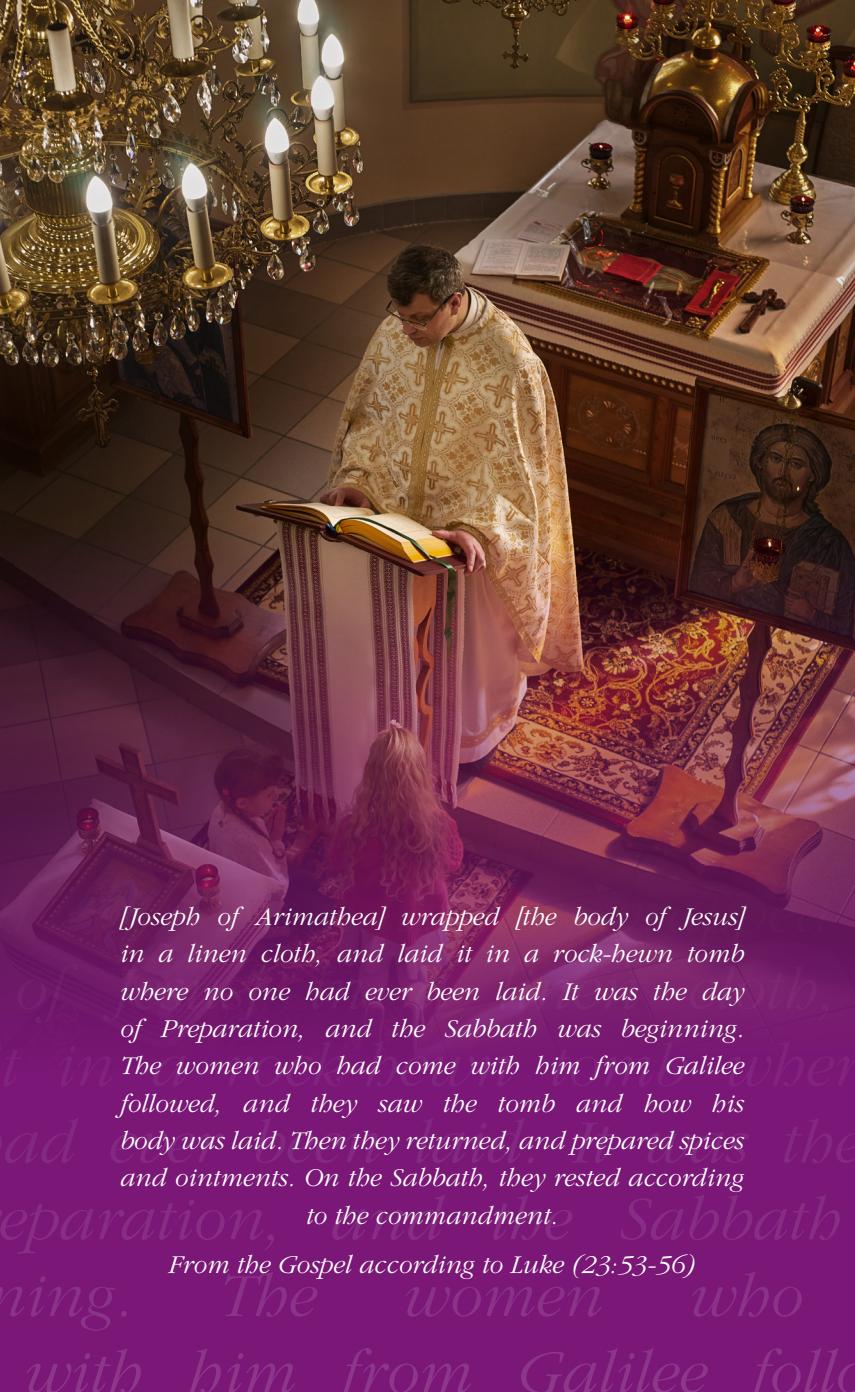
***To serve you is to reign!***

When we feed the hungry,  
***To serve you is to reign!***

When we give drink to the thirsty,  
***To serve you is to reign!***

When we clothe the naked,  
***To serve you is to reign!***

When we welcome the stranger,  
***To serve you is to reign!***



*[Joseph of Arimathea] wrapped [the body of Jesus] in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.*

*From the Gospel according to Luke (23:53-56)*

## ==== FOURTEENTH STATION ====

### Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb



Lord Jesus, who seem to sleep amid the tempests of this world, bring us all into the peace of the Sabbath rest. Then we shall see creation in all its beauty and goodness, destined for resurrection.

Then there will be peace for your people and peace among the nations.

Let us pray, saying:

***May your peace come!***

For earth, air and water,  
***May your peace come!***

For the just and the unjust alike,  
***May your peace come!***

For those who are overlooked and voiceless,  
***May your peace come!***

For the powerless and the poor,  
***May your peace come!***



## ON THE THIRD DAY...

***Christ is risen!***

Sisters, brothers, the Easter season is a time of hope. “There still is fear, there still is a painful awareness of sinfulness, but there also is light breaking through... Easter brings the good news that although things seem to get worse in the world, the Evil One has already been overcome. Easter allows us to affirm that even though God seems very distant and although we remain preoccupied with many little things, our Lord walks with us on the road... Thus there are many rays of hope casting their light on our way through life”

(H. Nouwen, *A Cry for Mercy, Prayers from the Genesee*).

Let us make room for the light of the Risen Lord! And we will become builders of hope for the world.

***Pope Francis,  
Easter Vigil homily 2025***

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