

AND SO WE WAIT . . .

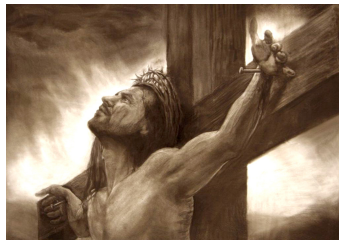
Mary: "Loving God, divine Father of my precious Son, Jesus, I have felt your presence in both sunshine and shadow, particularly as we followed the drama of salvation on that last day with some confusion and anger, but with wonder and awe at the love of your Son for a sinful world. I thank you for the honor and privilege of being his earthly mother and, as I recall the last day of his earthly life, I am still so grateful for the common folk and the little children, who sensed a glory that the proud and learned could not see. I was and still am thankful for each waving palm frond and every shout of Hosanna. With certainty that every painful step along the way of his cross was a loving sacrifice for the salvation of the world, I add my praise and pledge my love. With the people of Jerusalem, I cry for your help – Hosanna in the highest! – and sing about the love of your Son, my child, for this world."

Hymn #20 (MAJN)

"Jesus loves me"

Loving Jesus, for the sake of your cross and passion, we are justified in faith, washed clean of our sins by baptism and repentance, and made one with God. We thank you for your sacrifice on the cross and for the depths of your love for us. Help us to bear our cross in the world and follow you until you bring us into your heavenly kingdom; where you reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**AND SO IT ENDS —
THE BEGINNING**



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

**Meditations by
Mary, the Mother of Jesus**

And so . . . It begins . . . the end.

"My Son stood before Pilate as an innocent man. But, throughout his life he had entered more and more deeply into the condition of sinful flesh. It was not enough that he was born of a human mother like me. He grew up in obscurity in Nazareth. And, they always judged him there. They always judged that it wasn't right that he was conceived before Joseph and I were married. Even when he began his public ministry, the religious leaders didn't accept him. His reflection of God didn't fit their self-serving picture of God. Finally, his own followers abandoned him. One even betrayed him and led the Roman soldiers right to him. I wonder if he ever thought about what they would do to Jesus once they arrested him. I never imagined he would be beaten and tortured like a common criminal, but he was. I'll never forget the blood he shed and the pain he experienced at the hands of the Roman guards."

Mary, the mother of Jesus, walked the way of the cross with her son, as did many others from the moment he entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey and people waving palm branches and hailing him as the "one who comes in the name of the Lord." But soon their chanting changed. As we approach each moment with Mary, let us join her in her grief and in her praise to God for our redemption.



1st Station: Jesus is condemned to die.



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

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

Pastor: You stood before Pilate, your life condemned, your word rejected, your innocence ignored:

All: Keep us from rejecting your word of truth and salvation.

Mary: “My son, Jesus began this journey by becoming one with every powerless person, mocked and made fun of by others. He did nothing that deserved capital punishment, or the abuse he was given. But, now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps as he has said ‘yes’ to God and placed his life in God’s hands. His ‘yes’ ultimately destroyed the power of sin and death. While he was growing up, I told him many times how I had been graced to say ‘let it be done to me, according to your word.’ I never could have imagined that this would be the sword that would ultimately pass through my heart: to watch my Son say ‘Yes’ to God, so completely and fully, for the salvation of the world.”

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.



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

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

Pastor: In the tomb you were laid, but from the tomb you arose.

All: Be the Lord of the resurrection for us and for all the faithful.

Mary: “No mother should ever have to bury a child. Just a short time before this day, Jesus looked into Lazarus’ tomb. He must have known he would be laid in a tomb like that soon. And when he thanked God for hearing his prayer, he must have known that the Father who sent him would give him life that would never die. In just a few days, this tomb would be empty and forever a sign of Jesus’ surrender to the forces of sin and death, for us.

As we picture this scene, let us place the image of the empty tomb before our eyes. Whenever you are tempted to stand outside any tomb and grieve, remember this empty tomb and know that, through the eyes of faith, all tombs are empty. Today, join me in giving him thanks. Join me in revering the cross – a brutal tool for execution that became the beloved symbol of our salvation.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross.



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

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

Pastor: Faithful friends and loving women took loving care of your lifeless body.

All: Turn the darkness of death into the brightness of day for those we love.

Mary: “We waited what seemed like a long time before we had permission to take his lifeless body off that cross. And, it took so long to remove the nails, and to finally lower his body to the ground. Someone removed that horrible crown of thorns from his head. They pulled his hair back and wiped his face clean before letting me hold his body one last time. He had been given to me for only a brief time. When he left home three years before, I was so proud of him and excited to experience what God would do through him. There at the foot of the cross, my heart torn by grief, but always trusting in God’s promise, I asked only to be God’s servant for what was ahead. After the Ascension, when we would gather in homes for the Breaking of the Bread, I again held his broken body in my hands, now full of consolation that his promise was fulfilled: he would always be with us.”

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

2nd Station: Jesus carries his cross.



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

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

Pastor: You carried your cross on the wounded stripes of your back, for love of us and for all the world.

All: Help us to bear our cross, for love of you and for love of others.

Mary: “My Son was forced to carry the cross on which he would be nailed, ridiculed, and executed. We must pause here to remember what it represents. For this journey, he takes up the weight of all of our crosses, all of our senseless suffering, and the weight of all of the sin in the world – past, present, and future. Each step he took cut deeply into his already battered shoulders. I couldn’t believe he could manage even a few steps.

I look back now and remember that this is all for us – not just those of us who lived through it, but for every person in every time. Each of us can say it was ‘for me’ and as we imagine each step he takes, we can say ‘thank you,’ deep in our hearts.”

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time.



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

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

Pastor: The weight of your cross was the weight of our sins, which make us stumble and fall.

All: In our weakness, we turn to you for strength.

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross.



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

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

Pastor: When your sacrifice was complete, you handed your life to the Father, and he did not forsake you.

All: Keep us close to your cross and death, now and at the hour of our death.

Mary: "I can barely express to you what it was like to see my Son fall under the weight of that cross. Everything within me wanted to make them stop. This was already too much. But, there was nothing I could do but watch him lie on the ground. Of course, I now know that if he was to enter completely into our lives, he would have to surrender to the crushing weight of the burdens so many suffer in this world. All the people of the earth who are overcome by unfair burdens will always know that, laying there on the ground, Jesus knew and would always understand their powerlessness. Unable to get himself up, he entered into and forever understands our fatigue and whatever unfairly defeats us.

I understand your sorrow and feeling of guilt at reflecting upon my Son's way to Calvary. Please, just be grateful. My Son simply wants us to remember how he loved then and loves us now. This is all about his mercy and the gift of life we have in him."

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.***

Mary: "The sword of helplessness split my heart in two as I watched him hanging between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, struggling to breathe, pulling himself up to let air out of his lungs. With incredible courage and compassion, he spoke of mercy and love. There on that cross he gave me to John, and gave us all to the Spirit-filled Church that would be born on Pentecost. Then, after he gave himself into God's hands one last time, he took his last breath, surrendered himself to his Father with these words, 'Into your hands I commend my spirit,' and then he died. It is unforgettable to watch life leave the body of someone you love.

If you stand at the foot of his cross today, and listen with your heart, you will hear his death speak to you of his love for you. As his mother, it hurts me so but it also fills my own heart with love and praise for him – that he could love so much that he would suffer and die like he did."

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.***

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.



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

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

Pastor: Nailed to the cross, you took your place among the condemned.

All: Take your place beside us sinners, and bring us through faith to the Paradise of God.

Mary: "Today, as I remember him lying on the cross, with his arms outstretched, it is the sound of the hammer hitting the nails that stays with me. I remember pulling the first of many wood splinters from his fingers as a child working in Joseph's shop. Against his precious hands and wrists, that touched and healed so many, a nail was placed, and a hammer pounded the nail through his flesh and into the wood of the cross. The sound – metal against metal – that ring – and the look on his face – the spasm of his whole body – I will never forget. Then, the other hand and finally his feet are nailed to the cross.

Can you imagine the pain when they lifted him up on the cross with the weight of his body hanging on those nails? Every time he struggled to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slipped away and I wondered each time why he had to suffer like this that we might be free."

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.***

4th Station: Jesus meets his mother.



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

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

Pastor: Although you suffered, you still reached out to care for your mother.

All: May our cross-bearing never keep us from caring for our families.

Mary: "As I pushed and shoved to move through the crowds to be as close to my Son as I could, we came to a place in the road where he stopped. He saw me and we looked into each other's eyes. I didn't want him to see my tears or know my pain, but I long ago accepted how thoroughly he knew me. The love from my heart poured out in the only embrace I could give him. My lips quietly said the prayer he taught us: 'Father, may your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' He nodded so slightly, took a deep breath and moved on up the hill. The sword passing through my heart had blessed his mission, and I knew he knew it.

I cannot tell you how proud I am that he took up that mission for us but it is hard to believe that in doing so, he has tasted the separation and loss that every person in the world knows who has lost a loved one. And, he has understood the heart of every loving mother who grieves at the suffering of her children. "

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
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5th Station: Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.



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

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

Pastor: As you struggled to bear your cross to Calvary, a passerby was drafted to help you.

All: Make us as willing as Simon to bear the burdens of those in need.

Mary: "As I followed my Son up the Via Dolorosa, I realized that he simply was not able to carry the cross any further alone. I was so relieved that he was getting help at the time, even though my heart went out to Simon who was drawn into Jesus' journey.

At this point, Jesus entered deeper into our humanity as he came to know the experience of all of us who must depend upon others, who can't make it alone. Even in this final journey, Jesus would not even have the satisfaction of being able to do this on his own."

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.***

10th Station: Jesus is stripped.



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

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

Pastor: Stripped and jeered, you endured humiliation without complaint.

All: Humble us in our work and daily lives.

Mary: 'The sword passed through my heart again to watch my son violated this way. They intended to shame him even more by executing him naked. They simply had to strip him of any dignity a human being could have left. I remember looking at this body I had cared for and bathed so many years ago, now with all his wounds re-opened and bleeding, so exposed for everyone to see. Now I see all the people in the world who are vulnerable and without any defense, all those whose dignity is violated, and I see this act of stripping as placing my son so completely with those who suffer. His incarnation was about to be complete.

***Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.***

9th Station: Jesus falls the third time.



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

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

Pastor: The full burden of our sin crushed you mightily to the earth.

All: Do not forsake us in our falling, but bring us to repentance and faith.

Mary: "I will always remember this final fall. Having endured such a beating and having lost so much blood, my son simply collapses. I saw him lay there on the ground and I thought he was dead. His arms spread out and his face in the dirt, Jesus found himself becoming more human – in solidarity with all who fall in any way -- understanding every weakness or failure we have ever experienced.

This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely go on. Summoning all this remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic yet paying a price they think he deserves. They help him up, but only so he can make it up the hill of crucifixion."

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

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6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



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

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

Pastor: Others also took risks to comfort you.

All: Strengthen our faith to take loving risks for our needy brothers and sisters.

Mary: "I can't describe his face, with the blood and the sweat, and the bruises and swelling from the beatings. As a mother, I can hardly tell you that there was even spittle on his face – the face of solidarity with all who have ever experienced abuse and violence. Then, out of the crowd came a woman whose compassion for my Son was so great that she pushed past the Roman soldiers and wiped his face with her veil. Oh, how I loved her for that. The look between them touched me deeply. His clean face, for a moment, revealed the loving face of the Son I loved.

As he smiled at the woman and continued on the journey, those of us nearby looked at her veil and saw the gift he gave her. There on her veil was a stunning likeness, a true icon of the cost of his sacrifice and the depth of his solidarity with all who suffer. This image is his gift to us forever, to always contemplate his likeness, his union with us in our worst rejection and suffering."

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

7th Station: Jesus falls the second time.



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

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

Pastor: Sin weighed heavily upon you as you stumbled along the way.

All: Forgive us, Lord, for the sins which make us fall.

Mary: "Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground again. My heart sank as he seemed to just lose control, stumbling and crumbling to the ground. When his knees hit the hard stones, I could feel the jarring pain through my whole body. Helpless to help him, I ached all over with his agony. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him. 'Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return.' He has seen death before. I know he now feels the profound weakness of disability, disease, and aging, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

Think about how this fall made him one with people with disabilities, with people suffering from all kinds of physical diseases that weaken them, and with all who are aging and must confront the limits of their bodies. My prayer is that all God's people who know the suffering of these disabilities might know that they can always turn to my Son for understanding and comfort."

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



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

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

Pastor: Your suffering under the cross caused the women of Jerusalem to weep.

All: Make our suffering in life a share in your suffering.

Mary: "This moving scene filled my heart with even more love for him. During his ministry he had come to grieve for Jerusalem. As I had seen him comfort so many during his life, now he has returned to Jerusalem and, even in his own intense suffering, he comforts this group of women and children. They aren't here to condemn him. What a remarkable encounter. They try to comfort him, as he looks on them with love and compassion. Whenever he had met women and children during his ministry, he had broken all kinds of social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing he can't remain to help them more in this life.

Now, my son gives them a special mission. Soon they would understand that this suffering they witnessed so closely was for them. Soon they would witness the suffering of Jerusalem and have the chance to bring their compassion and faith to the children and the people of their city."

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

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