



The Holy See

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

COLOSSEUM

Good Friday, 13 April 2001

OPENING PRAYER

**In the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

The first Good Friday of the third millennium.

Night has fallen.

The moon shines high in the sky.

The faithful of Rome and countless pilgrims
have gathered to walk with Jesus
along the Way of the Cross.

At the Colosseum, splendid monument
of the Roman Empire, now we celebrate
the *Statio Urbis et Orbis*.

Via Crucis,

a journey of solidarity.

Jesus, the Son of God, born of woman,
is one with his brothers and sisters

- humanity, suffering and bewildered -:

in their steps, the steps of exiles

and deportees,

of the disillusioned who wander aimlessly,

in the halting steps of children, the sick,

the elderly,

of the condemned who approach the place

of their execution. Yet Jesus, as he walks

towards the Place of the Skull,
is leading humanity towards the splendour
of Glory.

Via Crucis,

a journey of discipleship.

Jesus, the one Teacher, has said:

"If any man would come after me,
let him deny himself and take up his cross
and follow me" (Mt 16: 24).

Follow me always. Follow me to Calvary.

Beneath the Cross stand Mary,
the first disciple,
and the Beloved Disciple.

As he ascends towards Calvary,
Jesus knows that he is about to teach
his greatest lesson
and to confirm that teaching by the gift
of his very self:

"Greater love has no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends"
(Jn 15: 13).

Via Crucis,

a priestly and royal journey.

Jesus, consecrated by the Spirit, is King
and Priest.

But on the way to Calvary

he holds no sceptre,

he wears no priestly garb.

Yet he knows that his Kingdom is beginning.

In the only form possible to him:

he reigns with the power of love.

Now begins his Priesthood:

the meek and innocent Lamb offers himself,
as an expiating victim for the sin of the world.

Via Crucis,

a journey of hope.

At nightfall the certainty of dawn
is already present.

In the twilight of his life,

Jesus is sure of the Father's love,
 he hopes in spite of the evidence of failure;
 he is sure that from the dark womb
 of the earth
 he will rise as the "bright morning star"
 (Rv 22: 16).

As he walks to his death, Jesus knows
 that he is hastening towards the resurrection.

Via Crucis,

a journey of fullness:
 of pain and unbounded love,
 of total abasement and sublime exaltation;
 fullness of the Spirit,
 who streams forth from the wounded side
 of the Saviour,
 as a river of life and grace;
 fullness of forgiveness and mercy,
 of reconciliation and peace.
 It is the hour of the "loud cry" (Mk 15: 37)
 and the silence of the cosmos,
 which mourns the death of its Creator.
 The hour of the bowed head
 and the laborious rest.
 And, in the heart of his Mother,
 the hour of immense compassion
 and anxious expectation.

*O mighty God,
 strengthen me with Thy strength,
 console me with Thy everlasting peace,
 soothe me with the beauty of Thy countenance;
 enlighten me with Thy uncreated brightness;
 purify me with the fragrance
 of Thy ineffable holiness.
 Bathe me in Thyself, and give me to drink,
 as far as mortal man may ask,
 of the rivers of grace which flow
 from the Father and the Son, the grace
 of Thy consubstantial, co-eternal Love.*

*O my all-sufficient Lord,
 Thou only sufficest!
 Thy blood is sufficient for the whole world.
 As Thou art sufficient for me,
 so Thou art sufficient for the entire race
 of Adam.*

*O my Lord Jesus,
 let Thy Cross be more than sufficient for them.
 Let it be effectual!
 Let it be effectual for me more than all,
 lest I have all and abound,
 yet bring no fruit to perfection.*
 Amen.*

*J. H. Newman, *Meditations on Christian Doctrine* 8: 504, 505.

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

Mt 27: 22-23, 26

*Pilate said to them,
 "Then what am I to do with Jesus,
 the so-called Messiah?"
 "Crucify him!", they all cried.
 He said, "Why, what crime has he committed?".
 But they only shouted the louder, "Crucify him!".
 At that, he released Barabbas to them.
 Jesus, however, he first had scourged;
 then he handed him over to be crucified.*

* * *

The Holy, Just, and True was judged by sinners, and put to death. Yet, while they judged, they were compelled to acquit Him. Judas, who betrayed Him, said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood". Pilate, who sentenced Him, said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person", and threw the guilt upon the Jews. The Centurion who saw Him crucified said, "Indeed this was a just man".

* * *

Thus ever, O Lord, Thou art justified in Thy words, and dost overcome when Thou are judged. And so, much more; at the last day "They shall look on Him whom they pierced"; and He who was condemned in weakness shall judge the world in power, and even those who are condemned will confess their judgement is just.

SECOND STATION

Jesus receives His Cross

Mt 27: 27-31

*The procurator's soldiers
took Jesus inside the praetorium
and collected the whole cohort around him.
They stripped off his clothes and wrapped him
in a scarlet military cloak.
Weaving a crown out of thorns they fixed it
on his head,
and stuck a reed in his right hand.
Then they began to mock him,
dropping to their knees before him, saying,
"All hail, King of the Jews!"
They also spat at him.
Afterward they took hold of the reed
and kept striking him on the head.
Finally, when they had finished making
a fool of him,
they stripped him of the cloak,
dressed him in his own clothes,
and led him off to crucifixion.*

* * *

Jesus supports the whole world by His divine power, for He is God; but the weight was less heavy than was the Cross which our sins hewed out for Him. Our sins cost Him this humiliation. He had to take on Him our nature, and to appear among us as a man, and to offer up for us a great sacrifice. He had to pass a life in penance, and to endure His passion and death at the end of it.

* * *

O Lord God Almighty,

*who dost bear the weight of the whole world
without weariness,
who bore the weight of all our sins,
though they wearied Thee,
as Thou art the Preserver of our bodies
by Thy Providence,
so be Thou the Saviour of our souls
by Thy precious blood.*

THIRD STATION

Jesus falls under the weight of the Cross the first time

Is 53: 4-6

*Yet it was our infirmities that he bore,
our sufferings that he endured,
While we thought of him as stricken,
as one smitten by God and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our offenses,
crushed for our sins;
Upon him was the chastisement
that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep,
each following his own way;
But the Lord laid upon him
the guilt of us all.*

* * *

Satan fell from heaven in the beginning; by the just sentence of his Creator he fell, against whom he had rebelled. And when he had succeeded in gaining man to join him in his rebellion, and his Maker came to save him, then his brief hour of triumph came, and he made the most of it. When the Holiest had taken flesh, and was in his power, then in his revenge and malice he determined, as he himself had been struck down by the Almighty arm, to strike in turn a heavy blow at Him who struck him. Therefore it was that Jesus fell down so suddenly.

* * *

*O dear Lord,
by this Thy first fall
raise us all out of sin,*

*who have so miserably fallen
under its power.*

FOURTH STATION
Jesus meets His Mother
Lk 2: 34-35, 51

*Simeon blessed them
and said to Mary his mother:
"This child is destined to be the downfall
and the rise of many in Israel,
a sign that will be opposed,
and you yourself shall be pierced with a sword,
so that the thoughts of many hearts
may be laid bare"....
His mother meanwhile pondered all these things
in her heart.*

* * *

There is no part of the history of Jesus but Mary has her part in it. There are those who profess to be His servants, who think that her work was ended when she bore Him; and after that she had nothing to do but disappear and be forgotten. But we, O Lord, do not so think of Thy Mother. She brought the tender infant into the Temple, she lifted Him up in her arms when the wise men came to adore Him. She fled with Him to Egypt, she took Him up to Jerusalem when He was 12 years old. He lived with her at Nazareth for 30 years. She was with Him at the marriage-feast. Even when He had left her to preach, she hovered about Him. And now she shows herself as He toils along the Sacred Way with His cross on his shoulders.

* * *

*Sweet Mother,
let us ever think of thee
when we think of Jesus,
and when we pray to Him,
ever aid us by thy powerful intercession.*

FIFTH STATION
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the Cross
Lk 23: 26-27

*As they led him away,
they laid hold of one Simon the Cyrenean
who was coming in from the fields.
They put a crossbeam on Simon's shoulder
for him to carry along behind Jesus.
A great crowd of people followed him,
including women who beat their breasts
and lamented over him.*

* * *

Jesus could bear His Cross alone, did He so will; but He permits Simon to help Him, in order to remind us that we must take part in His sufferings, and have a fellowship in His work. His merit is infinite, yet He condescends to let His people add their merit to it. The sanctity of the Blessed Virgin, the blood of the Martyrs, the prayers and penances of the Saints, the good deeds of all the faithful, take part in that work which, nevertheless, is perfect without them. He saves us by His blood, but it is through and with ourselves that He saves us.

* * *

*Dear Lord,
teach us to suffer with Thee,
make it pleasant to us to suffer for Thy sake,
and sanctify all our sufferings
by the merits of Thy own.*

SIXTH STATION

The face of Jesus is wiped by Veronica

Is 53: 2-3

*There was in him no stately bearing
to make us look at him,
nor appearance that would attract us to him.
He was spurned and avoided by men,
a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity,
One of those from whom men hide their faces.*

* * *

Jesus let the pious woman carry off an impression of His Sacred Countenance, which was to last to future ages. He did this to remind us all, that His image must ever be impressed on all our

hearts. Whoever we are, in whatever part of the earth, in whatever age of the world, Jesus must live in our hearts. We may differ from each other in many things, but in this we must all agree, if we are His true children. We must bear about with us the napkin of St Veronica; we must ever meditate upon His death and resurrection, we must ever imitate His divine excellence, according to our measure.

* * *

*Lord,
let our countenances
be ever pleasing in Thy sight,
not defiled with sin,
but bathed and washed white
in Thy precious blood.*

SEVENTH STATION
Jesus falls the second time
Lam 3: 1-2, 9, 16

*I am a man who knows affliction
from the rod of his anger,
one whom he has led and forced
to walk in darkness, not in the light...
He has blocked my ways with fitted stones,
and turned my paths aside....
He has broken my teeth with gravel,
pressed my face in the dust.*

* * *

Satan had a second fall, when our Lord came upon earth. By that time he had usurped the dominion of the whole world - and he called himself its king. And he dared to take up the Holy Saviour in his arms, and show Him all kingdoms, and blasphemously promise to give them to Him, His Maker, if He would adore him. Jesus answered, "Begone, Satan!" - and Satan fell down from the high mountain. And Jesus bare witness to it when He said, "I saw Satan, as lightning, falling from heaven". The Evil One remembered this second defeat, and so now he smote down the Innocent Lord a second time, now that he had Him in his power.

* * *

O dear Lord,

*teach us to suffer with Thee,
and not be afraid of Satan's buffetings,
when they come on us
from resisting him.*

EIGHTH STATION

The women of Jerusalem mourn for our Lord

Lk 23: 28-31

*Jesus turned to them and said:
"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me.
Weep for yourselves and for your children.
The days are coming when they will say,
"Happy are the sterile,
the wombs that never bore,
and the breasts that never nursed'.
Then they will begin saying to the mountains,
"Fall on us', and to the hills, "Cover us'.
If they do these things in the green wood,
what will happen in the dry?'.
* * **

Ever since the prophecy of old time, that the Saviour of man was to be born of a woman of the stock of Abraham, the Jewish women had desired to bear Him. Yet, now that He was really come, how different, as the Gospel tells us, was the event from what they had expected. He said to them "that the days were coming when they should say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the breasts which have not given suck".

* * *

*Ah, Lord,
we know not what is good for us,
and what is bad.
We cannot foretell the future, nor do we know,
when Thou comest to visit us,
in what form Thou wilt come.
And therefore we leave it all to Thee.
Do Thou Thy good pleasure to us and in us.
Let us ever look at Thee,
and do Thou look upon us,*

*and give us the grace of Thy bitter Cross
and Passion,
and console us in Thy own way
and at Thy own time.*

NINTH STATION

Jesus falls the third time

Lam 3: 27-32

*It is good for a man to bear the yoke
from his youth.
Let him sit alone and in silence, when it
is laid upon him.
Let him put his mouth to the dust;
there may yet be hope.
Let him offer his cheek to be struck,
let him be filled with disgrace.
For the Lord's rejection does not last forever;
Though he punishes, he takes pity,
in the abundance of his mercies.*

* * *

Satan will have a third and final fall at the end of the world, when he will be shut up for good in the everlasting fiery prison. He knew this was to be his end - he has no hope, but despair only. He knew that no suffering which he could at that moment inflict upon the Saviour of men would avail to rescue himself from that inevitable doom. But, in horrible rage and hatred, he determined to insult and torture while he could the great King whose throne is everlasting. Therefore a third time he smote Him down fiercely to the earth.

* * *

*O Jesus, Only-begotten Son of God,
the Word Incarnate,
we adore with fear and trembling
and deep thankfulness
Thy awful humiliation,
that Thou who art the Highest,
should have permitted Thyself,
even for one hour,
to be the sport and prey of the Evil One.*

TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of His garments*Mt 27: 33-36*

*Upon arriving at a site called Golgotha,
 a name which means Skull Place,
 they gave him a drink of wine
 flavoured with gall,
 which he tasted but refused to drink.
 When they had crucified him,
 they divided his clothes among them
 by casting lots;
 then they sat down there
 and kept watch over him.*

* * *

Jesus would give up everything of this world, before He left it. He exercised the most perfect poverty. When He left the Holy House of Nazareth, and went out to preach, He had not where to lay His head. He lived on the poorest food, and on what was given to Him by those who loved and served Him. And therefore He chose a death in which not even His clothes were left to Him. He parted with what seemed most necessary, and even a part of Him, by the law of human nature since the fall.

* * *

*Grant us in like manner, O dear Lord,
 to care nothing
 for anything on earth,
 and to bear the loss of all things,
 and to endure even shame,
 reproach, contempt, and mockery,
 rather than that Thou shalt be ashamed
 of us at the last day.*

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the Cross*Mk 15: 25-27*

*It was about nine in the morning
 when they crucified him.*

The inscription proclaiming his offence read:

"The King of the Jews".

*With him they crucified two insurgents,
one at his right and one at his left.*

* * *

Jesus is pierced through each hand and each foot with a sharp nail. His eyes are dimmed with blood, and are closed by the swollen lids and livid brows which the blows of His executioners have caused. His mouth is filled with vinegar and gall. His head is encircled by the sharp thorns. His heart is pierced with the spear. Thus, all His senses are mortified and crucified, that He may make atonement for every kind of human sin.

* * *

*O Jesus,
mortify and crucify us with Thee.
Let us never sin by hand or foot,
by eyes or mouth, or by head or heart.
Let all our senses be a sacrifice to Thee;
let every member sing Thy praise.
Let the sacred blood
which flowed from Thy five wounds
anoint us with such sanctifying grace
that we may die to the world,
and live only to Thee.*

TWELFTH STATION
Jesus dies upon the Cross
Mt 27: 45-47, 50

*From noon onward, there was darkness
over the whole land until midafternoon.
Then toward midafternoon
Jesus cried out in a loud tone,
"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?",
that is, "My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?".
This made some of the bystanders
who heard it remark, "He is invoking Elijah!".
Once again Jesus cried out in a loud voice,*

and then gave up his spirit.

* * *

"*Consummatum est*". It is completed - it has come to a full end. The mystery of God's love towards us is accomplished. The price is paid, and we are redeemed. The Eternal Father determined not to pardon us without a price, in order to show us especial favour. He condescended to make us valuable to Him. What we buy we put a value on. He might have saved us without a price - by the mere fiat of His will. But to show His love for us He took a price, which, if there was to be a price set upon us at all, if there was any ransom at all to be taken for the guilt of our sins, could be nothing short of the death of His Son in our nature.

* * *

*O my God and Father,
Thou hast valued us so much
as to pay the highest of all possible prices
for our sinful souls;
and shall we not love
and choose Thee above all things
as the one necessary and one only good?*

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the arms of His Blessed Mother

Mt 27: 54-55

*The centurion and his men
who were keeping watch over Jesus
were terror-stricken at seeing the earthquake
and all that was happening,
and said, "Clearly this was the Son of God!".
Many women were present
looking on from a distance.
They had followed Jesus from Galilee
to attend to his needs.*

* * *

He is Thy property now, O Virgin Mother, once again, for He and the world have met and parted. He went out from Thee to do His Father's work - and He has done and suffered it. Satan and bad men have now no longer any claim upon Him - too long has He been in their arms. Satan took Him

up aloft to the high mountain; evil men lifted Him up upon the Cross.

* * *

*He has not been in Thy arms, O Mother of God,
since He was a child;
but now thou hast a claim upon Him,
when the world has done its worst.
For thou art the all-favoured,
all-blessed, all-gracious
Mother of the Highest.
We rejoice in this great mystery.
He has been hidden in thy womb,
He has lain in thy bosom,
He has been suckled at thy breasts,
He has been carried in thy arms;
and now that He is dead,
He is placed upon thy lap.
Virgin Mother of God, pray for us.*

FOURTEENTH STATION
Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre
Mt 27: 57-60

*When evening fell,
a wealthy man from Arimathea arrived,
Joseph by name.
He was another of Jesus' disciples,
and had gone to request the body of Jesus.
Thereupon Pilate issued an order for its release.
Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it
in fresh linen and laid it in his own new tomb
which had been hewn from a formation of rock.
Then he rolled a huge stone
across the entrance of the tomb and went away.*

* * *

Jesus, when He was nearest to His everlasting triumph, seemed to be farthest from triumphing. When He was nearest upon entering upon His kingdom, and exercising all power in heaven and earth, He was lying dead in a cave of the rock. He was wrapped round in burying-clothes, and

confined within a sepulchre of stone, where He was soon to have a glorified spiritual body, which could penetrate all substances, go to and fro quicker than thought, and was about to ascend on high.

* * *

*Make us to trust in Thee, O Jesus,
that Thou wilt display in us
a similar providence.*

*Make us sure, O Lord,
that the greater is our distress,
the nearer we are to Thee.*

*The more men scorn us,
the more Thou dost honour us.*

*The more men insult over us,
the higher Thou wilt exalt us.*

*The more they forget us,
the more Thou dost keep us in mind.*

*The more they abandon us,
the closer Thou wilt bring us to Thyself.*

Meditations and Prayers by the Venerable Servant of God Cardinal John Henry Newman