

Little Thoughts along the Way of the Cross

Do not wait until Lent to pray the Way of the Cross. Come close to Jesus more often by spending a few short moments with him every week in a manner like the sample below. Ask him to teach you what to think about him, what to learn from him, how you can be like him, in what way you are already following in his footsteps, how you have used his good example to deal with conflicts in your family, in the workplace, with acquaintances, and with those who treat you as an enemy. Share with him your joys, your sorrows, your concerns of the day. Thank him.

It is true that this Way of the Cross version does not carry with it any official plenary indulgence from the Church. If you want, you can pray a version which is connected to an indulgence. How often you do that each year is for you to count.

Every Catholic church has the fourteen Stations of the Cross displayed prominently on the walls. Why is that?

The Enchiridion of Indulgences (Norms On Indulgences, #26 and #29) shows how to gain a plenary indulgence for making the Stations of the Cross.

To gain a plenary indulgence through making the Stations, it is necessary to move from one Station to the next, 14 in total, to meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord (no specific prayers are required), and to have the intention of gaining the indulgence. (Indulgences can always be applied to the Souls in Purgatory.)

Moreover, “To acquire a plenary indulgence it is necessary to perform the work to which the indulgence is attached and to fulfill the following three conditions: sacramental confession, eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even venial sin, be absent.”

“The condition of praying for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff is fully satisfied by reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary; nevertheless, each one is free to recite any other prayer according to his piety and devotion.”

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Jesus, at the time when you were sentenced to die by crucifixion, no Gospel had been compiled and no theological treatises had been written to expound on what you were doing. You faced your sacrifice silently, offering no explanation to anyone. Never once did you seek sympathy. You knew what you had to do, and did it for the eternal benefit of all.

2nd Station: Jesus carries his cross

Jesus, you were insulted, beaten, disfigured, and paraded through the streets like a filthy criminal in rags. The spectators regarded you as a disgraced failure. But, no matter what people thought, you persisted on your sacred mission without telling your foes you were doing the greatest good for them. You bore no bitterness; you did not fight back. You remained constantly meek and humble of heart. You cared not for human praise.

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time

Jesus, you collapsed along the way. After enduring an all-night ordeal of brutality and torment, you had no energy left. You could have used this fall as an excuse to call off the rest of the humiliating undertaking; but you got up and pressed onward.

4th Station: Jesus meets his afflicted mother

Jesus, I can imagine your Mother saying: “Son, you are doing the right thing. No matter what vicious things people say about you, keep up the good work.

“I have asked your Father: ‘Our Son’s Passion is excruciatingly agonizing. Please reduce the time of his suffering by giving the same suffering to me.’”

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus

Jesus, you accepted assistance from a stranger. Even though he was only forced into giving you a hand, in return you inspired the evangelists to include in the Bible his name and those of his sons and his village. Lord, how much more will you reward me if I do things for you voluntarily!

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Going against the current, and without the slightest concern for her own safety and reputation, Veronica braved the wrath of the soldiers and the onlookers by coming to your aid. Jesus, whenever I follow her example of devotedness to you with selfless bravery, I will become more and more your true icon in my heart and in my soul.

7th Station: Jesus falls a second time

Jesus, you were whipped and pushed, and fell again. You got back on your feet, not because you were coerced, but because of your immense love for me and your desire to save me.

8th Station: Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Jesus, you always respected women, never taking advantage of them or preying on their sympathy and emotions. Even in your own hour of need, you made sure to remind them to take care.

In the four gospels, I have seen how kindly you treated mothers, widows, little girls, and women of all ages – sinners and the virtuous alike. You were always so thoughtful and considerate towards each one of them. Lord, I want to be like you.

9th Station: Jesus falls the third time

Jesus, you summoned up your last ounce of energy to complete your mission for my sake. Thank you.

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Jesus, you submitted yourself to humiliation on my behalf in advance; that is why, time and time again, even when I could have been put to shame, I wasn't.

For your love does not apply solely to my life after death. Your love is concerned with every situation in my life now. Jesus, never should I live in darkness, with a shadow hanging over my head; when I surrender each difficulty into your hands, the light of your grace shines on all seemingly unsolvable problems. Thank you, Jesus.

And Lord, help me never to embarrass anyone.

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Jesus, you endured unbearable pains so that I do not have to suffer much. Lord, every time I ask, you deliver me from all tribulations – mental, physical and spiritual. You never fail to make my life easier.

And Jesus, help me never to harm anybody.

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

Jesus, you loved me so much that even if I were the only person who needed redemption, you would have suffered for me. “The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20, NIV) Thank you, Lord.

13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Jesus, why did you create me? For Heaven, of course! Nothing less! Without consulting me, you fashioned me; was it for suffering or for disaster? Certainly not! You are God, what you do must be for good. It cannot be otherwise.

Thank you for creating me and redeeming me from my sins, keeping the door open for me to live in eternal happiness. Thank you for directing me onto the right path every step of the way.

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the sepulcher

Jesus, with the help of your grace, I resolve not to sin against you anymore. I resolve to live in simplicity and absolute trust in your unparalleled kindness towards me.