

## THE WAY OF THE CROSS

*Taken from the book Living Way Of The Cross by Mother Angelica*

### OPENING PRAYER

Mary, my Mother, you were the first to live the Way of the Cross. You felt every pain and every humiliation. You were unafraid of the ridicule heaped upon you by the crowds. Your eyes were ever on Jesus and His Pain. Is that the secret of your miraculous strength? How did your loving heart bear such a burden and such a weight? As you watched Him stumble and fall, were you tortured by the memory of all the yesterdays-His birth, His hidden life and His ministry?

You were so desirous of everyone loving Him. What a heartache it was to see so many hate Him - hate with a diabolical fury. Take my hand as I make this Way of the Cross. Inspire me with those thoughts that will make me realize how much He loves me. Give me light to apply each station to my daily life and to remember my neighbor's needs in this Way of the Pain.

Obtain for me the grace to understand the mystery, the wisdom and the Divine love as I go from scene to scene. Grant that my heart, like yours, may be pierced through by the sight of His sorrow and the misery and that I may determine never to offend Him again. What a price He paid to cover my sins, to open the gates of heaven for me and to fill my soul with His own Spirit. Sweet Mother, let us travel this way together and grant that the love in my poor heart may give you some slight consolation. Amen.

### THE FIRST STATION

#### *Jesus Is Condemned To Death*

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

My Jesus, the world still has You on trial. It keeps asking who You are and why You make the demands You make. It asks over and over the question, If You are God's Son, why do You permit the world to be in the state it is in? Why are You so silent?

Though the arrogance of the world angers me, I must admit that silently, in the depths of my soul, I too have these questions. Your humility frustrates me and makes me uncomfortable. Your strength before Pilate as You drank deeply from the power of the Father, gives me the answer to my question - The Father's Will. The Father permits many sufferings in my life but it is all for my good. If only I too could be silent in the face of worldly prudence - steadfast in the faith when all seems lost - calm when accused unjustly - free from tyranny of human respect - ready to do the Father's Will no matter how difficult.

Silent Jesus, give us all the graces we need to stand tall in the face of the ridicule of the world. Give the poor the strength not to succumb to their privation but to be ever aware of their dignity as sons of God. Grant that we might not bend to the crippling disease of worldly glory but be willing to be

deprived of all things rather than lose Your friendship. My Jesus, though we are accused daily of being fools, let the vision of Quiet Dignity standing before Monstrous Injustice, give us all the courage to be Your followers. Amen.

### THE SECOND STATION

#### *Jesus Carries His Cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

How could any human impose such a burden upon Your torn and bleeding body, Lord Jesus? Each movement of the cross drove the thorns deeper into Your Head. How did You keep the hatred from welling up in Your Heart? How did the injustice of it all not ruffle your peace? The Father's Will was hard on You - Why do I complain when it is hard on me?

I see injustice and am frustrated and when my plans to alleviate it seems futile, I despair. When I see those burdened with poverty suffer ever more and cross is added to cross my heart is far from serene. I utterly fail to see the dignity of the cross as it is carried with love. I would so much rather be without it.

My worldly concept is that suffering, like food, should be shared equally. How ridiculous I am, dear Lord. Just as we do not all need the same amount of material food, neither do we need the same amount of spiritual food and that is what the cross is in my life, isn't it - spiritual food proportional to my needs. Amen.

### THE THIRD STATION

#### *Jesus Falls the First Time*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, it seems to me, that as God, You would have carried Your cross without faltering, but You did not. You fell beneath it's weight to show me You understand when I fall. Is it pride that makes me want to shine even in pain? You were not ashamed to fall- to admit the cross was heavy. There are those in world whom my pride will not tolerate as I expect everyone to be strong, yet I am weak. I am ashamed to admit failure in anything.

If the Father permits failure in my life just as He permitted You to fall, then I must know there is good in that failure which my mind will never comprehend. I must not concentrate on the eyes of others as they rest upon me in my falls. Rather, I must reach up to touch that invisible hand and drink in that invisible strength ever at my side.

Weak Jesus, help all men who try so hard to be good but whose nature is constantly opposed to them walking straight and tall down the narrow road of life. Raise their heads to see the glory that is to come rather than the misery of the present moment.

Your love for me gave You strength to rise from Your fall. Look upon all those whom the world considers unprofitable servants and give them the courage to be more concerned as to how they stand before You, rather than their fellowmen. Amen.

#### THE FOURTH STATION

##### *Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, it was a great sorrow to realize Your pain caused Mary so much grief. As Redeemer, You wanted her to share in Your pain for mankind. When You glanced at each other in unutterable suffering, what gave you both the courage to carry on without the least alleviation - without anger at such injustice?

It seems as if you desired to suffer every possible pain to give me an example of how to suffer when my time comes. What a humiliation for You when Your mother saw you in such a pitiable state - weak - helpless - at the mercy of sinful men - holiness exposed to evil in all hideousness.

Did every moment of that short encounter seem like an eternity? As I see so much suffering in the world, there are times I think it is all hopeless. There is an element of lethargy in my prayers for mankind that says "I'll pray, but what good will it do? The sick grow sicker and the hungry starve." I think of that glance between You and Mary - the glance that said, "Let us give this misery to the Father for the salvation of souls. The Father's power takes our pain and frustration and renews souls, saves them for a new life - a life of eternal joy, eternal happiness. It is worth it all." Give perseverance to the sick so they can carry the cross of frustration and agony with love and resignation for the salvation of others. Amen.

#### THE FIFTH STATION

##### *Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, Your tormentors enlisted a Simon of Cyrene to help You carry Your cross. Your humility is beyond my comprehension. Your power upheld the whole universe and yet You permit one of Your creatures to help You carry a cross. I imagine Simon was reluctant to take part in Your shame. He had no idea that all who watched and jeered at him would pass into oblivion while his name would go down in history and eternity as the one who helped his God in need. Is it not so with me, dear Jesus? Even when I reluctantly carry my cross as Simon did, it benefits my soul.

If I keep my eyes on You and watch how You suffered, I will be able to bear my cross with greater fortitude. Were you trying to tell all those who suffer from prejudice to have courage? Was Simon a symbol of all those who are hated because of race, color and creed?

Simon wondered as he took those beams upon his shoulders, why he was chosen for such a heavy burden and now he knows. Help me Jesus, to trust your loving Providence as you permit suffering to weave itself in and out of my life. Make me understand that You looked at it and held it fondly before You passed it on to me. You watch me and give me strength just as You did Simon. When I enter Your Kingdom, I shall know as he knows, what marvels Your Cross has wrought in my soul. Amen.

#### THE SIXTH STATION

##### *Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, where were all the hundreds of peoples whose bodies and souls were healed by you? Where were they when You needed someone to give You the least sign of comfort? Ingratitude must have borne down upon Your heart and made the cross nearly impossible to carry. There are times I too feel all my efforts for Your Kingdom are futile and end in nothingness. Did your eyes roam through the crowd for the comfort of just one individual - one sign of pity - one sign of grief?

My heart thrills with a sad joy when I think of one woman, breaking away from fear and human respect and offering You her thin veil to wipe Your bleeding Face. Your loving heart, ever watching for the least sign of love, imprinted the Image of your torn Face upon it! How can You forget Yourself so completely and reward such a small act of kindness?

I must admit, I have been among those who were afraid to know You rather than like Veronica. She did not care if the whole world knew she loved You. Heartbroken Jesus, give me that quality of the soul so necessary to witness to spread Your Word - to tell all people of Your love for them. Send many into Your Vineyard so the people of all nations may receive the Good News. Imprint Your Divine Image upon my soul and let the thin veil of my human nature bear a perfect resemblance to your loving Spirit. Amen.

#### THE SEVENTH STATION

##### *Jesus Falls A Second Time*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, one of the beautiful qualities the people admired in You was Your strength in time of ridicule - Your ability to rise above the occasion. But now, You fall a second time - apparently conquered by the pain of the Cross. People who judged You by appearances made a terrible mistake. What looked like weakness was unparalleled strength!

I often judge by appearances and how wrong I am most of the time. The world judges entirely by this fraudulent method of discerning. It looks down upon those who apparently have given their best and are now in need. It judges the poor as failures, the sick as useless and the aged as a burden. How wrong that kind of judgment is in the light of your second fall! Your greatest moment was Your weakest one. Your greatest triumph was in failure. Your greatest act of love was in desolation. Your greatest show of power was in that utter lack of strength that threw You to the ground.

Weak and powerful Jesus, give me the grace to see beyond what is visible and be more aware of Your Wisdom in the midst of weakness. Give the aged, sick, handicapped, retarded, deaf and blind the fruit of joy so they may ever be aware of the Father's gift and the vast difference between what the world sees and what the Father sees that they may glory in their weakness so the power of God may be manifest. Amen.

#### THE EIGHTH STATION

##### *Jesus Speaks to the Holy Women*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, I am amazed at Your compassion for others in Your time of need. When I suffer, I have a tendency to think only of myself but You forgot Yourself completely. When You saw the holy women weeping over Your torments, You consoled them and taught them to look deeper into Your Passion. You wanted them to understand that the real evil to cry over was the rejection You suffered from the Chosen people - a people set apart from every other nation, who refused to accept God's Son.

The Act of Redemption would go on and no one would ever be able to take away Your dignity as Son of God, but the evil, greed, jealousy and ambition in the hearts of those who should have recognized You was the issue to grieve over. To be so close to God made man and miss Him completely was the real crime.

My Jesus, I fear I do the same when I strain gnats and then swallow camels - when I take out the splinter in my brother's eye and forget the beam in my own. It is such a gift - this gift of faith. It is such a sublime grace to possess Your own Spirit. Why haven't I advanced in holiness of life? I miss the many disguises you take upon Yourself and see only people, circumstances and human events, not the loving hand of the Father guiding all things. Help all those who are discouraged, sick, lonely and old to recognize Your Presence in their midst. Amen.

#### THE NINTH STATION

##### *Jesus Falls the Third Time*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, even with the help of Simon You fell a third time. Were You telling me that there may be times in my life that I will fall again and again despite the help of friends and loved ones? There are times when the crosses You permit in my life are more than I can bear. It is as if all the sufferings of a life time are suddenly compressed into the present moment and it is more than I can stand.

Though it grieves my heart to see You so weak and helpless, it is a comfort to my soul to know that you understand my sufferings from Your own experience. Your love for me made You want to experience every kind of pain just so I could have someone to look to for example and courage.

When I cry out from the depths of my soul, "This suffering is more than I can bear," do You whisper, "Yes, I understand"? When I am discouraged after many falls, do you say in my innermost being, "Keep going, I know how hard it is to rise"?

There are many people who are sorely tried in body and soul with alcohol and drug weaknesses who try and try and fall again and again. Through the humiliation of this third fall, give them the courage and perseverance to take up their cross and follow you. Amen.

#### THE TENTH STATION

##### *Jesus is Stripped of His Garments*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

It seems that every step to Calvary brought You fresh humiliation, my Jesus. How Your sensitive nature recoiled at being stripped before a crowd of people. You desired to leave this life as You entered it - completely detached from all the comforts of this world. You want me to know without a doubt that you loved me with an unselfish love. Your love for me caused You nothing but pain and sorrow. You gave everything and received nothing in return. Why do I find it so hard to be detached?

In your loving mind, dear Jesus, did You look up to the Father as You stood there on that windy hill, shivering from cold and shame and trembling from fear, and ask Him to have mercy on those who would violate their purity and make love a mockery? Did you ask forgiveness for those whose greed would make them lie, cheat and steal for a few pieces of cold silver?

Forgive us all, dear Jesus. Look upon the world with pity, for mankind has lost its way and the principles of this world make lust a fun game and luxury a necessity. Detachment has become merely another hardship of the poor and obedience the fault of the weak. Have mercy on us and grant the people of this day the courage to see and know themselves and the light to change. Amen.

#### THE ELEVENTH STATION:

##### *Jesus is Nailed to the Cross*

V. We adore You, O Christ...

It is hard to imagine a God being nailed to a cross by His own creatures. It is even more difficult for my mind to understand a love that permitted such a thing to happen! As those men drove heavy nails into Your hands and feet, dear Jesus, did You offer the pain as reparation for some particular human weakness and sin? Was the nail in Your right hand for those who spend their lives in dissipation and boredom?

Was the nail in Your left hand in reparation for all consecrated souls who live lukewarm lives? Were You stretching out Your arms to show us how much You love us? As the feet that walked the hot, dusty roads were nailed fast, did they cramp up in a deadly grip of pain to make reparation for all those who so nimbly run the broad road of sin and self-indulgence?

It seems, dear Jesus, Your love has held You bound hand and foot as Your heart pleads for a return of love. You seem to shout from the top of the hill "I love you - come to me - see, I am held fast - I cannot hurt you - only you can hurt Me." How very hard is the heart that can see such love and turn away. Is it not true I too have turned away when I did not accept the Father's Will with love? Teach me to keep my arms ever open to love, to forgive and to render service - willing to be hurt rather than hurt, satisfied to love and not be loved in return. Amen.

**THE TWELFTH STATION:**

***Jesus Dies on the Cross***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

God is dead! No wonder the earth quaked, the sun hid itself, the dead rose and Mary stood by in horror. Your human body gave up it's soul in death but Your Divinity, dear Jesus, continued to manifest its power. All creation rebelled as the Word made Flesh departed from this world. Man alone was too proud to see and too stubborn to acknowledge truth.

Redemption was accomplished! Man would never have an excuse to forget how much You loved him. The thief on Your right saw something he could not explain - he saw a man on a tree and knew He was God. His need made him see his own guilt and Your innocence. The Promise of eternal life made the remaining hours of his torture. endurable.

A common thief responded to Your love with deep Faith, Hope, and Love. He saw more than his eyes envisioned - he felt a Presence he could not explain and would not argue with. He was in need and accepted the way God designed to help him.

Forgive our pride, dear Jesus as we spend hours speculating, days arguing and often a lifetime in rejecting Your death, which is a sublime mystery. Have pity on those whose intelligence leads them to pride because they never feel the need to reach out to the Man of Sorrows for consolation. Amen.

**THE THIRTEENTH STATION:**

***Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, it was with deep grief that Mary finally took You into her arms and saw all the wounds sin had inflicted upon You. Mary Magdalene looked upon Your dead Body with horror. Nicodemus, the man so full of human respect, who came to You by night, suddenly received the courage to help Joseph take you down from the Cross. You are once more surrounded by only a few followers. When loneliness and failure cross my path, let me think of this lonely moment and this total failure - failure in the eyes of men. How wrong they were - how mistaken their concept of success! The greatest act of love was given in desolation and the most successful mission accomplished and finished when all seemed lost. Is this not true in my life, dear Jesus? I judge my failures harshly. I demand perfection instead of holiness. My idea of success is for all to end well - according to my liking.

Give to all men the grace to see that doing Your Will is more important than success. If failure is permitted for my greater good then teach me how to use it to my advantage. Let me say as You once said, that to do the Will of the Father is my food. Let not the standards of this world take possession of me or destroy the good You have set for me - to be Holy and to accomplish the Father's Will with great love. Let me accept praise or blame, success or failure with equal serenity. Amen.

**THE FOURTEENTH STATION:**

***Jesus is Laid in the Sepulcher***

V. We adore You, O Christ...

My Jesus, You were laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. You were born with nothing of this world's goods and You died detached from everything. When You came into the world, men slept and angels sang and now as You leave it, Creation is silent and only a few weep. Both events were clothed in obscurity. The majority of men live in such a way. Most of us live and die knowing and known by only a few. Were You trying to tell us, dear Jesus, how very important our lives are just because we are accomplishing the Father's Will? Will we ever learn the lesson of humility that makes us content with who we are, where we are and what we are?

Will our Faith ever be strong enough to see power in weakness and good in the sufferings of our lives? Will our Hope be trusting enough to rely on Your Providence even when we have nowhere to lay our head? Will our Love ever be strong enough not to take scandal in the cross?

My Jesus, hide my soul in Your heart as You lie in the Sepulcher alone. Let my heart be as a fire to keep you warm. Let my desire to know and love You be like a torch to light up the darkness. Let my soul sing softly a hymn of repentant love as the hours pass and Your Resurrection is at hand. Let me rejoice, dear Jesus, with all the Angels in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for so great a love- so great a God- so great a day! Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

My Jesus, I have traveled Your Way of the cross. It seems so real and I feel so ashamed. I complain of my sufferings and find obedience to the Father's Will difficult. My Mind bogged down by the poverty, sickness, starvation, greed and hatred in the world. There are many innocent people who suffer so unjustly. There are those born with physical and mental defects. Do we understand that You continue to carry Your cross in the minds and bodies of each human being?

Help me to see the Father's Will in every incident of my daily life. This is what You did - you saw the Father's Will in Your persecutors, Your enemies and your pain. You saw a beauty in the Cross and embraced it as a desired treasure. My worldly mind is dulled by injustice and suffering and I lose sight of the glory that is to come. Help me to trust the Father and to realize that there is something great behind the most insignificant suffering. There is Someone lifting my cross to fit my shoulders - there is Divine Wisdom in all the petty annoyances that irk my soul every day.

Teach me the lessons contained in my Cross, the wisdom of its necessity, the beauty of its variety and the fortitude that accompanies even the smallest cross. Mary, My Mother, obtain for me the grace to be Jesus to my neighbor and to see my neighbor in Jesus. Amen.