

AID TO MENTAL PRAYER
ON THE FOURTEEN STATIONS

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NOTE: *These reflections are no more than jottings, which may be supplemented by reference to the Gospel narrative, and by individual prayer and aspirations.*

AVE CRUX AVE



CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps'. (I Peter ii, 21.) 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me'. (St Matt. xvi, 24.) That Christ carried the cross for himself the impious and the unbeliever think is utterly farcical, but to the faithful and the devout it remains a great mystery. 'The word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness: but to them that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God'. (I Cor. i, 18.) Christ carries his cross as a king does his sceptre, as a sign of his glory, which is his universal sovereignty over all things. 'The Lord hath reigned from the tree'. (Ps. xcv, 10.) 'The government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace'. (Isaias ix, 9.) He carries it as the victor carries the trophy of his victory, 'despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in himself'. (Coloss. II, 15.) Lastly as a teacher he carries the candlestick, in which the light of his doctrine was to be placed: since the word of the cross to the believers is the power of God. 'No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel: but upon a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light'. (St Thomas *In Ioannem*, cap. xix, lect. iii, n. 8.)

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

First Station.—Jesus is condemned to death.

Consider the dispositions of Pilate: 'My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me: and the light of my eyes itself is not with me'. (Ps. xxxvii, 11.)

'God spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all'. (Rms. viii, 32.)

'In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins'. (I John iv, 10.)

'The Son of God was offered because it was his own will'. (Isaias liii, 7.)

'God is greater than our heart'. (I John III, 20.)

'The Passion of Christ was the oblation of a sacrifice inasmuch as Christ by his own will endured death'. (St Thomas, *Summa*, III, xlvi, 4, ad 1.)

Second Station.—Jesus is made to bear his Cross.

Consider our Lord as the 'man of sorrows': 'surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted'. (Isaias liii, 4.)

'My friends and my neighbours have drawn near, and stood against me. And they that were near me stood afar off'. (Ps. xxxvii, 12.)

'Laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: Looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame'. (Hebr. xii, 11.)

Our Lord carried the altar of his own sacrifice. 'But in the stead of material fire, there was in the holocaust of Christ the fire of charity'. (*Summa*, III, xlvi, 4 ad 1.)

Third Station.—Jesus falls the first time under his Cross.

'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all'. (Isaias liii, 6.)

'Christ gave the highest example to penitents, since not for his own sin, but for the others, he willed to endure the penalty'. (*Summa*, III, xv, 1 ad 3.)

Fourth Station.—Jesus meets his afflicted Mother.

This was the hour of sorrow's sword which pierced Mary's heart.

'Truly, O Blessed Mother, the sword transfixing thy soul, or how else except by piercing it, could the flesh of thy Son have received its thrust?' (St Bernard, *Sermon*, 2nd Noct. Feast of Seven Sorrows.)

At this sad meeting Mary saw in the countenance of her Son the likeness to herself, and in that look his sorrows were multiplied, though even his slightest pain was enough to ransom the whole human race from all its sins. (*Summa*, III, xlvi, 5, ad 3.) He chose to suffer every type of agony.

Fifth Station.—The Cyrenean helps Jesus to carry his Cross.

Jesus is helping us to carry our cross, which he has made his own; we must therefore help him in the carrying of it. All are collectively Cyreneans, and every individual must be a Cyrenean in the daily carrying of the cross, and so 'fill up what is wanting to the Passion of Christ'. (Col. 12, 4.)

Sixth Station.—Veronica wīpes the face of Jesus.

‘I saw his sweet face as it were dry and bloodless with pale dying’. (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, ch. 16.) The Holy Vernacle ‘he hath portrayed with his own blessed face when he was in his hard Passion, wilfully going to his death, and often changing of colour’ (*ibid.* ch. 10).

‘We know in our Faith and believe by the teaching and preaching of Holy Church, that the blessed Trinity made Mankind to his image and to his likeness. In the same manner-wise we know that, when man fell so deep and so wretchedly by sin, there was none other help to restore man but through him that made man. And he that made man for love, by the same love he would restore man to the same bliss, and overpassing. And like as we were like-made to the Trinity in our first making, our Maker would that we should be like Jesus Christ, our Saviour, in heaven without end, by the virtue of our again-making. . . . Then atwixt these two, he would for love and worship of man make himself as like to man in this deadly life, in our foulness and our wretchedness, as man might be without guilt. Wherefore it meaneth, as was said afore, that it was the image and likeness of our foul black deeds’ shame wherein our fair, bright, blessed Lord God was hid . . . so fair a man was never none but he, till what time his fair colour was changed with travail and sorrow and Passion and dying’. (*ibid.* ch. 10.)

‘A mere man could not have made satisfaction for the whole human race: It was not befitting to God to make satisfaction, it was therefore fitting for Jesus Christ to be God and man’. (*Summa*, III, i, 2.) ‘The first creation of things took place by the power of God the Father through the Word. Whence it was necessary that re-creation should take place through the Word by the power of God the Father, that there should be a correspondence between creation and re-creation’. (*ibid.* iii, 8.) ‘As the flesh of Christ is the instrument of the divinity, in which he endured his Passion, his sufferings and actions have a divine efficiency for the expulsion of sin’. (*ibid.* xlix, 1.) And so redemption is achieved by the fact that ‘we are liberated from the bondage of guilt’. (*ibid.* xlvi, 6 ad 3.)

‘It is given to us all alike as in a mirror to catch the glory of the Lord, with faces unveiled; and so we become transfigured into the same likeness (*eikon*, i.e., likeness of a sacred person), borrowing glory from that glory, as the spirit of the Lord enables us’. (II Cor. iii, 18.)

‘We know that when he comes we shall be like him; we shall see him then as he is’. (I John iii, 2.)

Our Lord so presents himself to us that we cannot help loving him. In Baptism, Confirmation, and in the Priesthood, he impresses his

own Christ-like image, as a spiritual power to share the fruits of his Sacrifice.

Seventh Station.—Jesus falls the second time.

'Behold the Man'. (John xix, 5.) Pilate had not realised the full import of his phrase. 'I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people'. (Ps. xxi, 7.)

The second fall of our Saviour is a warning of the approaching consummation of his supreme sacrifice; life's spring was almost spent. But he who is Life, lays down his life and has the 'power to take it up again'. (John x, 18.) He is compassed with infirmity' (Hebr. v, 2); 'power is made perfect in infirmity'. (II Cor. xii, 9.)

'O Lord, thou hast broken my bonds. I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise'. (Ps. cxv, 17.)

Eighth Station.—Jesus speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem.

It is too late to weep at his sufferings, but mourning must be turned inwards to sin as the cause of them, and to all involved in its guilt.

Ninth Station.—Jesus falls the third time.

This third fall, as in the case of the other two, may have been due to a direct assault of Satan. 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out'. (John xii, 31.) 'The Passion of our Lord is the overcoming of the Fiend'. (Mother Julian, ch. 13.) We were delivered from the Devil's power through Christ's Passion. Firstly, 'by Christ's Passion man was delivered from the devil's power, in so far as the Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins'. Secondly, 'it must be said that Christ's Passion freed us from the devil's power, inasmuch as it reconciled us with God'. Thirdly, 'Christ's Passion delivered us from the devil, inasmuch as in Christ's Passion he exceeded the limit of power assigned him by God, by conspiring to bring about Christ's death'. (St Thomas, III, xlix, 2.)

'God so permitting it, the devil can still tempt men's souls and harass their bodies: yet there is a remedy provided for man through Christ's Passion, whereby he can safeguard himself against the enemy's assaults, so as not to be dragged down into the destruction of everlasting death'. (*ibid.* ad 2.)

'God permits the devil to deceive men by certain persons, and in time and places, according to the hidden motive of his judgments; still, there is always a remedy provided through Christ's Passion, for defending themselves against the wicked snares of the demons, even in Antichrist's time'. (*ibid.* ad 3.)

Tenth Station.—Jesus is stripped of his garments.

Christ Jesus 'emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man'. (Philip. ii, 7.)

'They parted my garments amongst them: and upon my vesture they cast lots'. (Ps. xxi, 19.)

'It was not the custom to strip those condemned except in the case of the lowest type of man. Our Lord was stripped that he might be shown great ignominy by his executioners. This was allowed to instruct us how we ought to denude ourselves of all affection to deeds of the flesh'. (St Thomas in *Matthæum*, cap. xxvii.)

'The human nature in Christ is likened to a garment . . . inasmuch as the Word is seen by the human nature, as a man by his garment, and also inasmuch as the garment is changed, for it is shaped according to the figure of him who puts it on, and yet he is not changed from his form on account of the garment. So, likewise, the human nature assumed by the Word of God is ennobled, but the Word of God is not changed'. (*Summa*, III, ii, 6 ad 1.)

Eleventh Station.—Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

Consider the cruel act of our Lord's slayers in piercing his tender hands and feet with sharp nails. 'Christ's Passion was indeed a malefice on his slayers' part; but on his own it was the sacrifice of one suffering out of charity'. (*Summa*, III, xlvi, 3, ad 3.)

Twelfth Station.—Jesus dies on the Cross.

'Christ died for all' (II Cor. v. 15).

'Christ was twice crucified, first by the tongues and voices of the Jews crying "Crucify him, crucify him"', and then again by the hands of the soldiery who crucified him'. (St Thomas *In Ioannem*, cap. xix, lect. iii, 5.)

'Death by crucifixion was most degrading' (St Thomas, *ibid.* 6.)

'Christ suffered out of charity and out of obedience; because he fulfilled even the precepts of charity out of obedience only; and was obedient, out of love to the Father's command'. (*Summa*, III, xlvi, ii, ad 3.) Death therefore followed the voluntary inclination of his sacred head.

'He properly atones for an offence who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offence. But by suffering out of love and obedience Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offence of the whole human race'. (*Summa*, III, xlvi, 2.)

'Adam's sin was the most harm that ever was done, or ever shall

be, to the world's end'; but 'this Amends-making is more pleasing to God and more worshipful, without comparison, than ever was the sin of Adam harmful'. (Julian of Norwich, ch. 29.)

'In this dying was brought to my mind the words of Christ: "I thirst". For I saw in Christ a double thirst: one bodily; another ghostly. . . . The bodily thirst I understood was caused by failing of moisture. The blessed body dried a long long time, with wringing of the nails and weight of the body. For I understood that, for tenderness of the sweet hands and of the sweet feet, by the greatness, hardness and grievousness of the nails, the wounds waxed wide and the body sagged, for weight by long time hanging'. (Julian of Norwich, ch. 17.)

'This is the ghostly thirst of Christ: the love-longing that lasteth and ever shall, till we see that sight on Doomsday . . . this is his thirst and love-longing, to have us together whole in him, to his bliss,—as to my sight'. (*ibid.* ch. 31.)

'By this word "thirst" is shown our Lord's ardent yearning for the salvation of mankind. "He willed all to be saved" (I Tim. ii, 4)'. (St Thomas *In Ioannem*, cap. xix, lect. v, n. 1.)

'Here I saw a part of the compassion of our Lady, Saint Mary: for Christ and she were so one in love that the greatness of her loving was cause of the greatness of her pain'. This was her spiritual martyrdom. 'And thus they that were his friends suffered pain for love'. (Julian of Norwich, ch. 18.)

Queen of Martyrs, pray for us.

Thirteenth Station.—Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

'From the side of Christ asleep on the Cross flowed the sacraments which brought salvation to the Church. Christ delivered us from our sins principally through his Passion, not only by way of efficiency and merit but also by way of satisfaction. Likewise by his Passion he inaugurated the Rites of the Christian Religion by offering *himself—an oblation and a sacrifice to God* (Eph. v. 2.) Wherefore it is manifest that the sacraments of the Church derive the power specially from Christ's Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner united to us by our receiving the sacraments. It was in sign of this that from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross there flowed water and blood, the former of which belongs to Baptism, the latter to the Eucharist, which are the principal sacraments'. (*Summa*, III, lxii, 5.)

'And after these things Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus' (John xix, 38, 39) came to perform their ministry of devotion and mercy.

Fourteenth Station.—Jesus is placed in the sepulchre.

‘It was fitting for Christ to die that by dying he might deliver us from fearing death, and that by rising from the dead, and manifesting his power whereby he overthrew death, he might instil into us the hope of rising from the dead’. (*Summa*, III, 1, 1.) Yet ‘the Word of God was not separated from the body at Christ’s death, much less was he separated from the soul’. (*ibid.* 3.)

‘With regard to Christ’s death, his patience and constancy in enduring death are commended, and all the more that his death was the most despicable; but in his honourable burial we can see the power of the dying Man, who, even in death, frustrated the intent of his murderers, and was buried with honour; and thereby is foreshadowed the devotion of the faithful who in the time to come were to serve the dead Christ’. (*ibid.* li, 2.)

‘Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
Oro, fiat illud, quod tam sitio:
Ut, te revelata cernens facie,
Visu sim beatus tuæ gloriæ.

Amen’.

(*Adoro Te.*)