

Praying the Stations of the Cross for the Gaza-Israel Conflict



Holy Week 2024

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Thirteenth Station—Jesus is Taken down from the Cross

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. (Mt. 27-54-44)

For the people of Israel at this time: comfort those who mourn, those whose losses are incalculable, whose lives have been inalterably scarred. Do not abandon your people. Return the abducted to their loving families. In their hour of darkness, helplessness and isolation, calm their fears, be their refuge and strength and deepen their resolve for peace.

Fourteenth Station—Jesus is laid in the tomb

After this Joseph of Arimathea... asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also... came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices (Jn 19:38-40).

Lord, as you are laid to rest, we think of the shroud: the shroud of suffering endured by people on both sides of this conflict. We think of the Israeli people and the shroud of fear that pervades every day life. We think of the shroud of anger, contempt, prejudice, and bigotry that has consumed so many lives and fuels the weapons of war. We think of the shroud of destruction that has left people hungry, frightened, and without a home. But then Lord, we think of Your shroud, a shroud of resurrection, new life, hope and new beginnings. We think of Your shroud as it transformed the darkness of the tomb, the darkness of our world with the Good New of Hope. We ask you to bring that Good News to our world.

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy,
in love you sent your Son
that we might be cleansed of sin
and live with you forever.

Bless us as we journey with you on the Way of the Cross.
Help us see the story of our world
unfold in the Stations of the Cross.
that we may learn from your example
the way we should go.
We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Before Each Station

We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

After Each Station

I love you Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you, and then do with me what you will.

Closing Prayer

My Jesus, I have travelled Your Way of the Cross.
You showed in your great passion, true grace, love and mercy in the face of the cruelty and violence of this world.
Teach me the lessons contained in the cross.
Help me to transform the cross of others.
Help me embrace and trust my Father's will as you did.
Help me to become fully alive in faith every day
that I see You as my model of undying love in your world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

First Station—Jesus is Condemned to Death

Then [Pilate] released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified (Mt 27:26).

Barabbas or Jesus? The crowd must choose. Just as war is a choice, so too, is the choice to walk in peace with our neighbour. We look to the one who stands silent and is condemned to death. Blessed are the peacemakers. We think of those who chose war, destruction, and fear; those who manipulate the ‘crowd’ through destructive ideologies and demonising their neighbour, those intent on acts of terrorism, those obsessed with power and hungry for conflict. We pray for an end to conflicts across the world, especially in Gaza and Israel.

Second Station—Jesus Carries His Cross

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet 2:24).

To ‘live for righteousness’, to do what is morally right or justifiable. As Jesus carries his cross, we pray for all political leaders, those who carry the burden of office in times of conflict. Bless our leaders with wisdom, foresight, and righteousness. Help them explore every path of diplomacy to bring about a peaceful resolution to conflict and the protection of innocent lives. May they be courageous in their condemnation of crimes against human dignity and the destruction of lives. May they work tirelessly in pursuit of truth, justice, and a just peace.

Eleventh Station—Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. And those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross!” (Mk 15:27-30).

For our Christian brothers and sisters in Gaza, and throughout the Holy Land. We pray especially for the 600 people in Holy Family Church in Gaza, the 200 in the Greek Orthodox Church, and the 55 children in the Daughters of Charity children’s home. May they find solace and strength in our solidarity, support, and prayers. Bless them with hope and resilience. May the refuge and support they offer to their Muslim neighbours inspire us in the way in which we welcome and love the stranger. May their witness to the cross, expressed through their hospitality, compassion, and steadfast presence in Gaza, become the soil for the seeds of peace to grow.

Twelfth Station—Jesus dies on the Cross

And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”. It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last (Lk 23:34.44-46).

For all who have died in this conflict on all sides. For the innocent lives lost in a conflict that is not of their making. For those still missing, unaccounted for in rubble. For those who were deprived of the dignity of a proper burial. For those who have fallen in battle. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!

Ninth Station—Jesus Falls a Third Time

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life (Jn 12:24-25).

Lord, you are the Prince of Peace. We ask you to sow seeds of peace in Israel and Gaza. Turn every heart to the true love of peace. Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust, despair to hope, oppression to freedom, occupation to liberation, that violent encounters may be replaced by mutual respect and love. By Your grace, may the seeds of peace grow in this land of brokenness, violence and destruction and it may rise once more.

Tenth Station—Jesus is stripped of His Garments

[The soldiers] crucified him, and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. This was to fulfil the Scripture, “They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots”. (Mk 15:24; Jn 19:24).

1.9 million of the 2.3 million people of Gaza have been displaced again and again as the invasion of Gaza continues. The innocent people of Gaza have been stripped of their humanity, security, shelter, safety, and their homeland. As you went before the Israelites leading them from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land, we ask you to go before the people of Gaza—be their light in times of darkness, their hope in times of struggle, and their refuge and strength in times of uncertainty.

Third Station—Jesus Falls the First Time

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities (Is 53:4-5).

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.’ We pray for of the many aid agencies and the thousands who risk their lives on mission to bring relief to the people of Gaza. We pray for the souls of 167 aid workers who have died in the conflict and their families. We pray for the work of Trócaire and Caritas, the work of the Latin Patriarchate, the World Health Organisation and other aid partners. Bless them with adequate resources as they minister to those who are devastated and heartbroken. Sustain them in moments of despair and help them to pick themselves up and continue their essential work.

Fourth Station—Jesus Meets His Mother

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against – and a sword will pierce through your own soul also – that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:34-35).

For the women and children of Gaza: A desperate mother reportedly said, “they pray for peace, but that if peace does not come, they pray for a quick death, in their sleep, with their children in their arms.” “It should shame us all that any mother, anywhere, has such a prayer,” she said. We pray for the mothers of Gaza. As they stand in the midst of chaos, powerlessness, and panic, we pray that Mary, our Mother, Our Lady of Palestine, will strengthen them in adversity, uphold them in times of fear, and guide them to safety and peace.

Fifth Station—Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus Carry His Cross

And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus (Lk 23:26).

Lord, help us respond with generosity as Simon did.... to give without counting the cost. As the conflict rages on, may we never become desensitised or indifferent to the plight of the people of Gaza. Lord, give us generous hearts, make us cheerful givers. May our generosity lighten the burden of others, alleviate suffering, console the broken, and offer hope. We pray for the work of our Order in the Holy Land. We pray in gratitude for the generosity of it's members and those who support it's work. Provide humanitarian access to food, supplies, shelter, for a nation under siege.

Sixth Station—Veronica Wipes the face of Jesus

Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me (Mt 25:34-36).

“The heartache is immense, and the wounded are endless,” “We don’t have the luxury of pausing to grieve” - Medical worker. Lord, we pray for medical professionals and paramedics in Gaza: those who like Veronica bring moments of relief, compassion, and mercy. We pray for those working with limited medical supplies, makeshift theatres and hospitals, overcrowded hospitals and shelters. We pray for their protection, for the blessing of strength and resilience. Support them in moments of despair and distress, burnout and loss. Bring them solace in the midst of their unspeakable trauma.

Seventh Station—Jesus Falls the Second Time

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who has loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the 7th October 2023, 250 innocent people were taken hostage by militants, more than 100 are still held captive in Gaza. We pray for their families, mindful of the anguish and distress this separation has inflicted on loved ones who wait with fearful hope of news of their release. We pray for the safety and wellbeing of all hostages. We pray for their release. Bless them with the strength of their faith in the love of God.

Eight Station—Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. Weep not for me, but for your children (Lk 23:27).

We pray for the frightened children of Gaza: for children deprived of education, security, peace, love, and hope. We pray for those children who have been physically and emotionally injured and traumatised. For children who are orphaned and alone as a consequence of this conflict. Be with children who are hungry. Help them to smile once more, to play in safety, and to live as children should. In our shared humanity, we weep for these children.