

O Cross of Christ

Pope Francis



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Introduction

On the evening of Good Friday, March 25, 2016, Pope Francis presided over the Stations of the Cross in the Coliseum in Rome. Of course, the setting is a fitting and dramatic one, since many Christians suffered martyrdom there in the days of imperial Rome.

The practice of the pope leading the Good Friday Stations there was begun by Pope Benedict XIV in the mid-1700s. The tradition was abandoned for a long time, until Pope Paul VI revived it in 1964, and it has been continued by his successors. These days, the prayerful event is followed annually by millions of people around the world by television and social media.

Typically, the pope invites a particular bishop or theologian to prepare original stational reflections each year. For 2016, the honor went to Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia, Italy. As Cardinal Bassetti's beautiful prayers were recited, people from various nations—including Syria, China, and the Central African Republic—carried a large cross from station to station.

But as the praying of the Stations came to a close, the Holy Father added a new and unexpected element. As the thousands of Romans and pilgrims who were present stood,

holding lighted candles, Francis recited the text of an original prayer that he had composed, titled “O Cross of Christ.” It prompts us to recognize Jesus’ cross in a series of contemporary circumstances and people, first in several negative ones and then in several that are positive. That is the prayer presented in this booklet.

With the Vatican’s permission, we have included a responsory line after each stanza of the prayer, in order to make it more conducive to prayer in a group setting. We also commissioned the original art you see included on these pages, by the American artist Deborah Luke.

In this useful booklet format, we recommend this prayer for use among families, youth groups, adult prayer groups, or parishes, especially during Lent.

Help us to recognize you, O Cross of Christ!



O Cross of Christ,

You are the symbol of divine love and of human injustice,
icon of the supreme sacrifice for love and of boundless
selfishness even unto madness,
instrument of death and the way of resurrection,
sign of obedience and emblem of betrayal,
the gallows of persecution and the banner of victory.

Response: Save us, O Cross of Christ.