

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

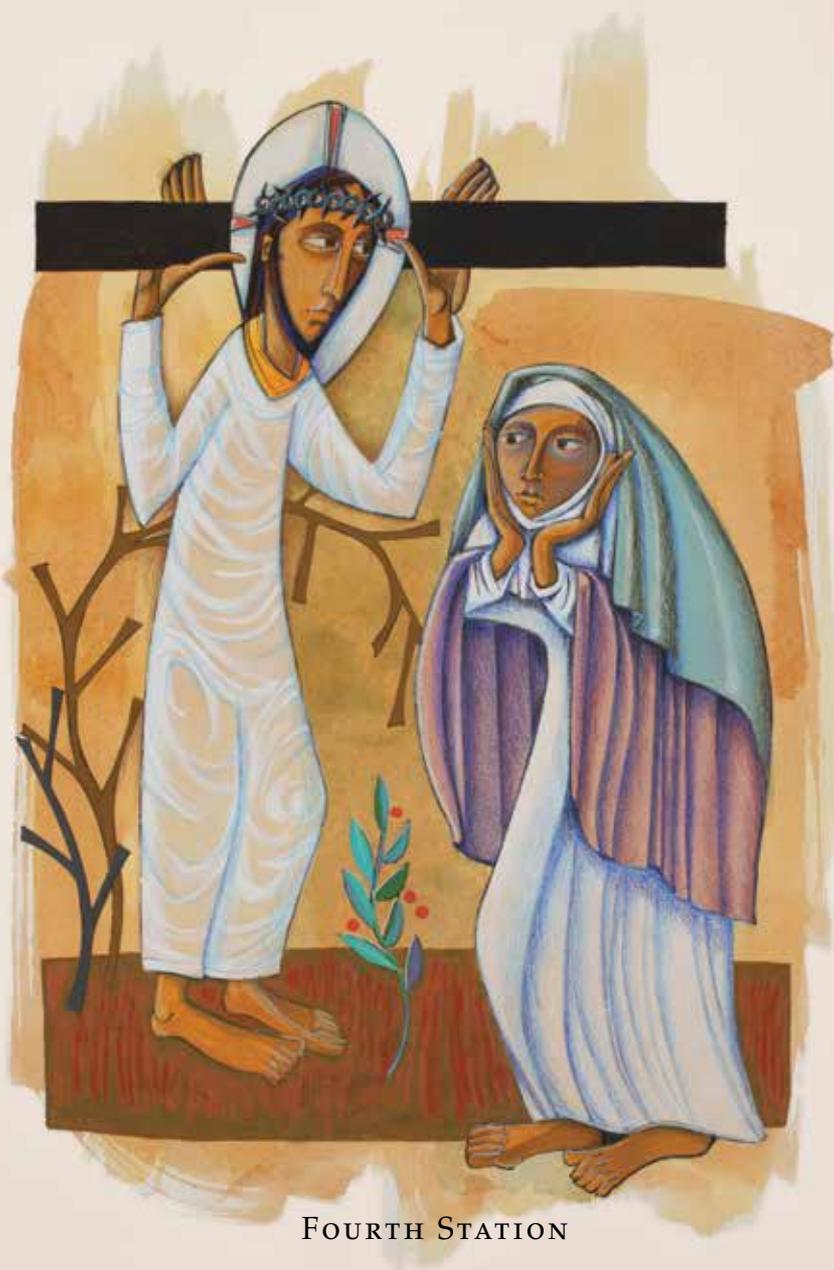
LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

PEOPLE: Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “[Pilate] said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your king!’ They cried out, ‘Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.” (John 19:14-16)

Reflection: The one thing of which we are sure is that one day we shall die. We all know our birthdays. We also have death days, the annual day of our coming death, but we do not know which day it is. People who are dying often have an acute sense of the gift of being still alive. If we remember that we too are condemned to die, then we may live every day as precious and unrepeatable, with the gifts and graces the Lord will give us today. Lord, give us gratitude for this day, and every day until we die.

Prayer: Jesus, at this moment you stand judged and condemned. You take upon yourself all the accusations that human beings hurl against each other. You bear the contempt that has crushed people throughout the centuries. Give us the courage to be close to those who are condemned and rejected by the world, whether they be innocent or guilty. Now you set off toward your crucifixion. Give us the confidence in your love, which is stronger than death and will have the victory. Amen.



FOURTH STATION

Jesus Is Met by His Blessed Mother

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

PEOPLE: Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.” (Isa 66:13)

Reflection: The death of a child before his or her parents is outrageous. It contradicts the natural order of things. It is the child who ought to care for his or her parents and bury them. This is the appalling suffering of parents who lose their children in war or to illness. Think of the mothers whose children disappeared during the years of dictatorship in Argentina, Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, who did not even have the bodies of their children to bury. All this scandalous suffering is embraced by God when Jesus and his mother meet on the way to the cross. Jesus *is* every child lost prematurely, and Mary *is* every parent grieving for his or her child.

Prayer: Jesus, be close to all who lose or become distant from the people they love, especially parents mourning their children. If we are separated from them by death, may we trust in the ultimate victory of God’s love, which will gather us together once more. If it is through alienation or misunderstanding, then may we be confident that one day God’s grace will cast down every barrier, and we shall be at home with each other in you. Amen.



TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

PEOPLE: Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
(Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34)

Reflection: What can we say of anyone’s death, since we do not know what it is to be dead? Dying we know, but not death. What possible words can we have for the death of God? The Word of God is silenced. What words do we have? Yet this dead man on the cross is the Word that speaks most loudly of a love beyond imagination. Pain and destitution often make people feel deeply alone and isolated. No one can understand the suffering that we endure. It is beyond sharing. But in Christ, one is never alone. In him God embraces everyone who feels abandoned and betrayed: people struggling with the loss of those whom they love, those who are angry at senseless terminal illness, those who feel that God has let them down. In Jesus, God embraces the absence of God. God has come near to us in our desolation, and so we can come into his presence.

Prayer: Jesus, be with us at the hour of our death. May those who feel abandoned by God know that he is closer than we can imagine. May those who feel that there is no God at all discover his intimate presence. Amen.