

*Vincentian Reflections
on the
Stations of the Cross*



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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on the
Stations of the Cross

as compiled by
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Credit Where It's Due:

This document follows the standard format we Catholics have come to expect in the *Stations of the Cross*. I have used a few specific sources for the format and content. *Catholic Online* at www.catholic.org was the source for the illustrations. St. Augustine's reflections on the stations provided many of the summary statements at the beginning of each. At home, I found 13 versions of the *Stations* both in pamphlet form and as part of various prayer books. More than half of the prayer books and pamphlets use *The Way of the Cross* as composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori. With each station, I will be using St. Alphonsus' *Considerations*. The hymn *Stabat Mater* is traditional with the *Stations*. The Vincentian reflections are mine.

Introduction

St. Alphonsus Liguori reminds us that we have been told so many times throughout our lives about the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord that, for many, it has become routine, matter of fact. So few of us place any real importance, emphasis or awe on these basic concepts of our faith. It is like that with the Stations of the Cross.

St. Augustine once wrote that the Stations of the Cross are repeated daily. They are relived daily by our Lord.

Jesus told us in Matthew 25:40 that, whatever we do to the least of our brothers, we do to Him. We need to take time to consider how we are forcing Jesus to relive His passion every day. It is in our interactions daily with the people we encounter that we can bring pleasure and comfort to our Lord or make Him relive His passion.

Before what is depicted as the first station, Jesus was arrested and abused by the Temple Guard. He was already in a weakened state. As members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, we daily encounter Jesus in the persons of those we serve — weakened and suffering. It is our role to bring comfort, relief and hope to Him.

These meditations are dedicated to Vincentians as reminders that our work with those in need can bring despair or hope. It lies in how we react to our Lord coming before us.

Preparatory Prayer

(to be said in a kneeling position)

My Lord, Jesus Christ, You have made this journey to die for me with unspeakable love; and I have so many times ungratefully abandoned You. But now I love You with all my heart; and, because I love You, I am sincerely sorry for ever having offended You. Pardon me, my God, and permit me to accompany You on this journey. You go to die for love of me; I want, my beloved Redeemer, to die for love of You. My Jesus, I will live and die always united to You.

(stand)

*At the cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful Mother weeping
Close to Jesus to the last*



The First Station Jesus is Condemned to Death

As Pilate passes judgment on Jesus, he reminds Jesus that he has the power to give Him life or death.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how Jesus Christ, after being scourged and crowned with thorns, was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. How well do we play the part of Pilate in this drama?

Whether we visit those in need in their homes or they visit us in our pantry or office, they stand or sit before us as we cast our judgment on them — maybe not life or death, but possibly hope or despair. Just like Pilate, we have the power to wield. Who will we imitate? Will we imitate Pilate and make our decision based on what the “world” expects and demands of us? Or, will we imitate Jesus and base our decision on the best way to love those before us?

(stand)

*Through her heart, His sorrow sharing
All His bitter anguish bearing
Now at length the sword has passed*



The Second Station Jesus Receives the Cross

A heavy wooden cross is placed upon the bruised and torn shoulders of Jesus.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider Jesus as He walked this road with the cross on His shoulders, thinking of us, and offering to His Father, in our behalf, the death He was about to suffer.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Families come before us already burdened with the crisis they are suffering. And, some times even if we have all the resources needed to relieve their burden, we tell them they must do this and/or that before we will provide for part of their need. For some, this is good because it forces them to act on their own behalf and they are up to the task. For others, they cannot. It may be for fear of the system, for language problems, for not knowing how to take the first step, for being here illegally, for being a meek person who gets intimidated easily, for any of a myriad possible reasons. For these we place a heavy cross on an already bruised and torn body. Do we take the time and ask questions to know which we are dealing with? Or do we simply follow the guideline regardless of what it is?

(stand)

*O, how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother highly blessed
Of the sole Begotten One.*



The Third Station Jesus Falls the First Time

Under the weight of the cross, Jesus falls the first time. In His agony, He is whipped and pushed and forced to get up and continue.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider the first fall of Jesus. Loss of blood from the scourging and crowning with thorns had so weakened Him that He could hardly walk; and yet He had to carry the great load upon His shoulders. As the soldiers struck Him cruelly, He fell several times under the weight of the cross.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. “I’m really embarrassed. I’ve never had to ask for help before. I’ve always had a good job. We’ve always had food on the table. Sure, we struggle from time to time but we always managed without having to...to...beg.” What is our response? We could easily say, “Why did you wait so long?! You should have come to us a week ago. We’re not miracle workers, you know. If you would stop smoking or stop drinking beer, you could pay some of your bills.” Or, do we say, “Alright, let’s start with what your immediate needs are and see where we can help. Then we’ll talk about ways to get back on track.” Do we kick them while their down or do we help them up to continue their journey?

(stand)

*Through her heart, His sorrow sharing
All His bitter anguish bearing
Now at length the sword has passed*



The Fourth Station Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother

Jesus encounters His Mother while carrying the cross. Their eyes speak a million words as they meet.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how the Son met His Mother on His way to Calvary. Jesus and Mary gazed at each other and their looks became as so many arrows to wound those hearts which loved each other so tenderly.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Only a mother can understand the anguish of her children. God must have placed this special gift in the hearts of mothers. They know, they understand, they feel the pain their child feels. Why is it that we have such compassion for mother and child? Is it that we believe there is an innocence, a sacredness that exists between them? It is very common for Vincentians to be more open and willing to help a mother and child. It may very well be the graces poured out on us through our Patroness, through our Blessed Mother. May we see what Jesus saw as we gaze into her eyes.

(stand)

*Is there one who would not weep,
'whelmed in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?*



The Fifth Station Simon Helps Carry the Cross

As exhaustion sets in, a man is pulled from the crowd to help carry the cross.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how weak and weary Jesus was. At each step He was at the point of expiring. Fearing that He would die on the way when they wished Him to die the infamous death of the cross, they forced Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross after Our Lord.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. There are times when we Vincentians call on outsiders to help us help someone. Many Conference members know of people within their parish who are willing to contribute money to help someone when the Conference is low on funds. Many Conference members know people they can call on who have a truck when needed or who are willing to help with a food drive or some other special activity. Some of these outsiders are reluctant at first but, once involved, find the true beauty of what they have done. We always find a way to draw others to help Jesus.

(stand)

*Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain
n the Mother's pain untold?*



The Sixth Station Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Veronica meets Jesus and cleans His face of the blood, sweat and dust. In exchange for her kindness, He leaves His mark with her.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider the compassion of the holy woman, Veronica. Seeing Jesus in such distress, His face bathed in the sweat and blood, she presented Him with her veil. Jesus wiped his face, and left upon the cloth the image of His sacred countenance.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. There are times when God brings us to that special situation that will leave a lasting mark in our hearts. It may be a whole series of circumstances, the feeling of accomplishment or simply the smile of a child. Over the years, as Vincentians, we will encounter hundreds of individuals and families that have their own unique story. Some are similar to others but still different. Most we will totally forget. Yet, a few will stay with us. We will remember — even the unpleasant ones. They have made their mark. They are part of who we are.

(stand)

*Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled
She beheld the tender child
All with bloody scourges rent.*



The Seventh Station Jesus Falls the Second Time

His loss of blood, His failing strength causes a second fall.
Once again, He is pushed and forced to continue.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how the second fall of Jesus under His cross renews the pain in all the wounds of the head and members of our afflicted Lord.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Once again she comes to us for help. We had just helped her a month ago with a utility bill. Now she is asking for food and a rent payment. We often find similar cases. Sometimes it happens every month. And, we have some choices to make. We can listen and offer advice. We can open ourselves up to wherever Jesus leads us in helping this person. Or, we can create guidelines for our Conference that will turn this person away before we even hear what she has to say. Are we sapping Jesus' strength and causing Him to falter? Or, will we be there to pick Him up and help?

(stand)

*For the sins of His own nation
Saw Him hang in desolation
Till His spirit forth He sent.*



The Eighth Station The Women of Jerusalem Weep for Jesus

Jesus encounters a group of women wailing and lamenting His suffering. “Weep not for Me but for your children.”

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how the women wept with compassion seeing Jesus so distressed and dripping with blood as he walked along. Jesus said to them, “Weep not so much for me, but rather for your children.”

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. There are times when the families we work with, their harsh conditions, their desperate circumstances, their unending hope cause tears to come to our eyes. It may not happen often. That may be because we are conditioned to keep control over our emotions. Or, maybe God is simply telling us that tears are not always justified. Suffering can cause tears both in the sufferer and the observer. Jesus wants us to weep — not for Him — but for Him in the suffering poor. Feel their pain.

(stand)

*O sweet Mother! Fount of Love,
Touch my spirit from above
Make my heart with yours accord.*



The Ninth Station Jesus Falls the Third Time

He was almost to the summit. Every step took an eternity. Every step was exhausting. He fell again and had to be dragged and goaded onward.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how Jesus Christ fell for the third time. He was extremely weak and the cruelty of His executioners was excessive; they tried to hasten His steps though He hardly had the strength to move.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. It's not working. We've tried and tried. Every other month we have to help in some way — food, utilities, rent, prescriptions — it seems unending. We've helped them now for three years. We can see the strain in their eyes, in the way they walk, in the way they talk. They're overwhelmed with one problem after another. Yet, they keep going. We help them again. Each time it gives them hope. Jesus, may we help lift Your cross this one more time.

(stand)

*Make me feel as you have felt
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.*



The Tenth Station Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

He has reached the place of sacrifice. Now, one more humiliation. He is stripped naked.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how Jesus was violently stripped of His clothes by His executioners. The inner garments adhered to His lacerated flesh and the soldiers tore them off so roughly that the skin came with them. Have pity on your Savior so cruelly treated.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Everything was going so well. He had a “loving” family, a great job, a nice house and some money in the bank. Then it started. His job was eliminated. It was okay until his money ran out. Then they started cutting things off — the telephone, the utilities and the bank came after the house. He started drinking and that made things worse. His wife finally gave up, took the kids and left. He was on the street — alone. He was stripped naked — his job, his money, his home, his family, his self-respect, his dignity. Jesus, what can we do? We can listen to him and love him.

(stand)

*Holy Mother, pierce me through
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.*



The Eleventh Station Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

They stretched Him out on His deathbed and His executioners pierced His hands and feet. He and His cross are one.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider Jesus, thrown down upon the cross, He stretched out His arms and offered to His eternal Father the sacrifice of His life for our salvation. They nailed His hands and feet, and then, raising the cross, left Him to die in anguish.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. This is the way they grew up. Their parents were on welfare or received disability. Their grandparents were the same. Their great grandparents were poor. Generation after generation. This is all they know. They just go from one agency or church to another. They move from one town to another. They move into an apartment and stay until they are forced out. They have become one with their cross. They don't know any other way of life. And, what does Jesus tell us? He says, "love them."

(stand)

*Let me share with you His pain,
Who for all our sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.*



The Twelfth Station Jesus Dies upon the Cross

It took three hours. The pain from the scourging, the nails, the exhaustion, the struggle to breathe, He gave up His life for us.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how your Jesus, after three hours of agony on the cross, is finally overwhelmed with suffering and, abandoning Himself to the weight of His body, bows His head and dies.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Every day, thousands of times each day, for two thousand years, Jesus died for us. Thousands upon thousands of times each day, adults and children die from malnutrition, from starvation, from abortion, from murder, from genocide, from terrorism, from driving while intoxicated, from carelessness, from loneliness. All of the conditions listed above are things human beings do to each other. These are not natural disasters. These are *man* killing *man*! Whatever we do to the least of these, we do to Jesus — thousands and thousands of times each day. And, what can we do? Lots! But, we have to start — start somewhere.

(stand)

*Let me mingle tears with thee
Mourning Him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.*



The Thirteenth Station Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

His body is finally removed from the cross. He is placed in the loving and mourning arms of His Mother.

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.
(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how, after Our Lord had died, He was taken down from the cross by two of His disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, and placed in the arms of His afflicted Mother. She received Him with unutterable tenderness and pressed Him close to her bosom.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Do people have to die to be separated from their cross? No. We help people everyday. We relieve them of their burdens. We also help them to get back on track. We do it directly and indirectly. We also advocate for the poor — both personally and in general. We help remove the cross through sponsoring and supporting positive legislation. We help remove the cross through promoting the defeat of negative legislation. We help separate those we serve from their crosses and place them in the loving arms of our Blessed Mother.

(stand)

*By the cross with you to stay
There with you to weep and pray
Is all I ask of you to give.*



The Fourteenth Station Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Jesus' lifeless body is placed in an unused tomb close by. The tomb is closed.

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

(genuflect)

Because by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

(stand)

Considerations: Consider how the disciples carried the body of Jesus to its burial, while His holy Mother went with them and arranged it in the sepulcher with her own hands. They then closed the tomb and all departed.

(kneel)

Vincentian Reflection: Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to Me. Death is natural. We all know that, but death seldom comes when expected. Even in death, we still have opportunities to love. We can give consolation to those left behind. We can pray for the deceased. We can aid the family with funeral arrangements and in some cases help with the costs. Death gives us all an opportunity to love. "Love one another as I have loved you" — in life and in death.

(stand)

Virgin of all virgins blest!

Listen to my fond request:

Let me share your grief divine.

Concluding Prayer

(to be said in a kneeling position)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, we realize that everyday You relive Your passion and death so that we may have life. Help us to be conscious of this and also aware of the part we play in Your relived sufferings. It is through Your passion and death that we have been reconciled with our Father and now have an opportunity to have life. Help us now to look forward to Your resurrection and the assurance that we have life in You. We ask all things of You in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.