Contemporary Passionist

Stations of the Cross
St. Paul of the Cross from his youth was inspired by the sufferings of the Savior. On the first day of his retreat after receiving the habit he wrote that his “only desire is to be on the cross with Jesus.” Within a year he took a vow to remember the passion of Christ.

When Benedict the XIV (fourteenth) approved Paul’s rule for the order, Paul had inserted a chapter on the vow to promote the memory of or devotion to the Passion of Jesus.

The word memory holds for us the biblical and historic connotation of remembrance, but another aspect of the “memory of the passion” calls Passionists to contemplate Jesus crucified and also the many “crucifieds” of today, such as the poor, the suffering, the sinner and the abandoned, those who are lonely or depressed, those who are sick and dying.

We find them in our cities and villages where they speak to us of the sufferings of Christ in today’s world, in the First, Second and Third worlds.]*

This “twofold” kind of memory is part of our call today as we contemplate in awe the final hours of Jesus’ life through these Stations of the Cross.

* From The Passionists by Roger Mercurio, C.P.
The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Die.

Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth, by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Christ is condemned to death as he lies alone in the crib, with no one to aid him. Born poor and in fragile health, he needs an operation to cure a simple heart defect. The hospital lacks the necessary equipment to treat him, leaving him to suffer his inevitable fate — death. Lacking the resources we in the First World often take for granted, our poorest brothers and sisters in Christ are ignored by an oblivious world that often condemns them to death when their cries for help go unnoticed.

**REFRAIN:** Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.
The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross.

Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. It represents the weight of all our crosses. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

The heavy weight of the cross bears down upon Christ as she carries water back to her impoverished village. There is no water in this parched area, so she must trudge for miles over rocky terrain each day to find a source. Etched on her face is the daily pain of her burden, as she seeks something most of us have available at the twist of a tap.

**REFRAIN:** The Lord hears the cry of the poor, blessed be the Lord.
The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time.

The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life of so many on this earth! He lies on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue.

He is pulled up and made to continue.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Weak from hunger, sobbing from the pain of an empty stomach, Christ sits by a roadside as he begs for food from passing strangers. With no jobs available, his family struggles to find sustenance from day to day. Each time a child perishes from hunger, Jesus falls under the heavy weight of sorrow — the sorrow of an innocent child dying a preventable death.

REFRAIN: Only this I want, but to know the Lord, and to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.
The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother.

Jesus' path takes him to a powerful source of his strength to continue. All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Now they look into each other's eyes. How pierced-through her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her tears! Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God bind them together.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Unable to stop crying, a homeless Mary weeps in anguish, knowing her son will fall ill from living in a dirt-floor tent in a makeshift slum. Rain batters his frail body as he shivers in the cold. Without resources or income to build safe, comfortable homes, this mother and other women bear the overwhelming burden of the poverty that condemns their children’s futures.

REFRAIN: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death. Amen.
The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.

Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying this burden on his own.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A caring hand reaches out to Jesus to help lift his burden. Guided by Christ’s love and a compassionate heart, Christians in the First World hear and respond to his pleas for help. Faith in action eases our Savior’s pain of bearing the cross of poverty. We are honored and blessed to share the burden as we walk with Jesus to Calvary.

**REFRAIN:** Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.
The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. His face shows the signs of his solidarity with all who have ever suffered injustice and vile, abusive treatment. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face - his gift to her. And, for us to contemplate forever.

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

Born into an uncertain world where few care about the fate of an HIV-positive baby, Jesus is comforted by a nurturing, caring stranger. Rejected and abandoned, and often spit upon and scorned because of AIDS, he finds temporary solace from his pain in a simple act of kindness. With few medical resources available and people too fearful to offer the reassurance of even a simple human touch, Christ suffers in the thousands of innocent AIDS babies condemned to death in the developing world.

REFRAIN: Only this I want, but to know the Lord, and to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.
The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time.

Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him. "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." He has seen death before. Now he can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

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

Staggering beneath the tremendous burden of surviving a devastating hurricane, Christ collapses to the ground from the pain of this cross — no home, no food, no clothing, no water and no hope. She is among thousands of voices of the poor crying out for simple human dignity and a caring hand to help her to her feet. Our poorest brothers and sisters in Christ have nowhere to turn after a disaster, and they cling to hope and prayer in the struggle to survive each day.

REFRAIN: The Lord hears the cry of the poor, blessed be the Lord.
The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He had broken all kinds of social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing he can't remain to help them more in this life. He knows the mystery of facing the separation of death.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Their laments echoing across the barren earth, the women reach out in desperation for food that has run out. Their farmlands are parched, their jobs picking coffee have vanished and hunger is a constant cry of suffering in their houses. All they have in abundance is the grief of watching their little ones starve. Though they themselves suffer, the Christ within moves them to try to comfort their families.

**REFRAIN:** Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death. Amen.
The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. Summoning all his remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic yet paying a price he deserves. They help him up so he can make it up the hill of crucifixion.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Hungry, alone and homeless, Christ sits on a busy sidewalk, her frail body in desperate need of food. Starved for attention and ignored by others, she is branded by society as worthless. Loving hands offering food and fellowship give strength to her spirit. Thousands more of the homeless and destitute collapse from the weary cross of hunger and from the weight of crushing loneliness.

REFRAIN: Only this I want, but to know the Lord, and to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.
The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped.

Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the ultimate vulnerability of the defenseless. No shield or security protects him. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Christ is stripped of dignity, freedom of movement and the opportunities given to the handicapped who live in the First World. He sits alone, vulnerable and naked in his defenselessness. There are no programs to help him on his journey, and few resources are available to improve his life. Others turn their heads, unable to witness his helplessness.

REFRAIN: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.
The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Like nails driven into flesh, the agony of hunger torments Christ. Bone thin and constantly aching, he can count all his bones. The rest of the world looks on without caring about his torment. Nailed to the cross of poverty, the poor silently suffer, for lack of a little food, a little love and a little human kindness.

**REFRAIN:** My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Broken, battered, in pain and alone, Christ slowly succumbs to death in an AIDS hospice. Without family or friends to hold his hand, he breathes his last. His frail body tormented by pain, his suffering finally comes to an end. Outcast by society, the poor who are stricken with AIDS quietly slip away with few people willing to provide comfort in their final hours.

REFRAIN: Father, I put my life in your hands.
The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lies in his mother's arms. He has truly died. A profound sacrifice, complete.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When the life a mother has nurtured from birth has ended, and nothing remains except to pick up the pieces and go on, the poor are left only with faith and hope: hope that someone will renew their spirits and faith in God’s eternal promise to all of us. From the grief of a mother losing her child to starvation, seeds of hope are sewn, with each tiny shoot struggling to blossom, nurtured by the steadfast faith of those who have only their trust in God.

**REFRAIN:** Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death. Amen.
The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb.

They take the body of Jesus to its resting place.

The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Buried beneath oppression, mental illness and homelessness, Jesus silently lies in his tomb as the rest of the world ignores him. This burial place is not even his own, but a public street belonging to others. Too busy with their own lives and uncomfortable at the sight of the homeless, many look away as they hurry past. Lord, how many times have we passed You by because we are buried in our own concerns and fail to see You in our poorest brothers and sisters who are suffering?

MUSICAL REFLECTION
Conclusion:

We pause to contemplate this act of closure on the life of Jesus Christ. In solidarity with all humanity, his body is taken to its grave.

We stand for a moment outside this tomb. This final journey of his life has shown us the meaning of his gift of himself for us. This tomb represents every tomb we stand before with fear, in defeat, struggling to believe it could ever be empty.

In the fullness of faith in the Risen One, given by his own Holy Spirit, we are grateful for this way of the cross. We ask Jesus, whose hands, feet and side still bear the signs of this journey, to grant us the graces we need to take up our own cross to be a servant of his own mission.

Once cold and dark, the tomb no longer contains the suffering Christ. From outside comes the piercing light of hope as loving hands reach out in assistance. There are those who care, and in the spirit of Christian compassion, they fulfill Christ’s commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 13:34)
ONLY THIS I WANT

Dan Schutte

Refrain

On - ly this I want: but to know the Lord,
and to bear his cross, so to wear the crown he wore.

Verses

1. All but this is loss, worth-less ref-use to me,
2. I will run the race; I will fight the good fight,
3. Let your heart be glad, al - ways glad in the Lord,

1. for to gain the Lord is to gain ___ all I need.
2. so to win the prize of the king-dom of my Lord.
3. so to shine like stars in the dark-ness of the night.

Text based on Philippians 3:7-16; 2:15, 18. Text and music © 1981, Daniel L. Schutte and New Dawn Music. Published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

Contemporary Passionist Stations of the Cross

Compiled and edited by David Cinquegrani, C.P.

Contributions from “Stations” by FOOD FOR THE POOR, INC.

Cover art by Michael Moran, C.P.