StationS of the croSS

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests,

with the elders and scribes, and the whole

council, held a consultation; and they bound

Jesus and led him away and delivered him to

Pilate. And they all condemned him and said, “He

deserves to die.” When Pilate heard these words, he

brought Jesus out and then he handed Jesus over to them

to be crucified.

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: The Catholic Church proclaims

that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human

person is the foundation of moral vision for society. This belief

is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

We believe that every person is precious, that people are

more important than things, and that the measure of every

institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and

dignity of the human person. U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops, Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the

governor’s headquarters. After mocking him, they

stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes

on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Reflection: The heavy weight of the cross bears down

upon Christ as a woman in the village 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: The environment is God’s gift

to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility

towards the poor, towards future generations and towards

humanity as a whole. Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritas

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Surrounded by a jeering crowd, Jesus sets out on the way

to Calvary. He bears upon his shoulders the heavy cross.

His strength fails, and he falls to the ground. There is no

one to help him, no one to show compassion. Instead, he

hears only mockery and insults.

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: In our world and nation, many

of our sisters and brothers live in poverty. The causes are

complex, but the results are clear. They cannot find decent

work, feed their families, educate their children, secure

health care, or find adequate housing. Millions of children

live in nations with too much debt and not enough

development, in societies with deadly disease and

inadequate health care, in lands where conflict and

corruption leave people without a place at the table.

Millions of families cannot live in dignity because they lack

the conditions worthy of human life. The Gospel and

Catholic social teaching place our service of the poor and

vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of

Christian witness. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, A

Place at the Table

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Mary hurries to the street to see Jesus already being led to

His execution. She makes her way through the crowds,

and comes upon a tragic sight: Jesus, her beloved Son, is

carrying a heavy cross. Stricken with grief, she cannot

utter even a single word.

Reflection: Unable to stop crying, a homeless mother

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.

Catholic Social Teaching: When a family is weakened, it

is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women

and mothers is not protected, it is the children who are

affected most. Pope Benedict XVI, Fighting Poverty to Build

Peace, 2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Carries the Cross

Jesus is severely weakened by his ordeal. They fear he

may die along the way. So they force Simon of Cyrene, a

by-stander, to help carry the cross.

Reflection: As the median U.S. household income

declined, more Americans dropped below the poverty line,

with Hispanics and children taking a particularly hard hit.

The nation’s official poverty rate is at 15.1 percent, an

increase for three consecutive years.

Catholic Social Teaching: As Catholics, we must come

together with a common conviction that we can no longer

tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so

much hunger and deprivation in our world. Our faith

teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but

sisters and brothers in God’s one human family. U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Place at the Table

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Seeing Jesus, his face bleeding and disfigured, a

woman named Veronica is moved to pity.

Forcing her way through the crowd, she wipes

his face with her veil.

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: We are one human family,

regardless of our differences. Answering the call to love

our neighbors will promote a culture of respect and lead to

peace in our communities around the world. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Principles of Catholic

Social Teaching

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls Again

Jesus again falls under the weight of the cross. Jesus bears

the suffering of all people.

Reflection: Jesus falls with the weight of poverty on his

back. According to a special report from the U.S. Census

Bureau, 46.2 million Americans are now living in poverty.

The number of those living in poverty in America has

grown by 2.6 million in just the last 12 months, and that is

the largest increase that we have ever seen since the U.S.

government began calculating poverty figures back in

1959.

Catholic Social Teaching: Poverty is not just about

numbers. It is about parents who cannot feed their

children or are unable to bring sick or disabled children to

a doctor. It is about the devastating consequences of

addiction and family violence. The people in these reports

are not just statistics; they are our sisters and brothers,

members of our one human family. U.S. Conference of

Catholic Bishops, A Place at the Table

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

There followed after Jesus a great multitude of the people,

and among them were women who bewailed and

lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters

of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves

and for your children.”

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: Those who live in poverty are

not just statistics; they are sisters and brothers, members of

our one human family. Poverty is not “one more thing to

feel bad about,” but rather an opportunity to put our faith

into action, to be the “leaven” in society, to lift up the

virtues and ethical principles that enhance human dignity.

We can make a difference if we mobilize to combat

poverty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Place at the

Table, 2002

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to

the least of my people, that you do unto me.

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Jesus again falls under the weight of the cross.

Jesus bears the suffering of all people. Reflection: 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 crushing loneliness.

Catholic Social Teaching: The fight against material

poverty concerns the current food crisis, which places in

jeopardy the fulfillment of basic needs for all people. All

the indicators of relative poverty in recent years point to an

increased disparity between rich and poor. The food crisis

is characterized not so much by a shortage of food, as by

difficulty in gaining access to it, by a structural lack of

political and economic institutions capable of addressing

needs. Pope Benedict XVI, Fighting Poverty to Build Peace,

2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means

the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink,

mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not

drink it. And they divided his garments among them by

casting lots. This was to fulfill the scripture which says,

“They divided my garments among them; they cast lots for

my clothing.”

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: There is a need to abandon a

mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as

peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders

trying to consume what others have produced. The poor

ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to

make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a

world that is more just and prosperous for all. Pope John

Paul II, Centesimus Annus

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

When they came to the place which is called the

Skull, there they crucified him; and with him they

crucified two criminals, one on the right, the other

on the left, and Jesus between them. And the

scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was numbered

with the transgressors.”

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: Faithful to Christ’s summons,

the Christian community will never fail, then, to assure the

entire human family of her support through gestures of

creative solidarity, not only by “giving from one’s

surplus,” but above all by “a change of life-styles, of

models of production and consumption and of the

established structure societies.” The truth of the axiom

cannot be refuted: “To fight poverty is to build peace.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Fighting Poverty to Build Peace, 2009

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Jesus on the cross said, “Father, forgive them; for they

know not what they do.” When Jesus saw his mother, and

the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his

mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then he said to the

disciple, “Behold your mother!” And when Jesus had

received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished!” And then,

crying with a loud voice, he said, “Father, into your hands

I commend my spirit.” And he bowed his head, and

handed over his spirit.

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: Each of us has many

opportunities in our everyday lives to make choices that

help or harm those who are most vulnerable. In our

families, we can make time to serve those in need and to

become involved in efforts that promote justice. We can

raise our children with an ethic of service and a passion for

justice. As faithful citizens, we should take seriously our

responsibilities to vote and to voice our convictions in

support of public policies that defend human life and

promote the human dignity of all, especially the poor and

vulnerable.

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

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.

Reflection: 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.

Catholic Social Teaching: The

Gospel and Catholic teaching

require us to serve those in need and

to work for a more just society and

world. Both charity and justice are

required by our faith. As citizens in

the most powerful democracy on

earth, we have unique opportunities

to use our voices to shape a more caring community, a

more just nation, and a more peaceful world. U.S. Bishops,

A Place at the Table, 2002

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

When it was evening, there came a rich man from

Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of

Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus;

then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body,

Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new

tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge

stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.

Reflection: Buried beneath oppression, mental illness and

homelessness, Jesus silently lies in his tomb as the rest of

the world ignores him. The 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?

Catholic Social Teaching: If anyone is well-off in worldly

possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but closes

his heart to him, how can the love of God be remaining in

him? Children, our love must be not just words or mere

talk, but something active and genuine. This is a time not

for just words or mere talk: but for active and genuine

commitment by Catholics in the United States to work with

others to make a place at the table for all God’s children.

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Place at the Table,

2002

Pray, sing or recite: Whatsoever you do to the least of my

people, that you do unto me.

Fifteenth Station: Jesus Has Risen

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. A child finds

peace and comfort in the knowledge that he is no longer

alone. 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) Catholic Social Teaching: When we gather as Catholics to

worship, we gather around a table to celebrate the

Eucharist. It is at this altar of sacrifice that we hear the

saving word of Christ and receive his Body and Blood. It

is Christ’s sacrificial meal that nourishes us so that we can

go forth to live the Gospel as his disciples. Too often, the

call of the Gospel and the social implications of the

Eucharist are ignored or neglected in our daily lives. “The

Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the

Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must

recognize Christ in the poorest.” (Catechism of the

Catholic Church) U.S. Catholic Bishops, A Place at the Table:

A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and Respect the

Dignity of All God’s Children, 2002)

Adapted from Stations of the Cross from Catholic Relief Services,

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