

Guided Meditation with the Stations of the Cross

Reflections by Fr. Michael Denk

This evening I'll be doing a guided meditation with the Stations of the Cross. They all focus with the scripture readings. I invite you in a moment after we pray just to sit and relax the whole time.

In the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we come before you this evening during this season of Lent and we reflect on the Stations of the Cross, we ask that we may unite any suffering that we endure with yours so that we can take in and participate in Your suffering. May we be reminded of our union as we hear in the Gospel of John, *I am in you and you are in me* and as we hear St. Paul address the Colossians that we complete the sufferings of Christ. And so, Father as we pray these Stations of the Cross together may our suffering be completely united with yours. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. AMEN

You have the books if you want to open your eyes to the scripture at any point, but I invite you to close your eyes and try to enter into these stations. I think it is good that once during the Season of Lent that we allow ourselves to realize the reality that Christ is suffering in us. In our Baptism we have been totally united with Christ and as I said before St. Paul says that we complete the sufferings of Christ. As I pray through these with you today, I want you to allow Christ to be in you and you to be in Christ as we go through the Passion. While we are doing these meditations, as I guide you into the mystery of each of these fourteen stations I want you to try to realize how you have been living the Stations of the Cross. From the time of your Baptism, you have been so united with Christ that He is living in you, and He is therefore suffering in you. Each of the stations I want you to be one with Christ. Look at everything that He sees with His eyes and to allow Him to look at everything that you experience with His eyes.

I invite you to close your eyes and I will lead you through the meditation and I will lead you through the prayers and the scripture readings.

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

1st Station: Jesus is condemned

Again, the high priest began to ask him and said to him, "Are you the Christ, the son of the blessed one?" And Jesus said to him, "I am, and you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. But the high priest tore his garment

and said, "What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy, what do you think?" And they all condemned him as liable to death.

This 1st station Jesus is condemned. Just as He was condemned before Pilate and the people, when you were baptized you were baptized into Him and so that means that you would be condemned and will be condemned by the world. I want you to try to think of times in your life that you have experienced condemnation. Maybe it is a time that you got in trouble for something. Maybe it was a time that you were wrongly accused. Maybe it was a time that you just felt judged. This could be something happening in your life right now or something from the past. I want you to realize that when you were condemned you were not alone. Jesus was condemned in you because you and He are one. I want you to allow Him to take the pain of that condemnation, and rejection and realize that He is being judged with you and in you.

Now the cross as Jesus bore it has become for us who share it. The jeweled cross of victory.

2nd Station: Jesus carries His cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold your king. They cried out to him, "Away with him, away with him. Crucify him." Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priest answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified and they took Jesus and led him away bearing the cross by himself.

Jesus promised us that one day we would go where we did not want to go. Everyone carries a cross in life, sometimes multiple crosses. But again, Jesus is in you and you are in Him so just as He carried His cross, He carried your cross with you. I want you to call to mind whatever your cross is. A cross is usually not something we choose it is something that is handed to us. Something that we must bear. I want you to realize now that He has been carrying the cross with you and in you this entire time.

We can prod and curse and flog him, his whole body bruised and swollen. Jesus tripped and lay in pain.

Station 3: Jesus falls the first time

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

If the world hates you, know that they hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love one of its own because you are not of the world. But I have chosen you out of the world therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I have spoken to you. "No servant is greater than his master." If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

As Jesus falls for the first time under the weight cross, I want you to think about the first time you fell in life. That could be physically the first time you fell maybe riding a bike. That could be emotionally the first time that you cried. That could be spiritually the first time you sinned, and you were surprised that you could do such a thing. *No servant is greater than his master*. Just as the Lord fell humanly under the weight of the cross, He is with us every time that we fall. I want you to realize now that He was with you and in you when you fell. Join the suffering and the pain and failure and the humiliation with Him.

Jesus met His grieving mother. She that made The Lord our brother. Now the sword her heart has pierced.

4th Station Jesus meets His afflicted mother

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Now they were standing by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophus and Mary Magdalen and Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciples standing by whom he loved. He said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciples, "Behold your mother" and from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

I want you to realize now the presence of Mary in your life. She is known as The Sorrowful Mother because she was with Jesus in all of His sorrow, and she is with you in all of your sorrow. Not only is she there but she is surrounded by these women who are tending to you. I want you to imagine Jesus is in you and as you are experiencing this sorrow Mary loves you just as much as she loved Him. I want you to try to feel the great love of this mother for her child. I want you to call to mind who the maternal figures have been in your life. Who are the women that have stood by you, cared for you, tended to you, and nurtured you? I just allow you to call these women to mind. Maybe whoever comes first to your mind, or you may have to think back younger in your life. How has God revealed Himself to you through these women? How have they helped you with your suffering? Most importantly, do you realize that Mary has been your mother this entire time?

Simon stopped in hesitation, not foreseeing his proud station called to bare the cross of Christ.

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

When they had mocked Jesus, they took the purple cloak off and put his own clothes on him, and they laid him out to be crucified. They forced a certain passerby, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country to take up his cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha a name meaning the place of the skull.

Just as Simon of Cyrene has been commissioned to help Jesus, God places people into our lives to be our Simon of Cyrene. When our cross becomes too heavy to bear, He sends us people who will help us carry it. Who is your Simon of Cyrene? Who comes to mind when you think of someone who has helped you carry your cross? Who is the one who has been there for you when your cross has been too heavy to carry on your own?

Brave but trembling came the women, none but she would flog the Roman moved by love beyond her fear.

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give your drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or imprisoned and come to you? In answering the king will say to them, "Amen I say to you as long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me.

When Jesus was carrying His cross to the point of the blood coming down His face. The crown of thorns, and the beating, the whipping and the scourging and the dirt, this woman Veronica comes to Him and wipes His face. Veronica means "one who shows an icon". Meaning that after she wiped His face, she held out the cloth and His face was visible in the cloth. In your life if you have you been suffering and have been persecuted and have been condemned and wrongly abused. Maybe you suffered physical abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse. Sometimes when we experience abuse, we begin to forget who we are. We begin to forget that we are created in the image and likeness of God. We forget that Jesus is in us, and we are in Him. Every once in a while, there is a person who reminds us of our goodness. There is a person who helps us to remember who we are. There is a person who helps us to

see our true face. There is a person who helps us to realize that Christ is in us. Who has been that person for you that has helped you realize your goodness? Who has been the one that has helped you see the Christ in you? Who is the one that has tenderly wiped your face? Who is the one that carries your impression? Who sees you as you truly are, Jesus in you and you in Him?

Prostrate on the dusty crumbled, flogged in body he resembled all our brothers poor and scorn.

7th Station: Jesus falls for the second time

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

It was our weaknesses that he carried. Our sufferings that he endured. When we thought of him as stricken, as one struck by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our offenses. Crushed for our sins. Upon him was the punishment that makes us whole. By his strikes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep. Each following his own way. But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all.

As Jesus falls the second time, we hear in this scripture passage that He fell in order to be within us. The Lord laid upon Him the guilt of us all. So, He desired to be with us in each and every one of our falls. I want you to think of another time that you fell in your life. Something especially traumatic. It could be the loss of a job. It could be a divorce. This could be an illness, a cancer. It could be a breakdown. Whatever this time is when you fell really hard, the Lord was in you taking the pain. So, join that with Him now. Let Him fall in you.

May our sympathy for Jesus turn to those who now will need us. May we see Christ bruised and them.

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

There was following Jesus a great crowd of people. Among them were some women who were bewailing and lamenting him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children."

As Jesus meets the women on the way, I want you to call to mind again those women that have been part of your journey. And think back along your whole life from the time that you were a child. It could be a friend. It could be a sibling, a sister. It could be a mother or an aunt. All throughout your life God has provided you with these wonderful and beautiful women to walk with you.

Jesus fell again in weakness, stumbling as we do to lead us through our sorrow and our pain.

9th Station: Jesus falls a third time

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

He lies prostrate in the dust. Give me life according to your word. I declared my ways and you answered me. Teach me to hear commands. Make me understand the ways of your precepts and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds. My soul weeps for sorrow. Strengthen me with your words.

When Jesus fell the third time, three is often symbolic of trinity or infinite. So, by falling three times it meant that He would fall over and over again and stand up over and over again. Not only has He carried His cross but as He completes His suffering in each and every one of us He will fall an infinite amount of times for us. As He falls a third time, I want you to think about the many times you have fallen. Especially that sin, that one sin that you struggle with perpetually. That you seem to fall with over and over and over again. I want you to let Jesus be in you to help you to get back up. No matter how many times you have fallen. No matter how many times you have sinned. Through His power and His strength, you can get up. Even if it happens a thousand times. So, think about whatever that sin is for you that you constantly struggle with and imagine Him now helping you stand up.

Stripped and injured by his own nation Jesus stood in desolation giving all he had to give.

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

They gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall but when he had tasted it he would not drink. Then after they had crucified him, they divided his clothes casting lots to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets, "They have divided my clothes among them and upon my garments they cast lots."

The stripping of clothes is often seen as a sign of humiliation. Jesus was nailed to the cross and there was nowhere he could hide. Unlike Adam and Eve who hid when they realized they were naked, Jesus was exposed before the world and before our God. Whenever we go to Confession, and we confess our sins we expose ourselves and that can be difficult to do. That can be humbling and humiliating. That can be something we want to hide from but if we know and believe that Jesus still remains in us then we can allow ourselves to be stripped, to be vulnerable, to leave nothing hidden. When we feel this feeling of shame or the terror that comes with the vulnerability, we are united with Him as He is stripped of His clothes. And He is united with us as we are.

He is the hand that blessed and cured us, He is the feet that want to free us. Walk the hill of Calvary.

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

When they came to Golgotha, the place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus and the robbers one on his right and the other on his left. And Jesus said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

As Jesus is nailed to the cross, He would experience an insurmountable amount of pain. He would do so in order to be united from us in order to take away our sins and sin causes the deepest pain. I want you to try to imagine times in your life where you have been in the greatest amount of pain. Usually in times of pain we question, "Where are you God?" I want you to realize now that He is in the pain. He is in you, and you are in Him. Just as He experienced the pain in the crucifixion of the cross your pain can be in His suffering. I want you to think of times when you have felt excruciating pain and let that be a part of the crucifixion completing the suffering of Christ.

Like eternal death defiant, bowed his head the world was silent. Through his death came life anew.

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

It was now about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour and the sun was darkened and the curtain of the temple was torn in the middle. Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, "It is finished. Father into your hands I commend my spirit." Then bowing his head, he died.

We are all called in baptism and throughout our entire lives to live out this paschal mystery. The suffering, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. That means throughout our lives we will experience times of suffering, times of dying and also times of rising. There is something that is so final about death. When we die there is no going back. I want you to think about times in your lives where you have died completely to a sin and you have never looked back. I want you to think now too about your death. That Jesus will be in you the moment that you die. Just as He has suffered with you in your life, He will be with you in your death. May you say the same words that He said, "It is finished. Father into your hands I commend my spirit." I want you to allow yourself right now in this moment of silence to die with Him. To surrender your life to Him. Father into your hands I commend my spirit.

Stunned and stricken merry mother, in your arms was placed our brother full of grace now filled with greed.

13th Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

When the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs but one of them opened his side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and the water. Joseph of Arimathea, because he was a disciple of Jesus, although a secret one for fear the Jews, saw Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus and Pilate would give him permission.

I want you to imagine you are one with Jesus on the cross. Just as you have now totally surrendered and handed over your spirit, you are completely dead with Him. As you lay there, Joseph of Arimathea comes to you to take you down and I want to try to imagine who that

figure is in your life. Who is it that takes your body? Who is it now that has been a friend to you all along but maybe you have not realized? Just as we have the beautiful statue of The Piedad by Michael Angelo and Jesus is laid into Mary's arms, I want you to imagine Joseph laying your dead body into Mary's lap.

Jesus Lord your gift accepted in three days you resurrected. You did first what we shall do.

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus wrapping it in a linen cloth. He laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of rock. Then he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and departed.

I want you to be with Jesus now. Dead with Him in the empty tomb on the stone slab as the stone is rolled against the entrance and everyone departs. Is there any part of your life right now that feels like that? That feels like complete darkness and death and aloneness. There is the hope of the resurrection and yet there is the silence of three days in the tomb and three can also seem like an eternity.

Jesus risen be our lover in your food and in your brother. Lead us home to heaven with you.

Now we will meditate finally on the resurrection of Jesus

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought the spices that they may go and anoint Jesus very early on the first day of the week. When the sun had just risen, they came into the tomb, and they were saying to one another, "Who will roll the stone back from the entrance of the tomb for us?" It was very large but looking up they saw the stone had been rolled back again and upon entering the tomb they were amazed to see a young man sitting on the right side and clothed in a white robe. He said to them, "Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, the place where they laid Him."

When all is said and done. When we have suffered with Jesus. When we have died with Jesus. We will rise with Jesus. When we unite our sufferings to Him. When we join Him in His suffering, we die with Him. We will rise with Him. Finally, when we allow Him to be united with us in our life and He suffers with us, in us and through us and He dies with us in us and

through us, He will rise in us, with us and through us. So, let us take great hope in the resurrection. Let us take great hope that any suffering we endured in this life may be united to His. Let us take great hope that when we experience our death we know and believe that we will rise.

We pray together: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

I invite you to stand for the Final Blessing:

V. The Lord be with you

R. And with your Spirit

Bow down for the blessing.

Heavenly Father, as your beloved children have gathered with you to celebrate these Stations of the Cross, we ask you that you continue to send your Holy Spirit into them and that they may realize their adoption and through Baptism that they are one with Your Son. He is in them, and You are in them and may they remain in this love. May they realize that all the suffering that they have endured that Jesus has been with them and that they continue to carry their cross toward Easter. May they also realize that He is within them. May He one day bring them through death to their everlasting life in heaven. May almighty God bless and keep you in the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever.

Go in peace.