

A WAY OF THE CROSS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH
by Archbishop Samir Nassar

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A blood-spattered poster of Jesus Christ is seen inside the the Coptic Christian Saints Church in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria (CNS)

A MEDITATION FOR THE INTENTIONS OF REFUGEES AND HOMELESS FAMILIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Reflections on the Stations of the Cross by Archbishop Samir Nassar, the Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, in his capacity as Episcopal Shepherd of the Syrian Commission for the Family.

“Blessed Are They Who are Persecuted for justice, the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs” (Mt 5:10).



FIRST STATION: JESUS IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

“Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified.” Mt. 15:12-13

An innocent man condemned to death. What injustice! Lord, our families feel their suffering with you, innocent victims in your image, through violence and persecution. They are forced to leave homes, schools, parishes, towns, neighbors, friends, and cemeteries, to live in refugee camps of misery and indifference. Pilate is always there to feed injustice.

Lord, enlighten the minds of these “judges” and make us messengers of justice. Amen.



SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS

“ ..then they led him away to crucify him ..” Mk. 15:20

Jesus is taken to the soldiers, he “through whom all things were made and nothing was made without him,” (Jn. 1:3) lowers his head and walks humiliated, carrying the cross, defenseless.

Lord Jesus, the force of evil is still rampant and destroys. Lord you identified with the weak, look at our fragile families, humiliated and torn by violence. They are victims of injustice as you were. Give them the strength to carry the cross, to keep the faith, and to hope in you. Amen.



THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

“He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.” Isaiah 53:5

He who brings peace to the world is wounded by our sins and falls under the burden of our sins.

Lord we are crushed by the weight of the cross and the great desolation around us. Our selfishness and weakness pulls us down. Lord, lift us from our falls and direct our mind back to your truth. Amen



FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

“And a sword will pierce your own soul.” Luke 2:35; Isaiah 53.5

Wounded and suffering, carrying the cross of humanity, Jesus meets his mother and the face of all humanity. In this mutual suffering between son and mother a new humanity is born.

O Mary, Mother of God, you saw your son suffer. Help our moms who are deprived of their children, whose children suffer and die alone away from them. In our daily life children and parents are hurting mutually. Help us Lord to transform our families and homelands into spaces of love and serenity in the image of the Holy Family. Amen



FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS

“..they laid the cross on him and he carried it behind Jesus.” Luke 23:26

This silent encounter between Jesus and Simon of Cyrene is a life lesson. Two eyes met in a silent speech that says a lot. Suffering received in faith traces a path of salvation.

Lord, our families are left alone in their misery. They are waiting for a hand, a heart, a “Simon of Cyrene” that you send in the wilderness. Amen.



SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

“Your face, O Lord, I seek. Do not hide your face from me.” Ps. 27:8-9

Veronica makes a strong symbolic gesture. She wipes the pain of your face in a gesture of faith that expresses her love for you. In Christian tradition this face is still seen on Veronica’s veil. Who will wipe away the wounded faces of our brothers, our mothers who weep for their children, and their distress?

God grant that we see your face in that of the poor, persecuted, and innocent victims of violence and injustice. Amen.



SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME:

“Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.” Psalm 22: 8-12

This second fall under the cross is a sign of loneliness in suffering. Injustice and violence pound the lowly people into the abyss. Your loneliness, Lord, joined the isolation of the poor victims of the world's selfishness.

Come Holy Spirit to comfort, strengthen and sow hope in the hearts the oppressed so that, united to Christ, they may be witnesses of his universal love. Amen.



EIGHTH STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

“Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Luke 23:27-28

These women saw in the cross a curse. The Lord saw redemption, the taking away of sins, and consolation for the oppressed. The eyes of the women were open to the truth of Easter.

Lord, our wounded moms who are suffering, need your consolation and comfort. O suffering Christ, be peace and balm for their wounds. Amen.



NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” Cor. 5: 14-15

Jesus falls under the cross for the third time and, despite his exhaustion, he seeks to get up again. Lord this exhausted and weakened people gathers strength to get up in vain. Our divisions are deep even in the Church as we work for Christian unity.

Lord, help us to get up and walk the path of forgiveness and unity that flows from your saving suffering. Amen.



TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHING

“...they divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” Ps 22:19

Lord you carry our humanity. The many victims of indiscriminate violence are poor and can only join you in your liberating suffering and your infinite love.

Lord, to our poor refugees who encounter various difficulties, give strength to overcome fear and remain committed to this holy land which empties of Christian witnesses to your word. Lord, teach us to detach from material goods so as to live in your evangelical poverty. Amen



ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

"Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." John 19:19

Lord Jesus, you were crucified for our sins. The blows of the hammer echo in our hearts. Our children are martyred, killed with savagery, in aimless violence. These oppressed young people are close your cross.

Lord, may your liberating suffering release these young people and families from slavery so they may discover your divine face. Amen.



TWELTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Luke 23:46

This cry of abandonment breaks the silence and opens the way to freedom. The whole meaning of the cross takes its value from this saving suffering. These innocent victims did not die for nothing. By your death Lord, you opened the door of the kingdom of eternal life. Death does not defeat us. Death introduces us to the Resurrection.

Lord, open the hearts of those who endanger the lives of others to discover the value of human life, a reflection of your divinity. Amen.



THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS GIVES US HIS MOTHER

"He said to the disciple, behold your mother." Jn. 19:26

Lord Jesus, the one who loves you stands beside you. Mary is the model of this love, the model of faith.

O Mary, our Mother, we place in your hands our martyrs, our refugees, those unjustly tortured, hated and excluded. We entrust to you, our dear Mother, children without schools, the sick who are untended, and our homeless refugees. Ask the Lord that the blood of innocent victims is made the seed of a new society, peaceful and just. Amen



FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

"They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in linen." Jn. 19:39

Nicodemus gratefully receives the body of Jesus, prepares it for burial and lays it in the tomb. Jesus crucified abandons himself completely into human hands, perfectly united with humanity in all things. Indeed, by his death we are buried with him so as to rise to new life with him.

These tombs of darkness await your spring Lord, the light of the Resurrection. Give us the grace to choose your redeeming cross, to keep faith and hope. Lord, make us children of the light who no longer fear the darkness. Make our cross lead to forgiveness, reconciliation and peace in the light of your Resurrection. Amen.

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