

The Way of the Cross



For Married Couples

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Covenant of Love is a parish based marriage ministry of The Alexander House. You can learn more about the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and about other marriage building resources by visiting their website:

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History of the Stations of the Cross As a Catholic Devotion

The Stations of the Cross are a Catholic devotion which commemorates the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the fourteen stations represents an event which occurred during Jesus' Passion and death at Calvary on Good Friday.

The Stations were originally performed many centuries ago by Christian pilgrims who visited the Holy Land and the sites of Jesus' Passion. Promotion of the devotion to the Stations began in earnest with the Franciscans, who were given custody of the Holy Places in the Holy Land in the 1300s. Countless Catholics have all enriched their spiritual lives with this powerful devotion.

The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make in spirit, as it were, a pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death, and this has become one of the most popular of Catholic devotions. It is carried out by passing from Station to Station, with certain prayers at each and devout meditation on the various incidents in turn.

Closing Blessing

From the Nuptial Blessing

Father, by your power you made everything out of nothing. In the beginning you made the universe and made mankind in your own likeness. You gave man the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and you teach us that what you have united may never be divided.

Father, you have made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and His Church.

Father, by your plan man and woman are united, and married life has been established as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in a flood.

Look with love upon this woman, your daughter, now joined to her husband in marriage. She asks your blessing. Give her the grace of love and peace. May she always follow the example of the holy women whose praises are sung in the scriptures. May her husband put his trust in her and recognize that she is his equal and heir with him to the life of grace. May he always honor her and love her as Christ loves His bride, the Church.

Father, keep them always true to your commandments. Keep them faithful in marriage and let them be living examples of Christian life. Give them the strength which comes from the gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children's children. And, after a happy old age, grant them fullness of life with the saints in the kingdom of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Fourteenth Station Jesus Is Laid In the Tomb

Meditation

Do we recognize our own mortality? Do we live this life as though it is preparation for eternity or do we only live for the pleasures of this world?

Do we recognize that the greatest responsibility we have to our spouse is to help them get to heaven? If our spouse were to be laid to rest tomorrow, would I have helped prepare him or her to meet our Lord?

Do we pray together? Do we pray for each other? Do we encourage each other on our journey of faith?

Let us resolve to live God's plan for marriage more fully. Let us resolve to love our spouse and be the partner to them God calls us to be.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, by your death and resurrection you freed us from the power of sin and death. Help us use that freedom to love each other as we are supposed to, working to perfect each other for the day we see you face to face. Amen

Opening Prayer

Scripture: Ephesians 5:21-33

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, He himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed Himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that He might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy without blemish. So also husband should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

Opening Prayer

Mediation

St. Paul's prescription for a successful marriage may sound impossible. It may sound strange to us, surrounded by modern secular and material values as we are. It may sound as if he expects wives to be less than husbands, even the property of their husbands.

But reading more closely, the kind of dedication—from both husband and wife—called for by Paul is consistent with the Gospel and with marriage as a sacrament and covenant rather than contract. And is Paul being unfair asking wives to be submissive? In the next breath he commands husband to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Christ loved the Church by laying down His life for us. What wife would not joyfully respect and submit to a husband who was so Christ like as to lay down his life for her?

Prayer

Loving Lord Jesus, as I begin this way of the cross, walk with me and deepen my desire to follow you always. Give me the grace to love my spouse with all my heart. Amen

The Thirteenth Station Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross

Meditation

On our wedding day, we committed to love our spouse until death do us part. We promised to love in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. We promised to love and honor each other all the days of our lives.

These are difficult vows to live out. They are impossible to live out if we don't access the grace of the marriage sacrament. God will help us fulfill our vows if we invite Him into our marriage and open ourselves up to His grace.

God can help us to love our spouse with the tenderness He was shown as His mother and friends took Him down from the cross. They weren't motivated by what Jesus could do for them at this point but by what they could do to love and honor Him until the very end.

Prayer

Lord, give us the strength to love our spouse today and everyday until the end of our lives. Help us to enjoy the good times and the healthy times and to invite you into the bad times and the sick times. You are the God who turned death into life. We invite you to do the same in our marriage. Amen

The Twelfth Station Jesus Dies On the Cross

Meditation

Jesus said, "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

(Kneel and pause to reflect on Christ's love)

Do we follow Jesus' instructions? Do we love our spouse as He loved us?

What are the things in our life that keep us from fully loving our spouse? Do we need to 'lay down' our attachments to work, hobbies, friends or addictions that keep us loving our spouse? Are we clinging to unrealistic or unneeded expectations of our spouse that keep us from loving him or her for who they are?

Let us resolve to "lay down" any attachments that keep us from totally loving our spouse.

Prayer

Merciful Jesus, your death for us on the cross is the ultimate example of love. You withheld nothing from us so that we would know your complete love. Help us to let go of our attachments to the world so we can lay down our lives for our spouses. Amen

The First Station Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Meditation

In our married lives we are often very quick to rush to judgment. We assume that things which annoy us are done deliberately to us by our spouse. We repeatedly ask (whether out loud or in our hearts), "Why didn't you...?" or "I thought you said you would..." Our words imply bad will on the part of our beloved.

When we do this, we are like the chief priests or like Pontius Pilot, quick to judge and quick to condemn without looking closely at our own insecurities or at the person at whom the judgment is directed. We fail to see the image of Christ in those we judge harshly. Again Jesus stands condemned.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You allowed yourself to be handed over to men who judged you unjustly and in ignorance. Save me from condemning You in my spouse. Let me always presume good will. Let me see Your own face in the faces of all I meet. Amen

The Second Station Jesus Carries His Cross

Meditation

How often do we receive the crosses of daily life with complaining and grumbling? How often do we count the burdens that we have without appreciating the burdens being borne by our own spouse? How aware are we of the burdens we place on our spouse through our own lack of consideration, taking one another for granted, or even deliberately out of bad will?

It is so easy to take for granted the mundane contributions of our spouse, easy to forget to say ‘thank you’—for hours worked to support the family; for laundry done, meals cooked, floors cleaned; for nights up with babies; for making phone calls we do not care to make ourselves; and for little courtesies and sacrifices our spouse makes for us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I have failed to appreciate Your willing acceptance of the cross for my sake. I have failed to see how my own sins contribute to Your being condemned to death. Thank you for your most wonderful sacrifice. Please give me the grace to accept my crosses willingly and without grumbling. Help me appreciate the sacrifices of my spouse, and help me not to make them greater by being inconsiderate. Amen

The Eleventh Station Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Meditation

It is humbling to acknowledge Jesus needed to suffer on the cross because of our sins. He is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” He even prayed for us while suffering on the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

It takes great humility on our part to come back to our spouse, or God, when we’ve offended them. It is easier to be angry and blame them than it is to ask forgiveness. Healing can’t start until we acknowledge that we’ve hurt our spouse.

Do we humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness when we’ve wronged our spouse? Do we extend mercy and forgiveness when our spouse sincerely seeks it? Do we seek Christ’s forgiveness regularly in the sacrament of Reconciliation so we can share Christ’s mercy with our spouse?

Prayer

Lord of all mercies, please forgive our sins which made it necessary for you to suffer on the cross for us. Grant us the grace to seek your mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation and to seek reconciliation with our spouse when necessary. Amen

The Tenth Station

Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes

Meditation

God gave us our bodies so that we could be a gift to our spouse. Nakedness in the marital embrace is supposed to remind us that we are made for each other like the Church is made for Christ.

Christ's persecutors degraded him by ripping his clothes off him against his will. Christ was willing to give himself as a redeeming gift to us, his church. Our role as the bride of Christ is to open ourselves up to his love. He will never force himself upon us though. He is a perfect gentleman.

Let us remember our bodies are meant to be a gift for our spouse, but that gift should never be coerced or forcefully taken. Husbands show their wives love through both offering the gift of their body and respecting when she isn't ready to receive the gift. Wives show their husbands love when they open themselves up to receive his gift in the marital embrace.

Prayer

Jesus, lover of our souls, you gave yourself up for us. Help us to live our lives as a gift for each other, particularly in the one flesh union. Amen.

The Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Meditation

During the engagement, on our wedding day, and in the early days of our marriage we were filled with joy, expectation, and excitement over the wonderful step we were taking. We 'just knew' we were doing the right thing, that our marriage would be the most beautiful in the world, that we'd always feel this way about each other. We expected of ourselves that we would be different and better somehow than we'd ever been before.

Then that first disillusionment hit—maybe a fight, a disappointed expectation, or just the first realization that the excitement was over. We felt like we were falling. These are the times we really show what our love is made of. When the feelings are gone, when we think we may have made a terrible mistake; when life seems boring, or dull, or long—then we must pick ourselves up and keep moving forward by choice, will and the grace of God. We must work to make our life together beautiful again.

Prayer

O my Jesus, give me the grace to follow Your example in this—to rise up and continue on whenever I fall. Let me always remember what You did for me in your passion and death. Amen

The Fourth Station Jesus Meets His Mother

Meditation

Even though we leave our homes and set up a new household in marriage, we continue to encounter our mothers, fathers, and siblings. We may still compete with them, judge them and be judged by them, or in other ways find our marriage challenged by them—even though we love them.

And when we are not physically with our 'family of origin', we continue to carry them in our hearts and minds, our habits and expectations. Often these influences from our past are not discussed and not even conscious to ourselves. And often the different expectations and assumptions husbands and wives bring to a marriage are the source of conflict and hurt.

We must come to terms with our families of origin. Husbands and wives need to talk about patterns and assumptions each brings into the marriage. Then they should consciously choose which of these from each family they will reject, and which to incorporate into their own life.

Prayer

Our dear Lord, help me to follow Your example of loving your parents but being about Your Father's affairs. Help me to know what to save and what to reject of my own family. Amen.

The Ninth Station Jesus Falls a Third Time

Meditation

Saint Paul pleaded to God three times for relief from a thorn in his flesh. Christ's response to him was, "My grace is sufficient for you. For my strength is made perfect in weakness."

It is easy to complain about the crosses we must carry in life. We can grow tired and lose heart along the way. The better response is to join our suffering to Jesus' suffering. This will open our hearts to receive God's grace so that we may be made perfect in our weakness.

These are great opportunities to support each other in developing the cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. These four virtues are the foundation of all the human virtues in our life.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, it is easy to want to give up on the important things when we grow tired from carrying our cross. Help us to turn our suffering in the virtues that will help us live the Christian life together. Amen

The Eighth Station **Jesus Meets the Holy Women**

Meditation

The holy women looked with pity and compassion on Jesus when he went by. He looked back at them with even more compassion and challenged them to look beyond themselves.

Jesus said, "I come not to be served, but to serve." Do we serve others together as a married couple? Do we build our spiritual muscles and grow in holiness by ministering to others as a couple?

Can anyone say they are closer to Christ because of what you and your spouse have done? If not, we need to ask God to show us a way to minister as a couple to others.

Prayer

Compassionate and loving Jesus, we thank you for the holy men and women who have led us closer to you. Please guide us and form us so that we can serve others together. Amen

The Fifth Station **Simon Carries the Cross**

Meditation

We love to think of ourselves as competent and self-sufficient. But all of us need help.

Often we are called to be "Simon" to each other as husband and wife. Sometime the hardest part is to be the one who is helped, to accept assistance. Sometimes it is hard to give exactly what our spouse needs, rather than what we prefer to give or what we are talented at giving.

It is important to know the limits of our abilities to fill the needs of each other. We both need to recognize "Simons of Cyrene" in our life, and let them help us. "Simon" may be a good friend, a priest, a marriage counselor, psychological counselor, or even our parents.

Prayer

Sweet Jesus, never let me be so proud that I fail to seek or accept the help I need. Help me discern who can truly help me from those whose help could be poison. Help me to be a generous "Simon of Cyrene", especially to my spouse. Amen.

The Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Meditation

What could Veronica do? Jesus was in terrible pain, and was bound to die. She could do nothing about that. But she did what she could. She was a loving presence to the Lord. Can we doubt that she lifted the Lord's spirits by her kindness?

So often in marriage our partner has pain or trouble or a problem. We often tend to respond by giving advice, or criticism, or logical problem solving. And we may become annoyed when our spouse isn't real grateful for our advice. But many times what is most needed is Veronica—a loving presence. Listening. Caring. Empathy. Concern. Love.

Sometimes we fail to reverence the simple gifts brought to us by our spouse. We don't want to admit our need for kindness and tenderness, but we hurt our beloved when we reject their acts of love.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to be like You. You accepted Veronica's loving act, all she was able to do. Help me to accept the simple gifts of presence from my spouse and help me to also be generous in my presence. Amen.

The Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Meditation

"How can this happen again? Didn't we deal with this before?" When challenges resurface we can be tempted to let anger and frustration dominate how we treat our spouse. It is easier to focus on what they are not doing than on the heavy cross they carry.

The crosses we bear can help us to let go of our plans for our life and to humbly open ourselves to God's ability to redeem even our greatest struggles and suffering.

Sometimes the cross will be too heavy to carry and our spouse will need our help when we don't feel like giving it. That is when we must remember St. Paul's writing, "Love is patient, love is kind...it does not seek its own interests...it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Prayer

Lord Jesus, it's easy to stand on the side and judge when my spouses' crosses interfere with my life. Help me instead to love my spouse with patience, kindness, and goodwill. Amen