

Lenten Information

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may also be taken, but not to equal a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.

Abstinence laws consider that meat comes only from animals such as chickens, cows, sheep or pigs --- all of which live on land. Birds are also considered meat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consomme, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are technically not forbidden. However, moral theologians have traditionally taught that we should abstain from all animal-derived products (except foods such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste). Fish are a different category of animal. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, (cold-blooded animals) and shellfish are permitted.

Fast and Abstinence

Canon 1250 All Fridays through the year and the time of Lent are penitential days and times throughout the entire Church.

Canon 1251 Abstinence from eating meat or another food according to the prescriptions of the conference of bishops is to be observed on Fridays throughout the year unless they are solemnities; abstinence and fast are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and on the Friday of the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Canon 1252 All persons who have completed their fourteenth year are bound by the law of abstinence; all adults are bound by the law of fast up to the beginning of their sixtieth year. Nevertheless, pastors and parents are to see to it that minors who

are not bound by the law of fast and abstinence are educated in an authentic sense of penance.

Canon 1253 It is for the conference of bishops to determine more precisely the observance of fast and abstinence and to substitute in whole or in part for fast and abstinence other forms of penance, especially works of charity and exercises of piety.

The Church, therefore, has two forms of official penitential practices (not including the Eucharistic fast before Communion)

Abstinence

The law of abstinence requires a Catholic 14 years of age until death to abstain from eating meat on Fridays in honor of the Passion of Jesus on Good Friday. Meat is considered to be the flesh and organs of mammals and fowl. Moral theologians have traditionally considered this also to forbid soups or gravies made from them. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles and shellfish are permitted, as are animal-derived products such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste.

On the Fridays outside of Lent the U.S. bishops conference obtained the permission of the Holy See for Catholics in the US to substitute a penitential, or even a charitable, practice of their own choosing. Since this was not stated as binding under pain of sin, not to do so on a single occasion would not in itself be sinful. However, since penance is a divine command, the general refusal to do penance is certainly gravely sinful. For most people the easiest way to consistently fulfill this command is the traditional one, to abstain from meat on all Fridays of the year which are not liturgical solemnities. When solemnities, such as the Annunciation, Assumption, All Saints etc. fall on a Friday, we neither abstain or fast.

During Lent abstinence from meat on Fridays is obligatory in the United States as elsewhere, and it is sinful not to observe this discipline without a serious reason (physical labor, pregnancy, sickness etc.).

Fasting

The law of fasting requires a Catholic from the 18th Birthday [Canon 97] to the 59th Birthday [i.e. the beginning of the 60th year, a year which will be completed on the 60th birthday] to reduce the amount of food eaten from normal. The Church defines this as one meal a day, and two smaller meals which if added together would not exceed the main meal in quantity. Such fasting is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The fast is broken by eating between meals and by drinks which could be considered food (milk shakes, but not milk). Alcoholic beverages do not break the fast; however, they seem contrary to the spirit of doing penance.

Those who are excused from fast or abstinence

Besides those outside the age limits, those of unsound mind, the sick, the frail, pregnant or nursing women according to need for meat or nourishment, manual laborers according to need, guests at a meal who cannot excuse themselves without giving great offense or causing enmity and other situations of moral or physical impossibility to observe the penitential discipline.

Aside from these minimum penitential requirements

Catholics are encouraged to impose some personal penance on themselves at other times. It could be modeled after abstinence and fasting. A person could, for example, multiply the number of days they abstain. Some people give up meat entirely for religious motives (as opposed to those who give it up for health or other motives). Some religious orders, as a penance, never eat meat. Similarly, one could multiply the number of days that one fasted. The early Church had a practice of a Wednesday and Saturday fast. This fast could be the same as the Church's law (one main meal and two smaller ones) or stricter, even bread and water. Such freely chosen fasting could also consist in giving up something one enjoys - candy, soft drinks, smoking, that cocktail before supper, and so on. This is left to the individual.

Lenten Recipes

Green Beans Greek Style

1 pkg fresh green beans
½ pkg crumbled feta cheese
Greek vinaigrette

Remove stems. Cook green beans to desired doneness. In a large bowl, combine cooked green beans and feta cheese. Sprinkle with a few tbsp of Greek vinaigrette. Mix to coat beans. Can be served warm or cold.

Broccoli, Feta and Tomato Salad



2 cups Broccoli florets, fresh
2 Plum, small
2 tbsp Balsamic vinaigrette, fat-free
¼ cup Feta cheese
4 cups Water
2 tsp chopped fresh or 1 tsp dried oregano leaves

In 2-quart saucepan, heat water to boiling over high heat. Add broccoli; cook 10 to 20 seconds or until broccoli is bright green. Drain broccoli; rinse in cold water until cool.

In small serving bowl, stir broccoli and remaining ingredients.

Grilled Eggplant with Tomato & Feta

1 large eggplant
3 large tomatoes, to match the diameter of the eggplant
4 oz feta, crumbled
½ cup fresh basil leaves
juice of half lemon
2 garlic cloves
½ extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper to taste



Cut of the eggplant crosswise into ½" thick rounds. Lightly season them with salt and leave them for 30 minutes on a side to let water to come out of the eggplant.

Once ready drizzle some olive oil on top of each slice and grill them on a lightly oiled grill rack for 2-3 minutes each side.

Blend the basil leaves with 4 tbsp olive oil, 2 garlic cloves, lemon juice and 1 tsp salt in an immersion blender until smooth.

Cut the tomatoes crosswise to ¼" thick rounds.

Lightly oil the baking pan. Arrange 4 eggplant rounds side by side. Spread ½ tbsp of the basil-garlic mixture on top of each one, then generously sprinkle feta crumbs. Top each with tomato rings. Add another layer of eggplant, basil spread, feta and tomato rounds and top with the rest of the crumbled feta.

Preheat the oven to 400F.

Drizzle some olive oil on top of each stack and bake for 15 minutes.

Coconut Shrimp



1/3 cup all-purpose flour (or whole wheat)
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
2 large eggs, beaten
3/4 cup Panko bread crumbs
1 cup sweetened shredded coconut
1 lb raw large shrimp, peeled and deveined with tails attached
vegetable oil or coconut oil

Start with 3 medium bowls. Combine flour, salt, and pepper in one. Beat the eggs in the second bowl. Combine Panko and coconut in the third bowl.

Dip the shrimp into the flour, then the eggs, and then dredge the shrimp into the coconut mixing, pressing gently to adhere. You want a lot of coconut on each shrimp. Set the coated shrimp aside on a plate as you coat the remaining shrimp.

Add enough oil to cover the bottom of a large skillet on medium heat. Fry the coconut shrimp in batches - do not crowd them in the pan. Fry about 6-7 at a time. Flip after 2 minutes and fry the other side for 2 minutes or until golden brown.

Place the finished coconut shrimp on a plate lined with a paper towel as you fry the rest.

Toasted Sesame Ginger Salmon

1 Vegetable oil or coconut oil
1 cup Coconut, sweetened
3/4 cup Panko bread crumbs
1 1/2 lbs raw salmon
1/4 cup olive oil
2 tbsp toasted sesame oil
2 tbsp rice vinegar
2 tbsp brown sugar
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 garlic cloves, grated
1 tbsp freshly grated ginger
1-2 tbsp toasted sesame seeds
4 green onions, sliced



Sesame Ginger Honey Glaze

1/4 cup honey
1 tsp toasted sesame oil
1 tsp soy sauce
1/2 tsp freshly grated ginger
1/2 tsp toasted sesame seeds

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and place a wire rack over top. Spray the rack with nonstick spray.

In a large bowl or baking dish, combine olive oil, sesame oil, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, vinegar, brown sugar and whisk well until combined. Add salmon to the dish or place everything in a ziplock bag, then refrigerate and marinate for 30 minutes.

Preheat the broiler in your oven. (Or preheat your grill.)

Remove salmon with kitchen tongs and place directly on the wire rack. Sprinkle with a little bit of salt and pepper, then place directly under the broiler. Cook for 10-12 minutes, depending on the salmon's thickness (our's was just about an inch thick), until opaque and easily flakable with a fork. You can flip the salmon halfway through cooking if desired.

Remove and serve immediately, with a sprinkling of toasted sesame seeds, green onions and the glaze below.

Glaze - Combine all ingredients in a bowl and whisk until smooth. Pour over salmon.

Shrimp and Pasta with Mushrooms



- 1 package (16 oz) spaghetti
- 3 tbsp butter
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 4 oz shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 1 lb uncooked large shrimp, peeled, deveined
- 1 to 1½ cups dry white wine
- Salt to taste
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Cook and drain spaghetti as directed on package.

Meanwhile, in large skillet, melt 1 tbsp of the butter over medium heat. Cook garlic and pepper flakes in butter 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Add mushrooms; cook 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned. Stir in shrimp; cook about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until shrimp are almost pink. Add wine and remaining 2 tbsp butter; heat to simmering.

Add cooked spaghetti to skillet; toss with shrimp mixture. Season with salt. Cook 1 minute longer until shrimp are pink. Sprinkle with parsley.

Mediterranean Pasta with Shrimp



- 2½ cups uncooked bow-tie (farfalle) pasta (5 oz)
- 1 lb uncooked medium shrimp (thawed if frozen), peeled, deveined and tail shells removed
- 1 pkg (4 oz) crumbled feta cheese
- 3 cups lightly packed fresh spinach (about 3 oz), stems removed, torn into pieces
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped (1 cup)
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh or 1 tsp dried basil leaves
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅓ cup sliced Kalamata olives or 1 can (2¼ oz) sliced ripe olives, drained
- 2 tbsp olive or vegetable oil

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray 13x9-inch (3-quart) glass baking dish with cooking spray. In 4-quart saucepan or Dutch oven, cook pasta as directed on package, adding shrimp during last 2 minutes of cook time. Cook until pasta is tender and shrimp are pink. Drain; return to saucepan.

Stir ½ cup cheese and remaining ingredients except oil into cooked pasta and shrimp. Pour into baking dish; spread evenly.

Bake 10 to 15 minutes or until hot. Sprinkle with oil; toss. Top with remaining cheese.

Scallops in Creamy Basil Sauce



2 tbsp olive oil
2 tsp basil pesto
½ tsp roasted garlic
1 lb sea scallops, thawed
1 cup jarred Alfredo sauce
8 oz angel hair pasta

Fill large saucepan ½ full of water. Cover and bring to a boil on high for pasta.

Preheat large sauté pan on medium-high 2-3 minutes. Place olive oil, pesto, and garlic in pan. (Pan should sizzle.) Stir in scallops; cook 3-5 minutes, stirring often, or just until they turn milky white (or opaque) and firm. Be careful not to overcook.

Stir in Alfredo sauce. Reduce to low; simmer 2 minutes or until sauce is thoroughly heated. Remove from heat and let stand until ready to serve.

Stir pasta into boiling water. Boil 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until tender.

Drain pasta thoroughly. Serve scallops and sauce over pasta.

Lenten Activities

It's a time to discern what the Lord is calling you to, what he wants you to be more detached from, what sin he's calling you to abandon, how he wants you to lean on him and love his children.

The 3 pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving

Fasting is the most obvious. Lent is an opportunity to root out some of the evil in our lives. Maybe it's time to give one (or a few) of these sins up. Or maybe there's something good in your life that you're too dependent on. Or even something good that is healthy for you but that you could offer to the Lord for 40 days. Fasting can help you grow spiritually in so many ways.

Prayer should be at the center of your life all the time, but especially during Lent.

Almsgiving isn't always as easy as giving money to the poor. Figure out how you need to love the people around you.

Crown of Thorns Bread

This simple recipe can also be used for Christmas ornaments

On Ash Wednesday, follow the instructions below to make a salt dough crown of thorns with your children, anticipating Lenten sacrifices your family hopes to make. Place the crown in a prominent place in your home; it makes an excellent centerpiece for your dining room table, and placing it upon a royal purple cloth has a striking effect.



For each Lenten sacrifice a family member makes, he or she pulls a toothpick out of the crown. This activity makes a great visual reminder of Christ's suffering: Parents can explain to their children that sin brings additional pain to Jesus' suffering and good works can comfort Him and show our love for Him.

The goal should be to remove all "thorns" from the crown by Easter. Once all the "thorns" have been removed, you can paint the crown gold or otherwise decorate it with colorful craft jewels, beads, or flowers where the "thorns" once were as a sign of the triumph of our risen King. This makes a beautiful Easter Sunday centerpiece with a great story to share with your guests.

4 cups flour
1 cup salt
Water
Toothpicks

Mix flour and salt. Mix enough water to make a stiff clay. (A little warmth helps dissolve the salt.) Knead until smooth to remove any air bubbles. Roll three long ropes and loosely braid them. Form braid into a circle and stick toothpicks loosely throughout the entire crown (If they are embedded too deeply they cannot be pulled out intact.) Bake at 350° F for an hour or until it is dry and light brown.

Alternate Method

Bread dough (your favorite recipe or Pillsbury breadsticks from a can)
Pretzel Sticks
1 egg

Make your favorite bread dough recipe, separate into 3 equal pieces, and roll into 3 ropes.

Braid the dough together, and shape into a circle. Pinch together at the end.

Beat one egg, and brush across the top of the bread. Bake according to dough directions.



Once it's all baked, stick pretzel stick in the bread all over to be the "thorns", poking out at different angles. They will easily go into the bread while it is still warm.

Goes great with soup. Just slice off pieces of the bread and serve.

Easter Story Cookies Recipe

To be made the evening before Easter

1 cup whole pecans
1 tsp vinegar
3 egg whites
pinch salt
1 cup sugar
ziploc baggie
wooden spoon
tape
Bible



Preheat oven to 300 degrees (this is important, don't wait till you're half done with the recipe!)

Place pecans in zipper baggie and let children beat them with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Explain that after Jesus was arrested, He was Beaten by the Roman soldiers. Read John 19:1-3.

Let each child smell the vinegar. Put 1 tsp vinegar into mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross, He was given vinegar to drink. Read John 19:28-30.

Add egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave His life to give us life. Read John 10:10-11.

Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers, and the bitterness of our own sin. Read Luke 23:27.

So far, the ingredients are not very appetizing. Add 1 cup sugar.

Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us. He wants us to know and belong to Him. Read Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16.

Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. Read Isaiah 1:18 and John 3:1-3.

Fold in broken nuts. Drop by tsp onto wax paper covered cookie sheet. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid. Read Matthew 27:57-60.

Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF. Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed. Read Matthew 27:65-66.

GO TO BED! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. Read John 16:20 and 22.

On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter, Jesus' followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty. Read Matthew 28:1-9.

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross (also known as Way of the Cross) are usually observed during Lent, especially on Lenten Fridays and most importantly on Good Friday. It is one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics. The devotion consists of meditating on 14 events which form the 14 stations of the cross. The purpose of this devotion is to focus on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Here is the long version of "Stations of the Cross" or "Way of the Cross" with meditations and prayers.

The Stations of the Cross are a 14-step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus Christ's last day on Earth as a man. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. The stations are commonly used as a mini pilgrimage as the individual moves from station to station. At each station, the individual recalls and meditates on a specific event from Christ's last day. Specific prayers are recited, then the individual moves to the next station until all 14 are complete.

The Stations of the Cross are commonly found in churches as a series of 14 small icons or images. They can also appear in church yards arranged along paths. The stations are most commonly prayed during Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, and especially on Good Friday, the day of the year upon which the events actually

Why do the Stations?

The most important reason for reviving the practice of making the Stations of the Cross is that it is a powerful way to contemplate, and enter into, the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself to us. It takes the reflection on the passion out of my head, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves my senses, my experience and my emotions. To the extent I come to experience the love of Jesus for me, to that extent the gratitude I feel will be deep. Deep gratitude leads to real generosity and a desire to love as I have been loved. First, just a note about the history of the stations:

The History:

From the earliest of days, followers of Jesus told the story of his passion, death and resurrection. When pilgrims came to see Jerusalem, they were anxious to see the sites where Jesus was. These sites become important holy connections with Jesus. Eventually, following in the footsteps of the Lord, along the way of the cross, became a part of the pilgrimage visit.

The stations, as we know them today, came about when it was no longer easy or even possible to visit the holy sites. In the 1500's, villages all over Europe started creating "replicas" of the way of the cross, with small shrines commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the set of 14 stations we now know and were placed in almost every Catholic Church in the world.

The Chaplet of The Way of the Cross

Sign of the Cross

On the Crucifix, say:

Apostles Creed

After each station prayer, say:

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed the world.

On the 3 small beads, say:

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory Be



Opening Prayer:

Mary, my Mother, you were the first to live the Way of the Cross. You felt every pain and every humiliation. You were unafraid of the ridicule heaped upon you by the crowds. Your eyes were ever on Jesus and His Pain. Is that the secret of your miraculous strength? How did your loving heart bear such a burden and such a weight? As you watched Him stumble and fall, were you tortured by the memory of all the yesterdays - His birth, His hidden life and His ministry?

You were so desirous of everyone loving Him. What a heartache it was to see so many hate Him - hate with a diabolical fury. Take my hand as I make this Way of the Cross. Inspire me with those thoughts that will make me realize how much He loves me. Give me light to apply each station to my daily life and to remember my neighbor's needs in this Way of the Pain.

Obtain for me the grace to understand the mystery, the wisdom and the Divine love as I go from scene to scene. Grant that my heart, like yours, may be pierced through by the sight of His sorrow and the misery and that I may determine never to offend Him again. What a price He paid to cover my sins, to open the gates of heaven for me and to fill my soul with His own Spirit. Sweet Mother, let us travel this way together and grant that the love in my poor heart may give you some slight consolation. Amen.

Station 1: Jesus is condemned to Death.

O Jesus, help me to appreciate Your sanctifying grace more and more





Station 2: Jesus is made to bear His Cross.

O Jesus, You chose to die for me. Help me to love You always with all my heart.



Station 3: Jesus Falls the First Time.

O Jesus, make me strong to conquer my wicked passions, and to rise quickly from sin.



Station 4: Jesus is met by His Blessed Mother.

O Jesus, grant me a tender love for Your Mother, who offered Your for love or me.

Station 5: Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene.

O Jesus, like Simon, lead me ever closer to You through my daily crosses and trials



Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

O Jesus, imprint Your image on my heart that I may be faithful to You all my life

Station 7: Jesus falls the second time.

O Jesus, I repent for having offended You. Grant me forgiveness of all my sins.





Station 8: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem.
O Jesus, grant me tears of compassion for Your sufferings and of sorrow for my sins.

Station 9: Jesus falls the third time.
O Jesus, let me never yield to despair. Let me come to You in hardship and spiritual distress.



Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his garments.
O Jesus, let me sacrifice all my attachments rather than imperil the divine life of my soul.

Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the cross.
O Jesus, strengthen my faith and increase my love for You. Help me to accept my crosses.



Station 12: Jesus dies on the cross.
O Jesus, I thank You for making me a child of God. Help me to forgive others.

Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the cross.
O Jesus, through the intercession of Your holy Mother, let me be pleasing to You.





Station 14: Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre.

O Jesus, strengthen my will to live for You on earth and bring me to eternal bliss in Heaven.

Conclusion: 5 Our Fathers, 5 Hail Marys, and 5 Glory Be's in honor of the 5 wounds of Christ.

On the 3 beads leading to the Crucifix:

Jesus! For Thee I live.

Jesus! For Thee I die.

Jesus! I am Thine in life and death.

Stations of the Cross

The 1st Station: Jesus Is Condemned To Death

My Jesus, the world still has You on trial. It keeps asking who You are and why You make the demands You make. It asks over and over the question, If You are God's Son, why do You permit the world to be in the state it is in? Why are You so silent?

Though the arrogance of the world angers me, I must admit that silently, in the depths of my soul, I too have these questions. Your humility frustrates me and makes me uncomfortable. Your strength before Pilate as You drank deeply from the power of the Father, gives me the answer to my question - The Father's Will. The Father permits many sufferings in my life but it is all for my good. If only I too could be silent in the face of worldly prudence - steadfast in the faith when all seems lost - calm when accused unjustly - free from tyranny of human respect - ready to do the Father's Will no matter how difficult.

Silent Jesus, give us all the graces we need to stand tall in the face of the ridicule of the world. Give the poor the strength not to succumb to their privation but to be ever aware of their dignity as sons of God. Grant that we might not bend to the crippling disease of worldly glory but be willing to be deprived of all things rather than lose Your friendship. My Jesus, though we are accused daily of being fools, let the vision of Quiet Dignity standing before Monstrous Injustice, give us all the courage to be Your followers.
Amen

The 2nd Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

How could any human impose such a burden upon Your torn and bleeding body, Lord Jesus? Each movement of the cross drove the thorns deeper into Your Head. How did You keep the hatred from welling up in Your Heart? How did the injustice of it all not ruffle your peace? The Father's Will was hard on You - Why do I complain when it is hard on me?

I see injustice and am frustrated and when my plans to alleviate it seems futile, I despair. When I see those burdened with poverty suffer ever more and cross is added to cross my heart is far from

serene. I utterly fail to see the dignity of the cross as it is carried with love. I would so much rather be without it.

My worldly concept is that suffering, like food, should be shared equally. How ridiculous I am, dear Lord. Just as we do not all need the same amount of material food, neither do we need the same amount of spiritual food and that is what the cross is in my life, isn't it - spiritual food proportional to my needs. Amen

The 3rd Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

My Jesus, it seems to me, that as God, You would have carried Your cross without faltering, but You did not. You fell beneath it's weight to show me You understand when I fall. Is it pride that makes me want to shine even in pain? You were not ashamed to fall- to admit the cross was heavy. There are those in world whom my pride will not tolerate as I expect everyone to be strong, yet I am weak. I am ashamed to admit failure in anything.

If the Father permits failure in my life just as He permitted You to fall, then I must know there is good in that failure which my mind will never comprehend. I must not concentrate on the eyes of others as they rest upon me in my falls. Rather, I must reach up to touch that invisible hand and drink in that invisible strength ever at my side.

Weak Jesus, help all men who try so hard to be good but whose nature is constantly opposed to them walking straight and tall down the narrow road of life. Raise their heads to see the glory that is to come rather than the misery of the present moment.

Your love for me gave You strength to rise from Your fall. Look upon all those whom the world considers unprofitable servants and give them the courage to be more concerned as to how they stand before You, rather than their fellow men.
Amen

The 4th Station: Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

My Jesus, it was a great sorrow to realize Your pain

caused Mary so much grief. As Redeemer, You wanted her to share in Your pain for mankind. When You glanced at each other in unutterable suffering, what gave you both the courage to carry on without the least alleviation - without anger at such injustice?

It seems as if you desired to suffer every possible pain to give me an example of how to suffer when my time comes. What a humiliation for You when Your mother saw you in such a pitiable state - weak - helpless - at the mercy of sinful men - holiness exposed to evil in all hideousness.

Did every moment of that short encounter seem like an eternity? As I see so much suffering in the world, there are times I think it is all hopeless. There is an element of lethargy in my prayers for mankind that says "I'll pray, but what good will it do? The sick grow sicker and the hungry starve. " I think of that glance between You and Mary - the glance that said, "Let us give this misery to the Father for the salvation of souls. The Father's power takes our pain and frustration and renews souls, saves them for a new life - a life of eternal joy, eternal happiness. It is worth it all." Give perseverance to the sick so they can carry the cross of frustration and agony with love and resignation for the salvation of others. Amen

The 5th Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

My Jesus, Your tormentors enlisted a Simon of Cyrene to help You carry Your cross. Your humility is beyond my comprehension. Your power upheld the whole universe and yet You permit one of Your creatures to help You carry a cross. I imagine Simon was reluctant to take part in Your shame. He had no idea that all who watched and jeered at him would pass into oblivion while his name would go down in history and eternity as the one who helped his God in need. Is it not so with me, dear Jesus? Even when I reluctantly carry my cross as Simon did, it benefits my soul.

If I keep my eyes on You and watch how You suffered, I will be able to bear my cross with greater fortitude. Were you trying to tell all those who suffer from prejudice to have courage? Was Simon a symbol of all those who are hated because of race, color and creed?

Simon wondered as he took those beams upon his shoulders, why he was chosen for such a heavy

burden and now he knows. Help me Jesus, to trust your loving Providence as you permit suffering to weave itself in and out of my life. Make me understand that You looked at it and held it fondly before You passed it on to me. You watch me and give me strength just as You did Simon. When I enter Your Kingdom, I shall know as he knows, what marvels Your Cross has wrought in my soul. Amen

The 6th Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

My Jesus, where were all the hundreds of peoples whose bodies and souls were healed by you? Where were they when You needed someone to give You the least sign of comfort? Ingratitude must have borne down upon Your heart and made the cross nearly impossible to carry. There are times I too feel all my efforts for Your Kingdom are futile and end in nothingness. Did your eyes roam through the crowd for the comfort of just one individual - one sign of pity - one sign of grief?

My heart thrills with a sad joy when I think of one woman, breaking away from fear and human respect and offering You her thin veil to wipe Your bleeding Face. Your loving heart, ever watching for the least sign of love, imprinted the Image of your torn Face upon it! How can You forget Yourself so completely and reward such a small act of kindness?

I must admit, I have been among those who were afraid to know You rather than like Veronica. She did not care if the whole world knew she loved You. Heartbroken Jesus, give me that quality of the soul so necessary to witness to spread Your Word - to tell all people of Your love for them. Send many into Your Vineyard so the people of all nations may receive the Good News. Imprint Your Divine Image upon my soul and let the thin veil of my human nature bear a perfect resemblance to your loving Spirit. Amen

The 7th Station: Jesus Falls A Second Time

My Jesus, one of the beautiful qualities the people admired in You was Your strength in time of ridicule - Your ability to rise above the occasion. But now, You fall a second time - apparently conquered by the pain of the Cross. People who judged You by appearances made a terrible mistake. What looked like weakness was unparalleled strength!

I often judge by appearances and how wrong I am most of the time. The world judges entirely by this fraudulent method of discerning. It looks down upon those who apparently have given their best and are now in need. It judges the poor as failures, the sick as useless and the aged as a burden. How wrong that kind of judgment is in the light of your second fall! Your greatest moment was Your weakest one. Your greatest triumph was in failure. Your greatest act of love was in desolation. Your greatest show of power was in that utter lack of strength that threw You to the ground.

Weak and powerful Jesus, give me the grace to see beyond what is visible and be more aware of Your Wisdom in the midst of weakness. Give the aged, sick, handicapped, retarded, deaf and blind the fruit of joy so they may ever be aware of the Father's gift and the vast difference between what the world sees and what the Father sees that they may glory in their weakness so the power of God may be manifest. Amen

The 8th Station: Jesus Speaks to the Holy Women

My Jesus, I am amazed at Your compassion for others in Your time of need. When I suffer, I have a tendency to think only of myself but You forgot Yourself completely. When You saw the holy women weeping over Your torments, You consoled them and taught them to look deeper into Your Passion. You wanted them to understand that the real evil to cry over was the rejection You suffered from the Chosen people - a people set apart from every other nation, who refused to accept God's Son.

The Act of Redemption would go on and no one would ever be able to take away Your dignity as Son of God, but the evil, greed, jealousy and ambition in the hearts of those who should have recognized You was the issue to grieve over. To be so close to God made man and miss Him completely was the real crime.

My Jesus, I fear I do the same when I strain gnats and then swallow camels - when I take out the splinter in my brother's eye and forget the beam in my own. It is such a gift - this gift of faith. It is such a sublime grace to possess Your own Spirit. Why haven't I advanced in holiness of life? I miss the many disguises you take upon Yourself and see only people, circumstances and human events, not the loving hand of the Father guiding all things.

Help all those who are discouraged, sick, lonely and old to recognize Your Presence in their midst. Amen

The 9th Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

My Jesus, even with the help of Simon You fell a third time. Were You telling me that there may be times in my life that I will fall again and again despite the help of friends and loved ones? There are times when the crosses You permit in my life are more than I can bear. It is as if all the sufferings of a life time are suddenly compressed into the present moment and it is more than I can stand.

Though it grieves my heart to see You so weak and helpless, it is a comfort to my soul to know that you understand my sufferings from Your own experience. Your love for me made You want to experience every kind of pain just so I could have someone to look to for example and courage.

When I cry out from the depths of my soul, "This suffering is more than I can bear," do You whisper, "Yes, I understand"? When I am discouraged after many falls, do you say in my innermost being, "Keep going, I know how hard it is to rise"?

There are many people who are sorely tried in body and soul with alcohol and drug weaknesses who try and try and fall again and again. Through the humiliation of this third fall, give them the courage and perseverance to take up their cross and follow you. Amen

The 10 Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

It seems that every step to Calvary brought You fresh humiliation, my Jesus. How Your sensitive nature recoiled at being stripped before a crowd of people. You desired to leave this life as You entered it - completely detached from all the comforts of this world. You want me to know without a doubt that you loved me with an unselfish love. Your love for me caused You nothing but pain and sorrow. You gave everything and received nothing in return. Why do I find it so hard to be detached?

In your loving mind, dear Jesus, did You look up to the Father as You stood there on that windy hill, shivering from cold and shame and trembling from fear, and ask Him to have mercy on those who

would violate their purity and make love a mockery? Did you ask forgiveness for those whose greed would make them lie, cheat and steal for a few pieces of cold silver?

Forgive us all, dear Jesus. Look upon the world with pity, for mankind has lost its way and the principles of this world make lust a fun game and luxury a necessity. Detachment has become merely another hardship of the poor and obedience the fault of the weak. Have mercy on us and grant the people of this day the courage to see and know themselves and the light to change. Amen

The 11th Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

It is hard to imagine a God being nailed to a cross by His own creatures. It is even more difficult for my mind to understand a love that permitted such a thing to happen! As those men drove heavy nails into Your hands and feet, dear Jesus, did You offer the pain as reparation for some particular human weakness and sin? Was the nail in Your right hand for those who spend their lives in dissipation and boredom?

Was the nail in Your left hand in reparation for all consecrated souls who live lukewarm lives? Were You stretching out Your arms to show us how much You love us? As the feet that walked the hot, dusty roads were nailed fast, did they cramp up in a deadly grip of pain to make reparation for all those who so nimbly run the broad road of sin and self-indulgence?

It seems, dear Jesus, Your love has held You bound hand and foot as Your heart pleads for a return of love. You seem to shout from the top of the hill "I love you - come to me - see, I am held fast - I cannot hurt you - only you can hurt Me." How very hard is the heart that can see such love and turn away. Is it not true I too have turned away when I did not accept the Father's Will with love? Teach me to keep my arms ever open to love, to forgive and to render service - willing to be hurt rather than hurt, satisfied to love and not be loved in return. Amen

The 12th Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

God is dead! No wonder the earth quaked, the sun hid itself, the dead rose and Mary stood by in horror. Your human body gave up it's soul in death but Your Divinity, dear Jesus, continued to manifest

its power. All creation rebelled as the Word made Flesh departed from this world. Man alone was too proud to see and too stubborn to acknowledge truth.

Redemption was accomplished! Man would never have an excuse to forget how much You loved him. The thief on Your right saw something he could not explain - he saw a man on a tree and knew He was God. His need made him see his own guilt and Your innocence. The Promise of eternal life made the remaining hours of his torture. endurable.

A common thief responded to Your love with deep Faith, Hope, and Love. He saw more than his eyes envisioned - he felt a Presence he could not explain and would not argue with. He was in need and accepted the way God designed to help him.

Forgive our pride, dear Jesus as we spend hours speculating, days arguing and often a lifetime in rejecting Your death, which is a sublime mystery. Have pity on those whose intelligence leads them to pride because they never feel the need to reach out to the Man of Sorrows for consolation. Amen

The 13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to his Mother

My Jesus, it was with deep grief that Mary finally took You into her arms and saw all the wounds sin had inflicted upon You. Mary Magdalene looked upon Your dead Body with horror. Nicodemus, the man so full of human respect, who came to You by night, suddenly received the courage to help Joseph take you down from the Cross. You are once more surrounded by only a few followers. When loneliness and failure cross my path, let me think of this lonely moment and this total failure - failure in the eyes of men. How wrong they were - how mistaken their concept of success! The greatest act of love was given in desolation and the most successful mission accomplished and finished when all seemed lost. Is this not true in my life, dear Jesus? I judge my failures harshly. I demand perfection instead of holiness. My idea of success is for all to end well - according to my liking.

Give to all men the grace to see that doing Your Will is more important than success. If failure is permitted for my greater good then teach me how to use it to my advantage. Let me say as You once said, that to do the Will of the Father is my food. Let not the standards of this world take possession of me or destroy the good You have set for me - to

be Holy and to accomplish the Father's Will with great love. Let me accept praise or blame, success or failure with equal serenity. Amen

The 14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

My Jesus, You were laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. You were born with nothing of this world's goods and You died detached from everything. When You came into the world, men slept and angels sang and now as You leave it, Creation is silent and only a few weep. Both events were clothed in obscurity. The majority of men live in such a way. Most of us live and die knowing and known by only a few. Were You trying to tell us, dear Jesus, how very important our lives are just because we are accomplishing the Father's Will? Will we ever learn the lesson of humility that makes us content with who we are, where we are and what we are?

Will our Faith ever be strong enough to see power in weakness and good in the sufferings of our lives? Will our Hope be trusting enough to rely on Your Providence even when we have nowhere to lay our head? Will our Love ever be strong enough not to take scandal in the cross?

My Jesus, hide my soul in Your heart as You lie in the Sepulcher alone. Let my heart be as a fire to keep you warm. Let my desire to know and love You be like a torch to light up the darkness. Let my soul sing softly a hymn of repentant love as the hours pass and Your Resurrection is at hand. Let me rejoice, dear Jesus, with all the Angels in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for so great a love- so great a God- so great a day! Amen