



# The Way of the Cross



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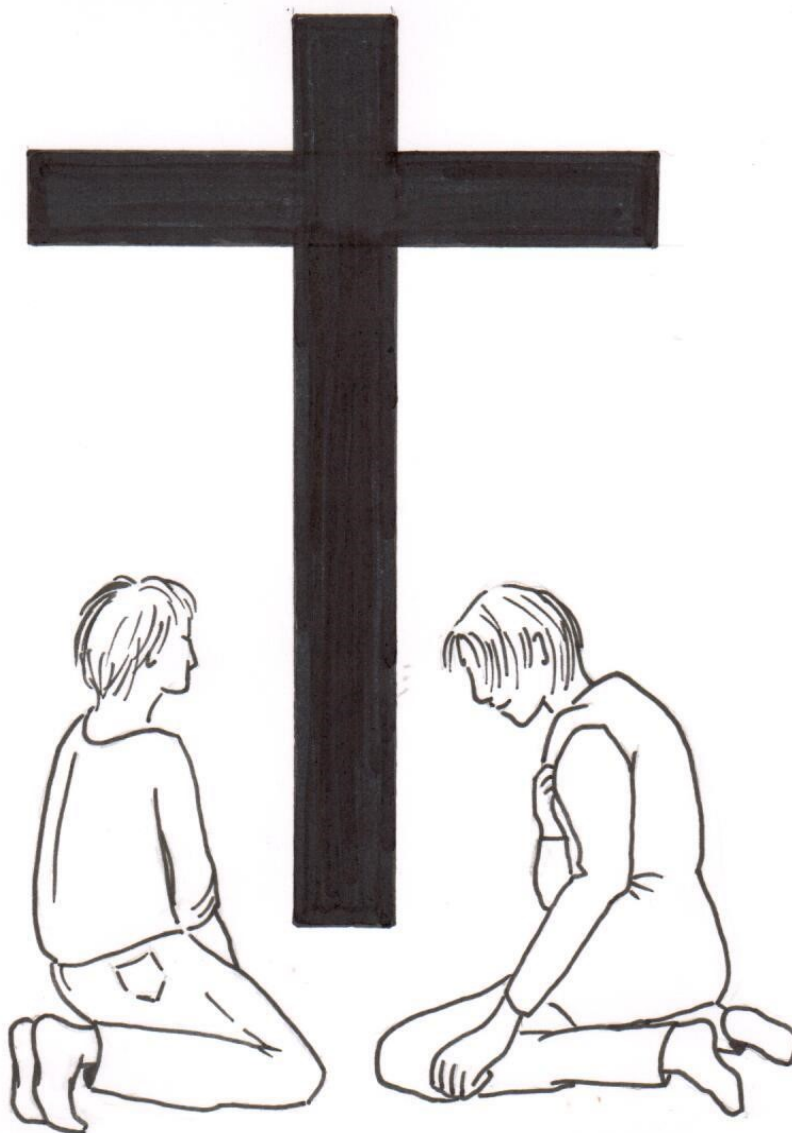
The cross stands above the city of Aleppo ©Ismael Martínez Sánchez / ACN

## Stations of the Cross for the Suffering Church

# *Introduction:* **THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

Every day millions of Christians around the world suffer for their faith. Many are persecuted for their beliefs; their ordeals can include discrimination at home or in the workplace, fines, imprisonment, torture and even execution. Still others are living out their Christian faith in extremely isolated communities or in the face of abject poverty.

Father Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of ACN, met many suffering and persecuted Christians on his travels around the world, and he recognised the importance of each individual person—every story involves real people with names and hopes and dreams, and it is often far too easy for us to think in terms of facts, figures and statistics rather than those who are suffering. Father Werenfried asked, “How is it that we [in the West] are so comfortably situated? These people live beneath the same sun and the same stars as we do. God also created them on the sixth day to be kings of creation. Where then is their kingdom? And we too will personally share in this injustice if we do not do everything in our power to banish it from the world—everything in our power!”



**Just as we walk with Jesus whenever we pray before the Stations of the Cross, so we walk with all those who suffer for their faith. Let us pray for them, that their faith may continue to grow and that their suffering will ease through the mercy and compassion of Our Lord.**



# 1<sup>st</sup> Station: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



Father Francis holds the battered cross (left) that was sliced off his church (right) during riots in Egypt in 2016 ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

## Scripture

Pilate... [asked them], “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he realised that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?”  
(Mark 15: 8-14 RSV-CE)

## Egypt

Rami Kamil, a Coptic Christian activist who writes about violations of religious freedom in Egypt, was arrested in late 2019 under the pretext of terrorism. He was subjected to both physical and psychological interrogation and was denied access to his legal team. Held in harsh conditions in prison, Rami awaits a second hearing. His legal representatives, not allowed at his first hearing, are calling for his release on the grounds of insufficient evidence against him. He has been told that, if he wishes to be released, he must stop writing about religious persecution in his country. Kamil is thirty-three and supports six members of his family, including his elderly mother, his two young nieces and his brother-in-law who has a disability. He founded the ‘Maspero Youth Union’, a human rights group created in the aftermath of the 2011 Maspero Massacre which saw the killings of 20 Coptic peaceful civil rights protestors. <http://m7aliat2019.com/en/detention-of-coptic-activist-extended-by-15-days/>; <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191126-egypt-arrests-coptic-activist-on-terror-charges/>

## Let us pray:

Jesus, you suffered the injustice of an unfair arrest. Give courage to those who suffer in the same circumstances. May they never lose hope in you and trust that every Cross they experience has its own Resurrection.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, even if it would be easy to follow the crowd, let us never be afraid to do what is right, no matter the cost. May we never abandon the innocent, instead standing by them in solidarity in whatever way we can.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

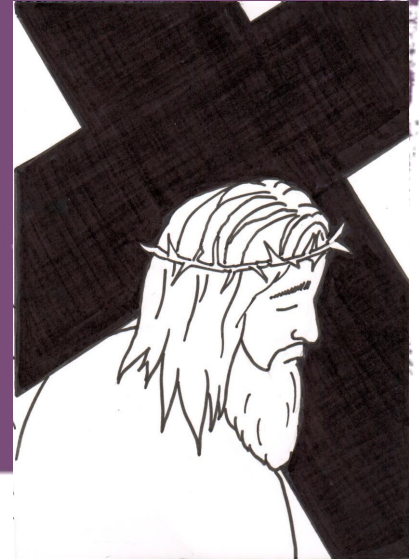
**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Station: JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

Despite the threat from extremist groups, the Sisters of Maria Stella Matutina in the Diocese of Ouagadougou are building a new convent with help from ACN. The Sisters provide help to desperate local people. ©ACN.



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### Scripture

Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them. (**Psalm 53 (54): 1-3 RSV-CE**)

### Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, Christians are under attack from jihadist groups. Christians are regularly threatened with violence if they refuse to abandon their faith and even killed simply for being Christian. Bishop Dabiré, a bishop in northern Burkina Faso, explained that the situation is worsened by the fact that “the weapons they are using were not made here in Africa. They have rifles, machine guns and so much ammunition, more than the Burkina Faso army has at its disposal. When they come to the villages, they shoot for hours. Who is supplying them with these resources? If they were not getting this support from outside, they would have to stop.”

Bishop Dabiré told of an incident where the extremists arrived at a village meeting and forced everyone to lie down. “Then they searched them. Four people were wearing crucifixes. So they killed them because they were Christians.” <https://acnuk.org/news/burkina-faso-stop-support-for-jihadists-says-bishop/>

### Let us pray

Lord, we pray for all those suffering injustice at the hands of others. Help them to feel your presence and to know that you are always with them in their suffering.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, may we never contribute to injustice. Let us always see opportunities to stand in solidarity with those who are witnessing their faith in you. Lead them through danger to safety in you.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



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## 3<sup>rd</sup> Station:

# JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The faithful in prayer at a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Cathedral in San Carlos. ACN has helped to fund the rebuilding of this cathedral and another church in the city. ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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### Scripture

Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, “It is a waste without human beings or animals,” in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without inhabitants, human or animal, there shall once more be heard the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord. (**Jeremiah 33:10-11 RSV-CE**)

### Venezuela

The people of Venezuela continue to suffer grave social, economic and spiritual hardships. Often these take the form of human rights violations. In early 2019, Catholic groups in Venezuela, including the Bishops' Conference, issued a public statement calling for change and reiterating the Church's desire to help. They asked for: “the resumption of a democratic course, the restoration of the rule of law, the rebuilding of the social fabric, [and] the revival of economic production”. They also demanded: “the restoration of the morale of the country and the coming together of all the Venezuelan people”, stating that the Church wants to “[help] so many of the weakest and most defenceless within the country to survive”. Beyond providing meaningful practical help, the Church in Venezuela also asks Christians to pray that “the Lord... grant us peace, reconciliation, liberty and health of body and spirit.”

### Let us pray:

Jesus, you experienced the humiliation of falling, and you know the pain of a life marred by poverty, oppression and injustice. May we not be afraid of difficulties, but trust that you have our lives safely held in your loving plan.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord we pray for places that experience repeated hardships and problems that are inherited through the generations. May you pour out your healing on places as well as people, so that your hope may be felt throughout the land.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

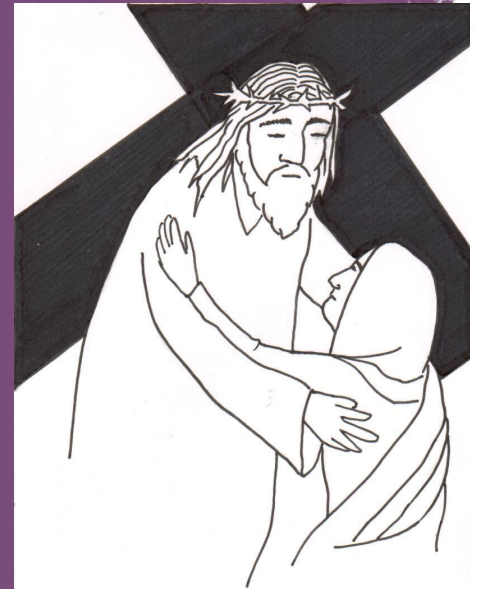


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## 4<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



In the Diocese of Nizhniy Novgorod, ACN helped to renovate a church building to provide accommodation for pregnant women and single mothers and their children. ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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### **Scripture**

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. (Isaiah 49:15 RSV-CE)

### **Russia**

3,750 miles from Moscow, the Russian town of Magadan is so remotely situated that it can only reliably be accessed by plane. Yet, in this isolated place a Catholic parish thrives, led by Father Michael Shields, an Alaskan priest who has been with the community since 1994. The parish of the Nativity of Christ, helped by Sisters of the Divine Mercy, runs catechetical classes for children and young adults. The parish also runs a programme to help women and girls with unexpected pregnancies receive the help and support they need, so that they can keep their babies. The parish also provides care for women who have suffered abortions, providing them with healing and reconciliation.

### **Let us pray:**

Lord, we pray for all those who are mothers in difficult circumstances, for those who long to provide their children with the best lives possible, but are not able to. Inspire us to help mothers who need support in any way.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, we thank you for giving us your Mother to be our mother, too. When we feel abandoned or alone, or that our suffering is unbearable, may we turn to her to show us her tender love, and lead us back to your loving care.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

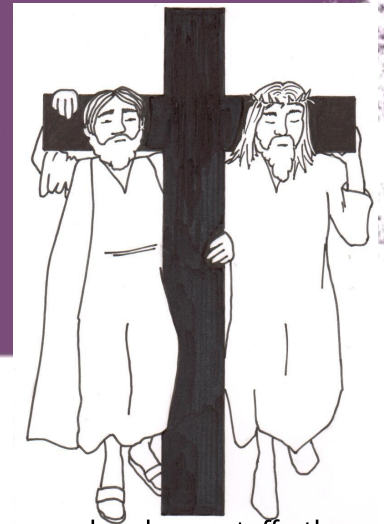


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# 5<sup>th</sup> Station: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS

Rolando José Alvarez Lagos,  
Bishop of Matagalpa, stands in the  
ruined Caritas offices in the city of  
Sébaco. The building was heavily  
damaged in the 2018/19 protests.  
© Jaques Berset / ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. (Psalm 22 (23):4 RSV-CE)

## Nicaragua

It is dangerous to be a Catholic in Nicaragua. The Church there advocates for peace and mediates between protestors and the government, which is known to use disproportionate violence against young demonstrators. In 2018, a priest used his car to rescue 19 demonstrators who had been shot by the army. Since the government had banned public hospitals from treating injured demonstrators, the priest opened his church as a field hospital, saying, “during those days, the people on our church benches were not listening to the Gospel, they were living it.” Despite harsh criticism and discrimination, the Church supports those in most in need in a country where hundreds are unfairly imprisoned, or simply disappear. “They accuse us of hiding weapons, but we have never done so,” the same priest says. “We are carrying a small corner of the cross of Christ. We cannot carry it all. It is He who is helping US.” Feature Story, 10.04.2019 / Nicaragua / A Church on the Side of its People by Ines San Martin for ACN

## Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, even you needed help on the way to Calvary. Let us be like Simon of Cyrene to those around us who are suffering. May we remember those who are like Simon to us, and have the courage to thank them for walking through our own suffering.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for all corners of the Church who are carrying their cross with bravery and courage, though the world does not notice their plight. May we not forget their suffering, but carry our crosses with them through our prayers.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



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# 6<sup>th</sup> Station: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Sister Marie Catherine of the Servants of Christ of Tibiri walks with a group of children. The Sisters support children and families, providing schooling and healthcare. ©ACN.



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## Scripture

Then Jesus said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." ( **Matthew 26:38 RSV-CE**)

## Niger

Sister Marie Catherine Kingbo lives in Maradi, Niger, a country that has experienced a dramatic increase in religious tensions since she arrived there fifteen years ago. Generally, relationships between Muslims and Christians have been cordial and supportive, but, following the publication of the Charlie Hebdo cartoon in France in 2015, hardline Muslims violently attacked Christians in Niger, killing ten people in a few hours and destroying 70 churches. Since then violence against Christians has been on the rise. Sister Marie Catherine lives only five miles from the most recent attack, and the pupils she teaches, as well as her community, are under constant police protection. Still, she refuses to leave, choosing to stay and serve those in her care. Full of hope, defiant in the face of evil, she says: "We will not go. They may have guns, but we have Jesus!" <https://zenit.org/articles/niger-they-may-have-guns-but-we-have-jesus/> accessed 13/01/20

## Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, like Veronica on the road to Calvary, let us have the courage to console you in the hearts of all those who suffer. May our love for you break through the indifference and cruelty of this world, and help you reach those who are most in need.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord Jesus, following the example of Sister Marie Catherine, may we never be so overwhelmed with fear that we forget your presence in our lives. May we always have hope and confidence in your perfect plan even when we cannot understand the reasoning to our suffering.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

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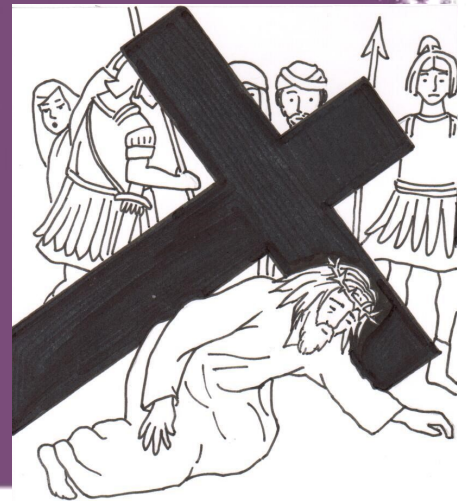
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# 7<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



Reconstruction is taking place in the town of Dombe, following the destruction wrought by Cyclone Idai. Workers are building a kindergarten and agricultural school, 2019 ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

The LORD is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. (**Psalm 34:18 RSV-CE**)

## Mozambique

In early 2019, Mozambique experienced a destructive cyclone that killed approximately one thousand people. Father Sandro Faedi, told how the port city of Beira was almost entirely destroyed and that from the sky “the city presents itself as a large lake, from which emerge buildings without ceilings.” The cyclone destroyed the city leaving hundreds dead. “Above the houses or above the trees, [many people were] asking for help, which nobody heard. They were carried away by the fury of the rivers entering the city.” Despite the awful situation, Father Faedi expressed his faith when he said “for now, we only pray, ready to give our contribution when the times comes.”

<https://acnuk.org/news/mozambique-no-one-heard-victims-crying-for-help-as-they-were-carried-away-by-floods-says-priest/>

## Let us pray:

Jesus, there are many times when the world is indifferent to the suffering of others, when the cries of those in need are not heard. Help us to remember you falling again on the road to Calvary in front of a crowd of people who did not care. May the needs of others, both spiritual as well as physical, be always heard.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for people around the world who are at the mercy of repeated natural disasters. Where there is devastation, bring new life. Where there is hopelessness, bring peace.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

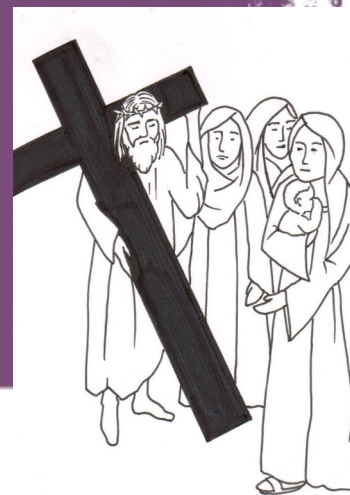
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# 8<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

The Bishop of Yaouda, Barthélémy Yaouda Hourgo, speaks to local women at a community gathering, 2019  
Photographer: Katja Bruhin; source: [www.ashia.ch](http://www.ashia.ch)



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skilled women to come; let them quickly raise a dirge over us, so that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids flow with water. For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion: "How we are ruined! We are utterly shamed, because we have left the land, because they have cast down our dwellings." (**Jeremiah 9:17-21 RSV-CE**)

## Cameroon

Three women in Cameroon were rescued by the army and taken to hospital after Boko Haram terrorists targeted only the women of their town, dragging them from their houses in front of their children. A local 'Vigilance Committee' were unable to stop the terrorists, who later amputated one ear of each of the women. Boko Haram abandoned them, after telling them that they would return to their village to carry out more attacks. The women were given medical treatment in hospital, and afterwards returned home to resume their lives as best they could. <https://acnuk.org/news/cameroon-women-maimed-as-boko-haram-strikes-terror-in-cameroon/>

## Let us pray:

Lord, we ask that you console all women who suffer violence. May they find the complete healing that may feel impossible, but that you long to give them.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, help us to protect life in all its forms. We thank you for men and women who protect and care, console and rescue. May we follow your example and cherish life at every stage.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**





# 9<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

A mother with a photograph of her son, a soldier killed in action in 2019, stands outside an ACN-funded rehabilitation centre for injured soldiers and their family in Lviv. ©ACN



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## Scripture

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27 RSV-CE)

## Ukraine

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, reflects on the ongoing suffering of his people, saying, “Ukraine is bleeding. Every day someone is injured or killed. Millions of our people are leaving.” But despite this, he believes that the faith of his people is increasing as they search for answers that political solutions cannot give. “We find an answer to those existential questions in the Word of God. People are attracted to that Church, that community, which is authentic and not linked to State power.” At a Church-run centre outside of Lviv where people can encounter Christ, volunteers provide money, food, warm clothes, and medical supplies for injured soldiers. The Major Archbishop has seen the great positive impact of the programme: “Showing mercy is the task of every authentic Christian”. <https://acnuk.org/news/ukraine-major-archbishop-faith-is-triumphing-over-fear/>

## Let us pray:

Jesus, when we find ourselves in continued suffering, when we fall again and again, let us always find our peace in you. May we not be frightened or distracted by the noise or hopelessness of the world around us, but instead turn to you as our foundation of hope.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, let us not forget those who are still suffering, even after the news headlines have moved on. May we always spread your love and mercy to those in need.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

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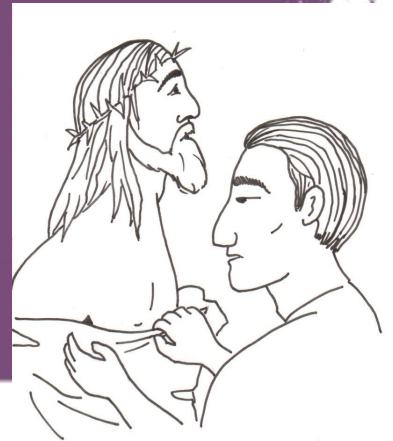


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# 10<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



A man selling fruits and vegetables in Youhanabad, the Christian district in the city of Lahore. Most Pakistani fathers are the main providers for their families, leaving wives and children without a means of support if they are injured or killed. 2019 ©ACN /Magdalena Wolnik



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. (Luke 10:30 RSV-CE)

## Pakistan

Christians in Pakistan are a persecuted minority, and often they can find only low paid and low status jobs, such as road sweeping, rubbish collecting and sewage work. In 2017 three Christian men were told to clear out a large sewer pipe in the small town of Bhawalpur. Stripped to the waist, and with no protective equipment at all, two of the men, Saleem and Danish, died immediately from the poisonous gases of the sewer. The third man, Nadeem, was helped out from the sewer and taken to hospital where he later died. All three men were family breadwinners, but their loved ones have received no compensation for their deaths.

<http://pukhtunkhwatimes.blogspot.com/2017/07/pakistan-three-christian-sewage-workers.html>

## Let us pray

We pray for those who are forced to find work that threatens their dignity. May we never contribute to people's suffering in this way, and always honour the profound dignity of each human being.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those humiliated, abused or abandoned. May they receive both the practical and spiritual support they need to heal from past scars.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



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# 11<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

The crucifix hangs in the ruins of a Jesuit chapel in Aleppo, Syria. ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. (Isaiah 53: 5 RSV-CE)

## Syria

Deir Ezzor is a Syrian city familiar with martyrdom; many Christians were killed as they tried to escape the Armenian Genocide in 1915. A century on, Deir Ezzor is the site of more tragedy. In November 2019, Da'esh (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the killing of an Armenian Catholic priest, Fr Hovsep Hanna Bedoyan. Fr Hovsep Hanna was travelling to the Armenian-Catholic *Church of the Martyrs* in a car with his father, a deacon and a layman; the car was clearly marked 'Armenian Catholic Church'. Two men on a motorbike overtook them and opened fire, killing the priest's father immediately. Fr Hovsep Hanna died on reaching the hospital. Archbishop Boutros Marayati, Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo, spoke about the situation, saying that: "It is entirely plausible that Father Hovsep was murdered because he was a priest and because of his efforts to re-establish the Christian presence in Deir Ezzor...Christians are afraid – with every new outbreak of violence, many families are deciding to emigrate... I beg you to pray for us and for our people because at present we are living through extremely difficult times." <https://acnuk.org/news/syriamurdered-syrian-priest-was-gunned-down-for-his-faith/>

## Let us pray:

Lord, we pray for our priests around the world. We pray for those who risk their lives to serve their spiritual flock, that their courage may never waver, and that they will always turn to you for their strength.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We thank you Lord for the gift of priesthood, for the sacraments you have provided for your Church. May we never take these gifts of your grace for granted, and always approach them with reverence and trust.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

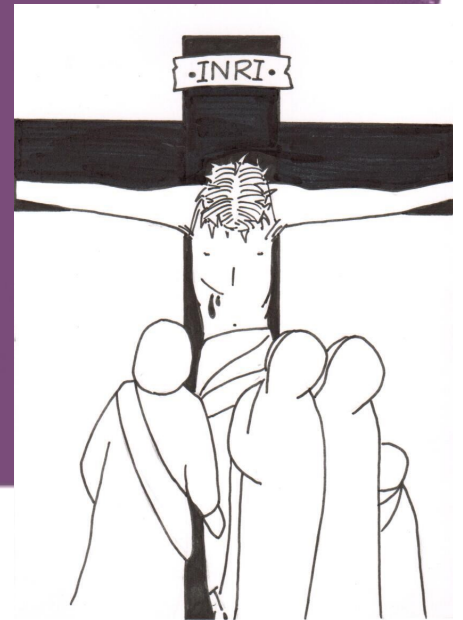
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# 12<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Spattered by the blood of those killed in the Easter Sunday attacks, a statue of Jesus stands in a glass case in the Church of St Sebastian, Negombo ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
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## Scripture

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. **(Matthew 27:50 RSV-CE)**

## Sri Lanka

On Easter morning in 2019, as the faithful gathered in churches to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord, devastating violence was unleashed as terrorists detonated bombs in several locations in Sri Lanka. 259 people died and many more were physically injured. Large numbers of the faithful have experienced emotional and psychological trauma, and many continue to suffer financially due to the downturn in numbers of tourists to the region. Fr Nishantha Cooray, who helped the victims on Easter Sunday, says, “our people need healing. We are accompanying them through their pain.” In one church, a statue of the risen Jesus was left covered with the blood of faithful Christians who died in one of the bomb blasts. The statue now stands in a glass case, preserved to show the blood of the martyrs and a reminder of our world that waits in the shadow of Good Friday for the promise of the eternal Resurrection. <https://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACN-2001-Sri-Lanka-Report-web-.pdf>

## Let us pray:

We pray for the repose of the souls of all martyrs of the Church, especially those of recent years, those known and unknown. We pray for those left behind, for those who have lost loved ones, fathers, mothers, children, and their sense of future. May all be healed.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for all who carry out terrible acts of violence and persecution. We ask that their hearts will be powerfully moved to sorrow and reparation for what they have done.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

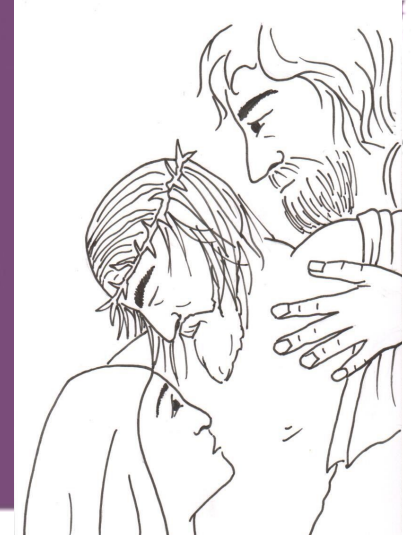
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# 13<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

A group of women and children in the  
Eritrean capital, Asmara ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

## **Scripture**

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. **(John 19: 32-34 RSV-CE)**

## **Eritrea**

Over just one week in Eritrea, all 21 of the Church's health institutes were shut down by the government in a move to ensure sole possession of all medical access in the country. However, this rapid and unjust forced closure put thousands at risk, many of whom already had to travel long distances to receive necessary treatment at the Church's well run medical centres. Those in hospital were forced from their beds and in some cases, when the staff refused to hand over the keys to their clinics, the soldiers broke into the buildings. The four bishops of Eritrea stated in a letter to the health minister that the action was "deeply unjust...[it] is the duty of the Church to take care of the sick, the poor and the dying – nobody, not even the government, can tell the Church not to do its job."

<https://acnuk.org/news/eritrea-sick-forced-from-beds-as-21-hospitals-and-clinics-forced-to-shut/>

## **Let us pray:**

May governments and armed forces everywhere recognise their duty to protect and care for their people rather than work against them. Lord, protect your people wherever they are threatened.

**R: Lord hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

May the Church always be allowed to fulfil her mission, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, to be with people who are suffering at the most vulnerable times in their lives.

**R: Lord hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



ACN

# 14<sup>th</sup> Station: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



The faithful at prayer in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady in the mountains in China ©ACN



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you  
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

## **Scripture**

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19 :25 RSV-CE)

## **China**

When the Bishop of Tianjin, who had been under house arrest since 1992, died in June 2019, his Christian funeral and burial were forbidden by the Chinese government. During his life, Bishop Stefano Li Side refused to comply with the government and would not put his church under the authority of China’s Patriotic Association. He was seized and spent 17 years in forced labour camps. After his death, some priests were allowed to pray over him, but they were not permitted to celebrate a Requiem Mass for their departed bishop. In a country where the practice of Christianity is both heavily prohibited and often violently opposed, this is yet another attempt to undermine the dignity and freedom of those who follow Christ.

## **Let us pray:**

We pray for the many who undergo the double persecution of losing a loved one whom they are forbidden to bury or who are not given the dignity of a proper burial.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for all who have lost hope and feel in despair about their lives. Lord, let your love remind them that there is hope beyond the tomb.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

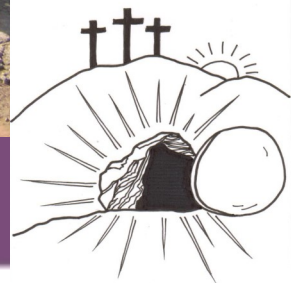
**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



# RISEN JESUS, WE PRAISE YOU!



A priest celebrates Easter Mass with the faithful in a mission in Guamá, Cuba. ©ACN



Risen Jesus, we praise you! You have triumphed over sin and death and your victory is evident in your Church today. No evil can withstand the power of your love.

## Let us pray

In firm faith we ask you to hasten the day when your Church is resurrected in those parts of the world where she is now sorely persecuted.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

May the joy of your victory fill the hearts of all Christians, as we follow you throughout our lives. So may we bear witness to the love you have poured out for mankind, and point the way to the eternal life you have opened to us.

**R: Lord, hear us.**

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

**All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**



# A PRAYER FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS



Children in the Diocese of Dedza, Malawi taking part in the ACN prayer initiative 'One Million Children Praying the Rosary'. ©ACN



A man prays in Pakistan while a police officer guards the church ©ACN/Magdalena Wolnik

**We pray together in solidarity with the millions of Christian people around the world who are persecuted because of their beliefs.**

Loving Father, we pray that each of your precious children across the world may know of your love for them. We pray that, where life has become very difficult, you may make a clear path for them.

We pray for their protection, and for them to know that “...under His wings you will find refuge”. (*Psalm 90(91):4 RSV-CE*)

May persecuted Christians know that with your grace, Lord God, they can do anything. We offer our prayers for their strength and safety.

*We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



The ONE NIGHT Icon commissioned after One Night for Religious Freedom at the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Manchester. March 2015. ©ACN

*“My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9 RSV-CE)*



“Blessed are those who have not seen  
and yet believe” *John 20:29* RSV-CE



Children from the Diocese of Dori in Burkino Faso on an annual retreat funded by ACN ©ACN

ACN, its project partners and thousands of suffering Christians around the world are deeply grateful for the part you are playing to care and pray for God’s people everywhere. We pray especially for those who are faithful, even under the threat of persecution or death.

**Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)** is a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church, supporting the Catholic faithful and other Christians where they are persecuted, oppressed or in pastoral need.

Founded on Christmas Day 1947, ACN supports over 5000 projects across the world each year.

For regular updates from the suffering Church around the world or to find out more information, please visit

[www.acnuk.org](http://www.acnuk.org)

**Thank you for your prayers and support for our brothers and sisters in Christ across the world.**

All images are Aid to the Church in Need copyright, unless otherwise stated. The line drawings have been produced for us by Wendy Moore, for use with ACN materials.

Please keep in touch with your local office. Details are listed below.



Volunteers working to support Christians in Aleppo, Syria ©ACN

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