



**JUSTICE AND PEACE
COMMISSION**

Stations of the cross

Walk with Christ on the journey
of his passion. Walk with our
brothers and sisters carrying
the heavy burden of violence,
injustice and poverty.



Introduction

In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year 'Pilgrims of Hope', 2024 has been designated a Year of Prayer by Pope Francis. This Lent, we walk alongside Christ on the journey of his passion and remember our brothers and sisters both around the world and in our own country who experience suffering, poverty and injustice on a daily basis.

Opening prayer

Heavenly father, walk with us as we meditate on your son's journey to calvary.

Remind us that today, many of your children continue walking to calvary, under the burden of heavy, difficult crosses.

May we be Simon, helping them carry those burdens which are too heavy to be carried alone.

May we be Veronica, embracing those who need our love, comfort and accompaniment.

And may we, struggling with our own crosses, reach out to you and to others for help and always remember your promise of justice, mercy and peace.

Amen.

First station
Jesus is condemned to death

Visit the prisoners

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: The governor said to them in reply, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They answered, “Barabbas!” (Matthew 27:21)

REFLECTION: Christ, although innocent, is condemned to death. With this condemnation, many of His disciples flee — afraid to be seen or connected with Christ.

Our justice system does not always work the way it should. Some are sentenced unfairly. Others are in custody, waiting for their case to be heard.

Regardless of whether they are innocent or guilty, all prisoners are children of God. Christ knows their pain and accompanies them in prison. Will we do the same or will we run away like the disciples? With our language, do we de-humanize prisoners or respect them in their God-given dignity which no one and nothing can take away?

PRAYER: Jesus, you were condemned by those you had come to serve, by those you had come to love. When I am tempted to condemn, discard and judge those around me, walk with me and fill my heart with compassion and understanding.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Second station
Jesus carries the cross

Be kind

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: After mocking Jesus, the soldiers stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:31)

REFLECTION: The guards dress Jesus up as a king, with a crown made of thorns, and mock him. They give him a heavy wooden cross to carry.

Our words can hurt. Whether online or offline, we can create, with our words, a toxic and harsh environment which poisons us all. We also know that teasing and bullying can have devastating effects on the mental wellbeing of people.

As we contemplate Jesus being mocked, we can ask ourselves: In what way do we mock people and strip them of their dignity? Instead of being nasty, how can we promote kindness with the gift of a smile, a word of encouragement and by listening to each other amid general indifference?

PRAYER: Jesus, you know what it means to stand alone in front of those who reject and insult you. Walk with me when I feel that I can't make a difference. Help me to be kind. Teach me to share your love.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Third station
Jesus falls for the first time

Feed the hungry

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: “I am troubled now. Yet what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” (John 12:27–28)

REFLECTION: Falling to the ground, Jesus’ body, already broken from being beaten and carrying the heavy cross, breaks a little more – the same body that is broken and shared with us in the Eucharist.

We often take the sacraments for granted. We forget that many people throughout history and even today lack easy access to the sacraments. Many also lack easy access to the food they so desperately need to survive – not just people in other countries, but here in Malta too: Food banks and soup kitchens are struggling to keep up with the increasing number of people who are approaching them and asking for food.

How are we using our resources to bring physical and spiritual nourishment to those in need? Are we indifferent to their cry? Do we blame them for the situation they find themselves in?

PRAYER: Jesus, make me an instrument of your justice. In your death and in the Eucharist, you have given your body for us. Walk with me and open my eyes to what I can give to those hungering for food and your presence.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...



Fourth station
Jesus encounters his mother

Welcome the foreigner

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary ... “You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34–35)

REFLECTION: In Mary’s arms, Jesus finds a home along the walk to calvary. Mary has always cared for Jesus’ every need. Caring for Jesus in this dark moment reminds us of other difficult times for the Holy Family — like leaving their home to travel to Bethlehem and fleeing Herod’s persecution to escape to Egypt. Just like the Holy Family, many in our world are refugees.

In 2023, over 114 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution and human rights violations. That means that more than 1 in every 74 people on Earth are forcibly displaced from their home.

We are a human family; let us find ways to welcome all our brothers and sisters into our country, schools, homes and parishes.

PRAYER: Jesus, you looked through the crowd and saw your mother’s eyes. Her love gave you the strength to carry on. Walk with me. When I don’t want to listen, open my ears to hear. When it would be easier to look away, open my eyes to see.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Fifth station
Simon helps Jesus carry the cross

Live in solidarity

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country ... to carry his cross. (Mark 15:21)

REFLECTION: We all know how it feels for a teacher to call on us when we did not raise our hand. How much worse must Simon have felt when he was called to participate in carrying the cross. But Jesus could not carry the cross alone and we cannot carry our crosses alone, either. Despite our differences, we are all brothers and sisters called to live in solidarity.

Solidarity, in its truest sense, is not a superficial and shallow feeling of compassion which we express once-in-a-while, especially around Christmas. On the contrary, it is a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all” (Pope John Paul II).

Solidarity becomes “firm” when we practice it. It becomes “persevering” when we live it constantly, even when it makes us uncomfortable, even when we don’t feel like sacrificing our time and resources for others.

PRAYER: Jesus, you know what it means to depend on someone and to need their help. Walk with me. When someone needs help, teach me to work with them to lighten their load. We are your global family of many different cultures and religions. Make us one family united in you.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Sixth station
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Do small things with great love

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25: 40)

REFLECTION: Moved by Jesus’ pain, Veronica overcomes her fear, and she courageously steps forward to wipe the blood and sweat from Jesus’ face. She cannot change his fate. He will still die a horrible death on a cross. But she recognises his dignity and performs her small act of love. As Jesus moves on, the image of his face is left on Veronica’s veil.

We too are called perform small acts of love. It is easy to be discouraged by the scale of poverty and need in the world, but each day offers us the opportunity to perform small acts of kindness and compassion. Mother Teresa used to say that “Not all of us can do great things. But we can all do small things with great love”. When we do that, when we recognise the face of Jesus in our neighbour, he imprints his face on each of us.

As pointed out once again by Pope Francis, “now is not a time for indifference: either we are brothers and sisters, or everything falls apart”.

PRAYER: Jesus, help me to remember that nothing I do for the sake of love is done in vain. Walk with me, that I may, like Veronica, have the strength to reach out to those we so often ignore—to those society has forgotten— and perform small things with great love.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Seventh station
Jesus falls a second time

Never give up on people

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: “Come to me all you who labour, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” (Matthew 11: 28-30)

REFLECTION: So many in our society fall again and again. We have names and categories for them: alcoholics, addicts, abusers. It’s so easy to see them as problems rather than persons. It is so easy to forget how many of them are victims of our failed educational, economic and legal systems.

We too sometimes may feel as though we’ve fallen one too many times. We can’t possibly get up again. God must be done with us—how can we be forgiven once more? We keep falling or stuck in seemingly impossible situations, weighed down, by our personal failures, financial burdens, family obligations, judgments and expectations of others.

Jesus knows this, but never gives up on us. He never tires of forgiving, of showing us mercy! And if Jesus offers us a second, third or hundredth chance, what then should we offer to our neighbours?

PRAYER: Jesus, you meet me where I am in my life with an outstretched hand rather than a thrown stone. Walk with me and help me to do the same for those around me. Teach me what it means to love my neighbour as myself again and again.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Eighth station
Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Always choose dialogue

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children” (Luke 23:28)

REFLECTION: Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus deeply involved with the concerns of individual people, especially those who are considered “less than” or unworthy.

We, too, must remember to act in this way. How tempting it is to assume we are the experts in everything! We see hurt and suffering on the news and we immediately jump to our own quick conclusions and solutions. Jesus points us to a different path—that of dialogue. Jesus encourages us to recognize that those living in difficult circumstances, oppressed by systems and structures of sin which increase poverty and hardship, are in fact the experts who are best suited to reimagine our broken systems.

Our role as Christians is to accompany them and to listen. Do we take the time to hear the stories of survivors of abuse? To people who are homeless? To families who are struggling to make ends meet? To workers who got injured on their workplace?

PRAYER: Jesus, you always invite; you never impose. You always seek to speak to people; and not just about them. Walk with me and guide me in my efforts. That I may truly create spaces of encounter and dialogue which serve the needs of the poor, rather than my own needs.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Ninth station
Jesus falls for a third time

Reject all forms of violence

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: “But if I'm speaking the truth,” Jesus answered him, “why are you beating me?” (John 18:23)

REFLECTION: “How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour? Let us not look the other way.” (Pope Francis)

These words of Pope Francis should serve as a wake-up call. Jesus knew in his own body the force of violence, the power of fear and the domination of those intent on destroying him. In our country today, the lives of people continue being destroyed by violence. We think in particular of the women who are victims of terrible abuse by those who are supposed to love and care for them. Over the past two decades, it is estimated that there have been more than 36 cases of femicides here in Malta.

PRAYER: Jesus, you felt the darkness of violence around you. The crowds surrounded you. You fell once more. Walk with me. When I feel afraid, help me to be brave. Give me the courage to speak out to change our world, so that all our sisters and brothers can live in a world free of violence and injustice.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Tenth station
Jesus is stripped of his garments

Care for our common home

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic. (John 19:23)

REFLECTION: Jesus has nothing left. Arriving at his place of execution, even his clothes are taken away from him. He holds nothing back. Around the world, people who are poor or marginalised continue to be stripped of what is theirs and of the opportunities that they need to flourish.

In the meantime, we also continue stripping our common home of its natural resources and beauty. God called us to be stewards of the resources which we have been given, to look out for one another by sharing and collaborating. Instead, we grab and destroy. We have inherited a beautiful garden and we are leaving behind us a desert of death, rubble and waste.

PRAYER: Jesus, all life comes from you. You have created a natural world with wondrous resources and beauty. Walk with me so that I may truly value that which you have made, and in turn be a good steward of your gifts for the common good of all.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...



Eleventh station
Jesus is nailed to the cross

Thirst for justice

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty". (John 19: 28)

REFLECTION: Just before he dies on the cross Jesus cries out that he is thirsty. We can hear him continue to say these words to us, through our brothers and sisters who each day struggle to find enough water to drink.

Our world is thirsty. There are one billion people in the world without access to safe drinking water. On average, women and girls in developing countries walk 6 kilometres a day, carrying 20 litres of water. In some areas, it is common for these journeys to take up more than 15 hours a week.

These last words of Jesus challenge us. They call us to see his face in all those who thirst for water but also in all those who thirst for a fairer world. They challenge us to stand alongside them and raise our own voices for change. They invite us to make the connections between how we live as individuals and as a country and the causes of thirst and poverty in our world.

PRAYER: Jesus, no one should ever die of thirst. Walk with me as I seek to bring justice to those who are crushed under the weight of poverty. Challenge me as I play my part in ensuring that access to safe drinking water does not become a privilege for the few but a right to be enjoyed by everyone.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Twelfth station
Jesus dies on the cross

Success or failure?

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (Matthew 27:46)

REFLECTION: By our normal standards, the crucifixion and death of Jesus is the ultimate failure. The one who was supposed to liberate his people was killed in a horrific and humiliating way.

However, our Christian resistance against all forms of violence and injustice is rooted in our faith in the Lord of Life. It's not dependent on apparent success, usefulness or recognition. Golgotha does not have the last word. And God is at work precisely when we see nothing but hopelessness and devastation.

The Jesuit Greg Boyle who has dedicated his life helping the most marginalised people in Los Angeles find a place in society reminds us that "success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the Gospel. Jesus stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified – whichever came first" (Greg Boyle).

PRAYER: Jesus, even in the most devastating failures, you show us the importance of being faithful. Walk with me, that I may have the courage to work patiently and tirelessly with those in need, always keeping my eyes on you, the Lord of Life.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Thirteenth station
Jesus' body is taken down from the cross

Love till the very end

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed the body. (John 19:38)

REFLECTION: Jesus was beaten and bruised, whipped and scourged, until just moments before his death.

Let us treat one another with love till the very last moments of their life. How do we treat those who are approaching death in our society? In a culture driven by economic profit and productivity, those who are reaching the end of their life are often viewed as a useless burden on society. They are often neglected and mistreated, even by their own families.

But a human person is always precious, even if marked by old age and sickness. When a person's life becomes very fragile and the conclusion of their earthly existence approaches, we have the responsibility of assisting, supporting and caring for them in the best way possible.

PRAYER: Jesus, make me an instrument of your care. Give me your eyes to clearly see the beauty and dignity of every human life. Walk with me as I accompany those who have reached the end of their earthly existence, that they may experience your warm and loving embrace.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Fourteenth station
Jesus' body is placed in a tomb

Bury the dead

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid. (Mark 15:45-47)

REFLECTION: The body of Jesus is most holy, and after his death on the cross, his remains deserved proper burial. It was an act of mercy for Joseph of Arimathea to request the body of Jesus, take it down, wash it, wrap it in a clean linen cloth and lay it in a tomb.

In 2023, every day, an average of eight migrants lost their lives or went missing in the Central Mediterranean. Many of them will never receive a proper burial. Their families receive no news of the missing, with no idea if their loved ones are dead or alive. The primary need of families is to know: They want to know if the missing are dead or alive. If their loved ones are dead, families always wish for their bodies to be repatriated so that they can be buried with dignity and take their place as a part of their community.

PRAYER: Jesus, you know what it's like to feel abandoned. Walk with me and show me how to treat others with dignity, even in death. Help me accompany the families faced with the excruciating uncertainty of not knowing the fate of their beloved ones. Show me how to pray for sisters and brothers that I have never met, but who are always loved by you.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Fifteenth station
Jesus rises from the dead

Hope

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

SCRIPTURE: On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark and saw the stone removed from the tomb. (John 20:1)

REFLECTION: For many people, especially the young, hope seems absent. We are gripped by despair, fear and anger. With Job, we find ourselves asking: “Where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?” (Job 17:15).

For us Christians, Holy Saturday is the day of hope. It is a kind of no man’s land between the despair of the disciples on Good Friday and their joy on the morning of Easter. This is where hope is born.

Christian hope is no easy optimism which naively states that “everything will be all right”, whilst ignoring the forces of evil which suck the energy out of people’s lives. Whilst daring to face reality, Christian hope is the certainty, rooted in love and faith, that God never abandons us and remains faithful to his promise: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalm 23:4). “Christian hope is not a denial of sorrow and death; it is the celebration of the love of the risen Christ, who is always at our side, even when he seems far from us.” (Pope Francis).

PRAYER: Jesus, help me to fearlessly share with others the hope and joy of your resurrection. Walk with me and give me the grace of accompanying my friends who, for lack of hope, may be smiling on the outside but weeping within.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

Closing prayer

Jesus, we have walked the way of the cross with you. We have witnessed your sorrows and sufferings and have experienced the hope and joy that a single moment of love can give. We know that your global human family encompasses each and every one of us—from communities in distant parts of the globe to our own villages, cities and country. All over our world, you are at work. And you call us to work as well, alongside those who are trapped in systems of violence, injustice, oppression and poverty. As we continue our journeys, we ask that you walk with us and bless our efforts to love and serve one another.

Amen.