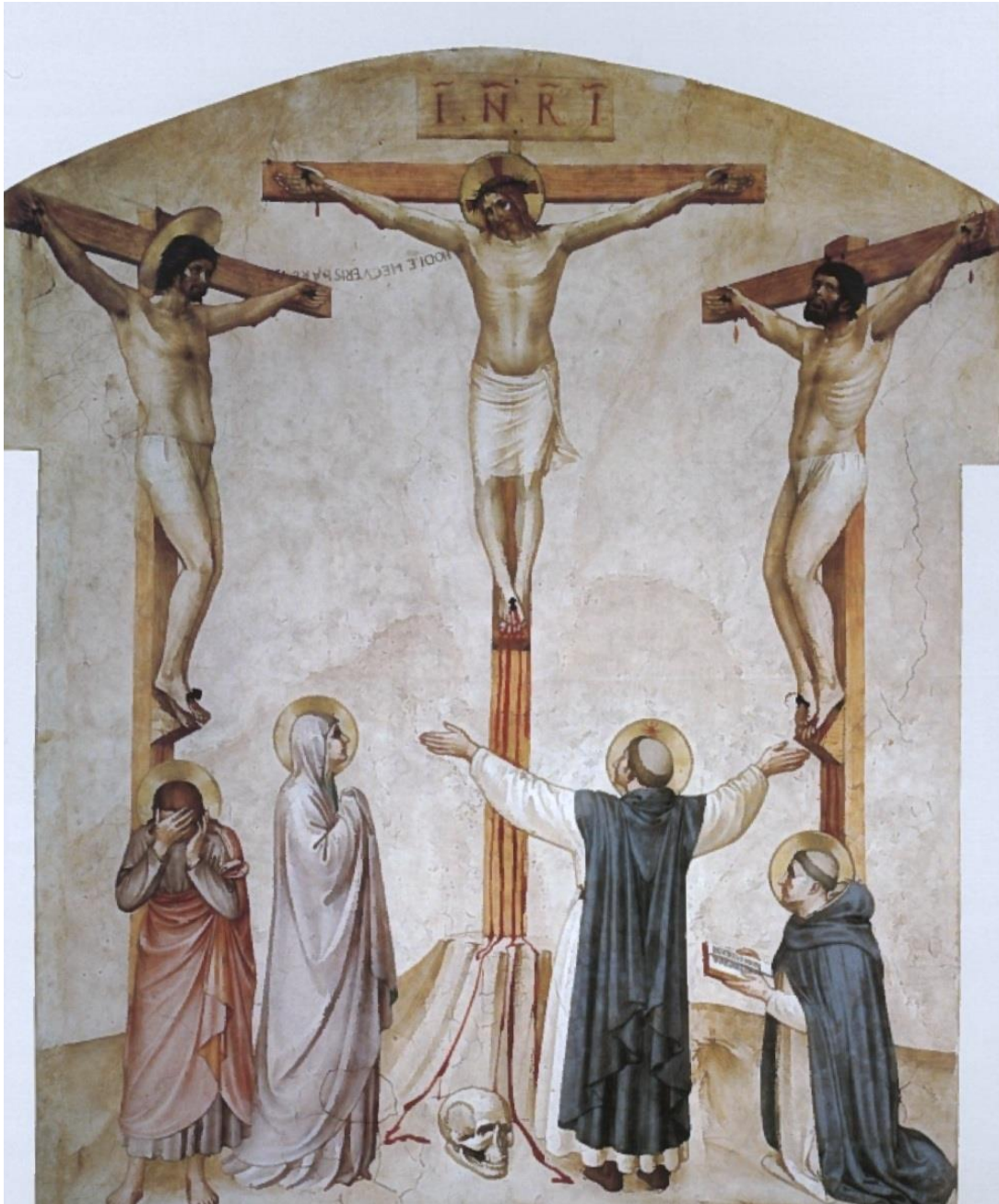


THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS



DAYLESFORD ABBEY

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross, the Way of the Cross, the Way of Sorrows, or the *Via Crucis*, all refer to the journey Jesus Christ travelled from the time he was condemned to death until his Body was placed in a burial tomb. Followers of Jesus have told the story of his Passion, Death and Resurrection while pilgrims who travelled to Jerusalem visited the sites where it is believed that Jesus was tried and executed. Journals have been discovered, dated as early as the fourth century, describing these pilgrims chanting psalms as they processed the *Via Dolorosa* (the Way of Sorrows) in Jerusalem. Liturgists view these processions as an embryonic form of the Stations of the Cross.

Many churches typically contain fourteen Stations but as an outgrowth of the Second Vatican Council, a fifteenth Station was added reflecting our Lord's victory over suffering and death and the Good News of Easter – the Resurrection. As we are a post Vatican Council II church, all of our Stations of the Cross, both inside the church and outside, reflect this more complete narrative. Today, Christians everywhere follow Jesus' final journey to unite their suffering with his in the hope of sharing in his Resurrection. In the words of St. Paul: "*I wish to know Christ and to be conformed into the pattern of his death, so that somehow I may come to know the power of his Resurrection.*" Phil 3:1

DISPOSITION FOR PRAYING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Suffering – in one of its many forms - invades all of our lives; no one needs to search for it. We may attempt to deny or run from suffering but it cannot be avoided. What is demanded is the need to come to terms with suffering. It is in this context that we provide the Stations of the Cross for Various Circumstances. We invite you to pray these Stations as a means of uniting your personal trials with our Lord's, so that you too might share in his Passion so as to rejoice in his Resurrection.

We believe in a God who became incarnate through his Son, Jesus Christ, who chose to suffer for the sake of our redemption. This Passion is made visible in the physical Way of the Cross and metaphysically in the psychological, emotional and spiritual suffering that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane – which one might call the overture to the *Via Crucis*.

The radical symbol of the Cross - ubiquitous throughout the world - has lost much of its shocking, paradoxical impact. We see the Cross hanging on walls, towering above churches and suspended from one another's necks in precious gold. The Cross has become a thing of beauty - and it should - for without the sacrifice made on the Cross, there would be no hope of eternal happiness with God.

When we pray the Stations, it is not for the purpose of undertaking an historical remembering of what occurred, but to show us what is happening now - what is happening within each of us. The reason for praying the Stations of the Cross is to enter into the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself for us – to experience his means of transforming suffering through love. We do this “through, with, and in him”, step by step, learning how this plan of love can be carried out by us today. In one form or another, his trials are revealed in ours and our trials in his. This frames the spiritual pilgrimage which you are invited to undertake through your particular circumstances, in contemplation of the Passion of Jesus Christ inspired by our faith in the Resurrection.

Allow One Hour

“Could you not watch and pray with me for one hour?” MT 26:40

For the Cross of our Lord's Passion becomes our Tree of Eternal Life

ABOUT DAYLESFORD ABBEY'S STATIONS OF THE CROSS

THE ARBOR GATEWAY

Thresholds are primarily spiritual in nature, not simply physical. Thus, crossing a threshold confirms one's willingness to move from the natural world to the supernatural. Our gateway entrance marks passage through a holy doorway designed to symbolize one's decision to enter into the life of Jesus.

SAINT RAPHAEL

Raphael, which translates as "It is God who heals", is the archangel known for facilitating all manners of healing. He is one of only three of the seven archangels named in the Bible. Raphael is credited with driving an evil spirit from Sarah and restoring Tobit's vision through the use of a fish. Tobit 6:7 Raphael is the patron saint of pilgrims and the appropriate guide for all who travel the Stations - particularly those seeking physical, emotional or spiritual healing. Pilgrimages in early times were a dangerous consideration. Pilgrims made wills before their journey as there was no certainty of a safe return. Unlike tourists, pilgrims travel toward their center; while tourists travel away. As a guardian to pilgrims, Raphael is often depicted holding a staff as well as a fish. The mission of Daylesford Abbey is healing and reconciliation, thus providing a suitable home for St. Raphael.

THE TRAIL

Most Stations of the Cross are typically laid out so that one follows a trail where station posts are staked and one pauses to pray. The Abbey's Stations are designed with alcoves where one must physically exit the trail - a place of certainty - so as to enter the spirituality of each Station's mystery. Physically, one interrupts their journey to undergo an experience of potentially unitive and transformative change.

THE STATION FRAME

Wood is a powerful, consistent symbol throughout Scripture: the tree in the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, the altar in Exodus, the kindling Isaac carries. It is not by happenstance that both Jesus and Joseph were carpenters. For Christians, all wood signifies and leads us to the one salvific wood of the Cross. Jesus' sacrifice, which redeemed us on Calvary, is re-membered today in the Eucharistic sacrifice that takes place on the altar. All grace flows from the Cross, from our Abbey's altar, which is why our Station's frames are designed to replicate the Abbey church. They are crafted from Brazilian hardwood of substantial weight and density but are ecologically respectful of the Amazon forest, reminding us of God's original commission to humankind in Eden - to be stewards of creation.

THE STATION IMAGES

The Station scenes are bas-relief replicas from the bronze doors located at the Basilica of San Zeno in Verona, Italy. According to tradition, the crypt inside the Basilica was the marriage site of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The church is Romanesque in design typical of 12th century architecture. Our holy father, St. Norbert, lived during that time and established the Order of Prémontré in 1120, thus connecting the Stations to the founding of our Order.

THE TREE TRUNK BENCHES

Daylesford Abbey took root and evolved from our original home at the site of the former Cassatt Estate. As Providence would arrange it, an oak tree was being removed from that property while our Stations were under construction. Our plans called for some seating to be formed from large tree trunks. This coincidence provided the symbolic means to represent our historical roots.

WE BEGIN: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself
and take up his cross every day and follow me. LK 9:23*



I JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

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

Jesus stands before us, an innocent yet condemned man. His very name means “God saves” and he himself tells us: “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” JN 3:17 To accomplish the work of redemption, Jesus willingly allows himself to be condemned to death on our behalf, the sinless for the sinful,

PRAYER: Lord, you stood alone, an innocent man sentenced to death, while I kneel before you, sinful but granted eternal life in the company of angels and saints. Help me to recall this when my life seems to get the best of me, when it weighs me down, and when I feel as though no one is on my side. On the other side of your trial, abandonment, and death awaited the Resurrection. Help me to grow in that light, knowing you are always at my side, and trusting that whatever happens, you are at work redeeming the moment.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father . . .
May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



II JESUS ACCEPTS HIS CROSS

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Each one of us meets the Cross at one point or another: A layoff notice; divorce; a car accident, cancer. Whether we experience life-altering circumstances such as these, we cannot escape much of life's more chronic trials: Strained relationships; the tedium of toil, uncertainty Whatever its form, the Cross awaits us – not to punish or torture, but simply because ours is a broken world in need of redemption. Jesus willingly accepts the Cross he received. Jesus takes it all, and through his Cross, the world is redeemed. Likewise, our crosses become openings for transformation, challenges to embrace, and opportunities for healing in ways that go beyond our present circumstances.

PRAYER: Lord, for you all things are possible. Remove this cross – but only according to your will. No matter what happens, help me to patiently accept what I must bear; give me the courage to overcome what I am able; and grant me the wisdom to unite my suffering with that of Christ's, so that I may become the person you've called me to be.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



III JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

When someone falls, our first instinct is to help them up. If we look around us more intently, we'll see that many are falling one way or another – whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. It is here that the eyes of Christ meet ours. On his shoulders, quite literally, rests the weight of the world, its people, and their sins. And it is heavy so he stumbles. His divine nature – ours by grace - is able to get back up again. In him, with him, and through him, we also are lifted off the ground. By this Cross, we are lifted back to our feet, better equipped to recognize Christ in others and be Christ to them. With St. Paul, we can say: “I am now rejoicing in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.” Col 1:24

PRAYER: I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. Happy are those who make the Lord their trust. Psalm 40

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Who can withstand the gaze of a mother – whether it’s a look of compassion, commendation, or consternation? Along the way of the Cross, Mary comes face to face with the fruit of her womb. As the new Eve - the mother of all the living whose “yes” to God reverses the first Eve’s “no” - she has a role to play in our redemption. Gazing at her son, her hands clasped in prayer, she intercedes for each of us. With Mary’s faithfulness, we are assured of grasping the mystery she pondered while on earth – that what is broken will emerge whole and transformed from an empty tomb at the dawn of eternal life.

PRAYER: Mary, you fix your gaze eternally on the mysteries of Jesus, and in in so doing, you meet the entire Body of Christ along the way. Ask him to help me do the same, so that my every thought, word and action originate from, and is directed toward, Jesus. As I bear my own cross in this life, ask him to take hold of me, to lift my body, heart, and soul to himself, so that I may be strengthened, so that through me, his love may radiate to all souls.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



V SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

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

Simon has his own problems. He tries to slip through the crowd, pretending not to notice. Suddenly, Providence touches his shoulder. “Why me?” he asks. Then his eyes meet those of Jesus, and their hearts speak as one “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” MT 11:29-30 Christ works in tandem with us, encourages us, and promises joy beyond all knowing. When we are pressed into service to bear a cross we didn’t seek, we must pray for strength and recall that, in the end, the cross does not belong to us, but to Christ, who bears it for all.

PRAYER: Lord, we don’t get to choose our crosses, and it is difficult for us to see and accept the reasons they are thrust upon us. This yoke – this cross – only makes sense if it is not my own, if it is borne for another’s sake. Help me then, to say yes, to carry the cross for another and for all others, so that I may find rest myself.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VI VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Our deepest desire is for the God who made us, to see his face. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” PS 42:2 As he was led to his crucifixion, Jesus’ face was slapped, spat upon, and mocked. Even worse, it was ignored, as passers-by turned their faces and pretended not to see. Veronica demonstrates an example of tremendous compassion through one simple act. Approaching Jesus, she steps through the surrounding cruelty and indifference, and with a cloth wipes the grime and exhaustion from his face. She beholds the face of God, and her heart rests in him whose image she bears.

PRAYER: Lord, my restless heart longs to see your face. Help me to see it more clearly in the faces of all your children. Assist me in reaching out in compassion to the physically or spiritually hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned. Grant me the courage to resist the selfishness, indifference, and cruelty of human nature, and instead minister to the weak, suffering, and needy – for as Jesus said, “Just as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to me.” MT 25:40

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VII JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Once again, Christ stumbles and falls to the ground. Out of immense love for us, God lowers himself in Jesus to restore the dignity that sin has stripped from humanity. God stoops to us, allows himself to be broken and shared among us, so that we who are so broken may together become the whole Christ, blessed and shared with all. To stoop means to bend down, to lower oneself, to willingly become small in order to provide another dignity.

PRAYER: Lord, how often I stumble and fall, but you are with me every step of the way to lift me up, to encourage and strengthen me. Help me each day to truly realize what you have done for me, so that your mercy and grace may inspire me to encourage and strengthen others – not from a position of superiority, but from your own self-sacrificing love.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VIII JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Unable to contain their sorrow and compassion for the suffering Jesus, a group of women following him along the way to Calvary openly mourns for him. Jesus asks them to set their sights on the eternal, to lament supernaturally the underlying reason for his necessary suffering – the evil that humanity habitually falls into, and the good it often neglect to do. “Weep instead”, Jesus says, for those among you who refuse to turn and follow me”. LK 23:28 He entrusts to these women – and to us – the apostolate of prayer. We must “weep” – that is, intercede – for the entire Body of Christ, that through him we may all be brought to everlasting life.

PRAYER: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. PS 126

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



IX JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

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

Weary and exhausted, Jesus collapses once again under the weight of humanity's pride. How often do we feel utterly overwhelmed by our weakness? We make sincere resolutions to change, but then fall once again. Typically, we do not stumble over new obstacles, but over the same old ones that continually trip us up no matter how hard we try to step around them. Human failure in this life is to be expected. The point is to recognize it, acknowledge it, look to Christ for further strength and courage and move on. When we are weak – and admit it – it is then that we are strong.

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me. My pride is my shame, but your mercy is my peace. Strengthen me as I shoulder my cross, and lift me up when I fall. Help me to forgive myself and move on. By your grace, may I always extend to others the mercy you've granted me, so that one by one, little by little, step by step, we may all keep to your way. You are our strength and salvation.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus is stripped of his garments in front of everyone. For our sake, he not only lets go of his human life, but his very dignity as a person. Little by little, from birth to death, we must inevitably learn to let go of what we possess. “Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.” LK 9:24 We need to have an interior disposition of holy detachment. Detachment is about denying inordinate desires that would lead us astray from the path of life God holds out for us. With an honest interior examination, we can all compose lists of desires that need to be stripped away from our lives.

PRAYER: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return.” Job 1:21 Grant me the grace to embrace my absolute dependence on your divine providence. Be patient with me as I learn to detach myself from any love which does not have you as its origin and end. Help me to be with those who also are in the process of being stripped of what they hold dear. Grant us all the eternal visions to realize that as we let go of the desires that clothe us, you stand ready to wrap us in the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XI JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

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

Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we see God's undeniable mercy and undying love for each of every one of us. Though he is innocent, Jesus willingly stretches out his Body upon a Cross reserved for the worst of criminals and insurrectionists. On that Cross, in the Body of Christ, hangs our every fault, fear, and tear. Every ounce of it is put to death with him and transformed by the Resurrection three days later. God does what only God can: He makes the imperfect perfect, brings new life from death, changes mourning into dancing.

PRAYER: If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself. It is finished.” JN 12:24, 32; 19:30

PRAYER: “My Lord and my God!” JN 20:28

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XIII JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Look at Mary's eyes as she cradles the body of her son, Jesus, after he has breathed his last. Are you able to discern how she pieces together the mysteries of Christ which she has pondered in her heart from the very beginning? Now, beneath the Cross, her son's Body in her arms, the words of the boy Jesus resounds once again in Mary's heart, applicable to this moment: "Why are you searching for me? Do you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" LK 2:49 Hints of promise begin opening up.

PRAYER: Mary, Mother of the Church, you are the hope of all Christian pilgrims on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem, where you and your son Jesus, the Lamb of God, await us all.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XIV JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

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

In his Rule for monks, St. Benedict says that one must “keep death daily before your eyes”. Someone – infinitely better, awaits us. The joy of this knowledge, derived through faith, fills us with that holy desire needed to live radically here and now. It is what makes us Christian. We should feel sorrow, because the life for which God created us was not meant to be that way. However, we should also embrace the joy of knowing that in Christ, God has restored all things, and rightly ordered them.

PRAYER: Lord, I wait for the dawn of Resurrection often in the midst of darkness and death. Life is a struggle sometimes for all of us, and we are overwhelmed by uncertainty. Our hearts long for eternity for you. However, by keeping death daily before our eyes, we are encouraged to prepare rightly for that moment when we will see your face. Help us along the way – in faith, hope and love - to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ, forever trusting that if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a Resurrection like his.

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XV

THE RESURRECTION

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

A lifeless body in a tomb. Alone. Defeated. Wrapped in burial cloths of misery, fear, and failure. Mystery awaits the morn. Thin light spreads over a horizon unaware of what the earth cannot contain. The soil is soaked with divinity's dew. The seed of humanity sheds its rotten garments. The wound within opens. A tender shoot appears. It emerges above the soil. A vibrant Body in a garden. Planted in the house of the Lord. Still bearing fruit when they are old. Surrounding the Tree of Life. Singing *Alleluia!*

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

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Adapted from: Stations of the Cross for Divorced Catholics, Monica Frese, www.DivorcedCatholic.com

Cover Image from the frescos of Fra Angelico, San Marco Monastery & Museum, Florence, Italy.

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