

WAY_{OF THE} CROSS_{FOR}



VOCATIONS

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Dedicated to the memory of
Richard and Catherine Silva

Scripture texts from
The New American Bible Revised Edition, 1986.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS BOOKLET

This Way of the Cross for Vocations is a reflection on the story of the Lord's way to Calvary in light of his invitation to each of us: "Come, follow me." Like the invitation, the Way of the Cross presented here is for all Christian men and women. The language is simple so that it can be used by children as well as adults.

The meditations and prayers are written in the style of conversation with the Lord. They are intended to be reflective and personal. Like our conversation, the meditations are not always formulated in complete sentences. For this reason, they should be read slowly and reflectively, preferably by one person. Another person may read the Scripture for each station.

After the meditation for each station, there is a time for a Response before the Scripture reading. This response may be a prayer (e.g. Our Father, Hail Mary), a song (e.g. Stabat Mater, Taizé chant, Gregorian Kyrie), a moment of silence, or a combination of these. Visual aids, background music and "environment" are other possible ways of enhancing the prayer.

Between each station, it is recommended that a verse of an appropriate song or an acclamation be sung. Suggestions are: Stabat Mater, Were You There, Keep in Mind (Lucien Deiss), Gregorian Kyrie, Taizé chant.

Above all, this Way of the Cross for Vocations is offered to help the participants enter more deeply into the Lord's life and hear the call that he speaks to them.

WAY OF THE CROSS FOR VOCATIONS

An appropriate song may begin the reflection.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we have come to spend some time with you because we want to learn from your example. During your time on earth and even now, you are the most fully alive person there has ever been. You gave totally of yourself to others in great obedience to your Father. Yet we know that your love for life led to your own condemnation to death. Knowing what was on the road ahead of you, you still chose to go the way you had been called to go.

You look at us and say, “Come, follow me.” Follow me in being fully alive. Follow me in giving totally of yourself. Follow me in laying down your very life for your brothers and sisters.

The way is not easy, but I want to learn from your example. Let me enter into your trials now and live them along with you. I come along in hope of sharing the fullness of life with you.



I. JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Lord Jesus, you tried so hard. You gave totally of yourself to help us believe the good news. And now the decision is to put an end to all your efforts. Isn't this what always happens to those who believe strongly in something? Aren't they always condemned too? But you bear the verdict patiently, Lord. Why? Don't you see that this is the end? ...Your eyes, though filled with pain, tell me, "No, my friend. It is really the beginning."

Response: *Scripture - John 15:13-14, 16-17*

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.



II. JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

I know where you are going, Lord. You carry your cross now, but soon it will carry you. And you want me to come along? Once again your eyes tell me your love is so great that you even accept these burdens we place on you. You call me to follow, Lord, because you know how much the world needs to hear your message -- that you love us even when it is most difficult. Strengthen me, Lord, so I may also carry the cross.

Response: *Scripture - Luke 9:23-24*

Jesus said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."



III. JESUS FALLS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Lord Jesus, you are God, and you have fallen! How many times have I held back from following you, fearing that I would fall? I am only human, Lord. Yet you call me to walk with you, knowing full well that I am so much weaker than you. Your falling and getting up again show me that you call me not because I am strong, but because you can accomplish your purpose in me even when I am weak.

Response: *Scripture - Matthew 11:28-30*

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls, For my yoke is easy and my burden light.”



IV. JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

You once passed through a town, Lord, and saw a widow who had just lost her only son. You were moved with compassion. Now here is your own widowed mother. You are her only son and are as good as dead. Her tears could stop you in your tracks; bring you to your senses; make you give up all this foolishness; settle down; live happily ever after. Yes, she is very sad. She doesn't fully understand. But she knows you must go on. She has known the power of love in her own life, and she knows that it now possesses you. She simply puts her faith in your Father, who is her Father, too.

Response: *Scripture - Mark 3:31-35*

His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and [my] brothers?" And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."



V. SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Lord Jesus, you are the Holy One of God. You are the Savior of the world. And you need someone else to carry your cross. I suppose it is heavier than it looks. So many in our world carry heavy burdens of suffering, rejection, injustice, and grief. Let us offer ourselves to be pressed into their service, Lord, so that they will know they are never alone.

Response: *Scripture - Galatians 6:2-6*

Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; for each will bear his own load. One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor.



VI. VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

At this point, Lord, your needs are so basic -- a little comfort, a little human warmth. This woman cared enough to minister to you. She may have had better things to do. She certainly could have found something more pleasant to do. But you needed her, and so she went. As you walk along this road again, Lord, inspire other women and men to put their own needs aside and to minister to you. It is said that you left Veronica an image of your face. You leave your image for us, too, in the faces of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the homeless, the imprisoned. May we always treasure that image, Lord, and touch it with comfort and love.

Response: *Scripture - Matthew 25:31, 37-40*

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne. ... Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”



VII. JESUS FALLS AGAIN

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Again, Lord, you fall. Again I am amazed that this could happen to one so strong, so sure. Our lives are filled with doubts, Lord. We begin a journey then wonder whether another road might have been more fulfilling. Our doubts can be our downfall and make us stop or turn back from the way along which you lead us. Help us to go on and follow you, Lord, confident that even our doubts can tell us something about your will.

Response: *Scripture - Mark 9:17, 22b-23*

Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. ... But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you can! Everything is possible to one who has faith.” Then the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe, help my unbelief!”



VIII. JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

These women whom you love so much are weeping for you, Lord. You tell them not to weep for you but for themselves and for their children. You know the cross you bear is not deserved but is the result of our own sinfulness. Provide for us, Lord, priests and sisters, brothers, and deacons who can weep for themselves and for us; who by their tears and prayers and sacrifices show this cold, uncaring world that it is indeed very good, and that one day there will be no more tears and no more sadness.

Response: *Scripture - Revelation 21:3b-4*

“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away.”



IX. JESUS FALLS YET AGAIN

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Your weakness is showing again, Lord. Again, let us learn our lesson from it. Sometimes you call women and men to give their whole lives to you in service to your people. Sometimes they feel unworthy of the call. They tell you that you have the wrong person, that they are too weak to bear the burdens of your mission. When we think these thoughts, Lord, let us remember that you fell three times just on that one morning. Let us remember your words: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”

Response: *Scripture - 2 Corinthians 12:9b-10*

I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.



X. JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHING

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

You are stripped bare, Lord, for all the world to see. It is humiliating, yet you accept it as part of your mission. How many times, Lord, have we felt your love, yet felt embarrassed to tell others about it? You touch our inmost being with your peace and your joy, yet we are too shy to share these with others. Strengthen us, Lord, so that we may never be ashamed to stand before all the world and tell them with our hearts and souls, our minds and bodies, the good news of your love.

Response: *Scripture - Philippians 2:6-8*

Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.



XI. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

You are committed now, Lord. You cannot run away. The nails will not be undone. For better or for worse you must go through with it. The word “commitment” sometimes frightens us, Lord. It is so final. It requires so much. Inspire me with your strength, so that I may be committed to the vocation you give me; so that I may lay my hand on the plow and never turn back; so that the seed you have planted with your own sweat and blood may come to full harvest for all the world to see.

Response: *Scripture - Luke 9:57-62*

As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus answered him, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.” And to another he said, “Follow me.” But he replied, “[Lord,] let me go first and bury my father.” But he answered him, “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” And another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” [To him] Jesus said, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.”



XII. JESUS GIVES UP HIS SPIRIT

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

You said this would happen to you, Lord. You know the reason for it all. We think this is death, but you know it is birth. You say “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” Yet when I arrive at the point of giving up my life for you, I hesitate. I have second thoughts. I think that you cannot be serious. I do want to follow you, Lord. I do believe in your word. Help my lack of faith.

Response: *Scripture - John 12:23b-28a*

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me. I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”



XIII. JESUS IS TAKEN FROM THE CROSS

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

Your friends have come to take you down, Lord, to bathe your body and lay it to rest. Their love goes with you even to the grave. Not even your death could make it die. I wonder whose love will lay me to rest? The love of a spouse or of children? The love of brothers or sisters in a religious community? The love of your own people whom I served with my life? Whoever they may be, Lord, help me to love them fully here and now; to give my very life to someone else in trust, in faith, in love.

Response: *Scripture - 1 John 4:7-9*

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us in this: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.



XIV. JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Leader: It was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you.

All: I chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

You are laid to rest, Lord. Your life was very short, yet you touched so many people -- the sick, the poor, the suffering, the aimless. Your life lives on in them. But even more wonderfully, Lord, we know that this tomb we remember now stands empty. Your life was so full that it could not be laid to rest for very long. When the new day comes, you say to your friends, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." Help us grow in your friendship, Lord, and to respond to your call to each of us. Let us leave behind in this tomb all our shrouds of fear and follow you with generous hearts.

Response: *Scripture - John 15:16-17*

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."



WAY OF THE CROSS FOR VOCATIONS

Concluding Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for this time we have spent with you. You submitted yourself to suffering, rejection and death to make it possible for us to be fully alive. You did this to “bring glad tidings to the poor, ... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

The poor are still with us, Lord, and they still await good news; there are still many people who are captives of ideas and powers that rob them of their true freedom; there are still the blind and still the oppressed; the whole world still yearns for a proclamation of a time of favor. Who will bring to fulfillment what you have begun?

... Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

