

Stations of the Cross: Crosses of Resistance

Facilitator Script

Welcome to *Stations of the Cross: Crosses of Resistance*, developed by NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice. Thank you for facilitating this event in your community.

Before beginning, assign a "Reader 1" and a "Reader 2." You can have the same two people serve as "Reader 1" and "Reader 2" for the entire event or change with each station.

Remember to pass out copies of the half-sheet handout, so that participants can follow along with the Psalm response and the concluding call to action.

Opening

Reader 1: We gather here today, on the journey to Jesus' crucifixion, carrying our own laments, fears, and maybe even anger at the dehumanization and violence that the people of this country have faced this year.

As we pause to remember Jesus' passion and death, we remember that he also lived under an imperial power that dominated, intimidated, and impoverished its people – not so far from what we are seeing in our cities and towns today. We can look to Jesus and ask, how do we respond?

Reader 2: Jesus shows us the way: solidarity, hope, mercy, and peacemaking. In accepting the cross, Jesus transformed it into a cross of resistance: resistance to violence, to greed, to exclusion. Just as Jesus' cross of resistance was an outpouring of love, our response today must be rooted in love – love for our neighbors, our neighborhoods, our families, our God. As we journey alongside Jesus today, we pray for the grace to lovingly take up our crosses of resistance, so that we may usher in a resurrected world where all God's people can thrive.

Reader 1: During today's prayer, each Station will include a scripture-based reflection, a Psalm response, a justice-based reflection, and a prayer response. For the Psalm response, all of us will together say or sing the words of Psalm 23, which are also on your handout: "Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life."

Station 1

Reader 1: Jesus is condemned to death. The Roman government that has oppressed the Jewish people for so long has now sentenced Jesus to torture and death by crucifixion, a sentence reserved for the poorest of society. Pilate, who gave the sentence, washed his hands in an attempt to pass the guilt along to the Jewish leaders.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Just as the Roman authorities arrested and condemned Jesus, the U.S. legal system locks up millions of people, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Far too many of us are subject to violent treatment by police; incarceration in inhumane conditions, including families and immigrants held in detention centers; practices like solitary confinement, a form of torture – and still in many states, execution. We know that we cannot truly solve social problems by caging human beings or perpetuating violence through the death penalty. We are called instead to do the work of real reconciliation and peace in our communities – and in doing so, honor Christ.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to recognize you in every human being, especially those incarcerated or condemned to death. Give us the strength to refuse to demonize, dehumanize, or permit violence against any person, and instead insist on our shared dignity.

Station 2

Reader 1: Jesus takes up his cross. This burden weighs heavily on him as he labors underneath it. Those watching can see clearly how he struggles along the path toward his crucifixion.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Many people bear invisible burdens in their daily lives. This is especially true today for many of our immigrant neighbors, family members, friends, and coworkers. They may carry a daily fear of being targeted, detained, or separated from their families by the cruelty of some people in power who use immigrants as a scapegoat. Many are afraid that ICE will raid their church, workplace, or even a local health care center. Some may even be fearful of driving, worried that a simple traffic stop will turn into an abduction. Children may worry they will come home from school to find that their parents have been taken away.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to notice the invisible burdens that many bear, especially our immigrant neighbors. Help us to greet our community members with hearts full of compassion. May we serve you by offering our protection, care, and welcome to each one of our neighbors.

Station 3

Reader 1: Jesus falls under the weight of his cross. It bears down on him, though he knows that he must rise and continue. How much more difficult must it have been for him to pick back up both himself and the cross after falling?

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Around the world and in our own backyards, so many of our loved ones, neighbors, and children stumble and fall under the weight of hunger. More than 80 million U.S. households experienced food insecurity in the past few years. The weight of hunger bears down on our physical and mental health, and our ability to succeed in school or at work. Meanwhile, some of our lawmakers in Congress cruelly continue to slash funding for food supports like SNAP.

Reader 1: God who nourishes, help us to both satisfy hunger now and work for a world in which no one goes hungry ever again. We know that we produce enough food to feed the world. Help us to ensure it is distributed in a way that leaves nobody out, so that all your people can thrive.

Station 4

Reader 1: Jesus meets his mother. Mary had walked with and protected Jesus from the beginning. She fled to Egypt when Herod wanted Jesus dead. Later, she returned to her homeland, but not to the town she knew so well. Mary knew what it was like to live in a foreign land for the sake of providing life for her family. Now, watching Jesus walk to his execution, she is still there to comfort and accompany him.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Just like the Holy Family, many families today are forced to flee their home countries, searching for a life free of violence, poverty, and desperation. Refugees, people seeking asylum, and immigrants seek a good life for themselves and their families, just as all people do. Nearly all of us have moved at some points in our lives, so why is it that immigrants are targeted with violent words, policies, and actions?

Reader 1: Jesus, protect us all from violence. Let no one be separated from their families. Give us the courage to show compassion and welcome to all people, especially those who have traveled long journeys or faced persecution, whether they are newcomers or our long-time neighbors. Give us the compassion to look upon one another as Mary looked upon Jesus: with limitless love and concern.

Station 5

Reader 1: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross. Some say that Simon was forced, unwillingly, to carry the cross. Others say he was chosen because he showed sympathy. Though we don't know for sure, we know that Simon helped to lighten Jesus' load and that he developed compassion along the journey. Simon shows us what solidarity looks like: stepping in to share the burden and traveling alongside the suffering person in front of us.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Our faith calls us to solidarity, including solidarity with workers. We know that in the past, workers have joined together to win better working conditions, better pay, and protections against abuses. But today, working people continue to face extremely low wages, unjust conditions, and not enough paid time off to care for ourselves and our loved ones. How can we foster solidarity with and among working people? How can we carry the load together, making it lighter for all of us?

Reader 1: Jesus, son of a carpenter, help us to see you in all who are burdened, especially workers. Give us the courage to journey in solidarity with one another, like Simon, sharing the burden with compassion even when it is hard. Guide workers across races, faiths, and ethnicities to join in solidarity – so that together we can insist upon the wages and working conditions that are consistent with our dignity and the dignity of our labor.

Station 6

Reader 1: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Making her way through the crowds and the many people jeering at Jesus, Veronica reaches out to show her care.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: As Veronica tends to Jesus, seeking to alleviate what pain she can, so we are called to care for our bodies by ensuring that all of us have quality, affordable health care. Yet, the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States is medical debt. As some of our lawmakers slash funding for our health care programs, too many of us cannot afford the staggering costs of the health care we need. We are forced to skip doctor's appointments, choose between glasses for our kids and medications for ourselves, or even forego lifesaving treatments, all while ultra-wealthy insurance corporations and their leaders grow their profits. In a health care system based on private profits, people die.

Reader 1: Jesus, hasten to us. Give us the grace to see you in one another and to know that when we care for our bodies, we are caring for you. Guide us in ensuring that our lawmakers protect access to health care for every person in our communities. Show us how we, like Veronica, can wipe the faces of your people.

Station 7

Reader 1: Jesus stumbles and falls a second time, his face in the dusty ground.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: How often do we turn on the news, see videos on our phones, or look around our neighborhoods, and see violence? People shoved to the ground, like Jesus? Whether it's gun violence or violence from ICE raids terrorizing our cities, violence doesn't come out of nowhere. It is a disregard for human dignity that comes when greed goes unchecked.

Wealth-hoarding drives war and instability and leaves our communities with too few resources and too many guns. Violence can only produce violence. It is up to us to break the cycle with our nonviolent, compassionate action for justice, mercy, and peace.

Reader 1: Jesus, as we consider the violence you experienced, develop in us a nonviolent heart. Help us to hold victims, victim-survivors, and perpetrators of violence in compassion so that we can avoid contributing further violence to our world. You transform death into life; show us how to transform violence into peace and justice for all people.

Station 8

Reader 1: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. Along his way, Jesus encounters the group of women who weep for him. They pour out empathy and compassion toward him.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Journeying with Jesus softens our hearts. Like the women of Jerusalem, we are moved to widen our circle of care. Yet today, some religious leaders spread the lie that only some people are worthy of our protection, only some people count as “true” Christians or “true” Americans. This exclusive, us-versus-them mentality does not align with the expansiveness of God’s love and Jesus’ closeness to those who are excluded.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see You in those whom society “others.” Inspire in us awe at God’s diverse creation. Grant us the empathy of the women who weep for Jesus and the courage to embrace radical solidarity and build relationships of peace – so that we may become Your Beloved Community.

Station 9

Reader 1: Jesus falls a third time. With each fall, he hits the ground harder and struggles even more to rise again. He feels he has nothing left in him. Still, he must find a way to go on.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Many of our neighbors have fallen more than once before they find themselves unhoused. Though there are more than enough homes for all of us in the U.S. today, wealthy private investors buy up houses in our neighborhoods and hike up rents and home prices. We are left spending disproportionate parts of our income on rent or mortgage payments, or losing housing altogether — forced, like Jesus, to find the strength to face a society that passes harsh judgment on those without stable shelter.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to remember how close so many of us are to falling — often one lost paycheck or one medical crisis away from losing our housing. Help us work together to create a society where houses are for people, not profits, and where every person has a reliable and safe place to call home.

Station 10

Reader 1: Jesus' clothes are taken away. Just before hanging him on the cross, the authorities strip Jesus of the very little he has left.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Beneath our apparent differences, we are connected in our shared humanity, and all equally the beloveds of God. But too often, some politicians and their ultra-wealthy backers stoke fear and division with hateful lies. They try to distract us from their wealth-hoarding by targeting and blaming others – especially immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ+ people, and our unhoused neighbors. When the powerful cast lots with our lives, our communities suffer.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see the seamless garment that is your people. Help us to withstand the temptation to tear it up and allow the powerful few to take the resources and freedoms that belong to all of us. Guide us in rejecting scapegoating and exclusion, so that we can together make our country a place where all are welcome, safe, and free.

Station 11

Reader 1: Jesus is nailed to the cross. His death is only a matter of time, as nails are driven through his wrists and feet. As the cross is raised, he labors to breathe.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Jesus was crucified because those in power chose to preserve their power rather than heed Jesus' call to convert our hearts and promote the flourishing of all people. Today, billionaires seek to preserve their power by funding the campaigns of politicians who will protect their wealth-hoarding. Then, they try to restrict our freedom to vote and to have a say in the decisions that affect our lives. As a result, we are left without the housing, health care, food, and clean air and water that our communities need and deserve.

Reader 1: God, may we remember that we all are made in your image, with infinite worth and dignity, and deserve to thrive. Give us the courage to answer our call to participate in shaping our society for the common good. Help us to build a political system that answers not to greed, but to the needs of your people.

Station 12

Reader 1: Jesus dies on the cross. He allowed himself to suffer such a death out of solidarity with all suffering and oppressed people. He gave his life for the sake of truth over lies, solidarity over division, and love over fear.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Two thousand years later, people still die needlessly. They die because they cannot afford lifesaving medical care, they do not have enough nutritious food to eat, they have cancer from toxins in their water or soil, they don't have shelter from the bitter cold or sweltering heat, or, like Jesus, they are killed by agents of the government. God created a world of abundance, with more than enough resources for all of us to live and thrive. Yet some lawmakers allow these resources to be concentrated into the hands of a small group of individuals, meaning that millions are forced to go without even the basics they need to live. This is not the reality of freedom and flourishing to which Jesus committed himself, even to death.

Reader 1: Jesus, we recall your warnings against greed and your call to share abundantly. Help us not only to share our personal resources, but also to create a tax system that ensures that resources are shared among all people for the common good.

Station 13

Reader 1: Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and placed in his mother's arms. She holds the body of her child, this time in excruciating sorrow. She weeps for his life.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: We remember our Black and Brown siblings who continue to be killed unjustly, especially at the hands of police. Like Mary, their mothers face an unfathomable loss. Today, people of color in the U.S. still face discrimination in housing and employment, unjust treatment by the legal system, and the ongoing legacy of racist policies that have ravaged our neighborhoods and schools.

Reader 1: Mary, we ask you to tear down our defensiveness and make us tenderhearted like you. Help us recognize that our laws, systems, and practices still preference the white and wealthy at the expense of all others. Help us, people of all races and backgrounds—Black, Brown, and white—to resist attempts to divide us, repair our relationships, and together ensure that each of us has all that we need to thrive.

Station 14

Reader 1: Jesus is laid in the tomb, in the earth. He is honored by being placed in a specially created spot, a sign of reverence toward the deceased.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: God our Creator has honored us by placing us on Earth. It is here that we are called to eat and be satisfied, to love and to nurture, to work and to rest. Earth is a gift for our care, not exploitation. But for too long, some of our lawmakers have allowed fossil fuel corporate executives to ravage the Earth for their own profit. The rest of us are left with unclean air, polluted water and soil, exposure to toxins, and increasingly extreme floods and droughts. How can we continue to allow this?

Reader 1: Creator God, help us to recognize our planet as the common home for those who came before us, we who are here today, and the generations who will follow us. Root us more deeply into Your Earth, remembering that we are a part of creation, too. Make us not just protectors, but co-creators, cultivators, and caretakers of our shared dwelling place, the creation of your heart.

Closing

Reader 1: We know that Jesus' death is not the end of the story. We know that the cross of resistance leads to Resurrection. We have seen how saying no to greed, exclusion, and violence is saying yes to God's hope, peace, and freedom. Inspired by the life-giving, loving solidarity of Jesus, we renew our commitment to one another – to together picking up our crosses of resistance and working to build a country where all of God's children can thrive.

All: Let the nations turn from war and encourage one another as good neighbors. O Blessed and Compassionate Friend, melt our hearts of stone, break through our fears, and guide our steps toward the way of peace.

Reader 2: May we now go forth to serve God and love our neighbors. One way we can do this is by together raising our voices with those in power to protect our communities.

Reader 1: Our elected leaders must safeguard human life and dignity, promote peace within our communities, end rhetoric that dehumanizes immigrants, and uphold the rights, freedoms, and civil liberties that belong to all of us – regardless of immigration status.

Consider sharing about this experience with others, contacting the White House, or calling your Members of Congress. Please see more information on your handout.

This resource was created by NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice as part of our 2026 Lenten campaign, "Crosses of Resistance." We thank you for spending time with us today. If you are not already connected with NETWORK, we invite you to learn more and join us at networkadvocates.org, or by emailing us at info@networklobby.org.