

VIA CRUCIS

The Road to Heaven

Stations of the Cross

VIA CRUCIS

The Road to Heaven





The Way of the Cross originated in Jerusalem in the late second century where places along the Lord's route through the city were identified and venerated. Christians came on pilgrimage to visit these 'stations' and to meditate on the Lord's Passion and Death. They would stop to reflect and pray, to unite themselves with Jesus and to beg forgiveness for their sins, which had led to His crucifixion. Refreshed by these spiritual encounters, they would draw new strength from Him to carry their own crosses in life and real hope that one day they would pass over with Him to the happiness of heaven.

The custom of making the Stations of the Cross was spread energetically by the Franciscans in the 14th century and soon many churches in Europe began to have stations erected along their walls or in the gardens around them. It was Pope Clement XII (1730- 1740) who fixed the traditional number at fourteen and ordered them to be set up in all Catholic churches. Now I commend to you this booklet with its prayers and meditations. May it help you grow in love for Jesus, repent of your sins and live more ardently the life of a Christian disciple.

In Corde Iesu

+ Philip

Bishop of Portsmouth

Lent 2024

How to Make the Stations in a Church

- Begin at the altar with the Prayers Before the Journey.
- Go to the First Station and read its title
- Genuflect while saying the Versicle and Response ('We adore you ...')
- Read the meditation ('Consider ...') and pause
- Reflect on the intentions for prayer ('Let us pray ...')
- Say the Act of Contrition ('I love you Jesus ...')
- As you move to the next station, say the verse from the Stabat Mater
- Finish at the altar with the Prayers at the End.

The Stabat Mater hymn, written by the Franciscan friar, Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306), is a powerful meditation on the suffering of Mary during her Son's Passion and Death. It is customary to sing a verse before/after each station:

At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
close to Jesus to the last.

Stabat Mater dolorosa,
juxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendeat Filius.

"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

Prayer Before The Journey

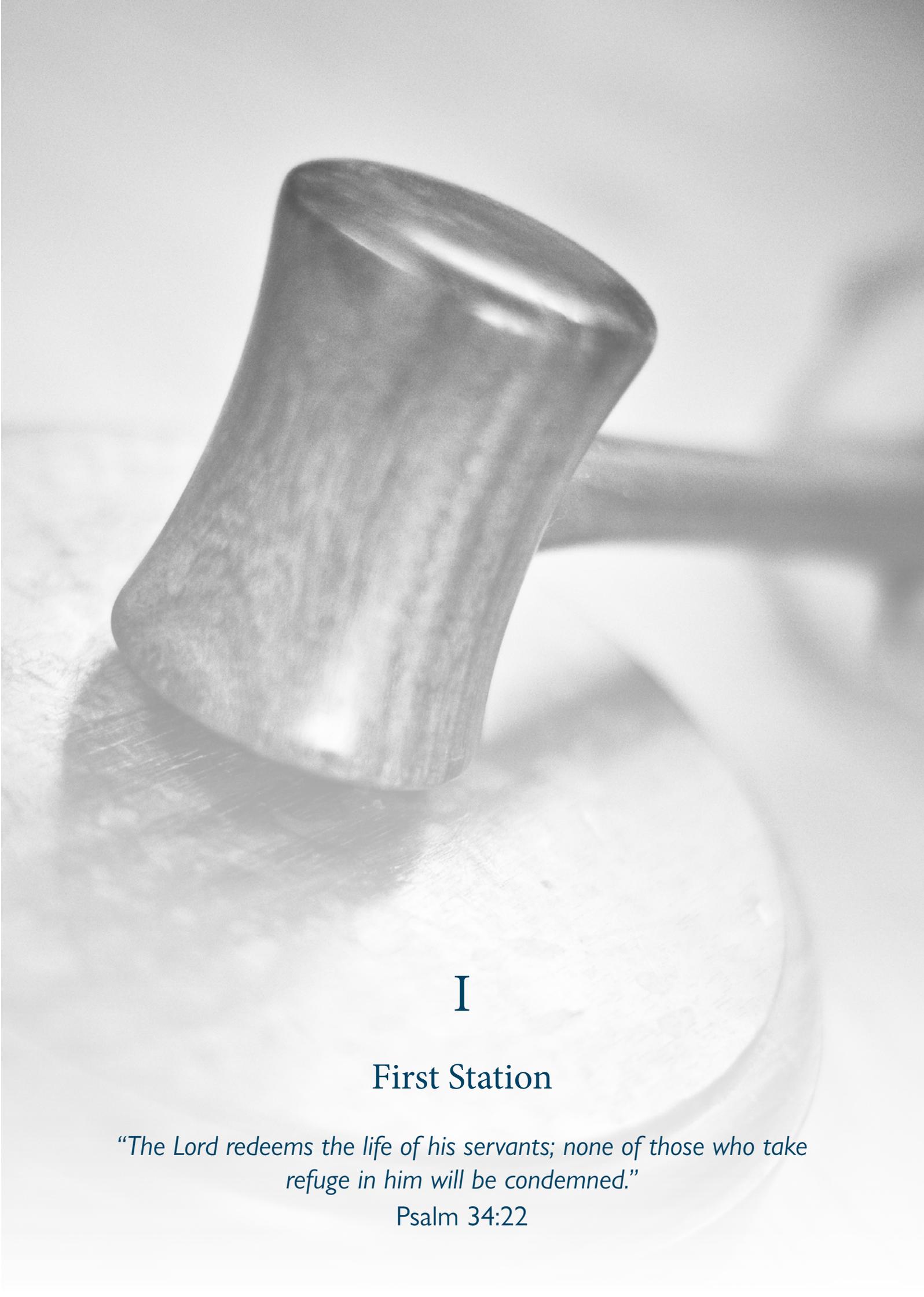
In the name of the Father + and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...

God our Father,
as we set out on this sorrowful journey, grant us your grace.
We thank and praise you for the gift of life
but even more we thank and praise you for the gift of Your Son.
By dying He has destroyed sin, suffering and death and by His
resurrection, He offers us the gift of eternal life.
As we follow Him now along the road to Calvary,
change our lives by your Holy Spirit
that we may live the new way of living He has called us to.
Grant us the grace to carry the cross in union with Him
and grant your love and strength to all who carry heavy
burdens, especially the poor and the needy.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



I

First Station

*“The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take
refuge in him will be condemned.”*

Psalm 34:22

Jesus is Condemned to Death

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how Jesus, God the Son Incarnate, after being scourged and crowned with thorns, was abused and insulted by the crowds and unjustly condemned to death by Pontius Pilate.

We are often quick to judge, criticise and even condemn others, yet one of the hardest things in life is when this happens to us. Let us pray for the grace to forgive those who have wronged us and for God's forgiveness for the times we have harshly judged others. And let us pray for those on trial today, for the unjustly condemned, for prisoners and for those who look after them.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
all His bitter anguish bearing,
now at length the sword had passed.

*cuius animam gementem,
contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius.*



II

Second Station

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?”

Matthew 16:24-26

Jesus is made to carry the cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how Jesus as He carried the Cross on His shoulders, was thinking of you and me, offering to the Father the death He was about to undergo to bring us salvation and happiness.

Jesus once said: "If anyone wants to be a flower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24)." Let us pray for the grace to fulfil our vocation in life and to persevere in it. And let us pray for people who carry heavy crosses such as poor health, financial worries, broken marriages, loneliness and sadness, and for refugees, migrants and the victims of violence and terrorism.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

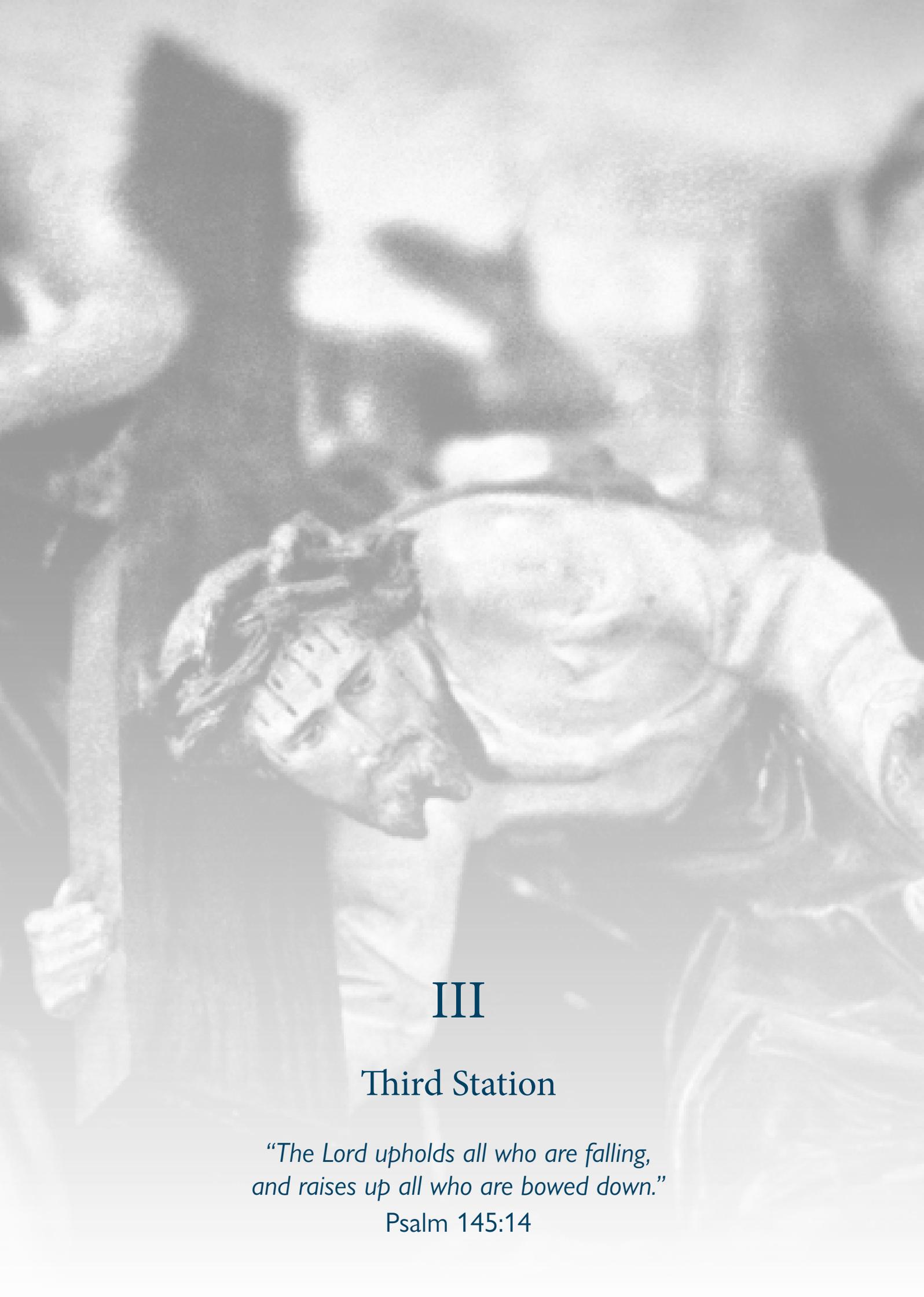
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Oh how sad and sore distressed
was that Mother highly blessed,
of the sole-begotten One!

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta,
Mater Unigeniti!



III

Third Station

*“The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.”*

Psalm 145:14

Jesus Falls For The First Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

the first time Jesus fell under the enormous weight of the cross. Loss of blood from the scourging and the crown of thorns had gravely weakened Him, yet the soldiers mercilessly drove Him on through the streets to his imminent death.

“Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried ... yet through his wounds we are healed (Is 53:4).” At this station, let us make an act of contrition to ask forgiveness for our sins, especially for falling into sinful thoughts, words, attitudes and deeds, and for a firm commitment to rise up again and amend our lives. And let us also make reparation to God for the sins and failings of others.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.
Never permit me to separate myself from You again.
Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Christ above in torment hangs;
she beneath beholds the pangs
of her dying glorious Son.

Quae mœrebat et dolebat,
pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati pœnas inclyti.



IV

Fourth Station

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?”

Matthew 16:24-26

Jesus Meets His Mother

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

this poignant meeting of Jesus and His Mother Mary, as they gazed at each other on the way, He, His Heart full of compassion, she there to support Him in His self-sacrifice for our benefit.

“Woman, this is your Son (Jn 19:26).” Mary, the Mother of the Church, is our Mother too; she loves us with a maternal concern. Let us pray for ourselves, for all our needs and especially for our diocese. Let us pray too for the whole Church, for the holy father, for all bishops, priests and deacons, for the religious and for the lay faithful that we might be more effective evangelisers of contemporary culture.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

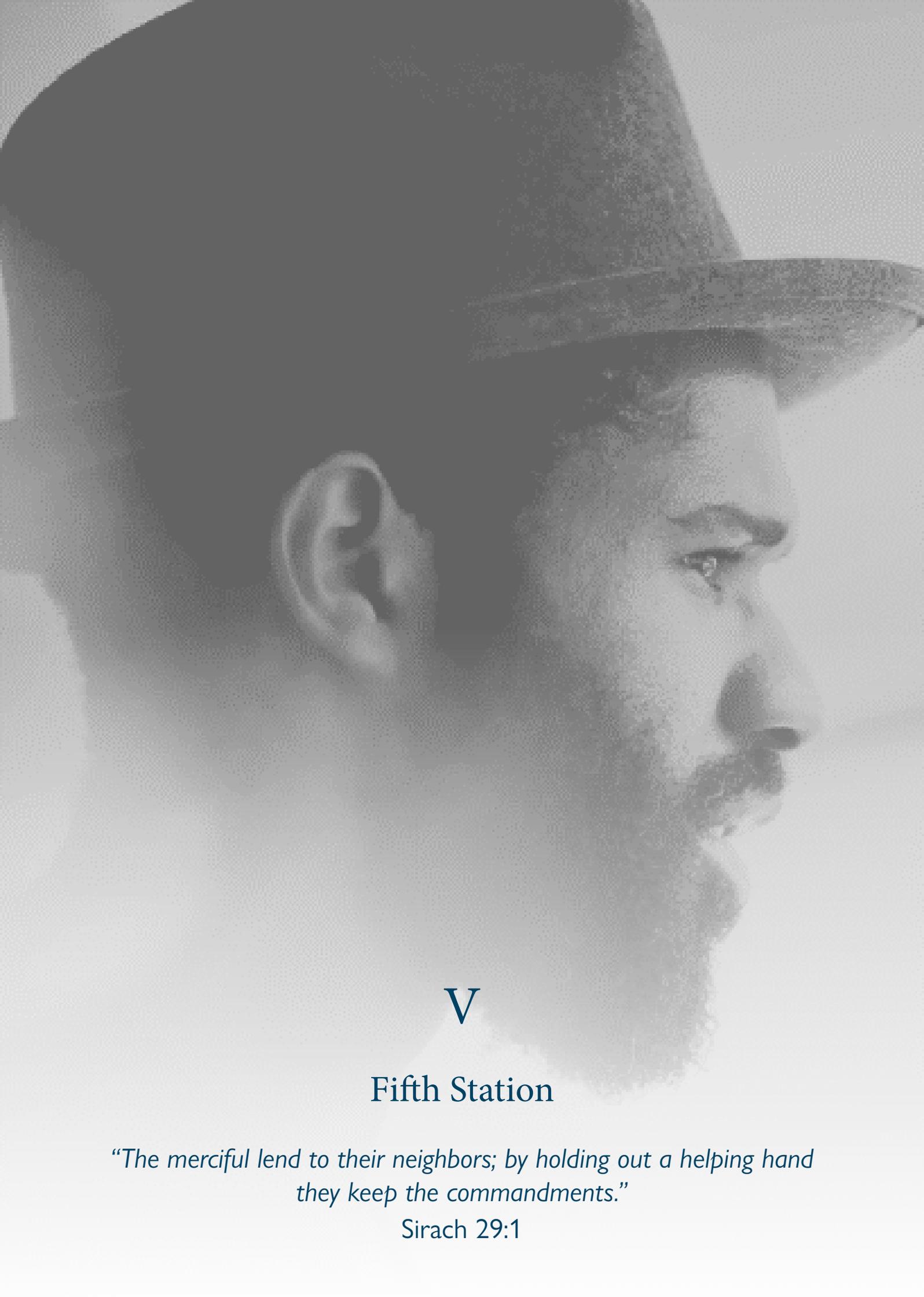
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Is there one who would not weep,
whelmed in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
in tanto supplicio?



V

Fifth Station

“The merciful lend to their neighbors; by holding out a helping hand they keep the commandments.”

Sirach 29:1

Someone Helps Jesus Carry The Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how Jesus was struggling and it seemed He would not make it, and so, forced by the soldiers, Simon of Cyrene came forward to help Him.

Simon, however reluctant at first, was literally a godsend, since without his help, Jesus would have expired along the way. Perhaps we too have been helped at some time by a generous passer-by? Let us pray for a greater love for others and a real sensitivity to their needs that we will always go the extra mile to help. And let us pray for God's blessing on all who have helped and supported us along the way of life.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

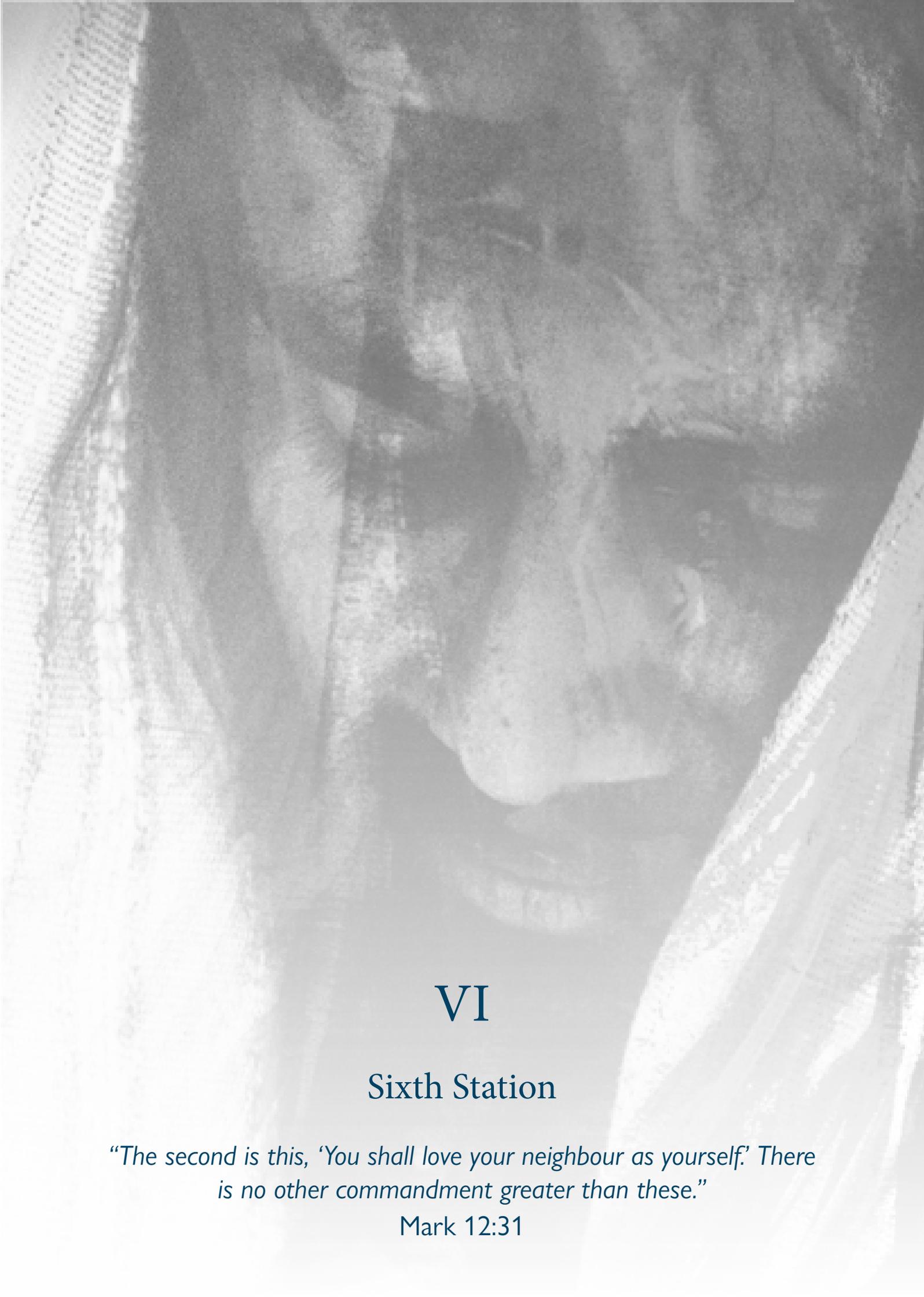
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Can the human heart refrain
from partaking in her pain,
in that Mother's pain untold?

*Quis non posset contristari
Christi Matrem contemplari
dolentem cum Filio?*



VI

Sixth Station

“The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:31

Veronica Wipes the Holy Face of Jesus

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how a woman in the crowd, Veronica, seeing Jesus in terrible suffering and distress, stepped forward to offer Him a towel. In drying Himself with it, He left upon it a sacred image of Himself.

The name Veronica means 'true image' and as disciples, that is what each one of us is called to be. Let us pray for ourselves that we may be true images of Christ. And let us pray for those who govern us, for those who work in the caring professions as public servants, for doctors, nurses and social workers, for those who serve in the armed forces, and for the police and emergency services.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

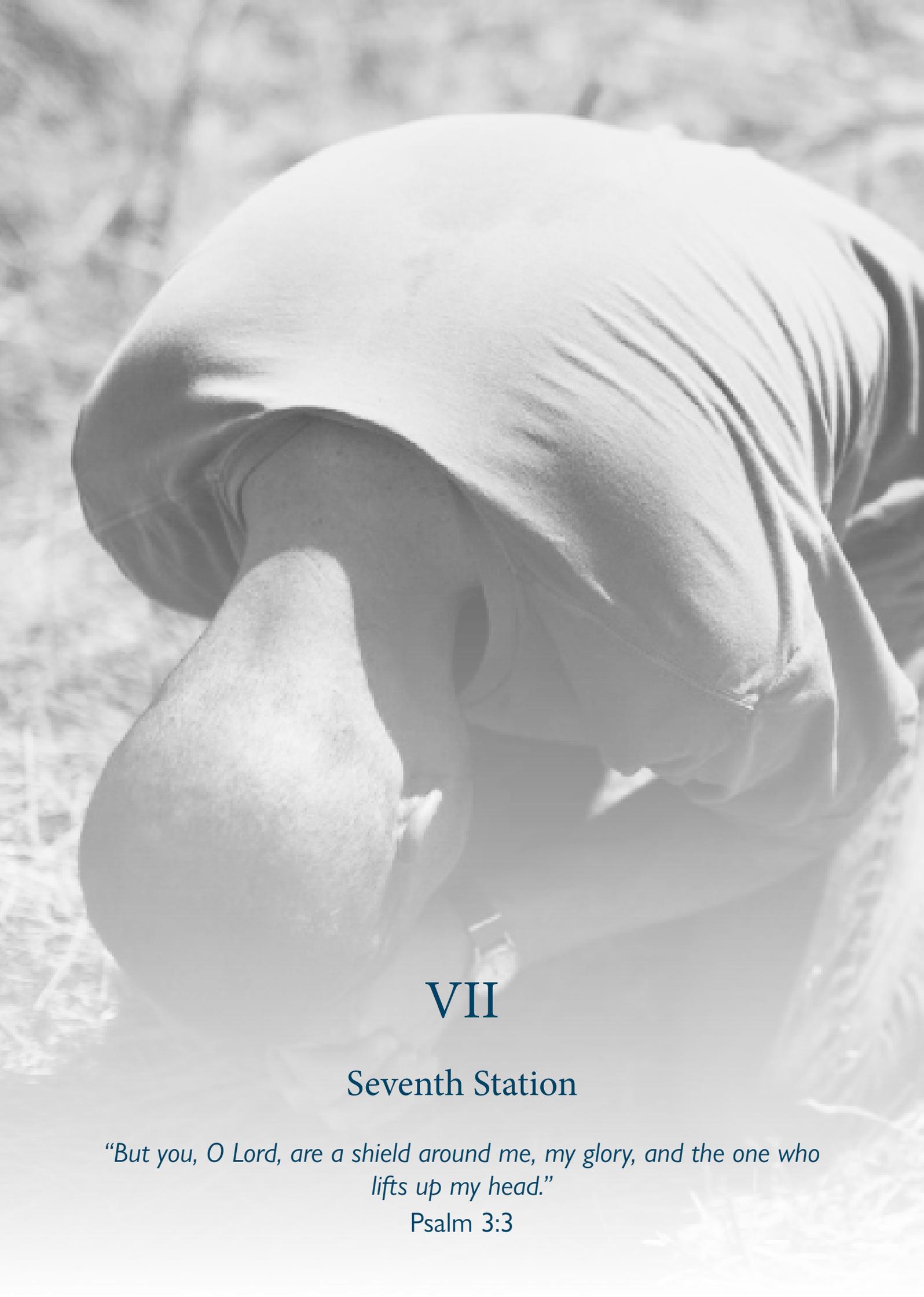
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
she beheld her tender child,
till His spirit forth He sent.

Vidit suum dulcem Natum
moriendo desolatum,
dum emisit spiritum.



VII

Seventh Station

“But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.”

Psalm 3:3

Jesus Falls a Second Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

all the intermediate falls and stumbling of the Lord as He bore the weight of the cross, carrying Himself to Calvary to offer Himself to the Father for our salvation.

How often are our good intentions mere words that we fail to see through? At this station, let us pray for the grace to put our faith into action. And let us pray for all who fail in their endeavours and good intentions, for those who fall into vice and difficulty, into alcoholism and the slavery of drug and sexual addictions, that the Lord will preserve them from despair and help them rise again to take up the cross.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

For the sins of His own nation
saw Him hang in desolation,
all with bloody scourges rent

*Pro peccatis suæ gentis
vidit Iesum in tormentis,
et flagellis subditum.*



VIII

Eighth Station

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”

Proverbs 31:25-26

Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how the women of Jerusalem, seeing Jesus weak, bruised and struggling, wept for Him, whilst He in reply, the Saviour of the world, said: "Weep not for me but for your children."

How many people in life have, like Jesus, given us a brilliant example of self-sacrificing love, when despite their own problems, they have looked out for us? Let us pray for the grace to differentiate what is really important in life from what is not. And let us pray for all the good women and men who have helped us to endure the misfortunes of life, especially our relatives and friends, our teachers and clergy.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

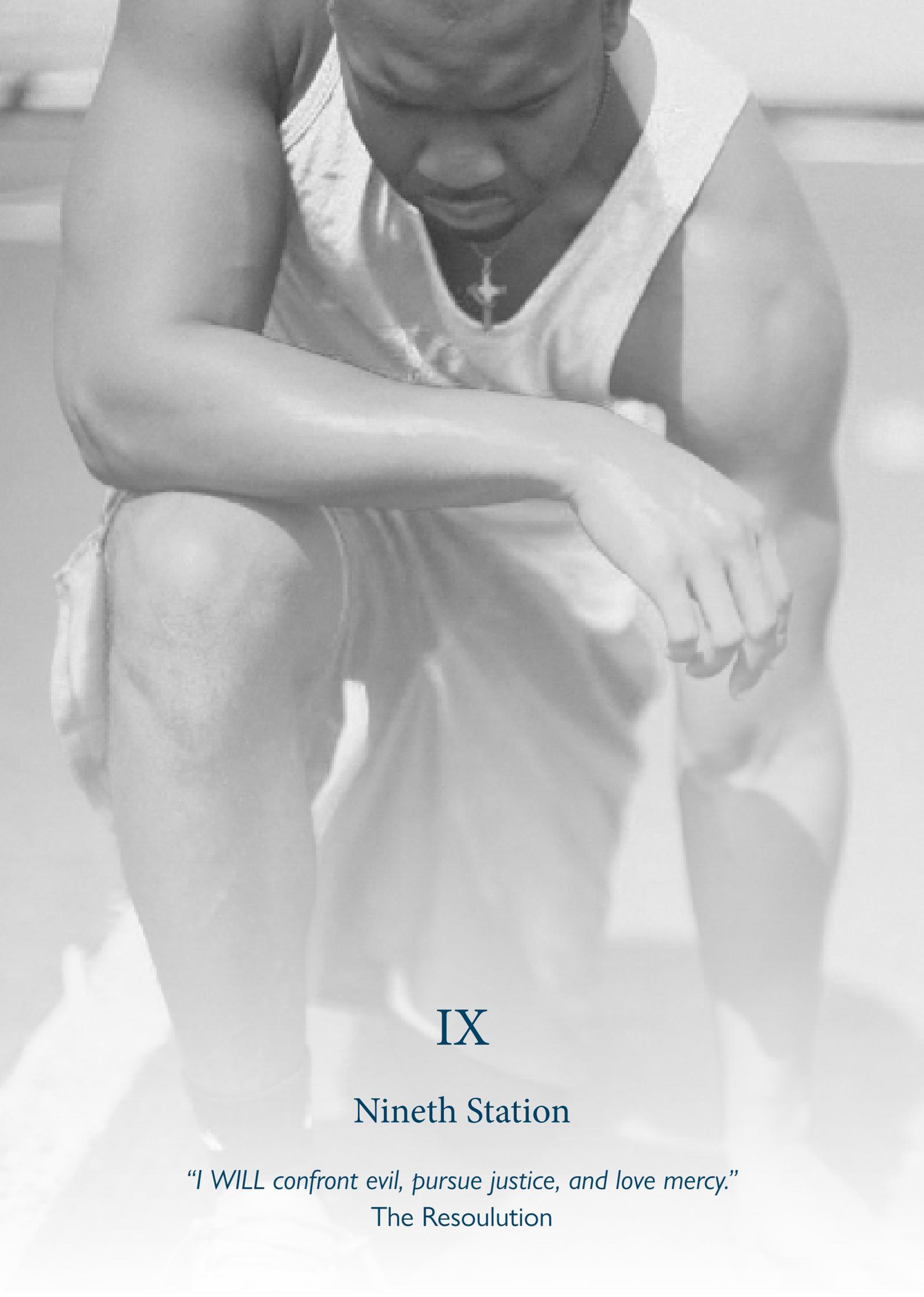
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

O, thou Mother, fount of love,
touch my spirit from above,
make my heart with thine accord.

*Eia Mater, fons amoris
me sentire vim doloris
fac, ut tecum lugeam.*



IX

Nineth Station

"I WILL confront evil, pursue justice, and love mercy."

The Resoulution

Jesus Falls a Third Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how Jesus, the King of Martyrs, gives to the end a perfect example of loving patience and commitment, when, weak and exhausted, He fell on His face at the place where He had come to lay down His life.

When we see how terrible is the suffering of many in our world, our own problems and difficulties, however real, can seem slight and short-lived. Let ask the Lord for the strength always to rise from our falls and to bear the cross with patience and love. And let us pray for all who are weighed down with worry and anxiety, or who suffer depression and mental illness, and for those who counsel and care for them.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Make me feel as thou has felt;
make my soul to glow and melt
with the love of Christ our Lord.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Christum Deum
ut sibi complaceam.



X

Tenth Station

“but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing.”

Mark 4:19

Jesus is Stripped of his Clothes

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

how, having reached Calvary, the place of crucifixion, Jesus was stripped of His clothes so roughly, that His skin was torn away with the cloth to which it adhered.

We often create personas that others will think highly of us, yet when the reality is exposed, our reputation lies in tatters. At this station, let us pray for the grace to be less critical and judgmental others. And let us pray for universal respect and love for the poor and the weak, and for the international community, that there may be peace on earth, with a more equitable distribution of the world's resources.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Holy Mother, pierce me through;
in my heart each wound renew
of my Saviour crucified.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.



XI

Eleventh Station

*“No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*

John 15:13

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

Consider ...

how Jesus, stretching out His arms on the wood, was painfully nailed to the Cross. He, the Lamb of God, was then raised on high and, blood flowing from His wounds, left there to die.

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance and at once there came out blood and water (Jn 19: 34).” Bodily pain can be excruciating, although we thank God for recent advances in medical science and palliative care. Let us pray for anyone in physical pain at this moment, for those who will die today, and for those with cancer and arthritis, that joined to the sacrifice of Jesus they may be consoled by His love.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.

Tui Nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
poenas mecum divide.



XII

Twelfth Station

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

John 3:16

Jesus Dies on the Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You:
Because by Your holy Cross, You have redeemed the world

Consider ...

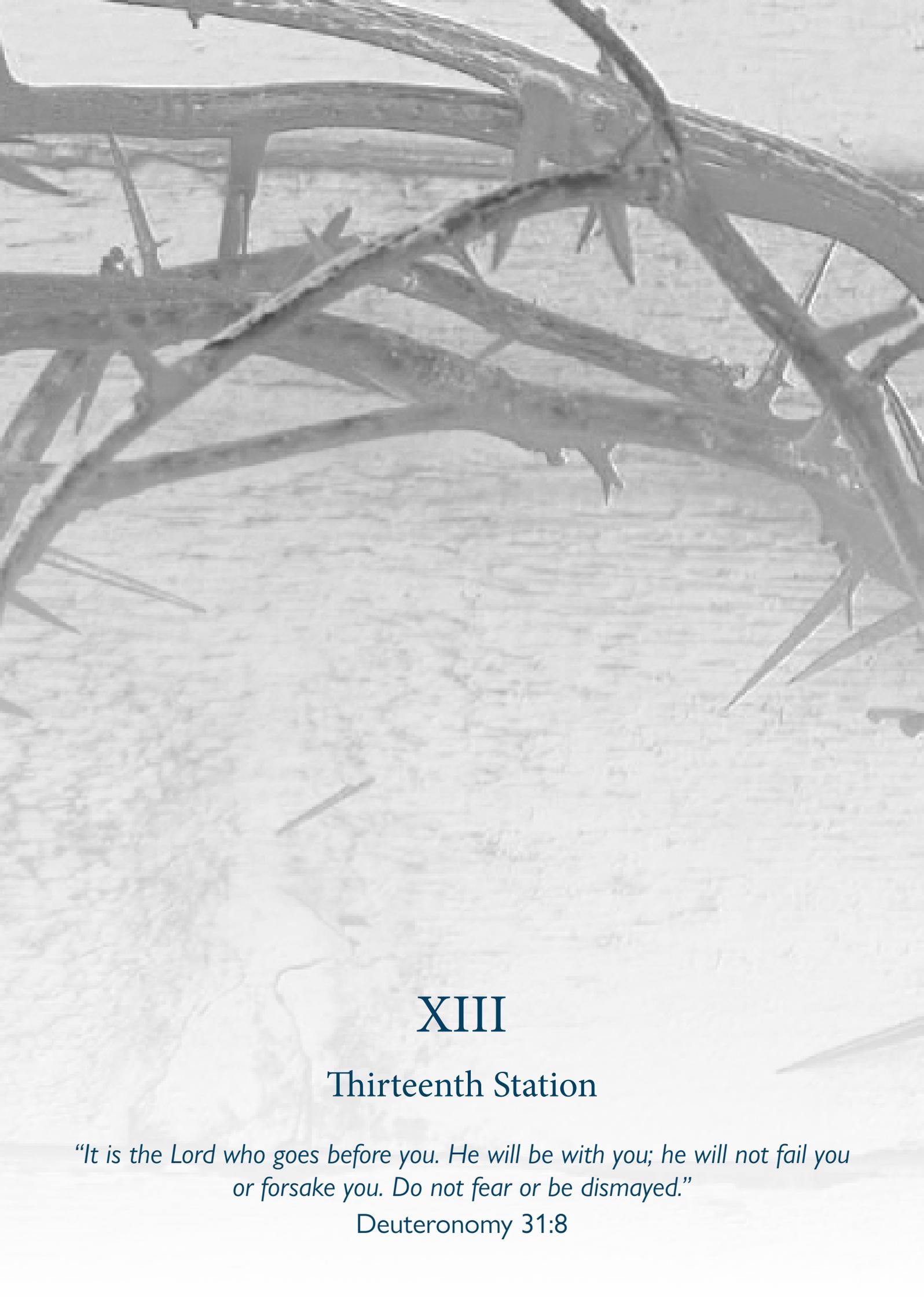
how Jesus, crucified between two criminals, cried out at last “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit,” bowed His head and expired.
(short pause)

“It is not easy to die, even for a good man (Rom 5:7).” Death and dying is daunting, yet by His Cross, Jesus has made it the road to heaven. Let us ask Him to preserve us from a sudden and unprovided death and to grant us a happy death, assisted by the Sacraments of Mother Church and attended by those we love. And let us pray for those who will die alone and unloved, especially the victims of war and prejudice.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.
Never permit me to separate myself from You again.
Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
mourning Him Who mourned for me,
all the days that I may live.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero.



XIII

Thirteenth Station

“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Deuteronomy 31:8

Body of 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

Consider ...

how all the other disciples had deserted Jesus in His last agony, except the Blessed Virgin and John the Beloved Disciple. Now His Sacred Body is taken down from the Cross and tenderly laid in the arms of His Mother.

“Behold, the Lamb of God.” Often these days the natural order, the human body and Mother Nature are mistreated. Let us ask for the grace to live more simply with respect for creation. And let us pray that everyone on earth may come to respect the corporal and the spiritual realms of God’s creation. We ask the Holy Spirit to give the gift of faith to those who do not believe in God or in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.

I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.

Never permit me to separate myself from You again.

Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will.

By the cross with thee to stay,
there with thee to weep and pray,
this I ask of thee to give.

*Iuxta Crucem tecum stare,
et me tibi sociare
in planctu desidero.*

XIV

Fourteenth Station

*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”*

Jeremiah 29:11

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

Consider ...

how, with the help of Joseph of Arimathaea, they wrapped the Body of Jesus in linen cloths with myrrh and aloes, following the Jewish burial custom, and laid it in a tomb. It was Preparation Day and on the Sabbath, as the Law required, they rested.

“Consummatum est: It is accomplished” (Jn 19:30). The Passion of Jesus was for Mary and the Apostles a devastating ordeal, yet we know this was not the end of the story. For He Who once said “I am the Resurrection and the Life” descended into hell to open the gates of Paradise. Let us pray then with confidence for all our loved ones who have died, and for all the faithful departed, that cleansed of their sins, the Lord will admit them into the communion of saints.

I love you, Jesus, my Love above all things.
I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended You.
Never permit me to separate myself from You again.
Grant that I may love You always, then do with me what You will

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence
be Thy mother my defence.
Be Thy Cross my victory.
Amen.

Christe, cum sit hinc exire,
da per Matrem me venire ad
palnam victoriae. Amen.

Prayers at the End

HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, Mother of mercy,
hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To you do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve:
to you do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.
Turn then, most gracious Advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

SALVE Regina, Mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae.
Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, Advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte.
Et Iesum,
benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende:
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria!

Pray for us, most holy Mother of God:

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ

GOD OUR FATHER,

we have devoutly recalled the Way of the Cross that your Beloved Son travelled on His way to Calvary to die for us and for our salvation.

Graciously hear the prayers we have offered to you.

Help us to carry our own cross and all the burdens of life. Make us holy and forgive us our sins,

that one day we may be found worthy

to pass over with Christ to the joys of Paradise.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the intentions of the holy father:

Our Father ...

Hail Mary ...

Glory be ...

