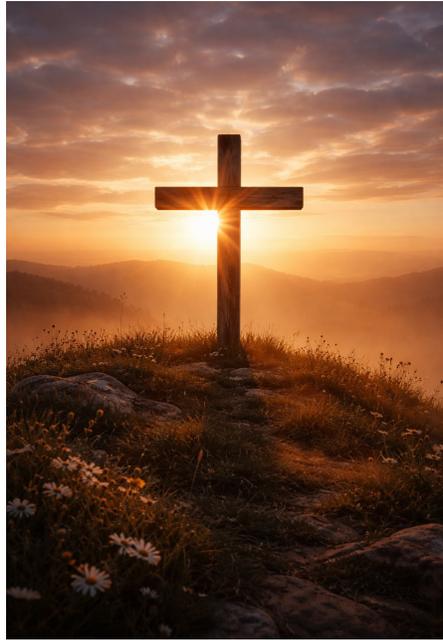


# **Not Alone on the Way of the Cross**

## **Stations of the Cross for Survivors of Clerical Abuse**

*By Faith Hakesley*

*A prayerful reflection for those wounded by members of the Church, reminding them that Christ sees their suffering and walks beside them.*



### **Introduction**

The Stations of the Cross invite us to walk with Jesus through the final hours of His earthly life when He suffered betrayal, humiliation, pain beyond anything we can imagine, and ultimately death on the cross.

For survivors of abuse by clergy or other religious authorities, this journey can feel painfully relatable. Jesus Himself knows what it is to be betrayed, abandoned by many of His friends, unjustly judged, and wounded by the misuse of power. He walks beside those who suffer.

These reflections are offered especially by a survivor for survivors. As you pray through these Stations, may you be comforted with the knowledge that God is with you in your pain. Know that you matter, and God is with you as you heal.

Even in the darkest moments of His Passion, Jesus's story leads us to the Resurrection, therefore reminding us that there is always hope.

### **Opening Prayer**

*Lord Jesus Christ,*

*You walked the road of suffering with courage, patience, and love. You know what betrayal feels like. You know what it means to be misunderstood and wounded by those who held power and by those who should have stood up for you and protected you. You know what it is to carry a heavy cross.*

*Today we bring our pain before you. For those of us who are suffering with anger, grief, confusion, or distance from the Church, please meet us with your love and gentleness. Remind us of the truth that we are deeply loved.*

*Walk with us through these Stations. Help us join our wounds to yours. If there is any part of our lives where there has been darkness, bring light. Bring truth to areas where there has been silence. Bring healing to any areas where there is pain. Bring peace and freedom where there is unresolved anger and resentment.*

*We entrust ourselves to you. Thank you for suffering, dying, and rising again for each and every one of us. Always remind us that love has the final word.*

*Amen.*

## **The Stations of the Cross**

### **First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death**

*“Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Crucify him.”  
(Mark 15:14)*

Jesus stands before those in authority who should have protected Him. He has done no wrong and yet He is unjustly condemned to death. The innocent is accused, the truth is ignored, and justice is denied. Though He is powerless before the human authorities, Savior's heart remains steadfast in love and obedience to the Father.

Many survivors know the pain of standing before authority who dismiss or do not believe them. Perhaps we have spoken truth that was ignored, cried out for help that was denied to us, or been judged by those who should have supported and protected us. The sense of betrayal can cut deeply. It can leave wounds of fear, anger, and sorrow. You did not deserve any of that. The injustice is not yours to carry.

Even in the face of betrayal and abuse by those who should have protected us, Christ stands with us. He understands the weight of being silenced, dismissed, or betrayed. He knows the truth, His heart is always with those who suffer, and His justice will not fail.

*Jesus, even when we see truth being ignored and power misused, remind us that you see all things. You know the truth and what is in our hearts. Bring comfort to those who have been wronged, give courage to those who are weary in their suffering, and assure us that your justice and mercy endure forever.*

### **Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross**

*“And carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.”*  
(John 19:17)

Jesus willingly accepts the cross placed upon His shoulders. Though heavy, He welcomes it out of love for us. Even when the weight feels unbearable, every step He takes is a choice to embrace suffering for the good of others.

Survivors carry crosses they never chose. We bear the pain of wounds inflicted by those we trusted, the memories that haunt us, and the long, often uncertain road toward healing. Abuse by a trusted figure changes us in ways we cannot always anticipate. It can leave us feeling weighed down, broken, or alone. Sometimes we might think the burden will never lift from our shoulders.

Yet, even in the heaviest moments, we are not alone. Christ carries our crosses with us. He strengthens us to keep moving forward. Even when progress is slow or the terrain is hard, His presence gives us courage and hope as we take step by step. Each small movement forward is a triumph of grace and a reminder that love endures even in suffering.

*Jesus, help us remember that we do not carry our crosses alone. Walk beside us, hold us up when we falter, and give us the grace to take even the smallest steps forward. When our crosses feel too heavy, remind us that your strength is greater than our weakness, and that with you, healing is possible.*

### **Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time**

*“But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by His wounds we were healed.”*  
(Isaiah 53:5)

The weight of the cross causes Jesus to fall. Imagine the pain He feels. His body is weak, bruised and battered, His muscles are trembling, and His heart is heavy with sorrow. We can almost see His Blood, sweat, and tears as He struggles under the crushing weight of the cross. Imagine the crowds jeering at Him, mocking His suffering even as He lies broken on the ground. These were some of the very people He lived among. These were the very people He prayed over, healed, preached to, and loved. And yet, look how they treat Him now.

Many of us know this kind of pain. Trauma, betrayal, or deep loss can weigh so heavily that we stumble under it. Sometimes it happens unexpectedly and repeatedly. On days when the memories, grief, or fear feel overwhelming, we can feel powerless, discouraged, or ready to give up.

Jesus understands this all too well. He knows what it is like to be burdened by the weight of human cruelty and yet continue forward. His first fall shows us that stumbling is not failure, and weakness does not mean abandonment. Even in our weakest moments, He is with us.

*Lord, comfort us when we fall beneath the weight of what has been done to us. Remind us that we are never alone, that you see every tear and every struggle. When we stumble, give us the strength to rise again and take the next step. Keep our eyes fixed on you, and let your love guide us forward on the path of healing.*

## **Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother**

*“And you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”  
(Luke 2:35)*

In the midst of suffering, Jesus meets the loving gaze of His mother. It is such a tender yet heartbreaking scene to contemplate.

Imagine Mary's pain upon seeing her beloved Son suffering so much. She sees her precious little boy all grown up and being treated so cruelly despite all the good He has done. At one time, Mary could kiss His cuts and scrapes and hold Jesus when He was little. Now, she can only watch helplessly as His painful journey continues. Yet, her loving presence is surely comforting to Him.

Mary is your Heavenly Mother and she loves you. Just as she comforts her Son, she wishes to comfort you. If you haven't already, invite her onto your journey. Mary will love and care for you and intercede for you in more ways than one.

*Jesus, help us to call upon your Mother especially in times of need. Holy Mother, look upon us with tenderness. When we feel alone or misunderstood, remind us that your mother's love is with us always.*

## **Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross**

*“They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.”  
(Mark 15:21)*

Simon is compelled to help Jesus carry His cross. Even the Savior of the world humbly accepts the help, and the experience is surely life-changing for Simon.

Healing often requires help. This help can be hard to accept at times. So often, we embark onto our healing journey thinking we are strong and independent and can do it all on our own. The truth is, God wants us to accept help. He not only sends us His grace, He also sends people into our lives who can help carry our crosses. Sometimes this help comes from unexpected sources. Let's ask for the grace to be open to accepting help. Remember that we always have the help of Jesus, Mary, and the saints in Heaven who are ready to intercede for us.

*Lord, bless those who listen, believe, and walk beside survivors with compassion and humility.*

## **Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus**

*“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine... you did for me.”  
(Matthew 25:40)*

Veronica offers a simple yet tender act of mercy. She wipes the disfigured and bloodied face of Christ with her veil. It is all she can give Him in that moment, yet Our Lord receives this small comfort with love.

Sometimes it is the small moments along our own painful journeys that mean the most. We remember

the person who listened to us, who believed our story, who stood beside us when we felt alone. Perhaps someone (even a stranger) offered us a kind word, a prayer, or a quiet gesture of compassion. These small acts of love and mercy can become signs of hope in the midst of suffering.

God also sends us gentle reminders of His love. In the darkness, He gives small glimmers of grace. Maybe it's a moment of peace, the support of a trusted individual, the courage to take another step forward, or even the breath in our lungs. And when we offer even our smallest acts of love to Him, they matter. Like Veronica's veil, what seems small to the rest of the world can be precious to Christ.

*Jesus, I offer my healing journey to you. Thank you for the quiet signs of your presence along the path. Thank you for the people who show compassion and remind us that we are seen, believed, and valued. Help us to recognize the small gifts you send, and remind us to offer our own acts of love to you in return.*

### **Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time**

*“The Lord gives sight to the blind. The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.”  
(Psalm 146:8)*

Jesus falls again beneath the crushing weight of His cross. He is exhausted and His strength is nearly gone as the burden He carries presses Him to the ground once more. Still, He does not remain there. Jesus loves each and every one of us so much that He rises again to continue the path to Calvary.

Healing is rarely a straight path. Old wounds can reopen, and discouragement can return when we least expect it. One moment we feel as though we are moving forward. The next moment we can feel as though we are moving backwards. Sometimes we fall into grief, anger, fear, or exhaustion, and it may seem as though we will never have the strength to stand again.

In these moments, we remember that Christ Himself fell beneath His cross. He knows the weight of suffering. He understands the exhaustion of the journey and the pain of carrying wounds that seem too heavy to bear. Yet even in His weakness, He continues forward. He shows us that falling does not mean our journey is over.

Even when we fall and even when we feel like we can't possibly take another step, we are not abandoned. God's mercy meets us wherever we are. It gently lifts us and helps us take the next step forward, even if it's a small one.

*Lord, when we struggle on the path toward healing, remind us that it is your love and mercy that lift us up again. When we feel discouraged or overwhelmed, give us the grace to rise up and continue on once more. Help us to trust that you walk beside us always even when the road is difficult.*



### **Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem**

*“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)*

Even in the midst of His own suffering, Jesus pauses to notice the sorrow of others. He carries the heavy weight of the cross, and yet His heart remains open to the pain of others. He is attentive and compassionate. Jesus reminds us that suffering is never meaningless when it is united with His. When we surrender every part of our wounds to Him, He can transform even our deepest pain into something beautiful that bears grace, healing, and hope. Trust that He will bring beauty from whatever feels broken within you.

When we have suffered so deeply, we might sometimes feel as though our pain has gone unseen or unheard. Yet, Christ sees every wound and holds our every tear with tenderness. He invites us to place our suffering into His pierced hands so it can become part of His redeeming love for the world.

*Lord, help the Church to truly see the suffering of survivors. Give all your children the grace to open their hearts so they listen with humility, compassion, and courage. Even when human hearts fall short, remind us that you remain with us always. May those who have been wounded surrender all to you and find understanding, support, and healing in your presence.*

### **Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time**

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.”  
(2 Corinthians 12:9)*

Jesus falls for a third time. Imagine His exhaustion. After everything He has already endured—the scourging, the crown of thorns, the long and painful walk—His body is battered and bloodied, and He is unable to take another step without the heavy cross pressing Him to the ground once more. It's hard to fathom that, even in this moment of extreme weakness, He still does not abandon the path before Him.

Some of our wounds run deep. Survivors know the weariness of carrying that kind of pain for many years. The weight of those wounds can feel overwhelming. When painful memories or emotions rise to the surface, facing them and finding the strength to keep moving forward can feel almost impossible at times. Yet healing often begins with the courage to acknowledge what hurts. Even when our steps feel small and uncertain, even when we fall, we always move toward the hope of the Resurrection.

Christ understands our weariness. By His own falling beneath the cross, He shows us that He knows the depth of human suffering and carries us through it.

*Lord, give us the grace to face our suffering honestly. Help us to persevere and to take the next steps toward healing, trusting always that we do not walk this road alone. When we feel that we cannot go on, remind us that your strength is greater than our weakness. When our crosses feel too heavy, give us the courage to rise again and continue forward.*

### **Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments**

*“They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.”  
(John 19:24)*

Wounded and exhausted, Jesus is stripped of His clothes before the crowd. He is exposed to the gaze of those who mock and ridicule Him. Most of us can imagine the cruelty of just some of the humiliation and shame He felt in that moment.

Abuse often leaves survivors carrying a deep and painful sense of shame, even though the real shame belongs to those who caused the harm. Still, that burden can settle deep within us and linger for years. Shame can make us feel exposed, unworthy, or somehow responsible for what happened to us. It can hold us captive in silence and self-blame and can eat away at our sense of worth. This can make it difficult to see ourselves as God sees us.

Jesus still stands with us in that place of humiliation. He knows what it is to be stripped of dignity before others. He allowed Himself to endure this suffering out of love for us, and He shows that shame and humiliation do not have the final word. Our true identity is not defined by what others have done to us. Rather, it is defined by the love of God who created us and calls us His beloved sons and daughters.

*Lord, remove any false shame placed upon our wounded hearts. Free us from the burdens that were never ours to carry. Clothe survivors with the love, dignity, and peace that come from being your beloved children. Remind us that we are worthy of compassion, healing, and hope. Help us to see us as you see us.*

### **Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross**

*“Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.”  
(Luke 23:34)*

Jesus is cruelly nailed to the cross. Imagine the sound of the hammer as the nails pierce His hands and feet. He did not deserve this suffering and yet He willingly accepts it out of love for us. Jesus completely innocent and yet He allows Himself to endure this agony for us so that we might have Eternal Life.

Some wounds are inflicted by those who should have protected us. Survivors know the pain of being harmed by those who were trusted, respected, or meant to care for them. Such betrayal can pierce us deeply, leaving wounds that are slow to heal. These experiences can bind our hearts with anger, resentment, grief, and confusion.

These feelings are a natural response to injustice and betrayal. They reveal the depth of the wrong that was done. Yet God desires something more for us than to remain bound by that pain. With His grace, healing and freedom are possible. Forgiveness does not erase what happened and it does not excuse the evil done to us. It is a journey that can take time and it may even be something we must return to again and again. But little by little, God can loosen the chains that bind our hearts and lead us toward peace and freedom.

Jesus Himself understands betrayal. He was abandoned by friends, unjustly condemned, and nailed to a cross by those He came to save. He walks closely with all of us who carry wounds of betrayal and injustice.

*Jesus, you know full well the pain of betrayal. Hold the hearts of survivors and remind us that the evil done to us does not define who we are. Lead us gently toward the freedom that forgiveness brings, and fill our wounded hearts with your peace and healing love.*

### **Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross**

*“Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.”  
(Mark 15:37)*

Jesus dies and hangs lifeless upon the cross, and all appears lost. In this moment, it seems as though darkness has won. There is silence, the sky grows dark, and hope itself seems to fade. Those who loved Him can only watch and grieve while wondering how such suffering could end this way.

Yet even in the darkest moments, we know it is not the end. Christ does not abandon us. In His final breath, Our Lord entrusts everything to the Father. Though it appears that death and cruelty have triumphed, something far deeper is taking place. Though we grieve with Mary and those Jesus loved, remember that we cannot experience the joy and hope of the Resurrection without the pain and sorrow of Good Friday.

Through His suffering and death Jesus enters fully into the depths of human suffering so that no pain is ever wasted. No one is beyond the reach of God’s redeeming love. Love has not been defeated. Rather, it has triumphed! Jesus reveals the immeasurable depth of God’s love for our wounded world. The darkness of Good Friday painful and it's real but, even in a moment when everything seems lost, God is already preparing the dawn of resurrection.

For those who suffer deeply, there can be moments when hope feels distant and the weight of pain feels too heavy to bear. In those moments, we can gaze upon the cross and remember Christ's love for us and that He is with us in our suffering. He knows our grief, and He holds our broken hearts close to His own.

*Lord, when suffering feels overwhelming and the darkness seems too great, remind us of your love that is stronger than death. Help us to trust that even when we cannot yet see the light, you are at work. You*

*will always bring us hope and new life.*

### **Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross**

*“They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom.”  
(John 19:40)*

Jesus is gently taken down from the cross and placed in the loving arms of His sorrowful mother. The suffering of Calvary has ended, and those who love Him now care for His wounded body with such love, reverence, and tenderness.

After the brutality of the crucifixion, we witness another deeply moving moment of the loving bond between Mother and Child. Mary holds the broken body of her Son. She is filled with sorrow and compassion as she cradles Him in her arms as she once did when He was a child on that first Christmas. We see her grief, and we see her profound love that does not turn away from suffering.

When we suffer deeply, we need tenderness, rest, and care. Survivors often carry wounds that require time, patience, compassion, and safety so that healing can begin. Just as Jesus was gently cared for after His suffering, our wounded hearts also need to be held with kindness and understanding.

God often brings healing through the compassion of others. Maybe it's through those who listen without judgment, through those who offer comfort and respect boundaries, and through those who help create places of safety and trust. These moments of tenderness can be so healing and become the beginning of our restoration.

*Jesus and Mary, hold survivors in your compassionate arms. When we are wounded and weary, surround us with people who will care for us with gentleness and respect. Lead us toward safety, healing, and peace.*

### **Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb**

*“They laid Jesus there.” (John 19:42)*

Jesus is placed in the silence of the tomb. The stone is rolled into place, and all seems quiet and still. The grief is heavy. To those who loved Jesus, it must have felt as though all hope had been buried with Him.

Sometimes healing happens quietly and slowly in the hidden places of our hearts. Survivors often walk through long seasons of waiting. The pain may remain ever present, and the path forward is not always clear. It can feel as though nothing is changing, and we might even start to think that our wounds will never heal.

God is at work even in the tomb. In the stillness and darkness, new life begins to stir in this hidden place. The seeds of hope, healing, and restoration are often planted in silence, and God's grace is at work beneath the surface before it is ever visible to the eye.

*Jesus, bring the hope of the Resurrection to every wounded heart. Where there is pain, bring healing. Where there is darkness, bring light. Where there is despair, plant the seeds of new life. Remind us that even in the quiet and hidden places, you are at work, and there is always hope.*

### **Fifteenth Station: Jesus Rises from the Dead**

*"He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."  
(Matthew 28:6)*

Christ is risen! The stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty, and death itself has been defeated. The Resurrection reveals that suffering and death do not have the final word. Love is stronger than fear, mercy is greater than pain, and God's light shines into every shadow.

For survivors, the Resurrection is a powerful reminder: new life is possible. Even after long seasons of grief, betrayal, or fear, God can bring hope and renewal. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, hearts that have been wounded can be restored to new life. Healing, peace, joy, and freedom are always possible through God's grace.

*Jesus, you have conquered death and brought new life. Pour the hope of the Resurrection into every heart that has been wounded. Let your healing love shine into even the darkest of places. Teach us to rise with you each day, confident that not even the deepest pain can separate us from your love.*

### **Closing Prayer**

*Lord Jesus,*

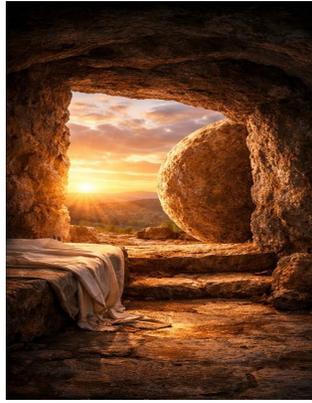
*You know every single wound we carry. Nothing is hidden from you.*

*Bring healing, peace, freedom, and hope to your children especially those of us healing from the scourge of clerical abuse. Strengthen those seeking justice and healing. Purify and renew your Church. Raise up shepherds who protect the vulnerable and serve you and your children with humility. Remind every wounded heart that no darkness is greater than your love. Your grace can bring light even in the darkest of places. Thank you, Lord!*

*We surrender our wounds to you.*

*Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.*

*Amen.*



## **A Final Word to Survivors**

If you are a survivor of abuse (especially abuse by a member of the clergy or another religious authority) please know that what was done to you was wrong, the harm you experienced was not your fault, and the shame does not belong to you.

You are God's precious child and your dignity comes from Him alone.

Healing takes time, and prayer can sometimes feel difficult. Yet, Christ sees your suffering and wants to hold you on your journey. Unite your suffering to His, and He will bring beautiful things from the pain.

*Dear one, you are never alone on this road! Even in the wounds that cut the deepest, Christ's love remains. Remember that your story is still unfolding in His hands.*

## **An Invitation to Clergy and Church Leaders**

Priests, bishops, and spiritual leaders are invited to pray these Stations with abuse survivors. Praying for survivors, listening to them, and accompanying them with humility and compassion are essential parts of the Church's path toward healing and renewal.

May these reflections be an opportunity to remember that Christ suffered for us all, and that He holds a special place in His heart for those who have been wounded by the very people who should have represented Him.

As we reflect on His Passion, may we humble ourselves before God. Let us turn back to Him with sincere repentance and ask for His mercy where we have failed to love, listen, and protect the vulnerable.

May we learn to recognize the suffering of those wounded within His Church and respond not with silence or defensiveness, but with courage, compassion, and a renewed commitment to truth, justice, and the protection of the vulnerable.

*Lord, purify our hearts, deepen our humility, and guide your Church toward greater holiness and healing. May we always remember that Christ does not abandon His Church and that He continually calls us to truth, repentance, and renewal.*

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