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photo: <http://mtcarmelcubs.org/events/2004/StationsOfCross/index.html>

The Way of the Cross for Children **Adapted from the method of St. Alphonsus de Liguori**

Introduction

The first year that we were considering the Catholic faith, we were invited to a Catholic church during Lent to attend the Stations of the Cross. We used a little book of the method of St. Alphonsus de Liguori (probably originally written during the 18th century). It was a strange and moving service, very solemn. One of things that stuck in my head was the little verse that was sung following each station (later I learned that this was the Stabat Mater or Sorrowful Mother). Somehow there were echoes of the ancient practice of the way of the cross in that little country parish. I can't remember ever being a part of such a reverent Stations of the Cross service since that first time.

Now, with my children, I've tried to find a way to pray the Station of the Cross at home, especially during Lent, that will be meaningful to us all. I still prefer the St. Alphonsus de Liguori Way of the Cross, but much of the language is too difficult and the prayers are too long for my children's attention spans. I don't know if good St. Alphonsus would approve, but I decided finally to write out a paraphrase that my kids could understand so I would not be winging it or stopping to explain every few minutes. I made a strong effort to be true to the spirit of the original meditations -- retaining many of the same words and nearly all of the same concepts. The words of the Stabat Mater have not been altered.

With children the pictures of the Stations are of great importance. We printed pictures off of the internet and glued them to poster-board so we can hang them up during Lent. A good friend also suggested a method for praying the Stations using candles. You begin with fourteen lit candles and extinguish one candle at the end of each station. At the end of the Stations you are left in the dark silence with Christ in His tomb. You could then light one final candle to represent the hope of Easter, but that is optional.

The events of the passion are graphic and some young children might be upset by the images of Christ's suffering that are a part of the reflections and prayers. A parent should look over this little guide first and decide how much his or her children can handle. Your family can do the whole thing, chosen parts, or just announce the stations and look at the pictures. If you choose to do it all and you have good readers, assign one person to announce the Station and read the Verse (We adore you...), one person to say the Reflection and one person to say the Prayer. Everyone can recite the Response (Because by your...), say the Glory Be, and sing the Stabat Mater verses at the end (or hum along).

The Meditations

Preparatory Prayer:

Lord Jesus, You made this journey to die for me because of your great love, even though I don't always love you as I should. But now I love you with my whole heart and I'm sorry for all my sins. Forgive me, Jesus, and let me take this journey of the cross with you. As you died for love of me, I would die for love of you. In life and death I want to always be with you.

Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: After Jesus was whipped and crowned with thorns, the judge Pilate said he had to die on the cross, although he had done nothing wrong.

Prayer: It was not just Pilate who made you die, Lord, it was my own sins. You died so that I could be with you in heaven. I love you Jesus, more than I love myself. I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. Please help me never be separated from You. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

The Complete Stabat Mater in English

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

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

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

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

O how sad and sore distressed
was that Mother, highly blest,
of the sole-begotten One.

By the Cross with thee to stay,
there with thee to weep and pray,
is all I ask of thee to give.

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

Virgin of all virgins blest!,
Listen to my fond request:
let me share thy grief divine;

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

Let me, to my latest breath,
in my body bear the death
of that dying Son of thine.

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

Wounded with His every wound,
steep my soul till it hath swooned,
in His very Blood away;

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
she beheld her tender Child
All with scourges rent:

Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,
lest in flames I burn and die,
in His awful Judgment Day.

For the sins of His own nation,
saw Him hang in desolation,
Till His spirit forth He sent.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
by Thy Mother my defense,
by Thy Cross my victory;

O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
make my heart with thine accord:

While my body here decays,
may my soul Thy goodness praise,
safe in paradise with Thee.
Amen.

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

Holy Mother! pierce me through,
in my heart each wound renew
of my Savior crucified:

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/BVM/SMDolorosa.html>

Latin version also available at this site.

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

Station 14: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

V: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
R: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: The disciples carried Jesus' body to bury it. His holy mother arranged his body gently as it lay. Then they closed the tomb and went away.

Prayer: Jesus, I kiss the stone that lays over your tomb. But you rose on the third day. By your resurrection, make me rise with you on the last day and be with you forever in heaven, to praise you and love you always. I love you and I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will. Glory Be.

By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.

Concluding Prayers (kneeling if possible):

Kind, sweet Jesus, I kneel before you. With all my soul, I pray that you help me have faith, hope and charity, as well as true sorrow for my sins, and the plan to do better. I think with love about your five wound on your hands, feet and side and remember the words of the prophet David, "They have pierced my hands and my feet, they have numbered all my bones."
Our Father and Hail Mary.

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.

Station 2: Jesus is made to carry His cross

V: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: As Jesus started His journey with the cross on His shoulders, He thought of us, knowing He was going to save us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I will have hard things to do in this life. Please make me strong so that I can do all things with patience and do them well. I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. Please help me never be separated from You. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.
Glory Be.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword has passed.

Station 3: Jesus Falls the First Time

V: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus' body was weak. He had been beaten and crowned with thorns. He almost couldn't walk with the heavy cross on His back. The soldiers continued to hit Him and He fell several times on His journey.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, the cross must have been so heavy but it was my sins which hurt you most. By your love during the first fall,

please help me not to fall in sin. I love you, Jesus, with all my heart. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

Oh, how sad and sore distressed
Was that mother highly blessed
Of the sole-begotten One!

Station 4: Jesus meets His Sorrowful Mother

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus met His mother on His way to the cross. He looked at Mary and Mary looked at Him. Their hearts were hurt, as with arrows, because of the great love between them.

Prayer: Most loving Jesus, by your sadness when you met your mother, give me the grace to love your mother too. Mary, my queen, by your sorrow when you met your Son, pray for me that I will always remember Jesus' love poured out on the cross. I love you, Jesus, and I'm sorry for my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.
Glory Be.

Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son.

Station 5: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Station 12: Jesus is Raised upon the Cross and Dies

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus hung on the cross for three hours. Finally, he let go of his body, bowed his head, and died.

Prayer: O Jesus, I kiss the cross on which you died for love of me. Because of my sins, I am the one who should have died. But your death is my hope. By your death, Jesus, give me the grace that, when I die, I will be full of love for you. My soul is in your hands. I love you, Jesus, with all my heart. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will. Glory Be.

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

Station 13: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross and Placed in the Arms of His Mother

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

R: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection: After Jesus died, two of his friends, Joseph and Nicodemus, took his body off of the cross. They placed him in the arms of his mother, who held him with great love.

Prayer: Mother of Sorrows, for the love of your son, accept me as your servant, and pray to Him for me. Jesus, you died for me. Let me love you because you are all that I want. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.
Glory Be.

Reflection: The soldiers tore off Jesus' clothes. They did not care that they hurt him again. And yet the Saviour loved them.

Prayer: Innocent Jesus, by your pain, help me get rid of all the things that I might care about more than you, so that I can love you above all. You are the only one who deserves all of my love. I love you, Jesus, with all my heart. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

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

Station 11: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: When they threw Jesus down on the cross, Jesus stretched out his arms and offered His life to God to save us. They nailed him on the cross and then lifted up the cross to let him die.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, take my heart, full of love, to the cross with you, so that it will be with you always. I love you more than myself. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

Holy Mother, pierce me through!
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

Reflection: The Jews noticed that Jesus was weak and would die soon. But they didn't want him to die on the way, they wanted him to die on the cross. So they made a man named Simon help him carry the cross.

Prayer: Sweet Jesus, Simon did not want to carry the cross with you, but I would. I will accept whatever hard things you have for me, even to my death, so that I can be with you. You died because you loved me, and I would die for you. I love you, Jesus, and I'm sorry for my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

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

Station 6: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: The holy woman, Veronica, saw that Jesus was covered with sweat and blood. She gave him a cloth to wipe his face. When she got the cloth back, the dirt, blood and sweat had made a picture of his face.

Prayer: Beloved Jesus, your face was beautiful before, but then it was made dirty and ugly. My soul was also beautiful when I was baptized, but I have it made it ugly with my sins. You alone can make it beautiful again. By your sacrifice, O Jesus, make my soul beautiful again. I am sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

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

Station 7: Jesus Falls the Second Time

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus fell under the cross a second time. When he fell, our Lord felt all of his cuts and pains again.

Prayer: Gentle Jesus, how many times have you forgiven me? And how many times have I fallen into sin again? By your fall, help me keep living in your grace until I die. When I'm tempted to sin, may I ask for your help. I love you, Jesus, with all of my heart. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender child,
All with bloody scourges rent.

Station 8: The Women of Jerusalem Weep over Jesus

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: The women saw Jesus, hurt and bloody, and they felt great sadness for him as he walked along. But Jesus said to them, "Weep not for me, but for your children."

Prayer: My Jesus, I am very sad for my own sins against you, you who loves me so much. Because I love you, I am sad that my sins

have hurt you. My Jesus, I love you more than myself. I am sorry for all of my sins. Help me never to sin again. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

For the sins of His own nation

Saw him hang in desolation

Till His spirit forth He sent.

Station 9: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Reflection: Jesus fell for the third time. He was weak and the soldiers were mean. They tried to hurry him when he was barely strong enough to move.

Prayer: Jesus, by your weakness on the way to the cross, give me strength so that I will never care what other people think about me if it takes me away from you. I love you, Jesus, with all my heart. I'm sorry for all of my sins. Help me love you always and then do with me what you will.

Glory Be.

O thou Mother! Fount of love,

Touch my spirit from above.

Make my heart with thine accord.

Station 10: Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

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

R: Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.