



Stations of the Cross 2021

An Economy Without Human Trafficking

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STATION 1: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Country: Brazil

Leader: We worship you, Lord Jesus Christ, and we bless you

All: For by your Holy Cross, you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Lk 23, 23-25

They, however, continued to shout with all their might, demanding that he be crucified. And their screams got louder and louder. So Pilate decided that their request would be granted. He freed those they wanted, who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder. As for Jesus, he gave him up to their will.



Reflection:

Jesus continues to be sentenced to death in the bodies of so many people who are victims of trafficking, humiliation, and exploitation within a dominant economic system that has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the conditions of exploitation of work, unemployment, hunger and misery. When people are not united in support of life, they are supporting death and allowing evil to prevail.

In the mid-21st century, there are now more enslaved people on our planet than ever before. One of the main causes of Human Trafficking is the model of globalization instituted worldwide, which proves to be a great concentrator of wealth in some regions of the planet and in some social classes and, on the other hand, cause great poverty and misery for much of the world population increasingly excluded from any development process.

Human trafficking is a crime that generates profits of unimaginable proportions. UN data confirms that it is the third largest illegal source of profit in the world, second only to arms and drug trafficking. Human trafficking generates \$150 billion a year.

Pope Francis has said that an economy without human trafficking is an economy that takes care of people. For example, one that offers jobs that contribute to a healthy social construction. It is an economy with market rules that promote justice and, therefore, it is a courageous economy which “combines legitimate profit with the promotion of employment and decent working conditions.” It is a firm foundation combined with solidarity.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, you humbled yourself to save us from our weaknesses,
enable us to enter into true communion with our brothers and sisters
who are victims of human trafficking, illegal migration, and all kinds of exploitation of human
beings. Cover with your mantle, all the people who are victims of human trafficking, so they
can find a helpful hand that helps them recover and frees them from this harsh reality.
Pull out all the roots of fear and indifference from our hearts,
that prevent us from recognizing you in these brothers and sisters,
and give us encouragement to bear witness that your Church has no borders,
true mother of all!

AMEN





STATION 2: JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS ON HIS SHOULDERS

Country: Colombia

Leader: Come to me who are tired, carrying heavy loads

All: And I will give you rest.

Biblical Text: John 19:17

He, bearing his cross, went out to the place called Calvary, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.



Reflection:

Jesus carries on his cross so many women, men, girls and boys who are victims of human trafficking - sold as merchandise, deprived of liberty, denied their rights, treated as objects, and violating their dignity.

How many victims of human trafficking day after day seek protection and find indifference from the government? Thousands of Colombians: men, women, girls and boys continue to suffer, walking in silence with the cross of being sexually exploited, subjected to forced labor, performing inhumane labor, in servile conditions, the armed groups who do not respect the age of the boys and girls becoming victims of forced recruitment, and forced begging among others.

In Colombia, human trafficking has increased alarmingly due to the massive migration of Venezuelans and internal migration generated by armed groups. The Ministry of the Interior pointed out that between 2013 and 2020 victims of trafficking in Colombia increased from 60 to 686, which means that there was an increase of more than 1000% of the cases during that period. 82% of these victims are women and most of the victims are sent abroad, with more than 50% coming from the Coffee Region, Antioquia, Bogotá and Valle del Cauca, whose main destinations are China, Mexico, Spain, Argentina and Ecuador.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, help us to fight all forms of slavery. Transform the hearts of traffickers, so that human trafficking comes to an end. In your infinite love, lighten the cross of the victims of human trafficking and help us to commit ourselves to the eradication of this scourge on the body of Christ.

AMEN





STATION 3: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Country: Ecuador

Leader: We adore you, oh Christ, and we bless you.

All: For by your Holy Cross you redeemed the world.

Biblical Text: (Ps 119, 25)

My soul is stuck to the dust: revive me with your words.



Reflection:

Our Savior, his strength exhausted, weakened by the harshness of the physical and moral sufferings that they caused him that night, fasting and without having slept, could hardly take a few steps before he soon fell under the weight of the cross. Through momentum and all the strength of his will he managed to get up and continue on his way.

Let us contemplate in the first fall of Jesus, those who have fallen into the networks of human trafficking. According to the 2020 report, in Ecuador traffickers exploit men, women and children in sex trafficking and forced labor inside and outside the country, including in domestic servitude, begging, banana and palm plantations, floriculture, shrimp farming, fishing, clandestine workshops, street vending, mining and other areas of the country's informal economy. Sex trafficking is more prevalent in the coastal provinces, including El Oro, Guayas, Manabí, Los Ríos (60% of the underage victims are from Babahoyo) and the border provinces: Carchi, Esmeraldas, Loja and Sucumbíos.

Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, because fraudulent employment opportunities particularly target those in an irregular migratory situation.

Human trafficking subdues and weakens people so that they do not react and remain subdued to the will of the traffickers. We pray for the victims of this crime, to have the necessary strength to get up, and live with freedom and dignity once again.

Let Us Pray:

Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross made you fall. The weight of pride knocks us down. The pride of thinking that a human can be transformed into a kind of merchandise which can be bought and sold, while, in reality, with these actions human dignity is more and more deeply tarnished. Lord help us because we have fallen. Help us to renounce our destructive pride and, learning from your humility, to rise again.

AMEN





STATION 4: JESUS ENCOUNTERS HIS MOTHER

Country: Peru

Leader: Lord may I find myself next to your mother

All: At all moments of my life.

Biblical Text: Luke 2: 33-35

Simon said to Mary, his mother. "Look, this child will bring the people of Israel, either fallen or resurrected. It will be a sign of contradiction as soon as it manifests itself, while a sword will pierce your soul."



Reflection:

“What happened to my daughter?” is the cry of many mothers in our country. More than 5,500 complaints of missing women were filed throughout 2020 in Peru, most of them minors. The problem of missing women is no longer an issue where one can say that the disappearance may be due to personal issues, but rather is related to forms of violence including human trafficking and femicides.

“The high number of missing women in 2020 is worrying because we were in a quarantine and pandemic context where women were in a safer space, which was their homes.”
(Ombudsman’s Office)

Most of the cases are not investigated in depth until reaching the real traffickers. The mothers of these girls struggle to find their daughters. The lack of financial means prevents judicial monitoring and ultimately the cases are archived. Trafficking networks and their economic power buy consciences.

The lack of due diligence and the indifference of the State to find them, as well as the absence of a comprehensive search system with a gender perspective, perpetuates a message of impunity and affects the lives of thousands of women.

Let Us Pray:

Between the angry shouts of the mob and the moans of the women, Jesus can feel the sighs of his Mother, the Virgin Mary, who is witness to the torments of her Son.

On the way to the cross, Mary manifests herself as the Mother of the Redeemer of the world. She is Model, Mother, Teacher, Queen of humanity.

Lord, may I find myself next to your Mother in all the moments of my life, relying on her maternal affection, I have the certainty of reaching You.

AMEN





STATION 5: **SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS**

Country: Argentina

Leader: We walk with you, Jesus, our brother

All: Because your life and your Word encourage us to keep going.

Biblical Text: Matthew 27:32; 16:24

As they left, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and forced him to carry the cross.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever wants to come after me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me."



Reflection:

The situation posed by human trafficking in Argentina is not indifferent to us, it moves us and worries us that prostitution is considered a job, because we know what that statement leads to.

We usually receive news which tells us how many people fall into trafficking networks, how many people are rescued. And we always ask ourselves again:

What about them?

How did they get there?

What will become of their lives from now on?

Who will accompany them?

We meet women and men, looking for ways to be close, to help. It is their empathy, their sisterhood, their brotherhood, which pushes them to be close to victims of human trafficking. Women and men who have understood the suffering of their sisters and brothers.

The biblical text tells of a man, Simon, who helped carry the cross of Jesus. Today, on this path crossed by the cross, by pain, we meet abolitionist organizations, especially women, who accompany other women. In this time of pandemic, many victims are adrift. The social, economic, and health emergency has been strongly felt. And there are organizations who help make the issue visible, help victims from an economic approach or from a mental health approach. In these times of hopelessness, we join with those who embrace this struggle and walk with those who have been crucified.

If we meet a person in that situation, are we willing to pick them up or do we look the other way?

Let Us Pray:

Santa Josefina Bakitha, we present to you the situation of victims of trafficking in our country. May they regain hope to keep walking. We ask you for the organizations that accompany them from simplicity, working, fighting, being. We ask it from the hope that animates us.

AMEN





STATION 6: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Country: Paraguay

Leader: We adore you oh Christ and we bless you

All: For by your Holy Cross you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Luke 23:27

A lot of people followed him. Especially women who beat their breasts, and wailed for him.



Reflection:

Paraguayan girls and boys enslaved in Brazil are abandoned at the border.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic, around a hundred Paraguayan girls, boys and adolescents, between 12 and 17 years old, were abandoned in Foz de Iguazú, near the Friendship Bridge (Brazilian side) of the border with Paraguay. They had been brought to that place by their exploiters, the majority from Sao Paulo, Brazil where they were taken for slave labor: labor exploitation in garment factories during the day and sexual exploitation at night by the same people who enslave them.

Many had been taken, with the consent of their parents, "to work." Some 12 and 13-year-old girls returned with a baby in their arms and reported that several more Paraguayan girls and boys continue to be exploited in garment workshops in Brazil.

What can we do to clean the darkened faces of so many boys and girls, who suffer from this slavery, to give them back the brightness of joy and hope?

Let Us Pray:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

AMEN





STATION 7: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

Country: Uruguay

Leader: We adore you Christ and we bless you

All: For by your holy cross you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Amos 2:6-7a

Thus says Yahweh: "My sentence against Israel for its many crimes will be without appeal. Because they sell the innocent for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, they trample the poor on the ground and prevent the humble from getting what they want. "



Reflection:

Prostitution is legalized and considered a job in Uruguay by law 17,515. The number of sex workers registered with the Ministry of the Interior (MI, 2019) amounts to 12,375, which represents 3 out of every 1,000 inhabitants, of which the vast majority are women (94%). There is reliable information that not all police stations report the registration, so it is certain that this number is underestimated. This does not reflect the discrimination, rape, and violence suffered by this so-called “work”.

Human trafficking is a problem installed in our country that has historical roots, since its existence is evidenced in the colonial slave system. It is the product of the structural inequalities reproduced and exacerbated by the heteropatriarchal capitalist system.

Currently, trafficking in our country is reproduced and exacerbated from the accumulation of capital from the global market. It mainly affects populations that suffer multiple exclusions and inequalities, and it materializes in the bodies of people, especially women, girls and adolescents. The social economic system generates, produces, and reproduces the commodification of people’s lives based on extractivist models that enable the “consumption” of human beings by other human beings.

If we know people in that situation, are we willing to pick them up or do we look the other way? Do we look at them as people? Do we contribute in any way to the economic system that crushes human beings?

Let Us Pray:

Saint Josefina Bakhita, as a child, you were sold as a slave and had to go through untold difficulties and suffering. Once freed from your physical bondage, you found true redemption in your encounter with Christ and his Church.

Oh Holy Bakhita, help all those who are trapped in slavery; on their behalf, intercede with God so that they may be released from the chains of their captivity.

AMEN





STATION 8: JESUS COMFORTS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Country: Dominican Republic

Leader: We adore you Christ and we bless you

All: For by your holy cross you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Luke 23:27-28

He was followed by a great crowd of the people, and of women who beat their breasts and wailed for him. Jesus turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, weep for yourselves and for your children."



Reflection:

"I was doing sex work in a town in the DR and my roommate in that business told me that there was a lady who was doing some trips to Curaçao. We met with her and she proposed to fix the papers for our trip and in a week we were ready to go to Curaçao.

When the day arrived a mini-bus took us to the airport. Once we arrived at the place, they collected our passport and took the \$5,000 pesos from us and put us on a mini-bus to "happy field" where they took us to a room and told us to "to work." That was the beginning of a long journey of 3 months. On the third day of being there they gave us drugs to be able to have sex at all hours, that is 24 hours a day. It did not matter if it was on those certain days of the month; we were told to use tampons. One of those days, it entered me and caused an infection that I almost died from. It gave me a lot of pain and fever, but I had to put up with it. They treated me on the spot, because they didn't dare take me to the hospital.

After three months when it was time to return to my country, the administration called me and at that moment I realized all the services were charged to me: room, clothing, bed, food and the cocaine that they supplied us. They wouldn't let me communicate with my family. I managed to escape and returned to my country with \$35.00 dollars, a huge debt, and all the accumulated problems including my family's criticisms of not supporting them while I was away."

~ Fatima

The Dominican Republic is the third highest country in the world for growth in human trafficking. Every year, some 60,000 Dominican women are victims of this crime both nationally and internationally. It is estimated that the country is one of the highest for exporting women victims of trafficking. In the last two years 79 people have been investigated, 47 prosecuted, and only 7 people sentenced. 195 victims were identified, of which 188 were sexual exploitation. (Actions to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling during 2019).

Let us ask the Lord to give us open eyes and a compassionate heart so that, like Jesus, we do not close our eyes to the pain of so many women who fall under the power of trafficking, so that we can approach this reality, extending a hand with a heart compassionate and merciful in the face of their suffering.

Let Us Pray:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

AMEN





STATION 9: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

Country: Honduras

Leader: We adore you oh Christ, and we bless you.

All: For by your Holy Cross you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Matthew 11: 28-29

Come to me all of you who are weary and downtrodden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me that I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.



Reflection:

From the perspective of an average citizen, it should be taken into account that many people do not know how and where to report events of human trafficking. There is little trust placed in the police and judicial agents who can help the victims who seek help.

The weight of the crosses of humanity becomes unbearable due to the absence of justice in social, economic, and political systems in Honduras. Deception is the method of manipulation to trick the victims through false promises in relation to a job with a good income.

Pope Francis has said, "An economy without trafficking is a courageous economy, which combines legitimate profit with the promotion of employment and decent working conditions." Let us work together to create such an economy and end human trafficking.

Let Us Pray:

Teach us God to live the hope that the Christian faith gives us, in an economy of solidarity, and committed to the application of justice including the creation of opportunities to build a society with a greater degree of humanity, and to improve the lives of women, boys, girls and men from Honduras and the whole world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN





STATION 10: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Country: Puerto Rico

Leader: We thank you Lord and we bless you,
All: That through your love you liberated humanity.

Biblical Text: Matthew 27:35 -36

After he was crucified, they cast lots to divide his clothes, thus fulfilling what the prophet said: "My clothes were divided, and for my clothes they cast lots." Then they sat down to guard it.

Let us pray at this station for the men and women exploited at work, for the women forced into prostitution and for the children forced to commit crimes, that they feel empowered by God to resist abuse and injustice, with the hope that there are people in solidarity to help.



Reflection:

As Jesus was stripped of his garments and cast to chance, in Puerto Rico, there are countless undocumented citizens hired for the construction industry, exploited and without fair wages; women forced into sexual exploitation as payment for entering and staying on the Island and women victims of domestic violence; exploitation of minors taken to other countries, to ask for money at traffic lights, forced to do domestic and agricultural tasks, or distribute and sell drugs. It is estimated that 85% of the people who work at drug points are minors. All of them are stripped of their dignity and basic rights such as a home, work and health. And although in 2012 the Government adopted the New Penal Code that addresses the issue of Human Trafficking and classifies it as a serious crime, the lives of these siblings of ours are left at the mercy of their own luck.

Who exploits? Who benefits? May this cry resound in our ears: "Where is your brother or sister?"

Let Us Pray:

Merciful Father-Mother God, touch the hearts of traffickers and exploiters, who can recognize that life is sacred, IT IS NOT MERCHANDISE! That no one has the right to benefit at the expense of the suffering of others. And to us, grant us the grace to denounce all injustice and exploitation. Through Christ Our Lord.

AMEN





STATION 11: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Country: Guatemala

Leader: We adore you oh Christ, and we bless you.

All: For by your Holy Cross you redeemed the world

Biblical Text: Luke 23:33-34

When the soldiers came to the place called "The Skull," they nailed Jesus to a cross. They also nailed the two criminals to crosses, one on each side of Jesus.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing."



Reflection:

Today as in the past, Jesus is still nailed to the cross:

- In the 41 girls burned from the “Safe Home”, they burned their childhood and their dreams.
- In migrants who continue to cross borders to reach the desired “American dream.”
- In the currently exploited, abused, kidnapped and murdered girls.
- In abused, silenced women, victims of trafficking.
- In the constant and unpunished femicides in our countries.

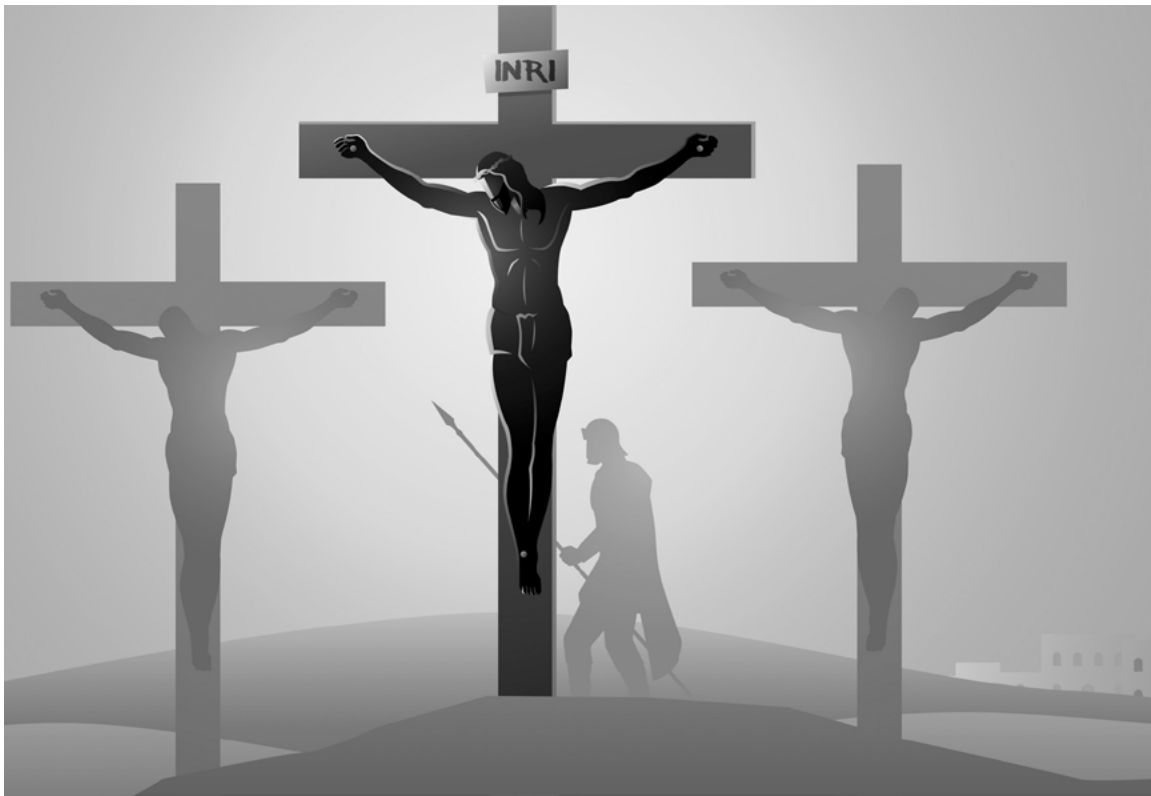
They keep nailing people to the cross in all those who suffer violence, impoverishment by the prevailing unjust system, and those discarded from our class society without human and Christian values.

Let Us Pray:

We beg you God for there to be greater solidarity with those nailed to the crosses of today, which are many in the world, that there be justice for those who have been forgotten in history. May we together help to unbolt victims from this heavy cross which has been imposed for so many centuries. Jesus listen to the crying of your suffering and crucified people that today cry out to you.

AMEN





STATION 12: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Country: Mexico

Leader: We love you, oh Christ, and we bless you,
All: For by your love and mercy you redeemed the world.

Biblical Text: Luke 23:44-46

Around noon the sun went down and the whole country was in darkness until three in the afternoon. At that moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in half and Jesus shouted very loudly: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And said these words, he expired.

Let us pray at this station for the victims of trafficking who have died, so that God may welcome them to heaven where there is no longer any mistreatment, no mourning or pain.



Reflection:

Today they join the death of Jesus: girls and boys, women and men whose lives have been torn, broken or clouded by falling into the networks of human trafficking. They become dead while they are alive, as their human rights are denied. They are stripped of their dignity as children of God, as people.

With their lives and forced labor they enrich companies or individuals, in different sectors such as the agro-industry, mining, sweatshops, health and the sexual sector. In Mexico, the most vulnerable are women who are used mainly for sexual exploitation. Today we unite these unjust deaths to the death of Jesus, so that they may rise again. We want to build networks that help many sisters and brothers to overcome this evil and generate a more caring and humane economy that allows the development of all people.

Let Us Pray:

God our Father-Mother, you who are Life, reach out your hands to so many of our sisters and brothers who are victims of Human Trafficking. And give us the strength to seek ways of life in the midst of so much unjust death. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

AMEN





STATION 13:

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND GIVEN TO HIS MOTHER

Country: United States

L. We adore you Christ and we bless you
T. For by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Biblical text: John 19:26-27, 38

Jesus, seeing her mother and next to her the disciple whom he loved, said to her mother: "Woman, there you have your son." Then he said to the disciple: "There you have your mother."

(Later) Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for permission to take the body of Jesus. Then they took the body of Jesus.



Reflection:

What is God saying to me in this text?

Before being laid in the tomb, Jesus is finally handed over to his Mother. He is the icon of a broken heart, showing us how death does not prevent a mother's last kiss for her child. Prostrated before the body of Jesus, Mary holds him lovingly in a final embrace. This icon is simply called "Mercy."

Our thoughts now turn to the many victims of human trafficking, especially the mothers and children impacted by this crime. In the US, sexual exploitation of boys and girls occurs in all 50 states. There are an estimated 200,000 children at risk for sexual exploitation, according to the Department of Justice. Many mother's children go missing, especially from indigenous and black communities, without the same resources invested in recovering them. These mothers are not able to hold their children like Mary held the body of Jesus. Their arms ache to embrace them once again.

Human Trafficking is a lucrative crime that treats precious mothers' children as mere commodities. Human traffickers abuse the financial system to promote their illegal activities. Today, technological advances give traffickers greater access to financial services and other resources to conceal their crimes and finance criminal activity.

This reality is heartbreaking, but in the end, death does not overcome love because love is stronger than death. Pure love is enduring. Evening has come. The battle is over. Love has not been defeated.

Let Us Pray:

As we contemplate the Blessed Mother holding the lifeless body of her divine Son, let us remember the victims of trafficking who die in slavery.

Jesus, help us see as you see so that when we look into their eyes, we can see your suffering and agony in their suffering. Help us to be able to lower them from their crosses and then give them the love that you give us every day so that it feeds them and restores their dignity and respect.

Help us to walk with them on this long road of recovery as they begin to believe in themselves and in you living in them again. Help them to have the courage and faith to start a new life of trust and freedom. We know that this can only happen in your presence, in your time and with your grace.

AMEN





STATION 14: JESUS IS BURIED

Country: Canada

Leader: As people of faith, let us follow Christ to the end, as Jesus, laid in the grave, descended into hell.

All: As people of faith, let us be present even if death seems to have the last word!

Biblical Text: Matthew 27:55,61

There were several women watching from a distance; they had followed Jesus from the days of Galilee serving him.... There were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting in front of the tomb.

"His Son, his only begotten, died, was buried and descended into hell..." says the CREDO of our faith.



Reflection:

The women sitting silently before the new tomb followed Jesus to the end: from the days of Galilee to the tomb. Like them, organizations that deal with trafficking and its consequences do not hesitate to go to even the most suffering and corrupt corners of the earth to support the victims and survivors.

Sitting in this time of silence, let us dare to accompany Jesus on his visit to hell. In the depths of our hearts, let us unite what cannot be united in everyday life. Like Jesus, let's reach out ...
(Silence)

Reach out to Aboriginal and immigrant women who have died trafficked and their pimps in their reign of terror.
(Silence)

Reach out to the victims of poverty and the capitalists who feed on suffering and the rejection of human dignity.
(Silence)

Reach out to the 5 women killed just in February in Quebec, during a pandemic, and offer a helping hand to spouses buried in their violence.
(Silence)

As people of faith, let us be present even if death seems to have the last word!

Let Us Pray:

Lord, we ask you for the grace of fidelity to follow you to the end through our commitment to victims of trafficking.

Lord, we dare to ask you for the grace of the descent into hell. Make everyone - exploiters, clients and profiteers, artisans of the economy of death - more aware of the dignity of the victims and survivors.

AMEN





STATION 15:

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Country: Nicaragua

Leader: We adore you Christ and we bless you

All: For by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

Biblical Text: Luke 24: 13-35 – excerpts

On the day that Jesus was resurrected, two disciples were going to a small town called Emmaus ... and they were talking about everything that had happened ... Jesus himself approached them and began to walk with them, but something prevented their eyes from recognizing him.

Jesus said to them: "What are you talking about together on the road?" They answered him, speaking of the life and crucifixion of Jesus. "We thought that he would be the one who should free Israel. But everything is done, and these things have happened for two days." They also told him that some women "from our group" went to the tomb but did not find the body and saw an appearance of angels "who said that he was alive."



Then he said to them: "How dull you are, and how slow are your hearts to believe all that the prophets announced! Didn't it have to be like that and that the Christ suffered to enter into his glory? "And beginning with Moses and going through all the prophets, he interpreted everything that the Scriptures said about him.

The disciples asked him to stay with them. He stayed, and while sitting at table with them, he took the bread, pronounced the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he had already disappeared. Then they said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn when he spoke to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

Reflection:

The two disciples walking to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus were very discouraged by the failure of a project in which they had believed. "We thought that he would be the one who should deliver Israel" (v 21).

Sometimes we too have hope in a project - for example, a new law against human trafficking - but we are disappointed when that law remains on paper and is not applied against criminals. Or we form a new anti-trafficking organization, and only experience obstacles and difficulties.

At that moment Jesus approaches them, listens to them, and begins to explain the scriptures to them and that the prophets always encounter problems and persecution. They ask you to stay with them. In moments of discouragement, which are natural, let us ask Jesus to talk with us and to reveal his presence and friendship with us along the way.

They recognized him when he broke bread, and they returned to Jerusalem with that good news to encourage the community. May we also open ourselves to Jesus when we are discouraged, listen to him and feel his friendship and support, and return to strengthen others in the fight against slavery.

Let Us Pray:

"Lord, you made the sky, the earth, the sea and everything in them ... Now look at how they are threatened; Grant your servants to proclaim your Word with courage, while you manifest your power and give great blows, performing healings, signs and wonders in the name of your holy servant Jesus."

We end the prayer asking for the Kingdom of God to come, the kingdom of justice, peace, love, and respect for all human persons and Mother Nature.

All: "Father-Mother, who are in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

AMEN

