

Praying the Stations of the Cross for Seniors

The Sign of the Cross

Opening Prayer

1st Reader:

God, Your Son never grew old. He can't teach us about getting old, can He? What can Jesus' saving death – as premature as it was – teach us about advancing years, about loneliness, about arthritis, failing eyesight, failing energy, and failing memory, about rising costs and fixed income, about the tide of uncertainties that seems to swell over us with each year?

Father, even though Jesus did not grow old, I can sense that there are tender and poignant lessons for me in His last hours. His passion and death, which I ponder in these Stations of the Cross, reveal, above all, that fullness of life is attained not so much by its length as by its intensity and faithfulness.

2nd Reader:

I pray these stations now, God, because I believe that Jesus will illuminate what it means to age with faith and patience, with spiritual vigor and true wisdom, with cheerfulness and generosity, with optimism and abiding hope. As Abraham and Sarah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth learned, old age is not just a time of diminishment but a time of fulfillment and challenge as well. From Jesus' passion and death, I will take comfort in this all the days of my life.

Amen.

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1st Reader:

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Die

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

The finality of Pilate's words seared Jesus' soul: sentenced to die by crucifixion, a criminal's death. Only hours earlier, in the stark loneliness of Gethsemane, Jesus accepted without reservation all that His Father would ask of Him: "Not My Will, but Yours be done." Fear-filled but composed, Jesus embraced the death sentence and so fulfilled His years in the loving surrender of His life.

2nd Reader:

As we age, we may come to see our advancing years as a fate we are sentenced to. We often rebel against the common sense course of nature; for all creatures – stars, swans, and snakes – are born, grow old, and die. But if we can learn to embrace our aging as Jesus did His cross, our old age can be so much more than a fate to be tolerated; it can be an opportunity for continuing growth into the life and love of God.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

**God, by Your grace, open my eyes to the true meaning of aging.
Let me embrace it joyously, as my true birthright, as a
challenge to develop in wisdom and grace. Amen.**

***Jesus remember me, when You come into Your kingdom
Jesus remember me, when You come into Your kingdom***

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1st Reader:

Second Station: Jesus Accepts His Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

The fear He felt in Gethsemane becomes cold reality as Jesus feels the heavy beam of the cross on His beaten shoulders. What was only fear now begins to be actual pain. This burden also leaves no doubt that crucifixion is unavoidable. Whatever anticipation there may have been about His fate, it will now, over the next few hours, dissolve into naked reality. Jesus will accept each phase of His execution as it comes. His heart, strained with love and pain, is open to all who will follow on this path to Calvary.

2nd Reader:

Jesus faced a moment when fear became reality, but we do not enter “old age” at a similar set point in life. The signs of slowing down, the stronger eyeglasses, the increase of aches and pains, the loss of friends and independence – these occur gradually, at different ages, with lighter or heavier burdens for different people. But however these signs come to us, and however the unavoidable reality of aging sets in, how important it is to keep our minds and hearts open to what these years will bring: the satisfaction and joys as well as the heartaches and pains. With the wisdom of our years, we move from fear to reality with an upbeat frame of mind.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

In Jesus name, God, grace me to be realistic about my age.

Help me to grip the reality of these years, to face my circumstances as they are, and to make the most of them.

They are, Compassionate Parent, the path You have given me to come to You. Amen.

Jesus remember me, when You come into Your kingdom

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1st Reader:

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

As often as I contemplate the weakened, weary Jesus falling to the dust, we focus on the pain of collapsing under the heavy wood and suffering still more bruises. What was most difficult and painful, in fact, was not the falling but the getting up. As He was whipped into rising to reassume His cross and continue towards Cavalry, Jesus had to rely on inner strength, on His character and motivation, to go on.

2nd Reader:

Not many people are inclined to view their senior years as a time of renewal and positive accomplishments. We may be tempted to see this phase of life only as going downhill both physically and psychologically. But even though we may “fall” in this sense, there are many locations when we “get up again” and go on productively with life. We must never settle for the idea that old age is a time when nothing significant happens anymore. There is much more to each day than getting through it. This is still a time for new insights, for personal relationships, for creative activities, for deeper wisdom, and for richer spirituality.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, by Your grace, may I rise from the discouragement I sometimes feel. May I go on through this time of my life with a profound sense of renewal and grateful anticipation for each new day You give me to love, to create, to ponder, to converse, to learn, and to speak with You. Amen.

***Jesus remember me, when You come into Your kingdom
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1st Reader:

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

The sensitive wrenching moment when Jesus' eyes met His mother's was part of His bereavement, not hers. She would soon grieve over the loss of her son, but now, the grief was His. One of Jesus' followers betrayed Him, another denied he knew Him, and the rest abandon Jesus when His need was the greatest. Except for Mary and John, Jesus was alone.

2nd Reader:

It is obvious that one of the deepest sorrows of advancing years is increasing bereavement and the resulting sense of aloneness. Our parents, our spouse, our brothers and sisters, our friends, and others we know may die. Sometimes death even takes our children. Memories become more important and take up more of our day as we cling, in the only way now available, to those we knew and loved. At times, only our faith in God's presence comforts us, and our anticipation of that time when, in Thomas More's words to Margaret, his daughter, "We shall meet merrily in heaven."

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, I believe that You are with me when I feel alone, just as You were with Jesus in His lonely Passion. Comfort me with the awareness that You are faithful and that Your presence is forever. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry The Cross

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

“Why me?” Jesus heard the angry protest over the noise of the crowd. In His pain, He didn’t pay attention to it until a soldier brought Simon over to him. Then He understood. And Simon walked along the narrow street, he was pressed to the side to make way for the faltering Jesus and the soldiers. Just then, one of the soldiers grabbed Simon and pushed him over to help the condemned man. Simon objected: “Why should I be chosen for this? Why not somebody else? It’s not fair!” Jesus understood how he felt, as Simon, for a time, took the weight of the crossbeam on his own shoulders.

2nd Reader:

The tendency to resent our misfortunes does not fade away as we age. Even with the benefit of our experience and wisdom, we still want to ask with indignation, “Why me?” when we break a hip or develop glaucoma, or find the time we hoped would be spent in leisure given over to taking care of our own elderly parents or raising our grandchildren or worrying about decisions our children have made. Jesus understands the feelings that make us want to protest, “Why me? It’s not fair!” But Jesus will be with us to help us bear our crosses, just as Simon was there to help Him carry His.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

Comfort me, God, when I feel unfairly put upon or called to do things I thought I had left behind. Help me to realize that even now I can grow through challenge, pain, and hardship. Help me to find moments of grace in even the most difficult situations and fill me with a sense of Your reassuring presence. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Not many of Jesus' friends were around since His arrest the night before. Where were those who cheered him and laid palms in His path only days earlier? Now, on the way to His crucifixion, it was safer not to recognize Jesus or show concern for him. But courageous Veronica steps out of the crowd to wipe His face. Did it feel cool and refreshing to Jesus, or did it sting His bloodied face? Either way, Jesus saw the compassionate heart that prompted her act and was grateful for it.

2nd Reader:

As we get older, hard as it is to admit and accept, our dependence on others tends to increase. We need more and more people to offer to help us in many ways. Our children, or relatives or neighbours, increasingly become caregivers. Not all offers to help, of course, are welcome, and not all "help" is really helpful, but how loving it can be to accept an offer of help or to decline an offer graciously, to speak openly and gently about what really would ease our path. Like Jesus, we should look to the heart of the one who steps forward to help.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, I have spent a lifetime learning to be a giver. Now, I need to learn the lesson of becoming a gracious receiver. Open my heart not only to Your gifts, but to the gifts - and good intentions - of those who care for me. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Wouldn't it be understandable for Jesus to become immersed in His own suffering and fear as He falls again amid the street throng? "Who cares about these people," He might think "about Simon and Veronica who helped me, even about My mother? All I can think about is the pain I feel and the sharp sense of being so alone." With each step and each fall, Jesus is tempted to think of Himself as the only one with real pain and real problems, as the only one who matters.

2nd Reader:

How easy it is – and how human – to think only of ourselves when our problems and physical ailments burn their way into our consciousness. We become absorbed with a painful hip and a lonely week, and we miss the opportunity to console the recently widowed friend. We get so preoccupied with pouting over a grandchild's fresh remark that we forget the date we made to go shopping with a neighbour. The fact is, concern for the sorrow and pain of others may help to take us out of the narrow world of our own suffering. We lighten the burden of our years when we take on the burdens of others. Was there more on Jesus' mind than His own suffering?

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, may I never, by Your grace, become so taken up with my own problems that I become blind and insensitive to the needs of others. Help me in my trials to be compassionate to those who need be, even as Jesus was, especially in His Passion. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Eighth Station: The Women Console Jesus

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

The small group of women approached Jesus as He struggled in the procession moving slowly toward Calvary. It was their custom as “professional mourners” to try to console the condemned man and even, we are told, offer a narcotic drink to dull the pain of crucifixion. Jesus accepts their words of comfort but, we may assume, not the drug. How well that cup must have expressed the rock-bottom reality Jesus was heading for. It symbolized more clearly than the crossbeam on His back that crucifixion was indeed just ahead. That destination, that ordeal, was inevitable.

2nd Reader:

Are we not inclined to make ourselves believe that some unwelcomed events are not really going to happen? Or is it starting to dawn on us that what we thought was so far off and far-fetched in our youth is now starting to be real? All too soon, time seems to be getting much smaller, there’s more gray in our hair, or much less hair, than there used to be, joints are increasingly painful... Everyone ages and dies. What was vaguely true in our youth becomes here-and-now true for us. We have to face up to this and, like Jesus, move on in our procession toward our destination.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, through Your grace, may I embrace with enthusiasm the realization that I am growing old. May the awareness of Your presence be my “drug” to spend this stage of my life in a loving, patient, and productive way. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Perhaps at the place of execution, Jesus falls yet again, exhausted physically and emotionally. Lying on the ground, Jesus finds a moment's rest before He will have to get up to face the hammer and nails. In this moment, does He recall other times He had to get up after failure and disappointment, times when He was tempted not to pursue His mission? Does He think of missed opportunities? Are there regrets about words unspoken that might have been? People who ignored His words of life? No matter now about the past. Jesus gets up again to face the present.

2nd Reader:

Let's face it – by the time we're seniors, we've known a lifetime of falls. Not just in the sense of "sins," but those regrets one amasses over the years: the career not chosen, the sweetheart not married, the impetuous business decision, the broken friendship, the hurtful words, the things that might have been. But what of those decades of wrongs and blunders? What benefit is there in mulling over them now? Self-forgiveness is the order of the day – every day of our later years. We have to pick ourselves up from our past and move boldly into the present. We can acknowledge the "might have beens," but we can't let them consume us.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, I know You have forgiven my sins. By Your grace, help me to forgive myself and to put behind me for good all those regrets I have carried with me all these years. May I rise for my past and, like Jesus, be busy with what remains to be done: doing Your will all the days of my life. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped

We adore You, O Christ and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Jesus is now stripped of His last possession. On a small hill just outside the city gates, Jesus stands naked to the world as the soldiers remove His clothes to prepare Him for crucifixion. He has lost His strength, His freedom, His disciples, and now even His clothes. What more can He lose? But without owning so much as a garment to cover himself, He has not lost His self-possession and dignity. Amid the degradation and torment He suffers, we see so clearly that His fundamental value and dignity come from who He is, not from what He possesses.

2nd Reader:

Like Jesus stripped on Calvary, age makes us more and more vulnerable to so many losses. When incomes are fixed, but expenses are not, we may experience a wrenching worry about money as our sense of security is stripped away. We may find ourselves or our spouse growing vague and forgetful, and we may have to face the slow loss of the accumulated memories and shared experiences. But, no matter what losses come with old age, we know that God knows us and holds us, and in God we have everything that really matters.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

By Your grace, God, I want to grow closer to You each day. Like Jesus, I stand naked before You, with all my worries and fears, and You see the core of my being. Even if I should lose myself, keep me in Your care and remind me that I am Your child, loved and cherished always. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Eleventh Station: 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.

The grotesque act of nailing a human being to a post takes place about midday, and Jesus, one of three criminals, is raised on high. Beyond the torment, the thirst, the blood loss, and the suffocation, Jesus also hears the jeers of those who arranged His execution: "He relied on God. Now let God come to rescue Him."

2nd Reader:

After a lifetime of faith in God's loving presence, we still harbour a feeling that God will rescue us from losses and pains that old age inevitably brings. We call on God, at least implicitly, to spare us from the loss of friends, the diminishment of our health, the lack of companionship, the neglect by our family. It is just as hard now as it was years ago to understand that, yes, God will rescue us ultimately, but that God will save us not *from* these losses but *through* them. God will be with us as we grow older but not spare us from the natural effects of aging. When faced with the reality that there is no way out, we have to align ourselves with Jesus and trust that God will be with us as we hang on our crosses, and God will embrace us afterward.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

I trust in You, God, to be with me in these declining years as You were with Jesus on His cross. By Your grace, help me to live my remaining years as if everything depends on me, but to believe and to pray as if everything depends on You. Amen.

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1st Reader:

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

(Pause and reflect in silence)

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

From multiple causes associated with the crucifixion, Jesus' life is "interrupted." What did Mary and the others think as they watched Jesus surrender to the inevitable? It was the end of a loving, faithful, composed, principled, and self-sacrificing life. What if Jesus had not died at this time, but, let us say, had taught and healed and loved for another fifteen years, and then was crucified? Would Mary's life and their lives and ours have been that much more enriched? What if...? But let us be content with God's ways.

2nd Reader:

The death of those we know always affects our lives. We become a bit poorer or even greatly diminished when associates, friends, or spouse or family members die. As our years increase, we lose more and more of those who have surrounded us and filled our lives. "If only my husband (wife, partner, brother, sister, friend) had not died..." We resent their deaths and perhaps blame them for our impoverishment. Our world has grown smaller and lonelier, and we are left with the faith that accepts the crooked lines of God's writing.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, I thank You for those You have given me to enrich my life. Help me, by Your grace, to accept their passing. Though I am poorer because of it, I rejoice that they are with You and that I can smile at my memories of them. Amen.

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Praying the Stations of the Cross for Seniors

1st Reader:

Thirteenth Station: 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.

“It is finished,” Jesus had said a short time earlier on the cross. Now He lay dead in Mary’s arms. This emotional tableau was the model immortalized in marble by Michelangelo’s *Pietà*. Jesus’ life was over. Through three years, He was the model of God for many of His contemporaries, and then, over the centuries since then, for endless millions. “He who sees Me, sees the Father,” Jesus had said. As the model of human life, Jesus would touch us all and leave His blessed influence on the world forever.

2nd Reader:

Our imbedded desire to be useful does not leave us in our older years. Indeed, as time grows rapidly shorter, we keenly want to be helpful. But in our heart of hearts we also want to assure ourselves that our lives have been useful and worthwhile, that we have influenced others for good, that the world is a better place for the love we have left in it, and that we have, to some degree at least, been a model of human living. And until it is time to say, “It is finished,” we can continue to live a life of love.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, I thank You for allowing me to be Your instrument to accomplish the good I have done and am still doing. May I, through Your grace, continue to use my mind and body, my talents, and my aspirations for Your purposes. Amen.

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Praying the Stations of the Cross for Seniors

1st Reader:

Fourteenth Station: 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.

Jesus' body was removed from the execution site and brought to a tomb cut out of rock. One of those who help prepare the body for burial was Nicodemus, the Pharisee who had questioned Jesus secretly one night a couple of years earlier about His teaching and miracles. Jesus spoke of himself as being "lifted up." Did Nicodemus connect this with being lifted up on the cross? Gazing at the lifeless body of Jesus, did he also recall that Jesus had spoken of rising three days later? Did Nicodemus believe this would happen?

2nd Reader:

Increasingly, as we get older and feel more and more of the effects of aging – we begin to acknowledge our mortality. We may not dwell on it, but it begins to take up residence at our side. Perhaps we wonder with Nicodemus about the truth of the resurrection. This is where faith comes in. Our faith teaches us that the cross was not the end. As we have all been "lifted up" on our daily cross, we also trust that we will rise to new life with Jesus. This faith in our ultimate victory overshadows the other joys and sorrows of our remaining years.

3rd Reader:

Let us pray

God, swell my being with faith in Your desire to bring me to Yourself. By Your grace, help me in these diminishing years to be a person of faith: faith in Your continuing presence now, and faith that Your eternal presence comes from my dying and rising with Your son, my Lord Jesus. Amen.

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Closing Prayer

1st Reader:

God, as I step slowly along my way of the cross through the years
You give me, grace me to appreciate each day's opportunities to love
and to be productive, to feel Your presence when I am burdened
with the sorrows that accompany aging.

Grace me to open my heart to Your still-strange ways and to rise
above my recent and long-ago failures.

Grace me with the realization that You value me for who I am, and
that I am always precious in Your sight.

Grace me, God, with the awareness that the richness of my
remaining years is measured by my faithfulness in You.

2nd Reader:

God, through Jesus' passion and death, may I come to recognize
that these years of both growth and diminishment will lead finally
to You.

By Your grace, I trust that my way of the cross will bring me, as
Jesus' did, to resurrection and to fullness of life with You forever.
Amen.

The Sign of the Cross