



WAY of the CROSS Families

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JIM MERHAUT

WAY OF THE CROSS FOR FAMILIES: JESUS' WAY OF LOVE

Thank you for choosing *Way of the Cross for Families*! All families know in their bones, flesh, hearts, and souls what the passion and death of Jesus is all about, because we all suffer. And if we try to learn and grow through our suffering, we can gain insights into the beauty of Christ's resurrection. Suffering can be as profound as the death of a family member or as simple as a scraped knee. All suffering is an opportunity to participate in the suffering of Jesus, a suffering that saves us from sin and death and leads us to new life. This simple family ritual will help you get in touch with the mystery of Christ's suffering that is already present and working in the events and patterns of your family's routines. *Way of the Cross for Families* will help you unlock the work of God that is often hidden in the rigors of daily life, and it can prepare you to experience more fully the wonder of Easter resurrection. Be faithful to the journey.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO USE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR FAMILIES

There are many ways to pray the *Way of the Cross for Families*. Consider these options:

Where?

- ✿ At Church: Visit your parish church and read through the fourteen stations as a family while you walk the stations displayed in your church. Invite other families to join you.
- ✿ At Home: Invite the members of your family to draw pictures of each station or make clay sculptures and display them in various locations throughout your house. Stop at each location as you read the reflections for each station.
- ✿ Outside: Include all of creation in your prayer by marking fourteen special locations in your yard for the stations. If you don't have a yard, visit a nature trail for your prayer journey and stop at fourteen different trees. The wood from the trees can symbolize the wood of the cross. Remind family members that Jesus' death and resurrection redeems all of creation, not just people. Don't forget to identify signs of new life in nature (budding plants or baby animals) as reminders of new life in Christ.

How?

- ✿ One Station at a Time: Begin the day after Ash Wednesday and read one station per day at mealtime or before bed. If you do this every day during Lent, you will journey through the fourteen stations three times and end on the last day of Lent, which is the day before Holy Thursday. This way is especially effective for families with children, because it is not overwhelming in terms of time commitment. Doing all fourteen stations at one time can be a bit much for young children. Plus moving through the process three times over the course of the Lenten season will help with memorizing the stations.
- ✿ Share the Journey: You'll notice that each station has a Leader and several Readers. If you are praying the stations with two people, then one can read the odd numbers while the other reads the even numbers. If you have more than two people, then you can simply read in a circular fashion until each part of the station is heard.
- ✿ Discuss the Journey: Each station has a "focus" and discussion questions that highlight ideas to help family members relate their lives to the Stations of the Cross. The discussions are optional. You may just pose the questions for quiet reflection, or you may skip them altogether if you've done them before. Customize the ritual to fit your particular family style. *Way of the Cross for Families* is a tool. Make it work for you.

INTRODUCTION

About 2000 years ago, Jesus died when he was nailed to a wooden cross. Why? Because people could not understand his love for everyone. This may seem hard to believe. Why would someone be killed for loving people? Think about it for a moment. Have you ever been jealous because someone else got something nice? Did you find yourself getting angry and perhaps even wanting to get revenge on the one who received the nice thing and the one who gave it? If you've ever felt that way, you can understand why people could have gotten angry at Jesus for being a loving person.

The important thing to remember about Jesus' death is that he showed us, by rising from the dead, that love and life are more powerful than sin and death. Let's walk with Jesus on his way to the cross. We'll stop with him fourteen times to think and pray about what his suffering meant for him and what it means for us.

THE FIRST STATION

LEADER: The first station: Jesus is condemned to death. We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: **By your holy cross you have saved the world.**

READER 1: The chief priests and the elders of the Jews plotted to kill Jesus.

READER 2: Judas betrayed his friend Jesus.

READER 3: The crowds who praised and cheered Jesus only days before now turned against him.

READER 4: Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor with the power to release Jesus, washed his hands as a sign that he wasn't going to help Jesus.

READER 5: We also condemn Jesus every time we fail to do what we know is right or choose to do what we know is wrong. Let's not blame people when things go wrong. We're all responsible in some way.

ALL: **Jesus, give us strength to accept responsibility for things that go wrong.**





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FOCUS RESPONSIBILITY

Discussion or Silent Reflection: Think about a time when you blamed someone for something that went wrong. What positive thing could you have done other than blaming?

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FROM WAY OF THE CROSS FOR FAMILIES

As **CHRISTIAN FAMILIES**, we are called to imitate Jesus in action and word, not only as we pray the Stations of the Cross, but in our daily lives. This booklet suggests ways for families to walk and pray the classic devotion of Stations of the Cross both at home and in the parish setting.

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