



**THE WAY OF THE CROSS
FOR RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS**

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Diocese of Greensburg
723 East Pittsburgh Street
Greensburg, Pennsylvania, 15601

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Imprimatur
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Bishop of Greensburg
Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2009

THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR VOCATIONS

An appropriate song might begin the reflection.

Sign of the Cross

Opening Prayer (kneel)

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, we have come to spend some time with you. We want to learn from your example. During your time on earth and even now you are the most fully alive person there has ever been. You gave totally of yourself to others in great obedience to your Father. Yet we know that your love for life led to your own condemnation to death. Knowing what was on the road ahead of you, you still chose to go the way you had been called to go.

People:

You look at us and say, "Come, follow me." Follow me in being fully alive. Follow me in giving totally of yourself. Follow me in laying down your very life for your brothers and sisters.

Jesus, the way is not easy, but I need to learn from your example. Let me enter into your trials now and experience them along with you. I come along in hope of sharing the fullness of life with you.

I

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Leader: *Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)*

All: *We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)*

Leader: Lord Jesus, you tried so hard. You gave totally of yourself to help us believe the Good News. And now the decision is to put an end to all your efforts.

People: Isn't this what always happens to those who believe strongly in what is right? Aren't they always condemned, too? But you bear the verdict patiently, Lord. Why? Don't you see that this is the end?—Your eyes, though filled with pain, tell me, "No, my friend. It is really the beginning."

(kneel)

Reader: *Scripture John 15: 13-19*

There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that all you ask the Father in my name he will give you.

The command I give you is this, that you love one another.

If you find that the world hates you know that it has hated me before you. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own; the reason it hates you is that you do not belong to the world.

But I chose you out of the world.

II

JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you tell me, "If you wish to come after me, you must deny your very self, take up your cross and begin to follow in my footsteps."

People: I know where you're going, Lord. You carry your cross now, but soon it will carry you. And you want me to come along? Once again your eyes tell me your love is so great that you even accept these burdens we place on you. You call me to follow, Lord, because you know how much the world needs to hear your message: that you love us even when it is most difficult. Strengthen me, Lord, so I might also carry the cross.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Luke 9: 23-27

Jesus said to all, "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day and follow in my steps.

Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

What profit does he show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?

If a man is ashamed of me and my doctrine, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and his holy angels.

I assure you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the reign of God."

III

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are God and you have fallen! How many times have I held back from following you, fearing that I would fall too.

People: I am only human, Lord. I think I hear the message. You call me to walk with you, knowing full well that I am so much weaker than you. Your falling and getting up again show me that you call me not because I am strong, but because you can accomplish your purpose in me even when I am weak.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Matthew 11: 25-30

On one occasion Jesus spoke thus " Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children.

Father, it is true. You have graciously willed it so. Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son - and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you.

Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

IV

JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: You meet your dearest mother on the road to Calvary. You know that her heart is pierced with sorrow and sadness as Simeon had foretold. She loves you. She has supported and encouraged you in your mission and throughout your ministry and now once again she is with you. She gives you strength to complete your journey. She knows well what it means to follow the will of the Father because she declared herself his handmaid at the Annunciation.

People: Yes, she is very sad. But she knows you must go on. She has known the power of love in her own life, and she knows that love is made perfect in you. She simply puts her faith in your Father, who is her Father, too.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Mark 3: 31-35

His mother and his brothers arrived, and as they stood outside they sent word to him to come out. The crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you."

He said in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

And gazing around him at those seated in the circle he continued,

"These are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me."

V

SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are the holy One of God. You are the Savior of the world, and yet you need us also to help you carry your cross.

People: I suppose it is heavier than it looks. Our apathy, our cruelty, our greed, and a thousand other faults weigh it down. I suppose that until all these are gone, you will need quite a bit of help to carry your cross. May there be many men and women who give of their time and energy to help you reach your destination.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Matthew 11: 28-30

"Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent."

VI

VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: At this point, Lord, your needs are so basic- a little comfort, a little human warmth. This woman cared enough to minister to you. She may have had better things to do. She certainly could have found something more pleasant to do. But you needed her, and so she went.

People: As you walk along this road again, Lord, inspire other women and men to put their needs aside and to minister to you. It is said that you left Veronica an image of your face. You leave your image for us, too, in the faces of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the homeless, the imprisoned. May we always treasure that image, Lord, and touch it with compassion and love.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture

Matthew 25: 31-40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, he will sit upon his royal throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. Then he will separate them into two groups, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep he will place on his right, the goats on his left. The king will say to those on his right, 'Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the just will ask him: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we welcome you away from home, or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison?' The king will answer them: I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me."

VII

JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Again, Lord, you fall. Again I am amazed that this could happen to one so strong, so sure. Our lives are filled with doubts, Lord. We begin a journey then wonder whether another road might be more fulfilling.

People: Our doubts can be our downfall, too, and make us stop or turn back from the way along which you lead us. Help us to go on and follow you, Lord, confident that even our doubts can tell us of your will because your will does not call us where your grace cannot keep us.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture

Mark 9: 17-26

"Teacher," a man in the crowd replied, "I have brought my son to you because he is possessed by a mute spirit. Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. Just now I asked your disciples to expel him, but they were unable to do so." He replied by saying to the crowd, "What an unbelieving lot you are! How long must I remain with you? How long can I endure you? Bring him to me." When they did so the spirit caught sight of Jesus and immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. Then Jesus questioned the father: "How long has this been happening to him?" "From childhood," The father replied. "Often it throws him into fire and into water. You would think it would kill him. If out of the kindness of your heart you can do anything to help us, please do." Jesus said to him, "'If you can?' Everything is possible to a man who trusts." Then the boy's father immediately exclaimed, "I do believe! Help my lack of trust!" Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, reprimanded the unclean spirit by saying to him, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: Get out of him and never enter him again!" Shouting, and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out of him.

VIII

JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: These women whom you love so much are weeping for you, Lord. You tell them not to weep for you but for themselves and for their children. You know the cross you bear is not your own. It belongs to us. We made it with our sinfulness.

People: Provide for us, Lord, priests, deacons, sisters and brothers, who can weep for themselves and for us. Who by their tears, prayers and sacrifices show this, at times, cold uncaring world that it is indeed very good because the Lord is with us. And that one day there will be no more tears and no more sadness.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Revelation 21: 1-4

Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: "This is God's dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away."

IX

JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Your weakness is showing again, Lord. Again, let us learn our lesson from it. Sometimes you call men and women to give their whole lives to you in service to your people. Sometimes they feel unworthy of the call. They tell you that you have the wrong person, that they are too weak to bear the burdens of your ministry.

People: When we think these thoughts, Lord, let us remember that you fell three times just on this one morning. Let us remember your words. "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection."

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

But I refrain, lest anyone think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from my lips. As to the extraordinary revelations, in order that I might not become conceited I was given a thorn in the flesh, and angel of Satan to beat me and keep me from getting proud. Three times I begged the Lord that this might leave me. He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection." And so I willingly boast of my weaknesses instead, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ; for when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: You are stripped bare, Lord, for all the world to see. It is humiliating, yet you accept it as part of the mission. How many times, Lord, have we felt your love, yet felt embarrassed to tell others about it.

People: You touch our inmost being with your peace and your joy, yet we are too shy to share these with others. Strengthen us, Lord, so that we might never be ashamed to stand before all the world and tell them with our hearts and souls, our minds and bodies, the Good News of your love. Strip me of my selfishness and lack of courage.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Luke 12: 8-12

"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men- the Son of Man will acknowledge him before the angels of God. But the man who has disowned me in the presence of men will be disowned in the presence of the angels of God. Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. When they bring you before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. The Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment all that should be said."

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: You are committed now, Lord. You cannot run away. The nails will not be undone. For better or for worse you must go through with it. The word "commitment" sometimes frightens us, Lord. It is so final. It requires so much.

People: Inspire me with your strength, Lord, so that I might be committed to the vocation you give me. So that I might lay my hand on the plow and never turn back. So that I might see through to the harvest the seed you plant with your own sweat and blood.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture Luke 9: 57-62

As they were making their way along, someone said to him, "I will be your follower wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "the foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Come after me." The man replied, "Let me bury my father first." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead; come away and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said to him, "I will be your follower, Lord, but first let me take leave of my people at home." Jesus answered him, "Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God."

XII

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: You said this would happen to you, Lord. You know the reason for it all. We think this is death, but you know it is birth. You say "Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

People: Yet when I arrive at the point of giving up my life for you I hesitate. I have second thoughts. I think that you cannot be serious. I do want to follow you, Lord. I do believe in your word. Help my lack of faith.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture John 12: 23-28

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. The man who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this world preserves it to life eternal. If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be. If anyone serves me, him the Father will honor. My soul is troubled now, yet what should I say-- Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

XIII

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: Your friends have come to take you down, Lord. To bathe your body and lay it to rest. Their love goes with you even to the grave. Not even your death could make it die.

People: I wonder whose love will lay me to rest? The love of family and friends? The love of your people whom I served with my life as a priest? The love of brothers or sisters in a religious community? Whoever they might be, Lord, help me to love them fully here and now, to give my very life to someone else in trust, in faith, in love.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture 1John 4: 7-11

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and has knowledge of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love. God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son to the world that we might have life through him. Love then consists of this: not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and sent his Son as an offering for our sins. Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another.

XIV

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Leader: Jesus said, "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (genuflect)

All: We choose you now so that we may go forth and bear fruit. (stand)

Leader: You are laid to rest, Lord. Your life was very short, yet you touched so many people—the sick, the poor, the suffering, the aimless. Your life lives on in them. But even more wonderfully, Lord, we know that this tomb we remember now stands empty. Your life was so full that it could not be laid to rest for very long.

People: When the new day comes, you say to your friends, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation." Help us grow in your friendship, Lord, and to respond to your call to each of us. Let us leave behind in this tomb all our shrouds of fear and follow you with generous hearts and faithful witness as your disciples.

(kneel)

Reader: Scripture John 15: 12-17

"This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead, I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that all you ask the Father in my name he will give you. The command I give you is this, that you love one another."

Concluding Prayer

(kneel)

We thank you, Lord, for this time we have spent with you. You submitted yourself to suffering, rejection and death to make it possible for us to be fully alive. You did this to "bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord."

The poor are still with us, Lord, and still await glad tidings; there are still many people who are captives to ideas and powers that take away their liberty; there are still the blind and still the prisoners; the whole world still yearns for an announcement of a time of favor from the Lord. Who will bring to fulfillment what you have begun?

Here I am, Lord. I come to do your will.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory Be...

Leader: Lord Jesus Crucified.

People: Have Mercy on us

Prayer for Religious Vocations

Heavenly Father
Your loving providence accompanies us
on our life's journey.
Thank you for the many gifts you have given us.
We ask that you continue to call sons and daughters
from our families and parishes to serve as priests, deacons
and consecrated men and women
in the Diocese of Greensburg.
Send your Spirit upon us
so that many will respond with great love
to your call to service and leadership in your Church.
Give to those you have chosen
the faith of the apostle,
the vision of the prophet
and the courage of the martyr.
Through the intercession of our Diocesan patroness,
Our Lady of the Assumption,
help us to be faithful disciples of your Son
by following the example of Mary.
Make us generous in sharing ourselves and our talents
for the sake of your Kingdom on earth.
We ask this through Christ the Risen Lord.

Imprimatur

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Bishop of Greensburg

August 15, 2005