

«The Way of the Cross with St. Catherine of Siena» was first attended by the Holy Father John Paul II on Good Friday, 1981.

Texts from Holy Scripture and from the writings of St. Catherine.

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La Via Crucis con S. Caterina da Siena, 1982

The Way of the Cross with St. Catherine of Siena, 1983

Cover:

St. Catherine of Siena contemplating the Crucifix,

by LORENZO DI PIETRO. « IL VECCHIETTA »

Siena, National Gallery.

The Way of the Cross

WITH ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

NATIONAL CENTER OF CATHERINIAN STUDIES ROME

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References to the writings of St. Catherine from which the passages were taken are given:

for the *Letters* after the numbering in Tommaseo's edition,

for the *Dialogue* by the number of the chapter,

for the *Prayers* in the numbering of the 1978 Latin and Italian critical edition edited by G. Cavallini.

INTRODUCTION

From that time Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.

(*Mt.* 16:21)

When the hour came he took his place at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them: "I have longed to eat this passover with you before I suffer".

(*Lk.* 22:14-15)

✠

God willed to teach us his truth by means of his dear Son: that he had created man to share and enjoy the vision of Himself eternally, wherein the soul receives its blessedness. But on account of sin this truth never had its fulfilment in man. Wishing therefore to bring it about, God himself, impelled by his love, gave us that which he held most dear, namely his only begotten Son, and laid upon him this obedience: to regenerate man so that he might turn from death to life.

(*Letter 259*)

✠

Let us pray

Oh eternal Truth, I appeal to your mercy that you grant me the grace to follow your Truth with a sincere heart; give me a fire, an abyss of charity; give me a constant thirst to endure pain and torment for your sake. Grant to my eyes, eternal Father, a fountain of tears whereby I may incline your pity toward the whole world and in particular toward your spouse.

(*Prayer XIX*)

Amen.

FIRST STATION

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



Pilate came outside again and said to them: "Look, I am going to bring him out to you to let you see that I find no case." Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said: "Here is the man". When they saw him the chief priests and the guards shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" So in the end Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

(Jn. 19: 4-6, 16)

And Yahweh burdened him with the sins of all of us.
(Is 53:6b)



O selfish love and servile fear, you blind the eye of the intellect, not allowing it to know the truth. O inordinate fear, you reach such blindness that you lose fear of the wicked and condemn the just man. Indeed, this is the perverse fear and love which killed Christ; for, in his dread of losing his power, Pilate was blinded and did not recognize Truth: and this was why he put Christ to death. And none the less what he had been

afraid of took place because, later on, he lost soul and body and authority. It seems to me that the whole world is filled with such Pilates.

(Letter 123)



Let us pray

O eternal Trinity, my sweet love! You, light, give us light, you, wisdom, give us wisdom; you, supreme strength, strengthen us. Today, eternal God, let the cloud of our self-love be dissolved, so that we may perfectly know and follow your Truth in truth, with a free and candid heart.

(Prayer XXII)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Stabat mater dolorosa
iuxta crucem lacrimosa
dum pendebat Filius.

*Plunged in grief, the mother stood
Weeping where the crimsoned wood
Held on high her dying son.*

SECOND STATION

JESUS RECEIVES THE CROSS
ON HIS SHOULDER

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

(Jn. 19: 17)

Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried.

(Is. 53:4)



Oh, the unspeakable and incalculable love of God! To save his disobedient, rebellious children he gave himself up to becoming a creature, to being despised, disgraced, insulted, mocked, and finally put to death as a malefactor. He had never done or said anything reprehensible: we had committed the crime for which he bore the punishment out of love for us. Well have you loved me, most sweet Jesus love, and thereby you teach me how much I should love myself and my brethren, whom you loved so deeply.

(Letter 147)



Let us pray

O immeasurable love, sweet love, eternal fire! You are a flame ever burning, high eternal Trinity! Turn the eye of your mercy upon your creatures. I know that mercy is your attribute, and wherever I turn I find nothing but mercy. Hence do I run and cry out in the presence of your mercy: have mercy on the world.
(Prayer XIX)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Cuius animam gementem,
contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius.

*Through her soul, whose moaning low,
Told how grievous was her woe,
Sorrow like a sword had gone.*

THIRD STATION

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.

(Jn. 12: 24)

Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth.

(Is. 53: 7)



What way did he walk, this gentle master, this spotless lamb? He walked the way of deep and true humility in that, being God, he so humbled himself as to become a man. His way was one of opprobrium, torture and reproach, grief and fatigue even unto the shameful death of the cross. And what fruit did he gain by opening this path to us? That whoever wills to do so may follow it.

(Letter 156)



Let us pray

O good Shepherd, you gave us the true Shepherd, your only-begotten Son; and he in obedience laid down his life for your sheep and made of his blood a bath for us. In their hunger, your servants beg of you this blood, that you may take pity on the world and that Holy Church may blossom again with the fragrant flowers of good and holy shepherds.

(Dialogue, 134)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti!

*Oh! how sad, how sorrow-laden,
Stood the meek and blessed maiden,
God's true mother undefiled.*

FOURTH STATION

JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.
(*Lk.* 8:21)

“I am the handmaid of the Lord”, said Mary, “let what you have said be done to me”.
(*Lk.* 1: 38)



In this blessed, sweet soil which is Mary, the Word grafted upon her flesh was like a seed cast into the earth; by the heat of the sun it buds forth and produces flower and fruit, while the shell remains in the ground. What was this shell? It was the will of the only-begotten Son of God who, as man, was wrapped in the desire for his Father’s honor and for our salvation. So intense was this desire that he hastened as one in love to the shameful death of the cross. This same longing took place in Mary so that she could desire nothing else but the honor of God and the salvation of his creatures. Hence it is that learned men say that she would have made of herself a ladder to set

her Son upon the cross, had there been no other means of doing so. This was because her beloved Son’s will had remained in her.

(*Letter 342*)



Let us pray

O Mary, redemptress of humankind, because by your flesh suffering in the Word, the world was redeemed: Christ redeemed it by his passion and you by pain of body and spirit. I have recourse to you, Mary, and I offer you my prayer for the sweet bride of Christ and for his Vicar on earth. May people be united and their hearts conformed to His.

(*Prayer XI*)

Amen.



All: Hail Mary...

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
Pia Mater, dum videbat
nati poenas incliti.

*Trembling, weeping, whelmed in woes,
Witnessing the dying throes
Of her own immortal child.*

FIFTH STATION

SIMON OF CYRENE
CARRIES THE CROSS OF JESUS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



“On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry His cross”.

(Mt. 27: 32)

“If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me”.

(Mt. 16:24)



Bind yourselves, bind yourselves together in charity; let each one endure and bear with the other, so that you may be united, not scattered, in Christ, sweet Jesus. Love one another, each of you love the other, since you know that this is the sign Christ left to his disciples; he declared that the children of God are known by no sign but the union of love which a person bears his neighbor in perfect charity. *(Letter 95)*



Let us pray

O Deity, my love, I see the world lying in death and such death that my soul grows faint at the sight. How can life be restored to this corpse? Your beloved Son will not come again, except in majesty to judge. But you call your servants “christs”, and by means of them you wish to cast out death and restore life to the world, provided they just walk manfully along the way of the Word with ardent desire, and patiently endure sufferings and grief for the sake of your honour and the salvation of souls. O supreme Redeemer, grant us then such “christs” as will spend their lives in watchings, in tears, in prayer for the salvation of the world!

(Prayer XII)

Amen.



All: Our Father..

Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
in tanto supplicio?

*Who is he who would not weep
Could he know what anguish deep,
Pierced the mother of our Lord?*

VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



“Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I, the light, have come into the world, so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark any more”.

(Jn. 12: 45-46)

“My heart has said of you, ‘Seek his face’. Yahweh, I do seek your face”.

(Ps. 27: 8)



O compassionate blood! Through you was distilled the divine mercy. In you humankind can understand and see the truth of the eternal Father. By this truth and ineffable love we were created in the image and likeness of God. This was your truth: that we might participate in and enjoy that highest good which he experiences in himself. In the blood you have manifested this truth to us, and for no other end have you created man. O blood, you dispelled the darkness and gave light to man, that he might know the truth and the supreme will of the eternal Father.

(Letter 195)



Let us pray

O eternal God, o compassionate, merciful Father, have pity on us who are blind, deprived of all light. With that glance of compassion whereby you have created us and all things, look upon the needs of this world and provide for them. You gave us being out of nothingness: enlighten, then, this being which belongs to you.

(Prayer VIII)

Amen.



All: Our Father..

Quis non potest contristari,
Christi Matrem contemplari,
dolentem cum Filio?

*Who from sorrow could refrain
Gazing on that mother's pain,
Weeping with her son adored?*

SEVENTH STATION

JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



Anyone who loves his life loses it: anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life.
(Jn. 12:25)

Without beauty, without majesty [we saw him], no looks to attract our eyes.
(Is 53:2b)



O sweet, inexpressible delightful love, become a slave to make men free and put to death to give us life, you demeaned yourself even to the shameful death on the cross, so as to restore to us the honor we had lost through disobedience. Alas, we encountered death through our rebellion against the commandments of God; daily we fall into this same death, by transgressing His sweet will. The unspotted Lamb came forth, ablaze with the flame of divine love, and restored grace to us by his obedience.
(Letter 180)



Let us pray

O sweetest Father, I beseech you to have mercy on the world and on your holy Church. Do not delay any longer: yield to and fulfil the desire of your servants. It is you who bid them to cry out; listen, then, to their voice! Your Truth has told us: ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. O eternal Father, your servants cry out for your mercy: do respond to them.

(*Dialogue*, 134)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Pro peccatis suae gentis,
vidit Jesum in tormentis,
et flagellis subditum.

*She beheld the torments sore
He for his own people bore,
Bowed beneath that scourging dread.*

EIGHTH STATION
THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM
WEEP FOR JESUS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



Large numbers of people followed him, and of women too, who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children... For if men use the green wood like this, what will happen when it is dry?".
(*Lk.* 23:27-28, 31)

Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death.
(*Is.* 53: 8b)



May the fire of holy, boundless desire grow, inebriated by the blood of God's beloved Son, let us hasten onward, hungry for his honor and the salvation of his creatures; boldly let us remove the bonds with which he was fastened to the wood of the most holy cross: let us restrain the hands of his justice. Now is the time to cry, to weep, to lament: this time is ours because the spouse of Christ is persecuted by Christians, her own

false and corrupt members. But God will not despise the tears, sweat and sighs of his servants.
(*Letter 137*)



Let us pray

O eternal Father, I well know that mercy is proper to you; hence you cannot refuse it to anyone who asks it of you. Your servants are knocking at the door of your Truth, because in the Truth, your only-begotten Son, they have come to know the unutterable love you have for mankind, and so they are knocking at the door. The fire of your charity must not, nor can it restrain itself from opening to those who knock with perseverance. Open, then, unlock and break the hardened hearts of your creatures; if not for the sake of those who do not knock, do it because of your infinite goodness.
(*Dialogue*, 134)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Tui nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
poenas mecum divide.

*Let me share his pains with thee
Who so tenderly for me
Deigned his sacred blood to pour.*

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you”.
(Jn. 15:18)

A thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces; he was despised and we took no account of him.
(Is. 53:3)



Our king behaves like a truly valiant knight, who perseveres in battle until the enemies are defeated. Barehanded, he has overcome the prince of this world; by giving the life of his body he destroyed the death of sin; by means of death he overcame death.
(Letter 256)



Let us pray

Restore, o eternal God, health to the sick and life to the dead, and give us a voice, so that we may cry out to you, with the voice you give us, for mercy to the world and for the reformation of holy Church: listen to that voice of yours whereby we cry out to you.
(Prayer XX)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
me sentire vim doloris
fac ut tecum lugeam.

*Come, o mother, love's sweet spring,
Let me share thy sorrowing,
Let my tears unite with thine.*

TENTH STATION

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



They shared out his clothing by casting lots.
(Mt. 27:35)

Like a lamb that is led to the slaughterhouse, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers never opening its mouth.
(Is. 53: 7b)



He was that immaculate Lamb who despised the riches and dignities of the world. He is humble and meek; he is not heard to cry out in complaint. It is overwhelming to see the sweet, kind Jesus, who rules over and provides for the whole world, and he himself in such misery and need that no one can be compared to him. Finally he dies naked upon the cross so as to clothe man once more and cover his nakedness. By committing sin he had been stripped, had lost the garment of grace. Hence, he despoils himself of life and clothes us with it.
(Letter 29)



Let us pray

Cancel out our sins today, o true God, and cleanse the face of our souls with the blood of your only-begotten Son, shed for us; so that, dead to ourselves, living for him, we may exchange our passion for His with bright face and undivided soul.
(Prayer VI)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Fac ut ardeat cor meum,
in amando Christum Deum,
ut sibi complaciam.

*Let my heart be all on fire,
Still to seek with fond desire
Christ, my God, my love divine.*

ELEVENTH STATION

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing".
(Lk. 23:33-34)

He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed.
(Is. 53:5)



We were that soil into which the banner of the most holy cross was set; we became a sort of vessel to receive the blood of the Lamb which ran down from the cross. Why were we that soil? Because the soil was not sufficient to hold the cross erect, rather would it have rejected such injustice. Neither would a nail have been enough to hold him fastened and nailed, if the indescribable love he had for our salvation had not held him bound. So then it was the intense love

for the Father's honour and our salvation which kept him there.

(Letter 102)



Let us pray

You see, eternal Father, that your servants stand at the door, your Truth, and ask. And for what are they asking? For the blood of this door, your Truth. In his blood you have cleansed our iniquity; his blood is ours because you have made of it a bath for us. You neither can refuse it to anyone asking it of you in truth, nor wish to. Give, then, the fruit of the blood to your creatures; place on the scales the price of your beloved Son's blood, so that the infernal demons may not abscond with your little sheep.

(Dialogue, 134)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas,
cordi meo valide.

*Holy Mother, this impart,
Deeply print upon my heart,
All the wounds my Saviour bore.*

TWELFTH STATION

JESUS DIES FOR US ON THE CROSS

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself.

(Jn. 12: 32)

It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit". With these words he breathed his last.

(Lk. 23:44-46)



And in order that the affection of the soul should be drawn to higher things, and the eye of the intellect might gaze into the fire, you the eternal Word were willing to be raised on high to show your love for us in your blood.

(Prayer XII)

Mind His great patience! He does not consider the abuses heaped upon him on the cross; he hears the shout of the Jews on the one hand crying out: "Crucify him" and on the other hand bidding him to come down from the cross; and he cries out: "Father, forgive!" and

perseveres unto the end. Then in great joy he called out saying: "Consummatum est", and though that word sounded sorrowful, there was joy in that soul, consumed and aflame in the fire of divine charity. It is as if the sweet Jesus wanted to say: "I have consummated and fulfilled what is written of me. The painful desire I had to buy back the human race is achieved; therefore do I rejoice and exult".

(Letter 101)



Let us pray

I implore your omnipotence, eternal Father, the wisdom of your only-begotten Son through his precious blood, and the clemency of the Holy Spirit, furnace and abyss of charity, who held the same Son fixed to the cross, to have mercy on the world and restore the warmth of love with peace and unity in the holy Church.

(Prayer XXIV)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Vidit suum dulcem natum

Moriendo desolatum

dum emisit spiritum.

*She beheld her only-born,
Death struck, utterly forlorn,
When his parting spirit fled.*

THIRTEENTH STATION

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS
AND LAID IN THE ARMS OF HIS MOTHER

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



To prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the sabbath... the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.

(*Jn.* 19:31-34)

Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown.
(*Cant.* 8:7)



Gentle and immaculate Lamb, you were already dead when your side was opened; why were you willing to be pierced and to have your heart cleft in two? Because my desire was infinite with respect to the human race while the endurance of pain and torment was finite; and by means of a finite thing I could not show how much

more I loved, because my love was infinite. And further I wanted you to see the secret of the heart, showing it to you opened so that you could see that I loved you more than I could manifest to you by finite suffering.

(*Dialogue*, 75)



Let us pray

O delightful love, O fire, O abyss of charity, O incomprehensible sublimity! The more I consider your exaltedness in the passion of the Word, the more my soul is ashamed of never having known you. But today may it please the loftiness of your charity to enlighten the eye of my intellect and that of all human beings!
(*Prayer XII*)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Fac me tecum pie flere,
crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero.

*Let our tears in mingling tide
Flow for Jesus crucified,
Till life cease within my breast.*

FOURTEENTH STATION
JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHRE

- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
- Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



At the place where He had been crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried... They laid Jesus there.

(Jn. 19:41-42)

You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor allow the one you love to see the Pit.

(Ps. 16:10)



O nature divine, you raise the dead and you alone give life: you willed to join dead human nature to yourself to restore it to life. O eternal Word, you united mortal nature to yourself in such a way as to make it impossible that it might ever separate itself. That is why, on the cross, the human nature suffered but the divine nature revived, so that simultaneously you were joyous and sorrowful. Not even in the tomb could one nature be separated from the other. O eternal Father, you clothed your Word in our nature so that our very own nature in Him might make satisfaction to you for us. O unspeakable mercy: you

chose to punish your only-begotten Son for the fault of the adopted son!

(Prayer XVI)



Let us pray

Eternal God, supreme eternal Trinity, in your light you make us see light! And I humbly supplicate you to infuse this light into every rational creature. Illumine those in darkness, that in your light they may know and love the truth. And I beseech you also for all people; let them be enlightened in your light and may every imperfection be removed from them so that they may truly labor in your garden where you have placed them to work. Let your will constrain you to have mercy on the world and to give your divine assistance to your Vicar and to your sweet spouse.

(Prayer XXI)

Amen.



All: Our Father...

Quando corpus morietur
fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria. Amen.

*When this mortal body dies,
May my soul to heaven arise,
Glorified and blest for thee. Amen.*

CONCLUSION

I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I leave the world to go to the Father... I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world.
(*Jn. 16:28, 33*)

The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon. Let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light.
(*Rom. 13:12*)

Now I and those with me, can witness to everything he did.
(*Act. 10: 39*)

✠
We are put into this life as into a battlefield, and we should fight valiantly, neither avoiding blows nor turning back, but keeping our eyes on our leader, Christ crucified who persevered faithfully and never failed to obey His Father's will and work towards our salvation unto the end. He returns to the eternal Father with the victory he has gained of having drawn the human race out of darkness and restored to it the light of grace. This caused his death: he inflicted death upon himself to bring us back to life; by his death he destroyed our death. The blood and determination of this captain should inspire courage in us for every battle: by enduring all things for love of him we, too, shall return victorious to the city of eternal life.
(*Letter 159*)



Let us pray
Do not delay, most benign Father. Turn the eye of your mercy upon the world. You will be glorified more by bestowing light upon them than if they were to remain in the blindness and darkness of sin, although you draw the glory and praise of your name from everything. But I wish to see the glory and praise of your name in your creatures, who follow your will and reach the goal for which you created them. Grant, o most kind and compassionate Father, your sweet and eternal blessing.
(*Prayer XX*)

Amen.



The blood of the mild
spotless Lamb
dispelled darkness
and shed light
on Truth

... ..

O ancient,
ever present Truth!
The soul
that holds you
is free from
miserable darkness
and wealthy
with light.

(*Letter 227*)

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