

The Stations of the Cross

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*Contemplate the sufferings of Jesus and
unite with Jesus in your life.*

Leader: *(at the foot of the Altar.):* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Each of us frequently finds himself fleeing from the cross of everyday life. Jesus makes us return into our town, into our village, into our house, to our families, to our working places, into our life so that in faith we do what we have to do and so that all that is transitory within us may die and all that is eternal may remain.

Preparatory Prayer

All:

Jesus, I would like to meet you.

Guide me on my way.

**Mary, teach me to hold on to Jesus' word
when I have to walk up the Calvary of my life.**

**Help me that I - like you - am ready to obey and say,
May your will be done".**

Help me to do what Jesus asks me to do.

Father, here I am.

**I would like to embrace the secret of your son
so that you may acknowledge me as your child
who is returning to you.**

Amen.

[The cross bearer leads the procession followed by two candles. The leader can either read from the podium or follow the cross and read from each station. The reader of each meditation reads from the podium. The leader announces each station as written.]

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.



THE FIRST STATION JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader: “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.” (Mt 26, 59)

Reader: Accepting one’s condemnation

Listen to Jesus saying: I was judged and finally condemned to death. The people who had listened to my sermons were in agreement with the government and the religious authorities on condemning me to die. My friends and apostles had fled. Only a short while ago they were full of praise and admiration for me and the miracles, they pushed their way to the front to touch me and assured me of their loyalty. Now they all are against me and force Pilate to have me crucified. Pilate, the foreigner, would like to set me free. But my fellow citizens force him to condemn me to death.

The people around you, even your very best friends, will judge you and condemn you. This does not mean that it is always you who are to blame. But it is always you who are condemned. Now you know that you cannot rely on men. God alone is your support and your security. This cross makes you independent of the men who you regard as your support and it invites you to seek support with me. If men condemn you, you can come over to my side. For I have been judged and condemned, too. Don’t defend yourself if you are judged by others. Their judgment cannot annihilate you, it does not leave you alone, it brings you closer to me and leads you into eternal glory. This sentence is your door to me, to a meeting with me. Now nobody can condemn you.

Leader: *Dear children! Today I ask you to stop all malicious gossip.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had pass’d.



THE SECOND STATION JESUS RECEIVES THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” (Isaiah 53, 4)

Reader:

Accepting one’s daily routine

I could have defended myself or wanted others to defend me.

I could have said: I am innocent, why shall I suffer? But I accepted the cross without complaining. Every moment of your life is a burden. You can accept it with patience or shake it off. You can flee from it or face it.

I accepted it. So you know where to find me. Your strength does not lie in running away. At any moment you will have to decide if you want to follow me. This is the second cross. Only few people recognize it. A lot of people look for extraordinary crosses. But your cross is here - in accepting your daily routine. Your daily routine is your life and your cross. If you accept it you will receive a lot of graces, and your faith will grow and develop quickly.

Leader: *Dear children, pray may accept illnesses and sufferings with love and patience, just as Jesus accepted them.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Oh, how sad and sore distress'd
Was that Mother highly blest
Of the sole-begotten One!



THIRD STATION

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph. 5, 2)

Reader: Having the courage to fall down

It is difficult to fall down. Everyone wishes to remain standing, to withstand and to prevail. I am God; nevertheless I fall beneath the cross, powerless. Everybody witnessed my miracles in amazement. But now they see me fall, beaten and despised.

Have courage to fall and to admit it, not to make it seem better. Here on earth you cannot become different. You are here to die. For it is written:

“Whoever loses his life, will find it.”

Why are you afraid to fall? Why don't you dare to look up when you have suffered defeat, when other men are cleverer than you? Why are you afraid when your sins get you down? You would like to get through. But look - when you fall you can come to me. Don't be afraid, falling is not the end. Why do you take it to heart so much, why are you so ashamed? You fall to come closer to me so that I can give you new strength.

If you understand that I also fell down, you will be able to see my face in your fall, and together we will defeat sin and failure. It is important not to remain isolated in falling, but to come close to me.

Leader: *Whenever you suffer, sacrifice your sufferings to God.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Christ above in torment hangs;
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.



FOURTH STATION

JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader: “This child is destined to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too.” (Lk. 2, 34-3 5)

Reader: Having to distress loved ones

It is impossible never to distress somebody you love. I could have avoided meeting my mother. Do you know what it means to meet somebody whom you have disappointed?

I was rejected and despised like a heretic and a seducer. My mother knew all about it. She saw my outer and inner pain and looked me in the eyes. It is a cross to look a loved one in the eyes when all others mock you. It is impossible not to disappoint people who love you. But you cannot protect them against it. Do not reject this cross. You will find me when you see that you have distressed your friends.

You see how your troubles pain them. This worries you. My mother understood who I am even in my defeat. Her last wish that I should succeed died in her, but her belief developed to the full.

You recognize a true friend if he stands by you even if nobody else finds anything praiseworthy in you. Then this true friend means you and you only. Accept what is offensive about you. Accept the fact that you will disappoint others, and you will meet me and my mother.

Leader: *I, the mother; love you all. I ask you not to allow my heart to cry bloody tears over those souls that are lost in sin.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelm'd in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?



FIFTH STATION SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4, 13)

Reader: **Allowing others to help you**

Nobody respected me. So many people did I cure, but even they left me, just like those who I was close to. Full of wounds and full of blood, shaken after meeting my mother I needed loving hands to support me.

The only one who came had to be forced. I longed for help given in compassion and love. Simon had to be forced to help me. It is a cross to find nobody willing to suffer with you in love. If you accept it you are no longer alone in suffering because I am with you.

And something else. Have courage to allow others to help you. I did it, too, although I am omnipotent. Let others surpass you, let them take care of you; admit it that you need them.

This is a cross and you cannot avoid it. Learn to understand that it is a door to me. Don't be astonished if all in you opposes this cross: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.” (Gal. 5, 17). Receive your cross and follow me. So you are with me.

Leader: *Don't be afraid to carry the cross. There is my Son to help you.*

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?



SIXTH STATION JESUS AND VERONICA

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25, 40)

Reader: Accepting a favor without being able to repay it

They took everything from me. And they all left me. I was alone, without possessions, on my way to death. Then Veronica came up to me and wiped my face with a napkin. Do you know how one feels in such a situation? I was deeply moved and full of gratitude, but I had nothing to reward her with. I had nothing but my suffering and my pain.

So I gave her the impression of my bloody face.

It is a cross to allow people to do you a favor without being able to reward them. Have courage and do what you have seen me do. Do not hesitate to be indebted to others. You need not pay for everything. Give yourself in return. Learn to receive without immediately thinking of a reward. This is a door to me: suffering the shame if you cannot give in return.

So you will meet me, and you will recognize the Father because you cannot reward him for what he gives you. He is like a spring exuding water generously. If you are like that you are my Father’s child. Also accept the cross that you cannot repay God for all his love. Be like a child that enjoys his father’s and his mother’s love.

Leader: *I thank you for all your sacrifices and call upon you for the greatest sacrifice, the sacrifice of love. Without love you cannot accept either me or my son. Without love you cannot bear witness of your experiences.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Bruis'd, derided, curs'd, defil'd,
She beheld her tender child
All with bloody scourges rent.



SEVENTH STATION JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “All who see me mock me,’ they hurl insults, shaking their heads; He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” (Ps 22, 7-8)

Reader: Relapsing

I fell once. Everybody wanted to see me strong. But I fell a second time. I knew that my mother would be shocked and my enemies would mock me. My friends would withdraw from me in disappointment. My weakness outraged everyone, and they asked themselves: Is this really God? I received this cross. My Father wanted to show that in me he is stronger than any offence.

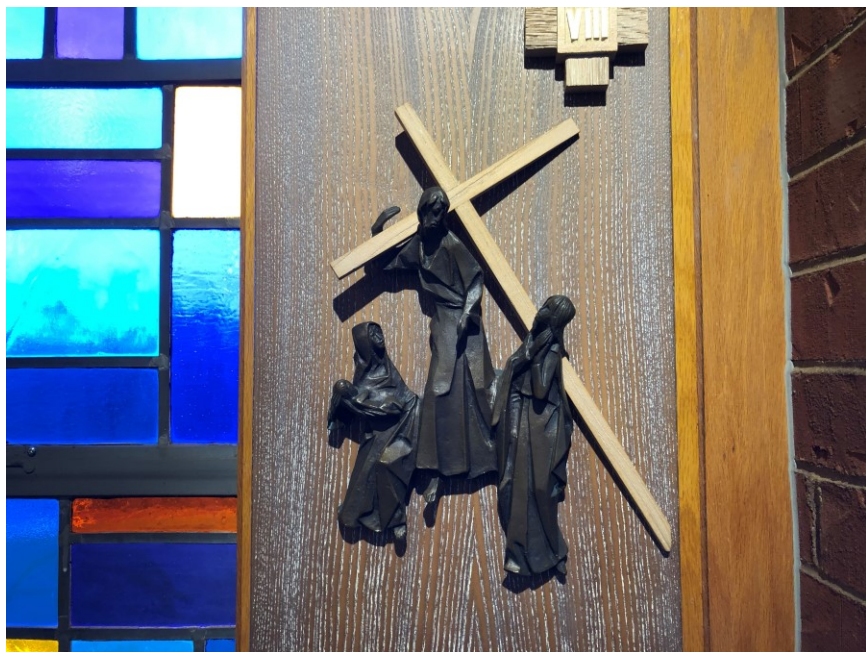
If you fall for the first time you will be able to make an excuse, but if you become weak a second time everyone will be able to prove that you are inferior. You will set yourself against this cross, you will want to put things right and to justify yourself. But in this case you become a stranger to me. By doing so you do not bear witness for me, but for yourself because you only want to show your own strength. Be aware that you will fall again and again, but I will raise you. Then they will say:

Look, somebody has raised him. Your seventh cross consists in admitting your weakness. Do not be afraid to fall, but turn to me. If you accept this cross you will find me in it, because it is only man who suffers defeat, mind will triumph.

Leader: He loves you, that is why he tests you. Sacrifice all your burdens to God, and don't worry.

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

For the sins of His own nation,
Saw Him hang in desolation,
Till His spirit forth He sent.



EIGHTH STATION JESUS COMFORTS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): **Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Lk 23, 28 and 31)

Reader: Comforting others in one’s own grief

Women listened to me; they believed me and loved me. I blessed their children. They looked at me with their hearts, and they could not understand that somebody condemned me. They cried because they felt that by condemning me life was condemned. In their sadness I comforted them.

This is the cross of conquering one’s own grief and seeing freedom behind it. No grief is tragic in the end.

Hardheartedness and blindness are tragic. It is tragic not to recognize that there is resurrection behind each death, recovery behind illness, reunion behind each farewell. It is tragic to submit to self-pity. You win a victory where you see somebody else’s grief and comfort him when you yourself need comforting.

Then it is God who comforts you. Have courage to do without human comfort and to ask God for strength. So you conquer the world. So you follow the stations of the cross, but it is a way into life. If you yourself are wounded and in pain, but comfort others, then you will find me, and I will support you.

Leader: *Dear children, I ask you to mend your ways. It is time for you to do it.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above;
Make my heart with thine accord.



NINTH STATION

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “My strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors.” (Ps 31, 10—11)

Reader: Suffering a total defeat

I fell a third time. The people believed that that would be my final breakdown. And just when they supposed that I would never make it I summoned up all my strength, took the cross and dragged it up to Golgotha.

A man can go on even if nobody thinks that it is possible. The moment will come when people tell you, “There’s nothing more to be expected from you. It’s the end!” You yourself will think, “I can’t go on.”

This is the moment of complete helplessness. It is the moment of your surrender, of the realization of your failure. Do you really want to abandon all hope then? - Don’t be afraid. There is another door, and you will meet me again behind it. If you cannot rely on yourself any longer, I will be there. You will cry from the bottom of your heart, and I will answer. It is a cross to lose and to be left alone, to have nobody who believes in you any more, to be given up. But if you accept this cross, I will surprise you with my presence and my strength. You will be able to go to the ends of the earth in my name. Are you willing to accept this cross? Don’t worry, I am with you. I have conquered the world.

Leader: *Promise that you will not offend or mock either Jesus or the cross.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ our Lord.



TENTH STATION

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: People stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. “(Ps 22, 17-18)

Reader: Enduring being undressed

I endured being stripped of my clothes, being deprived of my most intimate things. I let it happen that they ignored my sense of shame and invaded my privacy.

You want to have at least some tiny sphere for yourself, some area that belongs to you only, that must not be invaded by anybody else. You want to have something that nobody must see; otherwise your dignity would be offended. You are prepared to guard it and to hide it from anybody else’s eyes. You are convinced to have a right to it. You want to keep it at all costs as it is your most intimate possession and you are ready to fight for it. But there is the moment when there is no chance for you to save anything for yourself. There are situations when you must let everything go, there will be nothing left to you yourself. You are deprived of everything. You have to get through this cross. Give everything to God. We, my Father and I, will remain your most intimate and untouchable sphere. It is not only a cross when your body is violently stripped of clothes; it is much more painful when your soul is stripped. Your sins removed the cover long ago and you are ashamed.

Accept this cross, and nobody will be able to degrade you. Allow your Father to give you new clothes. Sacrifice your privacy; he will transform it into perfect innocence. In vain you will strive for innocence. Admit being too weak to attain it. This is the tenth cross - the cross of man’s disregarded sense of shame, the cross of man’s longing for innocence, the cross of man’s fear that anybody might learn of his guilt. Accept this cross and you will meet me. You fear will dissolve. Admit being weak, admit being what you are: a man degraded by sin. If you admit that nobody will ever be able to harm you.

Leader: *Look around you, dear children, and you will see to what extent sin has already seized power on earth. Therefore pray that Jesus may win.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Holy Mother! pierce me through;
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.



ELEVENTH STATION JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “My strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors.” (Ps 31, 10—11)

Reader: Being nailed to the cross

As long as you carry the cross you have the chance of throwing it off. But as soon as you are nailed to it you cannot escape any more. Now you know That the cross is your destiny until death. It is hard to accept this. You would like to throw off your crosses, but you are nailed to them. They are the place where you will die. Your fellowmen will nail you to the crosses. Are you afraid or do you rely entirely on me? There are crosses from which there is no escape. In vain you try to avoid them. Stop this futile fight and come to me. Dying with me means winning. Don't be afraid! Don't delude yourself that there may be other ways. The crosses will remain till the end, and the sooner you accept dying the sooner you will rise again. Remember this eleventh cross. For you are not only nailed forever to it, but also to me. I look forward to it.

Leader: *Pray especially before the cross, for great graces come from it.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.



TWELFTH STATION JESUS DIES UPON THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities,’ the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53, 5)

Reader: Dying on the cross

Death. I go from this world, but not into nothingness, but in order to live in a new way. By dying I did my Father’s will. So in dying I said, “Father, into your hand I commend my spirit!” And by doing so I fulfilled my Father’s plan. You think death is the end, and so you live in fear and oppose the thought of death. But as long as you do not accept death you feel a heavy burden resting upon your shoulders. If you accept death you win the victory and you come to me. I am far from you as long as you reject death and ask me to spare you. Understand that the way to me leads only through death. For death destroys everything that is sinful and mortal in you. I, however, destroy death itself. Death frees you from various crosses, but I free you from death. Risk looking into death’s eyes. Regard this cross as the Father’s present, as fulfillment. The Father has tolerated death. If you oppose dying you oppose the Father and me. The twelfth cross is the peak, a feast so to say, the moment of completion. It is the beginning of real life.

Leader: *Dear children! Make amends for the wound my son ~ heart has received! This heart has been injured by all sorts of sins.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourn'd for me,
All the days that I may live.



**THIRTEENTH STATION
JESUS IS TAKEN FROM THE CROSS
AND LAID IN MARY’S BOSOM**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “All you who pass by, look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me?” (Lam. 1, 12)

Reader: Not being able to enjoy the fruits of one’s labors

Only when I was dead my friends came. You are the seed of times to come.

But you want to see the fruits of your labors at once. My disciples often die in hopelessness and shame, and not they themselves, but others harvest what they have sowed. Others gain friends and life. This is the moment for you to serve as the seed of a new world. This is your cross. It is me who trusts you, for throughout your life you will hardly find recognition and success. Only after your death you will be taken from the cross and then you will be honored. For all eternity no cross will ever again be a burden to you because you had the courage to bear the cross in your life on earth. To work, but not to be able to enjoy the fruits of one’s labors, this is the thirteenth cross. It takes courage to sow the seed without being able to harvest the crop. But I am the fruit of your renunciation. I, however, take you to resurrection.

Leader: *Dear children! I give you special graces from the cross. Accept them and live them.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.



FOURTEENTH STATION JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and praise you.

All (*genuflecting*): Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12, 24)

Reader: Living without hope - from a human point of view

My friends thought to have done me a great honor by putting my body in the tomb. They cared for my body and forgot what I had told them: on the third day I will rise.” The tomb worries you. When the tomb is built you cease to exist. When not even the smallest trace is left of you, what will you do? When you know that nobody will attend your funeral, when you end your life in misery, it is me who knows you. It is a cross to bury one’s last wish, the wish to be respected here on earth. For this wish prevents you from being of real importance, from being a light for others. How can you be a light as long as you shrink back from burying your dark egoism with you, as long as you want to be near me but don’t want to burn your bridges behind you? Only then can I transform your life. Bury your wishes and accept the fourteenth cross. There is resurrection above it. Therefore I derive pleasure from the tomb in which your arrogance is buried. You don’t want to be put in a tomb; you are shocked by the thought of letting go this life. Therefore you are dead. If you were willing to accept death you would be able to rise in my life. Only one who is dead can rise. Don’t be afraid! What you call “death” is a bridge from you to me. The death of sin means joy and union for you and me, the fulfillment of all wishes and longings. I have gone this way and I am waiting for you. Don’t you understand that by my death I did not leave the world, but that it has been given to me? Before that I was only a guest on earth. Now I am the master. You will be as I am. Give to death what belongs to it. Don’t regard the tomb as a sad end, but as birth and a real beginning. Give up your pride and be ready to die, and the dawn of Easter will light up for you.

Leader: *I wish that you may understand that life on earth is very short compared to eternal life. Therefore, dear children, decide again in favor of God today.*

All: Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Virgin of all virgins best,
Listen to my fond request
Let me share thy grief divine.

Concluding prayer before the cross:

All:

JESUS, you accepted suffering for the love of us, and so it has become our redemption. We thank you for your cross! We thank you for your wounds and for the three hours of agony. We thank you for your words on the cross by which you gave us Mary as our mother: "HERE IS YOUR MOTHER!" (John 19, 27)

We thank you for your words on the cross by which you show us what forgiving really means: "FATHER. FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING." (Luke 23, 34) In this hour we come to your cross and offer you all our sufferings: the sufferings of the families, of the church, of the world. We know: You, oh Jesus, will redeem us. MARY, loving mother under the cross, pray with us and for us: By the cross, this SIGN OF SALVATION, almighty God may deliver us from all evil! By the cross, this SIGN OF TRIUMPH, almighty God may liberate all those who suffer from the influence of evil!

By this holy cross God may give us all the graces we need: the graces of reconciliation and of peace, of love, of faith and of salvation. By this sign of the cross almighty God may bless and protect all of us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Dear children! I would like to ask you to put the cross into the center in these days. Pray before the cross for great graces come from it. In your houses dedicate yourselves especially to the cross! Promise not to offend either Jesus or the cross and not to hurl abuse at either Jesus or the cross! Thank you for obeying my call!

Let me, to my latest breath,
In my body bear the death
Of that dying Son of thine. Amen