

Stations of the Cross

Conversion Stories from the Gospels



Jane Leclere Doyle

Leader: Dear Lord, we gather to remember your overwhelming love for us, a love that brought you to Calvary to die on a cross. As we follow your footsteps, strengthen us to shoulder our daily crosses, to know that no burden given us is so heavy that with your help we cannot bear it. Forgive us for the times we have shirked our burdens. And after our earthly struggles, bring us to everlasting life with you. Amen.

About the Author

Jane Leclere Doyle is a poet, songwriter, and writer of short stories. She was born into a Catholic family and raised on a farm in Southern Indiana. Her Catholic faith has shaped her writings and informed her life. She is married to a scientist with whom she worked for over 30 years at Cornell University. Now retired, she is devoting much of her time to writing. She and her husband of almost 40 years, Jeff, reside in Ithaca, New York.

About This Work

I wanted to reimagine the Stations from a personal point of view, in order to breathe new life into them for me. As I began to think about the best way to do this, an image of the early Christians gathered in the Catacombs came into my mind. I envisioned them telling stories to one another about being there when Jesus was put to death and how that affected them and brought them to faith in some cases. Once I had that image, characters stepped forward eager to tell me their stories. All I did was write them down. My hope is that their stories bring new insights to you as you pray this devotion.

First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Die

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Hebrew woman: I was condemned once. I was condemned as a coward. All who heard our story condemned my husband and me – but mostly we condemned ourselves. We’re his parents, the parents of the man born blind, the one that Jesus healed. But instead of being joyful and grateful about his healing, we were afraid of the Jewish leaders when they questioned us about his being born blind and then cured of his blindness. I knew they, and everyone else, believed we had to be sinners since we had a blind son. I knew what they were all thinking: “What terrible crime against God’s law have they committed?” It was written on their faces and in the way they avoided looking into our eyes. And I knew if we had said, “Yes, he was born blind and Jesus cured him,” we’d have been thrown out of the temple in a heartbeat. We were frightened and intimidated by the crowd. So unwilling were we to risk our place in the community and in the temple that we took the easy way out. We said, “Our son is old enough to speak for himself; ask him.” My son stared at us with profound sadness in his newly opened eyes. His first glimpse of his parents was of two frightened and shamefully cowardly people. I grieve over that to this day. We were guilty and deserved condemnation, even if only by ourselves. On the other hand, Jesus has been condemned and sentenced to death for no crime. As they lead Jesus away, we embrace our son and go to find the other followers. We’ve found our courage, become followers, and been thrown out of the temple for it. Our son has cured us of our blindness and led us into the light. (*Jn 9:1-41*)

Leader: When have I failed to speak the whole truth out of fear? When have I been blinded by the opinions of others and not had the courage to speak out? Am I willing to shed my blindness and speak out?

All: Dear Lord, I ask forgiveness for my quickness to condemn others and for my failure to speak up when the occasion demands it. Cure me of my blindness; give me open eyes and an open heart, and the courage to profess you even when it may cause loss for me. Amen.

Second Station: Jesus Bears His Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Well-dressed Hebrew businessman: I know about burdens. Let me tell you my story. I encountered Jesus one day. Wanting to prove myself to be a good Jew worthy to be a disciple, I asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was. His answer was insightful: “Love God above all else and love your neighbor.” I did all those things; I went to temple and made donations to the temple poor box. Feeling cocky, I asked, “What else?” When he answered, “Sell everything, then come follow me,” I was shocked. I walked away sad because I had a very nice house, owned a business, and lived well. Why should becoming poor be a prerequisite for discipleship? Several days later I remembered Jesus had said it was easier for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to be saved. That scared me, because I realized my possessions really were a hindrance—a burden. They fill my days with anxiety and consume me. I saw that I didn’t love God above all things. In fact, I rarely thought of God at all except for when I was at temple. I prayed for guidance and remembered other things Jesus said: “Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.” I challenged myself to recognize the “least of these” in my community. How had I ignored them for so long? I began to visit the leper colony, bringing bread from my bakery. I dropped coins into the outstretched hands of beggars. I realized discipleship didn’t mean becoming poor; it meant richly loving. It meant being unburdened by holding God’s blessings with open hands. Jesus taught me how to be less burdened by my possessions. Now he is bearing a burden—his cross. He’s going to his death because he dared to ask us to follow his example and risk ritual impurity for a higher cause—our fellow human beings. (*Mt 19:16-22, 22:36-40; Mk 10:17-22, 12:28-34; Lk 18:18-23, 10:25-28*)

Leader: Am I too distracted by what I have and what I want that I no longer see what I really need? Am I willing to divest myself of some possessions to make room for God?

All: Dear Lord, my possessions can be a stumbling block for me, getting in the way of my relationship with you. Help me to hold your many gifts with open hands so as not to be possessed by them. Amen.

Fifteenth Station: The Resurrection

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Hebrew woman holding a lantern: The morning was chilly and we were tired. We’d gotten up long before first light to mix the spices and prepare the oils. Our hearts were sad about his death. This was a labor of love we were about to do, but one we’d never wanted to do. One of the others asked, “Who’ll roll away the stone? Do you think if we all push, we can move it enough to enter the tomb?” None of us knew, but with luck a gardener might be there to help. I held my lantern higher in hope that light would give us confidence. Just as the sky was getting light, we began to recognize this portion as where his tomb was. Then, as the sun popped over the horizon, the earth shook! We all fell to the ground, and my lantern went out. How were we to see inside the tomb without a lantern? After what seemed a long while, the earth got quiet. We looked at each other to gain courage and got up. As we rounded the last bend, we were almost run over by half-crazed Roman soldiers. What could have spooked them so badly? More frightened than ever, we continued toward his tomb. To our amazement, standing by the open tomb with a hand on the stone was a shining angel. The angel spoke, telling us that the one we sought, the Crucified, is raised from the dead! The angel went on, instructing us to go tell Jesus’ other disciples what we’d seen and heard, and that Jesus was going to Galilee! We leapt and skipped for joy as we ran to tell them. They received the news with the same joy as we had. “He is risen from the dead,” we sang. “He is truly risen!” (*Matt 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-13*)

Leader: Do I believe the tomb is truly empty? Do I skip for joy at the news? Do I sing Alleluias in my heart always?

All: Dear Lord, you are raised! The tomb could not hold you! Filled with Easter joy as the women were, strengthen me to proudly and boldly tell the whole world this good news! Jesus, you are raised, Alleluia! Amen.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid to Rest

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Hebrew man: I'm a friend of the family. I've known Martha, Mary, and Lazarus for years, often eating with them, thereby knowing Jesus by extension. Many times I sat at table while we ate and he taught. I was mesmerized by his words, as were Mary and Lazarus. Martha always seemed preoccupied, but would offer comments as she filled cups or cut more bread. I was there when Lazarus died. I helped wash, anoint, and carry his body to the tomb. I rolled the stone in place. I was there when Jesus arrived. The sisters were a bit testy with him, as only good friends can be, but they had a faith in him that I felt was misplaced. When he asked to be taken to the tomb, I saw that Jesus' tears were genuine. He really did love this family. But when he asked that the stone be rolled away, I recoiled in horror. Mary stated the obvious, there would be a stench, but he insisted. She asked me to help roll it aside. Jesus prayed. As he concluded, he called out, and to everyone's shock and amazement, Lazarus stumbled out of the tomb! I mean he came out of the tomb; he was alive! I'd washed his very dead body and now he was walking. At that moment, I knew this Jesus was more than just a friend and good teacher. He was God's son, just as he'd said. What I cannot understand is how he allowed himself to be crucified. Why didn't he resist, or run away, or call upon a legion of angels? As I helped roll the stone in front of Jesus' tomb and it settled into place, I remembered Lazarus and prayed this wasn't the end. The man who had raised my friend and his friend surely wouldn't stay dead. I wanted to see Jesus walk out of his tomb, too. But who had such power to save? I walked away to prepare for the Passover. (*John 11:1-44*)

Leader: Do I trust in God's power? Do I believe in the resurrection of the dead? Can I believe that Jesus is both my God and my friend who laughs and cries with me? What do I do about my doubts and fears?

All: Dear Lord, you are my truest friend. I can tell you anything. When I feel the losses, sorrows, and disappointments of living, strengthen within me the confidence to turn to you, knowing you will understand and comfort me. Give me faith to trust that with your power, dead and buried hopes will rise. Amen.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Zebedee, holding a net: How different he looks now from when I first saw him. He was confident, bold, and charismatic then, whereas now he's prostrate, face down in the dust. I was so angry with him then. He just strode up to the three of us as we mended our fishing nets and asked my boys to follow him. I was running a fishing business with my boys, and he wanted them to leave me! What did he think I was going to do without them? James and John had always been good boys, so I was shocked when they jumped out of the boat to follow him, leaving me alone to sell the night's catch and mend the nets without so much as a backward glance! My wife had heard Jesus preach and thought he was wonderful. So later that day when I got home and complained, she was happy. She wondered out loud if they could be important staff members when he ran the Romans out and took over. While she dreamed, I stewed. But that changed two days later when the boys returned home with Jesus. We fished together that night. Jesus was a good worker, once he got the hang of it. He even had my boys promise to come home often to help me. And he talked – my, how he talked! He talked of his love of the Torah, the beauty of Judaism, and his interpretation of the law. It made such sense to me. That night on the Sea of Galilee was the best night of my life. We even had a good catch! My boys did come home often to fish, and explained Jesus' teachings to me. I'm no longer angry, but glad James and John are his disciples. As I watch, Jesus rights himself. In my heart, I promise: my boys and I will see to it that his teachings don't die. (*Mt 4:21-22; Mk 1:19-20; Lk 5:10-11*)

Leader: When have I felt a loss that seemed unfair or was too much to bear? Did I react with anger? Did I look for You in the moment? Have I moved on?

All: Dear Lord, when I am faced with loss and hardships and question how I can get up and go on, give me the wisdom to see your hand at work and trust You to help me overcome. Amen.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

One of the Magi, richly dressed: It had been over thirty years since I last saw her, but I was sure I recognized her. I still remember how young and unsure of herself she was when we came bearing those frivolous gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh – gifts that seemingly were of no use to her, her husband, and their baby. At least we were clever enough not to take information back to the king, going home by another route. The woman gazed at her baby as she is gazing at this grown man carrying his cross to his death; a look of deep love. Only mothers have that look – so this man, this criminal, must be her son! He’s about the right age. All those years ago, we’d felt a tug too great to ignore, compelling us to seek out a new king. We thought we had found him. Was that baby really this man? If so, then why would a people allow their king to be killed in such a cruel way? Was this woman his young mother from all those years ago? It had to be! I saw now how our gifts foretold this: gold for a king, frankincense for God, and myrrh for burial. It fit together. As the soldiers pushed her away from her son, she caught my eye. Her look of resolve made me shudder. Then he looked me straight in the eyes. His face shone, and the thorny crown on his bleeding head turned to gold for just the briefest moment. At that moment I was sure! I was sure, but I didn’t understand. I knew this bleeding and beaten man was that baby from Bethlehem, and that he was and is both God’s Son and a king. This is a deep mystery on which I must ponder, but I know it to be true. (*Mt 2:1-12*)

Leader: Do I take time to ponder the mystery? Am I convinced that You are both God’s son and my king?

All: Dear Lord, when I ponder the great mystery of your birth, life, death, and eventual return, help me to know with deep certainty and unwavering faith that you are God, who loves me unto death. Amen.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Hebrew man holding a scroll: It happened so quickly. Usually death on a cross is slow – it can take days. But he’s dead all right – didn’t even moan when that soldier thrust a lance into his side. Now a woman who must be his mother cradles his body. She looks like a woman from 30 years ago who came into the temple with her husband, her baby, and two doves. I was a student and wouldn’t have paid any attention except that the old priest, Simeon, who did the sacrifice and circumcision spoke loudly as he handed the baby back to her. Simeon declared himself ready to die now because he’d seen the Messiah! An old woman, Anna, sang for joy over the baby, too, talking about how he’s the fulfillment of all the prophets to anyone who would listen. Simeon spoke to the family, but I couldn’t quite hear over Anna’s singing – something about a sword. His words caused the mother to blanch, while the father shook his head in confusion. I saw them again about 14 years later, frantically searching for their son. When they arrived, a young lad was talking with and astounding the elders. The mother chided him. As the family left together, the lad retorted that he had to be about his Father’s business. Just last week I saw a zealous and angry Jesus overturn the money tables, yelling to stop making his Father’s house a den of thieves. I didn’t know he was her son then, but I was moved by his teachings so I sought him out this week. Now I see her sitting with him draped over her lap. A lance has pierced her son, yet she looks as though a sword has cleaved her heart. I now know the prophesy of Simeon and Anna to be true. He is the Messiah. I’m going to seek out his mother, his other followers, and join them. He may be dead, but I’m not. I’ll keep his teachings alive, or die trying. (*Luke 2:21-38, Luke 2:41-52 & Mark 11:15-17, Matt 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:14-17*)

Leader: Do I recognize your words when they come from the mouths of others? Am I open to learning from family, friend, or strangers? Do I boldly speak of you to family, friends, or strangers?

All: Dear Lord, Fill me with your zeal. When the cause seems lost and hope is dead, strengthen me, so I can fight for what is right and faithfully do your will. Amen

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Older Hebrew woman: Darkness surrounds us. Very few people remain because the blotting out of the sun frightens them. The quiet is deeply unsettling. From where I stand, I can only hear moaning from the two on either side of Jesus. Then Jesus calls out to ask why he has been forsaken. I was then transported back to when I first met Jesus. I was wailing loudly, feeling forsaken, too, as I followed the bier bearing the body of my only son to be buried next to his father. What would I do now? My daughter-in-law wasn't in a position to aid me. She'd go back to her family, and I'd starve. Even in my deep despair and sorrow, I saw Jesus approach. He called out for the procession to halt. In our confusion we did. Next he stepped up to the bier, laid his hand on my son's dead body, and told him to get up. I was gulping sobs as my son sat up. We were all astonished and a bit frightened. Jesus told me to take my son home, and then turned to leave. I ran after Jesus and fell at His feet, hiccupping out my thanks. He stopped and turned around. Then he helped me up, dried my cheeks with his hands, and told me I must never forget how it feels to lose everything. I am feeling that way now as my tears fall while I stand by watching him die. Then he calls out again that it is finished and his head drops. He who gave me a most precious gift, my son's life, just now gave away his best gift – his life. I weep to think it's come to this. Even the earth shakes with indignation. I'll have to labor on to share his gift of life. To remind others of the compassion he showed, his teachings of the law, and his challenge to be real followers of God. His work's done. He's finished – completely emptied out. *(Luke 7:11-17)*

Leader: When have I felt as though all was lost? When have I been close to despair? Did I seek Jesus' healing touch? Am I ready to give that touch to others in their times of loss?

All: Dear Lord, I ask to remember that loss is part of life, and to always look for ways to bring life into the world. I know Your death was not the end. Remind me to trust that the deaths in my life are not the end either. Amen.

Fifth Station: Jesus Is Helped by Simon

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Humbly dressed man: I should've been the one chosen to help carry the cross. I'm every bit as strong as that field hand. I broke my iron fetters and cracked rocks while I dwelt among the tombs. I would've gladly taken his cross, not needing to be forced by the soldier like he was. You see, I know Jesus. I'm the man from whom he drove out the demons, Legion. Thus I owe Jesus a great debt. The least I could've done would've been to help bear his cross. I bore his message, though. After Jesus drove out the demons, I wanted to be a follower, but he sent me to preach instead. I took his message of love and compassion to anyone who'd listen, proudly proclaiming his message ever since. Even though some didn't want to hear it, and especially didn't want to hear it from me – a former possessed lunatic. But I didn't let anything stop me. Now I stand here unable to help, and even worse, I'm powerless to stop what is about to happen. I wanted to help shoulder his burden as I've helped spread his message. I'm sure his preaching brought him to this. Will mine do the same? Will I soon be carrying my cross through the streets of Jerusalem? Am I strong enough? Jesus, am I strong enough? Just as I was being consumed by my doubts, he looked at me. He saw the fear in my eyes and read the doubt in my heart. He smiled faintly at me. Then, in the same way I had felt the demons leave me, I felt this demon of doubt leave me. I will be strong enough! I will carry on with Jesus' message, no matter. And if I wind up dying for it, someone else will step forward to help keep the message alive. *(Mt 8:28-34; Mk 5:1-20; Lk 8:26-39)*

Leader: Do I proclaim Your message fearlessly? Do my fears and doubts weaken my resolve to be Your disciple? Do I lend aid gladly when needed?

All: Dear Lord, I am supposed to be the bearer of Your message of love and compassion. In times of trial, send me helpers. In times of doubt, give me strength. Amen.

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Poorly dressed old Hebrew woman: I watched her come out of the crowd. I heard the gasp as she removed her veil. I watched as she held it to his bloody face. I wondered how long the soldiers would allow her with him. It wasn't long. Quickly and roughly she was shoved aside as they moved him along with lashes from a whip. Her veil fell to the ground. She had to snatch it up to keep the trailing soldier from treading on it. The look on her face was one of shock that melted into joy as she looked down at her veil. I couldn't see why. But as I watched, she clutched it to her heart. I hold a piece of Jesus in my heart, too. I didn't ask for his praise. I was only doing what I felt I had to do—placing my two mites into the temple treasury box and trusting that I wouldn't starve. I was embarrassed by the meagerness of my gift and hoped no one saw me deposit it into the box. It was a small gesture, much like her wiping his face just now, but it earned me his praise, because as soon as my mites clinked into the box, I heard his voice ring out that I had given more than anyone. Others turned to look at me. I was uncomfortable with the notice. It was my duty to care for those in need. Despite my discomfort, I was pleased to learn that no matter the size of the gift, it is how it's given that's most important. Her gift of cleaning his face was a small gesture that showed great care and love. She was somehow rewarded. My small donations will be rewarded somehow, too. I don't care how or when, because I have his assurance that nothing given in love goes unnoticed by God. That's enough for me. (*Mk 12:41-44; Lk 21:1-4*)

Leader: Am I truly generous with my time, talent, and treasure? Do I trust that I will not go without if I give generously? Am I concerned about how my gift will impress others?

All: Dear Lord, when I give with an open heart that's filled with love, I am serving you. I ask not to be rewarded; only to know that what I give or what I do in Your name will be enough. Amen.

Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Young Hebrew girl holding a water pitcher: His arms were outstretched. His feet had already been affixed. The pain was plain to see on his face and hear in his cries. I averted my eyes, not wanting to see the nails go into his hands. Instead, I looked at his feet from which blood dripped. I remember his feet. I remember them well. I was supposed to have had that night off. My owner said the upper room wasn't rented, but suddenly a group was coming. I worked all afternoon and then had to stay to serve and wait on them. I had basins and pitchers of water ready to clean feet, but no one stopped. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry, wanting to be in the best position—near the head couch. Their leader, Jesus, arrived last and stopped at the entrance to the room. He smiled at me and sat down by a basin. I removed his sandals, and as I poured water over his dirty feet, he asked me my name. I was shocked—no one had ever noticed me, let alone spoken to me. I answered, "Leah." While I dried his feet, he reached down, cupped my chin in his hand, and raised my face up. "I love you," he said, "and thank you. Now remember, Leah, when you wash others' feet, you serve God." Later that evening he washed the other guests' feet. I was so taken aback. They were, too. That's my job, the job of a slave, and Jesus was no slave. One man resisted, but in the end he allowed Jesus to wash his feet, too. He even washed my feet! After Jesus put back on his outer garment, He told them, with a wink to me, that we must humbly serve all we encounter. We must "Love one another as I have loved you." Now, as I look at his bleeding feet, I can still feel the love he showed with his tender care for a servant girl and her tired feet. I pray that I never forget his new commandment. (*John 13:1-20 & 15:9-17*)

Leader: Have I failed to serve you by failing to serve others? Am I motivated into action by hoping for notice and thanks? Am I willing to love even those I don't like?

All: Dear Lord, you gave us a new commandment: to love as you have loved. Many days that is such a tall order. When I think that you loved me y death, I know just how often I fail to love even just a little. Grant, I pray, that I see you and be you to all those I meet. Let your love for them flow out of me. Amen.

Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Young Hebrew woman carrying a cloak: I know just how he feels – how it is to stand naked before a crowd clamoring for your death, to feel the scorn and the staring. I stood before such a crowd about a year ago. I'd been dragged from my lover's embrace, not allowed to cover myself, and driven into the Temple Square. Yes, I was guilty. I'd been unfaithful. There were reasons for my infidelity, but I was guilty. Those holy men of God were a bit too eager to expose my adultery and me. With unmasked glee they made me stand, naked, before Jesus, His disciples, and the jeering, leering crowd. Jesus looked into my eyes, not at my nakedness. He saw me as a worthwhile person. That was a new experience for me. He told them to go ahead and stone me if they were free of guilt. Soon it was just the two of us. He put his cloak around me and escorted me to my husband's house. My husband came out. The two men talked of love, commitment, and forgiveness. My husband gave Jesus back his cloak as I walked into my husband's home, where I have faithfully remained since. So yes, I know how Jesus feels right now. I know the shame and humiliation of standing naked, having nowhere to hide, and hearing the jeers. Yet I also know that Jesus possesses a depth and strength unseen before. He doesn't shrink. He holds his bleeding and crowned head high. He has nothing to hide, nothing about which to feel shame. He's a man filled with dignity. That bloody, filthy cloak now lies discarded in the dust. The soldiers are tossing dice for it. I long to wrap myself in his cloak again and feel his compassion and his encouragement envelop me. But I cannot. I must find deep within myself the strength He shows now, as I continue striving to live a life of fidelity and dignity. (*John 8:2-11*)

Leader: How often am I unfaithful? How often have I broken promises to others and to You? Have I taken steps to reconcile?

All: Dear Lord, I long to hide my shame from You, from others, and even from myself. Cover me in Your compassion so I may know forgiveness, put my past behind me, and stand before you with confidence. Amen.

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Hebrew girl: I remember falling. I remember seeing stars and the awful pain in my head before everything went black. I'd been sweeping our roof where we sleep and backed off the edge. It was a long fall, so I must've hit the cobblestone street very hard. I should've been more careful, but I was in a hurry and didn't pay attention to where the edge was. I don't know how long it was before Jesus came to our house. I was following a faraway light when I heard him call, "Little girl, I say arise." The sound was distant, but I turned around from the light and went to his voice. When I looked up, I saw his loving and friendly face. I could hear my mother wailing and saw the concern and despair on my father's face. Jesus took me by the hand to help me up. My mother shrieked. Jesus told her to get me something to eat, and I realized I was hungry. I wanted to talk to Jesus about where I'd been, but he only smiled and told me to be more careful in the future. While eating, I wondered about my future. I wasn't sure just what I was expected to do with this second chance. I couldn't ask because Jesus was gone by then. In fact, I never saw him again until today. As I watched, I asked in my heart, "Jesus, what do you want of me?" Even as tired and full of pain as he must've been, he looked at me as he stood upright and mouthed the words, "Little girl, I say arise." I have a big job ahead – to be his disciple. But I know that I'll rise to the challenge. And I know that he'll always be with me. (*Mt 9:18-19, 23-26; Mk 5:21-24, 35-43; Lk 8:40-42, 49-56*)

Leader: When have I been given a second chance? Did I take time to wonder about what I must do with it? Am I certain Jesus is always with me?

All: Dear Lord, I have a job to do, too. I must speak your words to bring about your kingdom. Strengthen me for this task. Help me up again when I fall. You are with me always. Amen.

Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

A Hebrew woman: He didn't want our tears, but this was our job—to wail and weep at funerals and executions. We're professional mourners. But I remembered him from when the temple priest Jarius's daughter died. We were prostrate with our feigned grief when Jarius and Jesus arrived. Jesus told us to be quiet and then put us out. He was having none of our fake tears then, or now, as he told us yet again to be quiet. "Don't bother shedding fake tears for me. I want real emotion, genuine love and care, not your purchased feelings. The time will come when you will cry for real, so save your tears for then." What was ahead that would cause us to cry, I wondered? But really, Jesus' life was all about being true, authentic, and genuine in one's actions. Being lukewarm wasn't what he demanded. If you couldn't follow him wholeheartedly, he didn't want you. You could fail, but you had to be committed. He didn't suffer fakers either. Well, I was a phony. I faked my tears. I faked my grief. I faked my life. I'd heard him speak, but I was afraid because what he asked of me seemed too hard—to step out of my comfort zone and be vulnerable. It was easier to stay in my safe, pretend life. But now, after he'd called me out yet again, I felt I needed to dry my phony tears and try real mourning. I needed to mourn for the person I'd become—unable to commit. I needed to let my mask fall, try to understand Jesus' teachings, learn to live them, and suffer the consequences. If I truly do this, and I know it won't be easy to change, I may indeed shed tears one day. But at least these tears will be genuine. (*Lk 23:27-31*)

Leader: When have I hidden behind fake emotions to protect myself? Have I avoided becoming involved in the pain of others so I wouldn't get hurt? Do I stay in my little safe life, not willing to commit to real change? Am I ready to commit to Jesus and suffer the consequences?

All: Dear Lord, help me to move toward real commitment to You. Strengthen me to allow myself to be vulnerable by showing my emotions and empathy and working to alleviate suffering. Move me out of myself. Amen.

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Older Hebrew woman: He fell hard. It broke my heart the way he struggled to carry that cross when he was so tired. How could he go on? I asked myself. Why would he? He needed rest. I remember experiencing that last year. I'd been feeling poorly for some time. My daughter was worried. She wanted me to slow down a bit—take better care of myself. But I was afraid if I stopped, I'd never get up again. You see, Simon Peter, her husband, had become one of Jesus' followers and wasn't home much. His fishing income was sorely missed, so she was taking in sewing and laundry. I was doing most of the cooking, cleaning, and chasing the children. There was no time to rest. Finally one morning, I just couldn't get up. I knew I was feverish because I ached all over. My daughter didn't know where Simon was, but she ran out of the house to seek information. Shortly thereafter she, Simon, and Jesus came into my little room. Jesus sat down beside me, taking my hand. He chastised me, saying I mustn't overtax myself. I must learn to rest to refill and refresh myself. Just like taking time to pray to refill and refresh our souls. Then he said to me, "I'm hungry. Could you fix a small meal for me?" Suddenly, I felt completely well. I hadn't felt that well in weeks. And I was hungry, too. I got out cheese, olives, yesterday's bread, and a jug of wine for our meal. Between bites, Jesus made me promise to take a rest every day. I nodded, understanding that if I wanted to help my daughter I had to take care of myself, too. As I watch, he staggers to his feet and moves forward. I had a reason to get up, and Jesus seemed to have a reason to get up, too. I got up so I could continue to serve those I love. So did he. (*Mt 8:14-15; Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38-39*)

Leader: Do I rest often enough in the presence of God in prayer? Am I too busy doing things that I fail to do the important things? Have I allowed my spiritual life to grow weary?

All: Dear Lord, when I fall for whatever reason, help me to discern if my struggles are where I should be putting my energies. Grant me clear insight to see what I need to be doing and when I need to rest and pray so I have the energy to do your will. Amen.