

Way of the cross

for children

The road which Jesus walked from Jerusalem to Calvary, is and was always called

THE WAY OF THE CROSS, Via Crucis.

It has always been a pilgrimage and a prayer in which we are invited to accompany the steps of Jesus who has given His life to the world.

Praying the Way of the Cross, we cannot do less than see in the sufferings of the Son of God, the sufferings of the world, especially of the little and innocent ones.

In that Good Friday all of them were present, and in Him, the suffering of children has reconciled the world with God.





Jesus is condemned to death



*"Pilate, after having Jesus scourged,
handed Him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:15)*

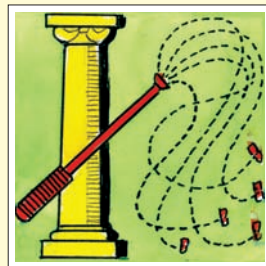


In some Nations even the under age boys
are prosecuted and condemned.
They do not have any possibility
to defend themselves
and they wait, without hope,
for their sentence.

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus,
when Pilate condemned you to death,
You wanted to rebel because you were innocent,
but then you looked far ahead and saw the face
of many children condemned to die because of unjust wars,
hunger, sicknesses and extreme moral and material misery.
Those faces, Lord, convinced you
to accept the sentence without justifying yourself,
like a child who doesn't know and cannot ask an explanation
for a suffering he did not deserve.

*Forgive us, Lord,
if we have not yet learned how
to respect human life and allow
ourselves every day to condemn to
death Your creatures,
made according to Your image
and likeness.*





Jesus carries the cross



*"Jesus, carrying the cross,
sets out for Golgotha" (John 19:17)*



250 million children in the world work as slaves in the factories, making carpets, matches, deep-freezers, shoes, toys, bricks. They work in the coal mines, in the glass factories, on the tea and sugarcane estates...

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, when they presented the cross to you, you embraced it because love and compassion were helping you to carry that weight; love and compassion for those children who every day carry on their shoulders heavy loads of bricks; for those little ones who push heavy trolleys of coal in the mines. You thought of those who incessantly collect sugarcane under the burning sun; of the weavers of carpets, closed inside small and humid rooms; of the little girls who work in the toy and match factories; of the little tea pickers, of the little herdsmen, of the 250 million working children worn out with fatigue and very badly paid.

*Jesus, we ask you pardon,
because our society imposes
burdens on the children that are too
heavy and leaves them to carry
their crosses alone.*





Jesus falls under the cross



*"Rescue me, God, from evil men,
protect me from violent men
who are bent on making me stumble." (Psalm 140:5)*



*In the whole world there are
more than 600 thousand soldier children.
They are trained for war, they shoot boldly,
but there is much fear in their heart.*

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, when You fell under the weight of the cross,
You did not care about Yourself but about Your and our little
brothers who fall into the net of cruel soldiers.
Still very small, they are trained for war, forced to shoot,
irreparably wounded in their heart.
The small machine-gun is the cross of the boy soldiers:
they take it down, load it and polish it.
They look bold but in their heart they feel terribly frightened.
In the evening they use that nasty piece of war as a pillow,
and at night their dreams are tinged with blood.
These boys, like you, without having looked for it, climb their
Calvary weighted down with weapons
and violence.

*Forgive us, Lord, because we have
armed children's hands,
destroying their play and the dreams
of their childhood.*

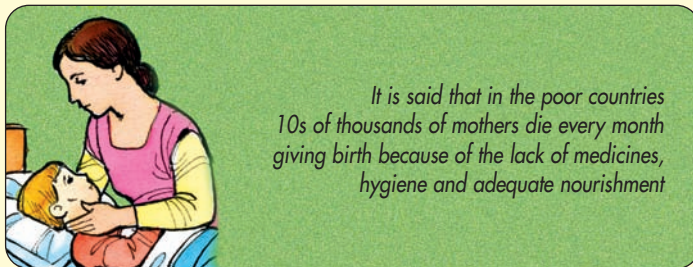




Jesus meets his mother



*"And Simeon said to Mary:
a sword will pierce your soul." (Luke 2:35)*

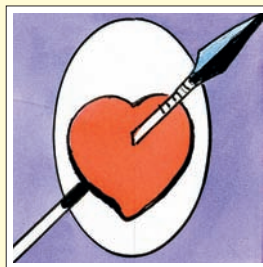


*It is said that in the poor countries
10s of thousands of mothers die every month
giving birth because of the lack of medicines,
hygiene and adequate nourishment*

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, when Your mother met You on the way to Calvary, she could have cried aloud her sorrow to the world; instead, she wept in silence together with the mothers of handicapped, crippled, prisoner, starving, abused and injured children. She united her suffering to that of the mothers who have lost their children in drugs, violence and road accidents. She thought of the mothers in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Sudan, in Angola, in Palestine and in Israel who see their children slaughtered by war. She embraced her Son, and in Him, she wanted to embrace the sufferings of all the mothers.

*Forgive us, Mary,
because we think too much of oursel-
ves and our small pains
and we do not know how to console
those mothers who suffer.*

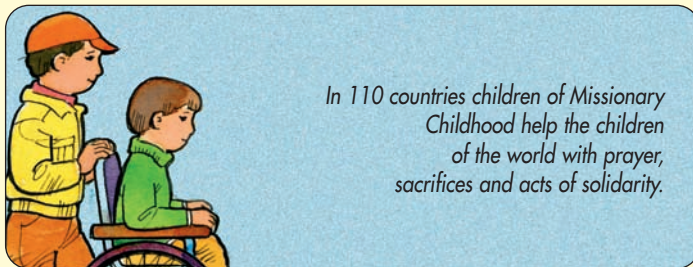




Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene



"They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry the cross." (Mark 15:21)



*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, when the soldiers saw You exhausted, they wanted You to be helped by a man who was just passing by. Simon of Cyrene was his name. He was coming back from the fields, after having spent a whole morning working. Simon, seeing your tiredness, put his shoulder near to Yours to relieve You of the burden. You accepted it willingly because, in that man, full of compassion, You were seeing all those good people who forget their own tiredness in order to help others. You thought of those Mothers, Fathers, Priests, Missionaries, Sisters and the many volunteers who offer their own life for the service of others and, in Your heart, Jesus, You blessed them.

*Jesus, forgive our laziness
and our selfishness.
Make us ever more available
to carry the burdens of others.*





Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



"A large crowd of people followed Him, including women, who mourned and lamented over Him." (Luke 23:27)



*The Missionaries in the world are many:
Priests, Brothers, Sisters and lay people.
They announce the Gospel,
help their brothers and sisters
and awaken the face of God,
who sleeps in their heart.*

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Lord, a woman who did not know
You felt pity on Your suffering and,
challenging the ferocity of the soldiers,
came close to You to wipe Your face wet with blood and sweat.
You wanted to reward her gesture and left
Your image imprinted on that linen.
Lord, in the heart of men the light of your face is dormant.
The missionaries try to revive it by announcing Your Gospel,
but after 2000 years about four billion people still do not
know You, do not know that You came to save us and that all
creatures can call God by the name "Father."

*Lord, awaken Your face
which is sleeping in the heart
of every person
and call many missionaries
to announce Your salvation
to the world.*

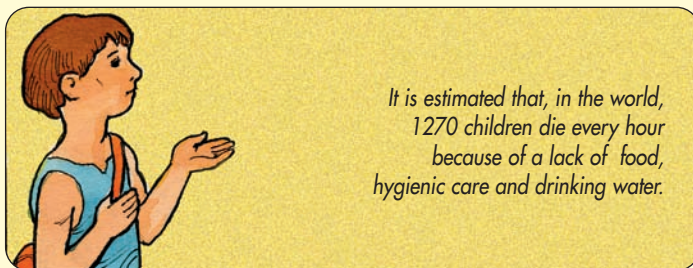




Jesus is stripped of his garments



*"They divided His clothing,
casting lots to decide what each should get." (Mark 15:24)*



*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, they did to You what is often done to the poor: they stripped You of everything and took away Your clothes. A wicked system continues in the world that digs furrows of injustice. There are children dying of hunger and children who eat too much. There are children who cannot go to school and children who do not want to study; children who search for bread among the dirt and children who waste food; children who have a beautiful home and children who live in the streets; children who work twelve hours a day and children who only want to play: good children who help others and children who never think about the suffering and misery of their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

*Lord, forgive us because
we have too much and often
complain without thinking
of our brothers and sisters
who lack everything.*





Jesus is crucified



"Then they crucified Him, and two bandits with Him, one on His right and one on His left." (Mark 15:27)



100 million mines are buried in the earth.
The cowardly war of mines
has not only killed thousands of people,
but has also injured thousands of
men, women and children.

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

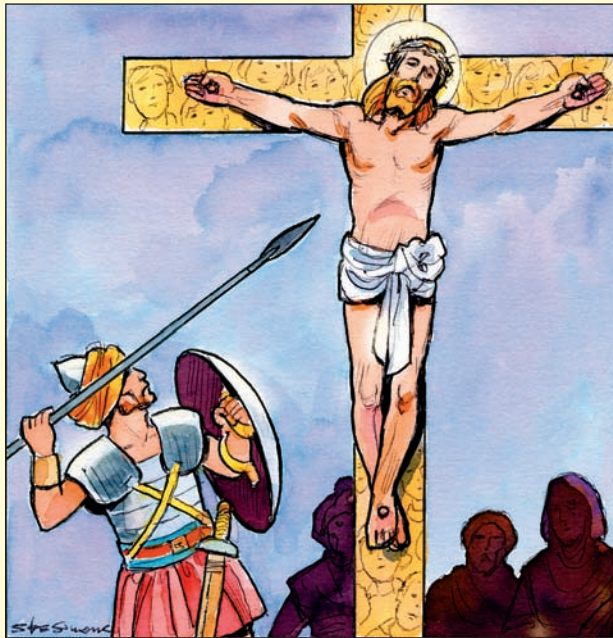
Jesus, when they nailed You on the cross, You felt infinite pain, as many children, women and men do when shot by "Kamikase" or crippled by mines. Lord, after the violent wars, we invented cowardly wars and the false heroism of the "Kamikase." With them we have destroyed the life of millions of human beings who have lost their arms, legs and eyes. Their pain will endure for their whole life, because nobody will be able to reverse the ravaging ruin of those deadly objects. Free us, Lord, from the temptation to invent more and more sophisticated tools of war nailing our brothers and sisters on very hard crosses that no Cyrenean can ever lighten.

*Lord, pardon our cruelty
and grant us the strength
to disconnect the mines of evil
we carry in our heart.*





Jesus died on the cross



"One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water." (John 19:34)



In these last decades, not only in Europe, divorces and broken marriages are dizzily increasing, causing suffering to children who feel neglected and unhappy.

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

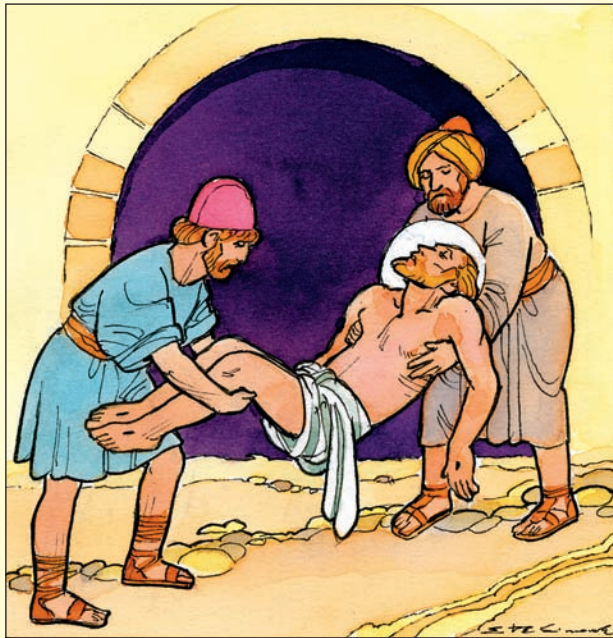
Jesus, in order to be certain of Your death, the Roman soldier pierced Your side with a lance and there came out a few drops of blood and water. You had given everything for us; You had poured out Your blood to the last drop because You love with infinite love. Your life was offered for the salvation of the world. How many lives, Lord, are burned out every day: children who suffer and die because of lack of medical care, hygiene, nourishment. How many brothers die because of wars, earthquakes and poverty! You live the agony together with them. You die with them and for them.

*Forgive us, Lord,
because we are not able
to save millions of children
condemned to death by misery.*

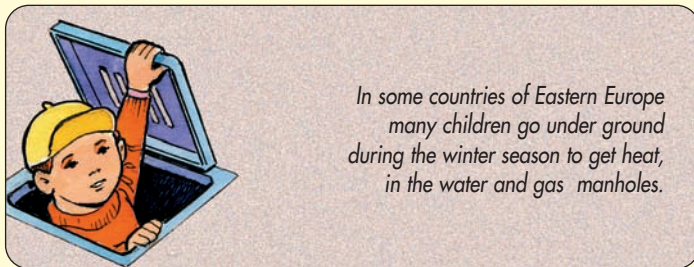




Jesus is buried



*"Joseph of Arimathaea took the body,
wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it
in his own new tomb." (Mt 27:59)*



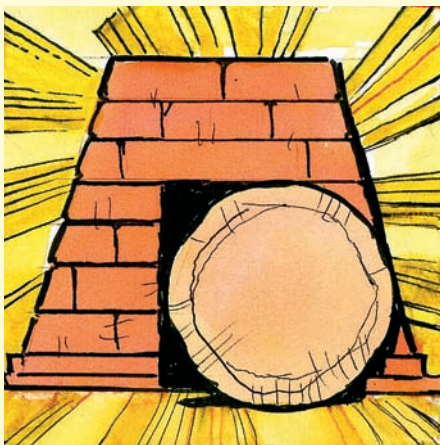
*In some countries of Eastern Europe
many children go under ground
during the winter season to get heat,
in the water and gas manholes.*

*We adore You, O Christ, And we bless You
Because of Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, the stone of the tomb seemed to close every hope,
but You conquered the darkness and came out victorious.
We too are sure that the life of the children of the world
will not always be painted grey.
It will assume the colour of hope.
We are doing our best in order to conquer death.
Give us a hand because the task is difficult.
We do not want to stop to cry on Your tomb,
we do not want to always count
the number of children killed, exploited, impoverished.
We know that Your tomb remained empty
because You have conquered death.

*Lord, help us to make empty
the wells of indifference and to fill
hearts with the hope that is born
on the day of Your resurrection.*





*Remove, Lord, from our hearts
the stone that hides death,
and open us to fraternity, peace, joy and gratitude.*

*Transform our tombs into places of hope,
where the light may cancel the signs of death
and give a new impetus to life.*

*Return innocence to humanity
So that it may be able to welcome life
With the same tenderness and wonder of children*

Jesus is risen

*"And the Angel said:
You are looking for Jesus of Naza-
reth, who was crucified:
He has risen, He is not here."
(Mark 16:6)*

*In the shining morning of Easter
I came to the tomb to weep over
the sorrow of Good Friday.*

*A luminous air was wrapped around
the tomb and, in that splendour, my eyes could not find tears.*

*Around Your tomb there were angels and children,
plucking flowers, running after butterflies,
singing at the top of their voice.*

*White children, black children,
children of all colours were entering and coming out
from what had been Your tomb
and the angels were looking at them with delight.*

*I joined, became one of them, and I forgot
the tears of Good Friday.*





*Whoever welcomes one child
such as this for my name's sake,
welcomes me.*

(Mt 18,5)