

MICHEL SCHOOPYANS

**Way of the Cross
of the Jubilee of the Family**

Prologue by Cardinal Bergoglio

Preface by P. Daniel-Ange

Translation by Sister Mary Agnes

Prologue

The Via Crucis is the most profound expression of the way of God among men. From there it follows that it would be contradictory to think of it as a static icon or simply as an episode, the final episode, of the life of Jesus. Michel Schooyans knows that and – with fine intuition – he penetrates the mystery of the way of God. To enter into the mystery: such is his intention; however, he cannot... no one can. It is the Holy Spirit who introduces us to the Mystery. That is why the main theme of this Way of the Cross is the presence of the Spirit, the Spirit who reminds us of all that Jesus has taught us, who has prayed and groaned in our hearts, who makes us aspire towards the new Heaven and the new Earth, culmination of the way of God in that future and marvellous unveiling (Apocalypse) of this humble sojourn among men.

The way has commenced in the Bosom of the Trinity, in that decision of love: "Let us make man in our own image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). It has pursued its course through the centuries of history, sometimes in moments of light, sometimes in tragic moments ... but this is always a path of fidelity, quite simply because "He could not deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Way of shadows and light of which the constant murmur was this "I have loved you with an everlasting love". Way which is hidden and is transfigured, which triumphs and knows failure, which enlightens and knows how to wait in spite of the unlovingness of men and of women, of entire peoples. Yes, it is the way of eternal love and it is fidelity strong and immovable.

And on this last day of the life of the Word made flesh, the long way is condensed into a few hundred metres, with all the strength of eternal and faithful love, and all the weakness of this "If it is possible... let this chalice pass from me" (cfr. Lk. 22:42). The way is condensed in a transformation into com-passion for the history of men and peoples, but also for the history of each, of the heart of each. For, although the way of eternity and centuries is longer than the short way of Good

Friday, it is the way of God who has mortgaged his heart to love, gives himself in mercy, and rejoices because the one who was lost has been found. (cfr. Lk. 15:6,7,9,10,32).

It is by following in the steps of God transformed into the Suffering Servant, that the Holy Spirit carves on our hearts, with the instrument of the mercy of the Father, the image of the Faithful Servant who has learned in patience and in suffering the mystery of obedience (Hebr. 5:8), that this listening with an open heart to the Will of the Father is “accomplished” in his way among men.

I thank Doctor Beatriz Gobbi for making this mystical work available to the faithful of the Spanish language. This will do much good. May the Lord reward her abundantly.

Buenos Aires, 14 September 2007

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Card. Jorge Mario Bergoglio s.j.

Preface

From the astonishingly unending litany of jubilees – veritable explosion of divine life – which has studded the great Holy Year 2000 and marked the passage of one millennium to the other, that of the family shines with all its energy.

Before the eternal city invaded by families often reaching back three generations, I am reminded of the words of the prophet Zechariah:

“Old men and old women will again sit down in the squares of Jerusalem, every one of them staff in hand because of their great age, and the squares of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in the squares.” (Zechariah 8, 4).

After the fervent vigil, I see these children again, playing football on St Peter’s piazza, all lit up with lights illumining the basilica, under the windows brightened by this little old man with the heart of a child, a spirit younger than our teen-agers: prophet par excellence of our age.

If we were to see them from above, we would laugh with joy. Is it not He who has invited them all here, with their parents and grand-parents? What Head of State or spiritual master in the world would be capable of gathering, from all the countries of the earth, families of every colour and language? Of gathering them around Whom? Around this Baby of Bethlehem, King of the nations, for whom we celebrate the 2000 birthday with indescribable jubilation.

A short while ago I was contemplating one holding on his breast an infant without arms or legs presented by his parents for adoption. Vibrant and astonishing Icon of the tenderness of the Father.

On the morrow these same families were there, under glacial rain. During four hours in a queue, often feeding a child in arms, they waited... Finally: after the Mass of three hours, some waited yet another hour to walk through the holy Door.

This diluvial gale: striking image of the murderous cyclone unleashed against our families, of this ideology aggressively imposed, destroyer of our liberty, veering towards dictatorial totalitarianism. Absolute intellectual terrorism poisoning our societies, attacking the family in its very beginning: life, and then love! For what

prostitutes love destroys life. There where love loses its value, life loses its savour. There where love is laid waste, life is ravaged.

In the corridors of this war against the family such as given by God, loved by God, lived by God, takes place the decisive duel between the Murderer- whose only aim is to kill by injecting hatred- and the Prince of life – whose only work is love. To love even to die for us and inspire us by His Life.

It is because this Great Jubilee is precisely the acting out – mystical but real – of the moment in which Love is made flesh to give us life that, furious, the Liar unleashes himself as always against this mystery of a love capable of giving life, through the body. In brief: the mystery of sexuality, marriage, family.

How we bless you, so dear Father Michel, for your great courage in denouncing with lucidity the Enemy against whom we have to fight with all our strength.

In order to remain honest and upright in this perverted world, every man should read your studies so well documented and place their trust in your very pertinent diagnoses.

But in these pages it is no longer the clinician of the world giving his diagnosis or the surgeon proposing survival operations, it is the man of God, the contemplative who shares his suffering.

Beyond the Passion of God, that is to say, the most intimate of Love, there is all the distress of the world: the hurts of children, the anguish and confusion of the young, the crises of adolescents, the discouragement of those who struggle, the lassitude of educators, the tears of mothers and already the distress of fathers, the powerlessness of politicians, the fever of scientists, the weariness of parents exhausted from fighting to protect their little ones against the virus with which they are being contaminated.

All of this is thrown into the broken heart of Jesus, and we have a wild hope. All of this is here transferred into absolute certitude of final victory.

Yes and yes, Love will have the last word. The Life will take away death. The Truth over the lie. The Truth which is reality. The Truth eternal.

For here the Man unveils to us who is man. The King shows us who we are: kings and queens. Reigning already over a world of which we are the great conquerors.

Yes, Way of the Cross: way of a happiness which is not from here. Way of a joy elsewhere, of a joy profound. Of a joy which endures.

Way of light. Of a light of heaven which knows no end.

Way of childhood: of our new childhood, eternal because divine. From the very childhood of God, eternal because divine, given gratuitously to all those whose childhood has been snatched, adolescence spoiled, youth tarnished.

And I recall this Way of the Cross during the fabulous JMJ 2000... Never will I forget those hundreds of thousands of young people, intensely recollected, an inner light radiating their beautiful countenances! These young people massed all along the great avenue surrounding the Coliseum, symbol of the martyr for Christ.

Yes, these youth are the victims of the world of today, but tomorrow will be masters of the world. This new generation, eager, vibrant, profound, will calmly continue in a sad generation which claims to manage our societies. They will be the masters, but at the price of martyrdom. Some will be called to walk in the footsteps of these martyrs who have perfumed with their love, have shed their blood all through this twentieth century, and who have been solemnly glorified by our John-Paul II and the other heads of Churches and ecclesial communities, even here, at the Coliseum.

Yes, there will be martyrs of the family, of love, of life! We cannot save the family, protect love, save life, attest to the truth of God and of man, without witnessing to it even by work destroyed reputation lost, life given, to the shedding of blood.

However, by your Way of the Cross, dear Father Michel, the Lord whispers to us: "Fear not! Courage! The world? Have I not overcome it? Once and for all and forever! Hold fast in the combat! It awaits you, my crown of glory!"

John the Precursor, was he not martyr for love in the family? He could not tolerate that two families be broken by adultery and incest. Because he was the witness: on one part, of the Trinity, of a God-Family, pure circulation of love between different Persons, love fruitful to the infinite; on the other part, witness of the marriage of Jesus and his Church.

Because witnesses to the Trinity, and to the marriage of God in his eucharist, are we not called to be precursors?

To end your Way of the Cross with the Trinity and the eucharist: expression of genius!

Faced with the unleashing of satanic forces aiming to destroy our families, behold the divine response: this crowd of 250,000 grandparents, parents, youth, adolescent, infants and even babies at the breast, praying on their knees this Way of the Cross! Stronger than terror: their fervour! More powerful than the din of proclamations: their silence of adoration! And already victorious over all evil: their familial tenderness, their ecclesial communion, their royal peace.

Michel, my brother in the combat and thus already of glory, for these contemplations you reveal your heart of ambassador of Jesus, your fraternal love of youth and paternal of parents, allow me to bless you.

DANIEL-ANGE
Ermitage de Sarov,
This 6 January 2001
Epiphany of the Lord,
Closing of Great Jubilee,
Dawn of a new millennium.

Presentation

This Way of the Cross which has been prepared at the request of the pontifical Council for the Family for the Great Jubilee of the Family. This Jubilee took place at Rome under the presidency of Pope John-Paul II, on 14th and 15th October, 2000. This world gathering was centred on a particularly joyful theme: children, springtime of the family and of society. The Way of the Cross has thus been celebrated in a festal atmosphere by Christians coming en masse from the four corners of the world in response to the invitation of the Holy Father.

For practical reasons the text used at Rome on 14 October, Piazza of St. Peter's, presented a shorter and slightly different one from the complete text which is published here.

On account of the "jubilee" context in which it took place, we have removed from this Way of the Cross all formal language and avoided all sorrowful tones. We have chosen to write this text in simple language while using some familiar expressions.

It is not surprising that this Way of the Cross is largely centred on interlaced themes: life, family, woman and child. As requested, we have had recourse to very direct words, meant to touch hearts. In this celebration of the Word we have concentrated on the mystery of the Incarnation and underlined the divine source of family and life, their beauty, the dangers which threaten them, the necessary engagement of Christians to foster them, the hope which justifies the boldness to serve them.

The text of the stations is more often than not longer than the usual texts. For this there are two reasons. Firstly, when the Way of the Cross is celebrated by a large crowd, the movements between the stations are shortened or even suppressed, to allow for more time for meditation. Moreover, we were considering those, more and more numerous, who opt for private celebration, not constrained by length of time. In any case, it is always possible to shorten the texts or to withhold some stations, whether in view of public celebration or private devotion.

This Way of the Cross is replete with scriptural reminiscences, easily recognisable. However, to avoid breaking the text, the principal references to scripture have been reduced to a minimum and usually placed at the end of each station.

Profiting by the liberty which has been given us, we have retained all the usual stations and introduced new ones: 1, 2, 3, 13 and 14. Moreover, by a process of inclusion we have inserted the whole between two glorious events: the Transfiguration and the Resurrection. The royal way leads us to end the contemplation with the blessed Trinity, followed by a prayer of sending on mission.

Our hope is that this traditional devotion will be rediscovered with renewed spirit. We wish in particular that families and the youth rediscover it with wonder.

M.S.
Rome,
year 2000
of the Great Jubilee.

Introductory prayer

Lord, we gather together to celebrate your Passion, death and resurrection. We know that all began at Nazareth, when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Saviour. Lord God, our Father, we come now to meditate on the major events which took place between Nazareth and Jerusalem.

“Which events?”

– Those concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was delivered and crucified, and whom a few women said that He was alive.”

Lord, how could we forget the price of our salvation, the tears shed for our deliverance, the blood poured out so that we could have life and life in abundance?

Send us your Spirit, so that we may follow Jesus with fervour on the way of the Cross, which is the way of life.

O Mary, protector of the innocent, take us by the hand and lead us, by way of the Passion and the Cross of your Son, to the glory of the Resurrection. Amen.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

References: Lk. 24,19-23; Jn 10,10

FIRST STATION

The Transfiguration

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

The repeated mention of the Passion was very difficult for the apostles to accept and it provoked fear. The Gospel reminds us often of the repulsion at the idea of a suffering and humiliated messiah. And our good places also? And our privileges? And the re-establishment of a messianic kingdom through the power of God? Now in place of these attractive future perspectives, behold the Lord announcing that He will suffer, be put to death, it is for this that he has come and that he goes up to Jerusalem. "That, Lord, never!" But to cut short their misunderstanding Jesus adds that for them also the recompense will be persecution and martyrdom. Astonishing chalice to which they are invited to take part.

Certainly they have witnessed cures and many other miracles; they have seen people change their lives at the appeal of Jesus. After all, they themselves have left all to follow Him. But Jesus, who reads their hearts, knows how fragile is their faith. "Have you not yet understood?"

Then the Lord uses great means. He leads Peter, James and John up a high mountain. He raises the veil on the splendour of his glory. He transforms their gaze. He opens wide their eyes of faith. He shows Himself to them as He is, as He has been and as He will be forever. No longer as before an interested, marvelling crowd, that noisy majority who will not hesitate to call for his death. But the Lord of glory, raising the veil on His Resurrection, which alone gives meaning to His death on the Cross.

Glory to You, Lord, glory to You.

Prayer

Lord, give us a new perception so that we firmly believe that you have come to wipe away every tear. Give us a new heart so that we may love you more and follow you wherever you go. So that the moment we are tormented by doubt, trial or despair, we fix our anxious eyes on the burning bush of your love.

References: Mt. 16,23; Mc. 8,21; 9,1-10; 20,20-28; Lk. 9,28-36; 24,25; Jn 8,58; 13,6.

SECOND STATION

The Last Supper

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

All was announced at Cana, where Jesus elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. But at Cana it was too soon. Today, Jesus' hour has come. It is for this hour that He has come into the world. This is the hour of truth. Truth of Jesus with His Father. Truth of Jesus with us all, whom he loves so much as to give his life for our salvation.

It is the hour also of the new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." Love unto forgiveness. From now on you will no longer be able to make excuses for not loving since your heart is invited to love with the very love of the Heart of Jesus.

The eucharist is the holy hour par excellence; it is the hour of Jesus celebrating in its fullness the gift of God, Corpus Christi. Gift of the Body and Blood of Jesus received at the Mass while giving thanks to God for the gift of His Son. Memorial of infinite sufferings, guarantee of happiness without end, sacrament of the Resurrected forever present by the ministry of the priest.

Jesus teaches us here that charity is humble service of the neighbour. A service which, through the Cross, is shown by simple actions the profound significance of which, like the apostles, we sometimes hesitate to welcome. Situated at that decisive moment of the life of Jesus, the Washing of the feet underlines the institution of the eucharist. It announces that the Master has come to serve and not to be served. He has come to invite those He has chosen to enter into the dispositions of His Divine Heart, calling each person to be the servant of his

brothers. Thus is exemplified the new commandment, and this communion between Jesus and His disciples is the foundation of the Christian community.

The institution of the eucharist gives to the Washing of the feet its sacramental expression and expands its range. It is no longer simply a gesture changing the new commandment into a living parable where the Master dons the apron of a servant. Henceforth it is the real and total offering of oneself, of love for the brethren, of the New Covenant sealed between God and humanity, of the communion of His Body and His Blood.

This attitude of service, Jesus fully accomplishes once and for all on Good Friday, in His abandonment without reserve to the will of the Father. Between the Washing of the feet and the Cross, the celebration of the eucharist by the priest is the representation, "until He comes again" of the interior offering which Jesus made of Himself on Holy Thursday. It is communion with this will to serve, even to the sacrifice of self. It is communion with the body and blood of Jesus, separated on Calvary, but reunited on the night of the Pasch. These liturgical rites themselves celebrate this reunion and emphasize that the Body and Blood of Jesus unite us, with one same movement, to the passion and resurrection of the Saviour. Truly, the consecrated bread and wine which we receive from the hands of the priest are the body and blood of the Resurrected.

Glory to You, Lord, glory to You.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your Body and Blood. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the perpetual gift of yourself which you have instituted in the Cenacle. Grant that your priests, whom you have placed under the shadow of your Cross, be faithful witnesses of your love. Make them resemble you. Make them grow in the knowledge of the mystery of the faith. Reveal yourself to them!

Grant us to welcome, by their ministry, your gentle and strong Word, your Pardon which revives our steps, the consecrated Bread and Wine which reminds us that the hour is coming and soon your Day will appear.

Give us the grace of a heart on fire when you speak to us in the Scriptures, the grace of a heart ready to recognize you in the breaking of bread.

References: Mt. 26,17-35; Lk 24,13-35; Jn 2,1-11; 1 Co 11,23-26; Jn 6,1-59; 13,2-15,34; 15,12.

THIRD STATION

The denial of Peter

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

There is a time to confess: there is a time to deny. Peter, formerly so impetuous, so sure of himself, behold him crack. The cold does not help him. The servants on guard at the fire repeatedly denounce him. Poor Peter! Here you are in fine clothes.

Then the fisherman of Galilee, caught up in the lie, the denial, slips away. He forgets the commitment he had made to follow Jesus wherever he went. Denied, the evidence of his accent betraying the disciple! Peter is surrounded, in the blink of an eye, by the unleashed mob. He no longer understands anything. In his own way, he has embarked on a way of the Cross like to that of his Master. For the Master does not delay in holding him, the sinner, in the nets of mercy. Matured by bitter tears and pardon, he will be enabled to receive his definitive mission: to be witness to the empty tomb, to eat and drink with the Resurrected, to confirm his brothers, and finally to give the supreme witness which will conform the disciple to his Master.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, I scarcely dare to say it, but I thank you for the denial of Peter. First, because you pardoned him and because he repented. You who so often pardon me, give me the tears of a true repentance. Grant me to confess, like Peter, that you are

the Son of God, the Lord with the glance full of clemency. Then I will be able without fear to admit my cowardice, that of human respect, of omission, of bad faith, those of adultery of all kinds, those of travesty of the truth, of cheating and falsity of all kinds.

Lord, it is You who inspire me to ask pardon and I see in your initiative the sign that you have already pardoned me.

Moreover, Lord, it is not that I wish to bargain with you, like Abraham or Job. But since I have noted that you have founded your Church on Peter, renegade of a day, and on Paul, fiery persecutor, my heart is in peace. Like Peter and Paul, I have the sole title of belonging to the corporation of sinners, and so I dare to ask you, when you so desire, to give me the crown promised to those whom you have pardoned and who have placed in you all their trust.

References: Lk 22, 32. 54-62; Mt 26, 69-75; Ac 10, 41; 2 P 1, 16-19.

FOURTH STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

Strange man, this Pilate. Cunning? Certainly. Pleasure loving and disillusioned philosopher? Without doubt. He even asks the good question: "What is truth?" Now Truth is in front of him. But between him and Jesus there is the matter of career, advancement. He was required to please the emperor, especially not to cause trouble, and do what was needed to please the people. In his heart there was no place for this truth which he claimed to seek. All that remains to him is liberty, his wounded liberty, that of discretionary power: the liberty to be cowardly. That of allowing the execution of the Innocent. Miserable liberty of a manipulator of opinion, which delivers to death even He who only waited for a gesture to give this opportunist the chance to enter history as the patron of upright and just magistrates.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, we pray to you for governments, kings and queens, presidents, ministers, deputies, senators, prefects, governors, present and future, as well as for doctors, jurists, businessmen, journalists, philosophers and other leaders of opinion, as well as for pastors and theologians. Give them, Lord, a heart open to truth and justice. Grant that they never abuse their freedom in giving their approval to the

culture of death. Prevent them, Lord, from ever allowing themselves to be corrupted by money, seduced by the love of power or intoxicated by concern for popularity. Lord, you have never ceased to seek out the poorest and you have restored their dignity to those whom respectable people repulse and exclude. For in the weakest of human beings we can all discover your swollen face on which shine the tears of your glance so full of tenderness.

References: Jn 18, 38; 19, 1-16; Mt 27, 11-26.

FIFTH STATION

The Cross is Laid on Jesus

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

Specialists of the question are unanimous: Antiquity has underlined a varied range of executions. Not to permit the condemned to choose his torture: this will be chosen for him according to personalised criteria. The law, or its usage, understood different techniques according to requirements for punishment, the crime to expiate, the divinities to appease. The execution varied also according to the social status of the condemned. The type of death inflicted was more dignified when it was a question of a free man or of a slave. Women sometimes benefited by privileged treatment. However, in any case, death was the result and the issue the same: fatal.

Jesus had known for a long time that He was to suffer and be put to death. Reputed sovereign, the popular vote had demanded His crucifixion – decision which Pilate and Herod, won by the urgent demand, hastened to ratify. Thus converged the request of the people and the prophecy of Scripture: the Messiah will die on the Cross.

Now the Cross was the privilege of the slave. It was necessary then to attempt to withdraw from Jesus the human appearance by suffocation, scourging, crowning with thorns, by giving him a reed for sceptre and a scarlet robe, all to mock His divine Royalty. It was necessary that He bite the dust: humiliate Him; it was necessary to make him sub-human: a slave.

Relentless in depriving Him of His dignity as man to be sure that He would reflect nothing of His divine condition. And in the process – already doomed to

failure – to consummate this destruction, it was necessary to expose Him, until death would follow, on the torture of the wood.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, since you have been laden with the Cross the processes aimed at destroying man have not ceased to be refined. Our century has invented high performing techniques to depersonalise and reprogramme him. Our societies make new slaves who consent to their servitude inasmuch as one knows how to flatter their instincts. Right itself has sometimes become an instrument of oppression, like medicine as an instrument of death. We are witnesses, Lord, of your passion which is enacted in those whom the world despises and with whom you identify Yourself.

However, Lord, your victorious Cross not only gives meaning to our sufferings, but shines more than ever as the sign of all hope. Since the Resurrection the instrument of your torture signifies your victory over death. Your royal Cross projects the light of Easter on all violence and forever exposes injustice.

O Jesus, it was necessary that you take up this gibbet and so reveal the sin of the world, to overturn the ladder of pagan values cultivating violence and honouring death. Challenge to the wickedness of men, your Cross shows us that God is faithful to His promises, and that, displeasing to hardened hearts, merciful Love will have the last word.

References: Dt 21, 22 s.; Mt 27, 27-32.; Lk 24, 20; Jn 19, 16 s.; Ac 10, 39; 13, 29; Ph 2, 8; He 12, 2; 13, 13.

SIXTH STATION

Jesus meets his Mother

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

Simeon had said to her: "A sword of sorrow will transpierce your heart", and Mary knew that the hour of her Son would be the hour of the test of her faith. Jesus had given his disciples instructions concerning this: the greatness of Mary was not so much in having given birth to the Son of God; it was to have believed and to have kept faithfully the mystery of Jesus in her virginal heart, to have let her faith increase in a charity which bears the name of compassion.

For this is where the faith of Mary, the Faithful one, led her. She also would have wished to carry the Cross of her Child, but this office will be given to Simon. So Mary is totally free to join the offering of herself with the self oblation of her Son. She places all the suffering of the world in the heart of the suffering of the Saviour. In the night of her faith she offers to the Father what is most precious to her, Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb, whom she has fed, cradled, presented in the Temple, searched among the doctors, and whom she continues to mother today, as she will continue to mother us at the hour of our death.

And now while the doctors watch and others were ready to ensure that the guards had done their job, Mary meets her Son on the way to calvary. She cannot be absent from this event since, by her Immaculate Conception, she was the first beneficiary. In her, and here, is manifested the maternal heart of God.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

O Our Lady, so often we do not know what to say in the face of suffering.

What can we say to a mother who has just lost her child? To a wife whose husband is paralysed for life? How to speak to a patient with terminal illness? What will we say to a man whose wife has left him? Or to a grandfather who is never visited by his children?

You yourself, tell us, what can you say to your Son?

If the Gospel is discreet about this dialogue it is without doubt that we learn from you the secret of compassion. To be there, close to one who suffers, to be there with a discreet, attentive and loving presence.

To be ready to share His pain, to tell Him that He is not alone to carry his Cross, to tell Him that suffering does not take away His dignity, that He is forever valued in the eyes of God and of others.

And since you have agreed to carry the sufferings of your Son, O my Mother, do not allow our sins to increase the weight of the Cross of Jesus.

Obtain for us the grace of a good death, and that of entering the Kingdom where your risen Son has taken and crowned you as Queen.

References: Lk 2, 34 s.; Ga 5, 6.

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls beneath the cross

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

Jesus longs to arrive at the summit of Golgotha. He wants to finish with this Cross, becoming heavier and heavier, more and more rough and sharp. No question of rest, for there are jeers, curses, blows of the whip. And all must be finished in three hours. Then Jesus will no longer have to fall beneath his Cross.

Face on the earth, on stones, He sees before Him all the sins of the world, the sins of all time, including ours: the social injustices, the scandalous gulf between poor and rich, starvation, poverty, unemployment, war. He sees the wasting away of waifs who will die before having lived a year. He sees that people will measure the value of others by the profit they can gain from them. As if these men and women were merchants. He sees that the world is merciless, that there is no place for the weak, that they are unwanted, that it is necessary to exclude them, prevent them from being born, from living and working. Machines will replace them and will not ask to be loved: they will be cheaper. Jesus Himself was the victim of his meek weakness. He could have convoked celestial forces, but he sharply repulsed such an abuse of divine power.

He was saddened to see how many men rushed to use their liberty to subscribe to all kinds of lies, to cause them to be swallowed by others. So-called "new rights" of man, among which would include the "right" of abortion; of so-called "models of the family, as unions between persons of the same sex; of so-called "right to death with dignity".

Jesus was reminded of Satan, His old Adversary, whom He had called liar, murderer, and father of a numerous and restless brood.

He would have shuddered while thinking of the false prophets and mercenary shepherds who invent lying justifications to eliminate the weakest or to gather in reserves in pockets of under-development.

There would have been the concern at seeing how others caused their own unhappiness. At the creation of the world how damaged they had been: they had been made in the image of God, endowed with reason and free will, with a heart to love and to be loved. They knew how to use their intelligence to cheat and exploit others. But when it was a matter of using their hearts or their bodies so often they discarded their reason to yield to their instincts. From time to time tricksters would even whisper: "Transgression is good!", which we know led to the departure, to the story of Adam and Eve.

Meagre subject for consolation, Jesus seeing how people became more and more fascinated by the beautiful nature He had given them. Those who mobilized to preserve the ozone layer, to denounce deforestation of the Amazon; they would take out subscriptions to protect the species in danger of extinction; they would be outraged at the production of meat with hormones. But, curiously, many would tolerate without a shudder an annual quota of some five million abortions, the sterilization of women, euthanasia of the elderly and other "costly embarrassments". Jesus could not understand how man make commerce of health and life, while one and the other were gifts of God.

Simon, who sees Jesus crying, attributes these tears to the weight of the Cross. He is right, of course. But, for the Heart of Jesus, the wood of His torture was small compared with the sins of the world.

Lord, have pity on the sinners we are.

or else

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.

Prayer

Lord, you have agreed to be crushed by the weight of your Cross, by the weight of the sins of the world. Make us understand that our responsibility is gravely

committed to the injustices and multiple violence of society. Teach us to confront them, to denounce them with courage and to remedy them.

Guard us from also becoming accomplices to these injustices and violence which, without You, we would not have the courage to confront.

We pray you, Lord, to extend your protection to those who are victims of the evils which our society generates.

Make us responsible and choose priorities conformed to justice. At a time in which scientific prowess and techniques are multiplied, remove the scandal which causes so many people to quietly die from lack of clean water, tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria, or other ills of poverty.

Teach our society to question itself honestly on its responsibility in face of the diffusion of Aids. Give us the words necessary to comfort those who suffer from this evil.

Enlighten all those who work tirelessly to prevent all these ills and endeavour to find a remedy.

Teach us also to take our responsibilities with regard to suicide of the youth. They also are victims of the culture of death. They are hurt by the divisions in our families; they suffer from the physical absence or morality of their parents and the blunders of educators; they are without defence iface of the snares of the media. Give us a heart ready to listen to them. Grant that we find words of hope and of love which will help them to make the only good choice, the choice of life.

Have pity on us, Lord! You have given all that is necessary for our happiness. Have pity on us! Not only have we wasted our heritage, but we have beaten the servants of the master of the vineyard, and killed His Son whom you sent us.

References: Dt 30, 19; Lm 3, 1-9; 2, 16; Mt 21, 33-41; Lk 18, 13.

EIGHTH STATION

Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

These women, in great number, St. Luke tells us, struck their breasts on seeing Jesus carrying His Cross. They could have changed their lives, since the insistent appeal to conversion had so often been addressed to them by the Lord. They could have done something to avoid coming to this point of non-return. Certainly, before the threat of death, now inevitable, they could not contain their tears. After all, this Son could have been their son. But Jesus invites them to go further, to recognize their share of responsibility in this condemnation. He reverses the role of compassion, for he reads their hearts, as he had read the heart of the adulterous woman and the judges who wanted to condemn her. In this hour when he goes to his death, Jesus gives these women one last and solemn invitation to repentance. An invitation which, through the centuries, is addressed to the prodigal children that we are, and points to the infinite patience of our God.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, you who sound hearts, you know that families are often afflicted by crosses of all kinds and hurt by sin. You who always offer your mercy, give to separated spouses the strength of a crucifying but liberating pardon. You who wish that no sheep be lost, grant that our communities not marginalise those who enter into a new relationship. You over whom Mary and Joseph watched with tenderness,

protect abandoned children and those neglected through new unions by their parents. You who pardoned the Samaritan woman, shelter all our sisters from exploitation and violence. You who have been abandoned, comfort by your word and your sacraments all those who, in spite of all, remain faithful to their commitments. Give them, Lord, the strength necessary to raise their children with respect for your holy Name.

References: Mt 18, 14; Lk 15, 11-32; 23, 27-31; Jn 4, 1-45.

NINTH STATION

Simon, the Cyrenian

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

As usual, Simon the Cyrenian, had had a hard day. To fertilize his patch of earth he had borne the weight and heat of the day. He had dug, raked, weeded under the sun. And not a penny for this labour since he was working to feed the family for whom he had charge. He was harassed, his feet hurt, his hands calloused. However, while slaving away at his work, he was thinking of his children awaiting him, and his wife, who was preparing a good soup with fresh vegetables from his garden.

And behold, a ruffian grabs him: "You, Simon, en route!" No means of escape by vanishing in the lanes.

That is how, by the interception of the executioner, the Cyrenian has been called, not under the flag, but under the glorious standard of the King. Strange vocation, but one which places his name on the first page of the Book in which are inscribed the names of the elect in heaven.

Strange face to face encounter between this tough man, suddenly become partner of the King crowned with thorns! The mission received was as unique as it was imperative: "Behold the Man" whom he was forced to support in life until the moment when all justice would be accomplished.

So it is that Simon places his steps in those of Jesus, without understanding, at this moment at least, that he was representing in advance all those who would add to what was lacking to the Passion of Jesus so that the world could be saved. In the name of all of those, Simon was humbly rendering kindness to the conqueror

Lamb, who had come to set up his tent among us and take upon himself the sins of the world.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, through the example of Simon of Cyrene, you invite us to unite our cross with yours. You honour us greatly by associating us with the redemption of the world.

However, Lord, since your Cross makes us afraid, you understand that we recoil from ours. The burdens of illness, malformations, the anguished wait for a child, physical and mental handicaps, the results of accidents, bereavements, and the inevitability of death which awaits us... Pity, Lord.

Grant us, Lord, the grace to be able to help others to carry their crosses. Show us how to make our families attentive to sick parents; to show widows and widowers the solicitude which will alleviate their sorrow, to generously adopt abandoned children. Help us recognize our responsibilities to children whose parents neglect them, and all those, young or old, who suffer from family divisions. Thank you, Lord, for calling us to endure our trials and to share those of others, for we believe you have made yourself the Cyreneen who leads us to the other shore.

References: Dn 12, 1; Mt 27, 32; Lk 10, 20; 23,26; Jn 19, 5.

TENTH STATION

The Holy Women

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

The Gospel does not tell us who they were, or what they were. On the other hand, Scripture leaves no doubt about their determination. It falls to a famous lot who dare to force the cordon of police, to halt this march to the scaffold, to wipe the unrecognizable face of the Well-Beloved. Astonishing liberty of these women who take all these risks and whom nothing can intimidate. "I have sought Him whom my heart loves."

We do not know what happened then. According to the logic of Unique Thought – that of the time, they were politically incorrect: they could have been accused of disturbing public order, of premeditation, and received a fitting punishment for their boldness.

In fact, the guilty one was this Jesus, the indisputable con-conformist who took liberties against the Law. For, after all, it was he who gave "bad example"! How tolerate Jesus curing on the Sabbath? That he pardoned as well as cured? That He called himself master of the Sabbath and, even more than that, Son of God? Tolerance has its limits! That he tells the truth, that is already inadmissible, but that he said he *is* the Truth, the Life, and moreover, the Way, this goes beyond measure. Tolerance zero, then! Likewise, as for the matter of the way, he only got what he wanted: the Way of the Cross.

Then, at the turning of a corner, behold rising up, gentle but immovable, this commando of compassion. A collection of a few women. One of them, her name predestined, was called, it is said, Veronica. On the linen with which she wiped the

face of the Victim was imprinted the features of the dissident whom she had so many times heard, so often followed, and whom she loved as she had never loved before.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, in this world of violence of all kinds, make our sisters pillars of tenderness. You have made them beautiful, like your Mother, because it is they who are associated so closely with the work of creation. You have made them lovable and loving so that they welcome life in their hearts and bodies. You have made them compassionate so that they can welcome human suffering and console. Grant, Lord, that they also instil in their children the life of the children of God.

Protect them, Lord, from all endeavours to destroy their maternal love or rob them of the capacity to become mothers. Do not allow them to be "alienated" by being despoiled of their incomparable dignity as women.

Open the eyes of those responsible, so that they recognise, protect and honour the irreplaceable roles of mother, father, and the family in human society.

And to those who have rejected the life newly enclosed in them, show, Lord, your merciful face, and give them the hope of one day seeing the child to whom you are the first to open your arms.

References: Lk 23, 27-32; Is 53, 2-4; Ps 27, 8 s; Ct 3, 4; 1 P 3, 1-8. See also *Evangelium Vitae* 99.

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

The most malicious hurried to Calvary, anxious to be there before the arrival of the King and his escort. Finally, the wailing of the holy women announces that the cortege has arrived. No time to lose. The clothing? Torn. "Leave him only his crown!" Jesus has but one moment of respite: that of his lying on the Cross, like the Oriental vine lying on the earth to give its fruit. Then the mournful ritual is hurried. Hammer, nails, a few precise blows. And flesh which is paralysed. The work of a true professional. The Cross is finally erected, and set on this derisory throne. Jesus embraces all the misery of the world. A thief on the right; a bandit on the left. The first good thief named in History, recognises that His Cross, at least, He had not deserved, and, for this avowal, is promptly amnestied by Jesus and catapulted into Paradise.

And there, at the foot of the Cross, is Mary, standing. She could have attempted a final recourse, to go and speak with the officer charged with organising the execution of the Lamb of God laden with the sins of the world. But she knew that all must be accomplished in accordance with the Scriptures, and that she must be strong to the end, so that her Son, he also, be strong to the end. And strong she was, as are all women who feel their child slipping away from them.

She is the New Eve, the Mother of the Living, Mother of Believers, associated forever with the work of the New Adam. Mary, Mother of the Church, is here confirmed in the mission confided to her by her Son: to unveil the maternal face of God.

And to John, Jesus said,: "Behold your Mother", so that men may know that if God has come close to men by passing through Mary, it is also by passing through the Heart of Mary that men are invited to penetrate into the Heart of God.

«Then Jesus said: "All is accomplished." And, inclining his head, he gave up his spirit.»

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

O Jesus, on the Cross you have known your final temptation, the most terrible, of thinking yourself abandoned by the Father. When this temptation attacks us, strengthen, Lord, our faith and hope.

Lord, by your Cross you have vanquished death and you allow all men to taste the fruits of your victorious passion. You know, however, Lord, that your trial is pursued even today. You, the totally Innocent, have been declared guilty by a howling crowd, struck with contagious dementia: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That is all they know how to howl.

Now in our country, and sometimes in our families, the drama of Good Friday is repeated by the furtive elimination of the holy Innocents. Do not allow us, Lord, to beat our faults on the breasts of others. Make us recognise our cowardice and our omissions in the face of the proselytes of the culture of death, mercenaries, profiteers and executioners, manipulators of opinion, fabricators of half-truths and other merchants of violence.

Faced with this brood of the Prince of Darkness, give us the courage you gave to the holy women, to John and to your Mother. Give us the courage to dissent, which consists in not becoming a bleating sheep, but refusing to follow and howl with the wolves. Give us the courage to name as death what is death, and life what is life.

Faced with the culture of death, give us, and give to our pastors the strength to be watchful and capable of protesting. Grant us the audacity to follow you as signs of contradiction and division when faced with those who believe they have the power to kill so many innocents whose faces the angels contemplate in heaven.

References: Is 56, 10; Mt 10, 35; 18, 10; 23; 25, 31-46; Mc 15, 33-39; Lk 2, 34; 12, 51-53; 23, 32-42; Jn 3, 19-21; 6; 9; 15, 18s; 19, 30; Ac 28, 26-28.

TWELFTH STATION

The descent from the Cross

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

No matter how well one fulfils the noble profession of Arms, obeys superiors' orders, one cannot but have his own idea on the events of the day. Hold on: watch this centurion St. Luke mentions. The closer he draws to Calvary, the more he is shaken by the respectful attitude of Simon (the gardener, not the fisherman) and by the determination of the women. And the veteran asks himself some questions. However, he must wait until all justice is fulfilled in order that the truth be revealed. A truth, so to say, on two levels. First of all, the truth of a fact: he had just co-operated in a judicial error. Now, the truth in the order of faith. Here, St. Luke strikes harder. Impatient, without a doubt, to announce the Resurrection, he even suggests that this error was happier than the fault of Adam! "The centurion, writes the evangelist, glorified God, saying, "Truly, this was a just man!" And behold how this unknown soldier has received as payment the grace of faith and discerned that this victim has come to bring happiness.

As for the executioners, they had been dispensed from showing all their know-how. They will not break the bones in order to hasten and assure death. These executors of lower works also merit mention since, immunised by their ignorance, they witness, in spite of themselves, the fulfilling of the Scriptures: "Not one of his bones shall be broken."

However, one last duty was still required of them, without which they risked being suspected of culpable kindness. "One of the soldiers, with his lance, pierced his side, and there came out water and blood." From the Heart of Jesus, these

pagans thus caused the spring of living water of baptism which makes us forever children of God, and the blood which we receive in the Eucharist and comforts the pilgrims to eternity. Shed for the salvation of the world, this water and this blood will be signs of the New Covenant between Heaven and Earth, sealed by Jesus on Golgotha.

For the friends of the condemned the moment had come to take Jesus down from the Cross, to perfume his body – and begin to hope. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were among them. Mary was there too, Mother of sorrows, Pieta full of compassion as shown by Michelangelo. St. John was there, and the holy women foreseeing, bring useless funeral array, their phials and ritual cloths to be forever cast aside.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, on that day when the Darkness seemed to have covered the Light, we thank you for having given us Mary, Star of the morning. With her at the foot of the Cross the first Christian community, the first cell of the Church, our Mother, came to birth.

To this same community also belonged Nicodemus. He too had strongly opposed their intention: "Does our law condemn a man without having heard and knowing what he has done?" There was also Joseph of Arimathea, who wished to honour his precious body, as was so fitting, in a new tomb.

O Jesus, give us the confident vigilance which animated these believers while you descended into the underworld. For it is in this mysterious place, mentioned in the Credo, that you went after your death, to liberate Adam, Eve and their descendants from the bonds of death which prevented them from celebrating your Resurrection.

Lord, you have engulfed us also in your death so that we be reborn to life. Thank you, Lord, for the grace of our baptism. Grant that we "put off the old man with his practices, and so attain the stature of the new man, to go forward in the knowledge of your mystery and be more and more conformed to the image of the Creator."

References: Lk 23, 47; Jn 7, 51; 19, 34-42; Ex 12, 46; Col 3, 10.

THIRTEENTH STATION

The Risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

We are at the dawn. We return to a garden, but it is no longer that of Olives, nor that of Eden. It is that of the Resurrection.

We would be right to say that the women are curious; Mary Magdalen confirms it. Early in the morning she is there, standing near the tomb. She is crying all the tears of her body, but it is to expel those last demons, those of sadness. She is moved by a mysterious force and an irresistible desire: to find the body of the Well-Beloved.

Then Jesus rewards the pardoned sinner by a divine illumination which makes of her the first witness to the Resurrection. An illumination in the order of faith, like to that granted to Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration, to the man born blind, to the pilgrims of Emmaus, or again to Paul on the way to Damascus.

So, Mary Magdalen has come with her perfumes to embalm the body of the Crucified, and to turn a new page of her life. And see the delicacy of Jesus: he places before her two angels, that is to say, two divine messengers. They come in white, sign that they are there to announce radical and glorious news, to reveal to her the Good News which she does not even dare to imagine: Jesus is living. Jesus himself calls her by her name and sends her to tell the disciples that she has seen the risen Lord and that they have spoken together.

So it is that this repentant and pardoned sinner has become, by her faith, the first witness of the Resurrection, with an urgent mission to go waken the faith and courage of the apostles, who had taken refuge in hiding.

And to say that there are still some who declare that women have only a secondary role in the Church!

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Prayer

Lord, we recognise ourselves in Mary Magdalen. Like her, we have had the sad experience of sin, but also that of pardon. Sins against life, sins against love. Sins against the truth rejected in the name of liberty. Even in the heart of our families it comes to destroy us. Physically, by abortion or by irreversible mutilations. Psychologically by disputes or divorce, by fashionable transgressions, drugs or other experiences which become tragic.

Lord, among our brothers and sisters here present there are those who carry the weight of grave sins and cannot find peace. Help them, Lord, to confess now your mercy and to find in the Sacrament of Reconciliation the way that leads to you. Show them, Lord, that despair has no place in the heart of the Christian. Give them, risen Lord, the gift of the cure which you offered to Mary Magdalen. Give them especially a new outlook, the glance of a child so that having discovered you risen in the garden of your Church, they go from here on the highways of the world to proclaim the Gospel of life.

References: Jn 9; 20, 1-18; Lk 8, 2; 24, 1-35.

FOURTEENTH STATION

The Blessed Trinity

We adore you, Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Contemplation

The Way of the Cross leaves from the Heart of God and leads to the Heart of God. Since the apparition to Abraham at the oak of Mambre, God has not ceased to show us that He is communion and love. From all eternity the Son is obedient without reserve to the Father. It is by the Son that all has been made; it is by Him that the world is saved.

When God approaches men it is first of all to reveal to them that He is Trinity. This Revelation attains its summit in the event of Easter, which crowns the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Cross reveals to us that between the Father and the Son there is no withdrawal into oneself, neither of the Father on Himself, nor the Son on Himself. Between the Father and the Son there is total transparency, perfect Love, and this Love is revealed to us in the divine person of the Holy Spirit.

This mystery was already signified to Abraham when He welcomed the angels. The father of believers understood then that the One God engages himself in human history, and thus in ours. Welcoming the envoys, it is God himself he is welcoming. When the time had come, it is yet again an angel whom God sends to Mary to announce to her that the Son of God would take flesh in her womb.

Now when Jesus instituted the memorial of his passion, he immersed us in the mystery of the Trinity. The eyes of the Father, the Son and the Spirit come together in the cup of benediction. We are invited to drink this cup not only to be associated with the Passion but also with the Resurrection of Jesus.

Thank you, Lord, for the consecrated bread and wine, which are the body and blood of Him who is risen. Thank you for giving us the bread of angels, which makes of us the happiest people of the world, since, by this bread, we are already taken up into the heart of the Holy Trinity.

Glory to you, Lord, glory to you!

Final Prayer

FIRST READER

Thank you, Lord, for the consecrated bread and wine, which are the body and blood of Jesus Risen.

Thank you for giving us this mysterious link between earth and heaven, and allowing us to remain in communion with those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.

Thank you, Lord, for giving us access even now to the contemplation of the ineffable Trinitarian family.

Thank you for giving us even here and now so precious a gauge of the glory with which we hope to be associated.

SECOND READER

Lord, today as in the time of Abraham you send angels to visit us. With some of these we have not had the time to see the joyous light with which you inundate the world. Others, also, whom you have placed on our way, we have not been able to recognise.

Grant that we discover in them the reflection of your loving presence in our lives.

Help us welcome the messages which they come to bring us.

Grant that our families radiate in the eyes of men the splendour of your Trinitarian mystery of love. Make each of us, Lord, a small Church, an Ecclesiola, in which life is welcomed with joy and generosity. Remind us that in Jesus you first revealed yourself to men in a family and under the form of a child.

THIRD READER

Give to our spouses the courage to manifest through all their life the great mystery of the Marriage of Christ and the Church.

Grant that mothers and fathers welcome their children with joy, as Mary welcomed Jesus on the blessed day of the Annunciation.

Lord, in this world where life and death are mercilessly given over to a cunning duel, soften our hearts with tenderness at sight of the glance of a child.

Thank you, Lord, for giving us these children, who are yours first of all. It is among these sheaves that you raise up labourers for the next harvest. That is why we offer them to you, consecrate them to you, asking you to bless them and protect them from all evil.

And since these children are the springtime of the world and of the Church, we ask that you take them under your mantle of tenderness and lead them, with us all, to the rendez-vous of happiness without end.

References: Gn 18, 1-10; Ap 14-21s.

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Michel Schooyans

Way of the Cross of the Jubilee of the Family

This Way of the Cross was drawn up at the request of the highest roman authorities for the celebrations which marked the Great Jubilee of the Family. These diverse celebrations took place at Rome from 11th to 15th October, 2000. They were followed by an immense and recollected crowd.

For pastoral reasons and because of the constraints of time, the text used at St. Peter's Piazza on 12th October, 2000, had to be adapted and shortened. As requested, the Way of the Cross presented here is the original and complete version of the text.

Faithful to the spirit of this traditional and popular paraliturgy, but taking advantage of the liberty given him, the author has introduced stations which revive this devotion and incorporate into it a note of joyous confidence.

This text can serve as private as well as public devotion. It is aimed in particular to help families and the youth to rediscover with wonderment that the Way of the Cross is a way of life.

Philosopher and theologian, Michel Schooyans is a priest of the archdiocese of Brussels. After ten years of university and parish ministry at Sao Paulo, he taught political philosophy and contemporary ideologies at the University of Louvain. He is the author of some twenty books. Consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Family, he is a member of the pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and of other international scientific societies. At present he is working for the defence and promotion of life, the family and the rights of men.