

# Three gifts offered by Jesus on His way to the Cross

*On the Readings for April 13, 2025, Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion*

[April 12, 2025 Carl E. Olson](#)



*Detail from "Entry of Christ into Jerusalem" (1320) by Pietro Lorenzetti [Wikipedia]*

## Readings:

- At the procession with palms, Gospel: Lk 19:28-4
- Is 50:4-7
- Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
- Phil 2:6-11
- Lk 22:14—23:56

**It is done. We have judged our God and have ordered Him slain.**

**We will not have Christ with us more—He is in the way.**

Those lines open Paul Claudel's poem, "The Way of the Cross", [poem follows the article here] a lyrical, moving reflection on the fourteen Stations. Claudel, one of my favorite poets, had a profound love and knowledge of the Bible (in fact, he wrote a book titled *The Essence of the Bible*). His poetry has often opened up new and wonderful perspectives in my study of sacred Scripture.

In writing that Christ "is in the way," Claudel emphasizes the **two choices before each one of us: to embrace Jesus as The Way or to try to remove him from our way.**

Those choices are evident throughout today's reading from **St. Luke's Gospel. There is, in this reading, a series of gifts offered by Jesus** as he, the King of kings, makes his way to his throne, the Cross. These gifts involve choices, not only on the part of man but also on the part of the God-man.

In the Upper Room, reclining with the apostles, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and said, "This is my body, which will be given for you..." He took the cup, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." This, of course, is **the gift of the Eucharist**, "the source and summit of the Christian life," the Body and Blood which nourishes the sons and daughters of God. **This gift was offered along with the gift of the priesthood, through which this perfect and holy sacrifice has been perpetually offered (CCC, 611).**

Yet one of the Twelve rejected the gifts. Judas—grasping and greedy—had spitefully judged Jesus and believed he was now in the way. **Judas refused to accept and be part of a kingdom rooted in self-sacrifice, suffering, and redemptive love.** "But woe," said Jesus, "to that man by whom he is betrayed."

**The gift of the cup of the New Covenant, the Catechism remarks, "is afterwards accepted by him from**

**his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani..." (par. 612). This gift of Jesus—offering himself, his fears, and his horror of death—is a profound mystery, for it is bound up in the mystery of the Incarnation.**

The second person of the Trinity, St. Paul states in today's Epistle, had "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" and had "humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death..." **The first Adam had failed the test of love in the Garden of Eden** when faced with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But **the new Adam, whose sweat in the Garden of Gethsemani "became like drops of blood," humbly embraced the torturous trial of the tree of Golgotha.**

The anguish endured in private prayer in the Garden would soon be a public lamentation: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

**The third gift is that of love, redemption, salvation, and reconciliation. It is the gift of the Cross,** the gift of the Incarnate Word who did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. "The shame of his passion was not the fruit of his own will," wrote St. Cyril of Alexandria, "but he still consented to undergo it that he might save the earth."

Arms stretched wide, Jesus embraced the world. He embraced the thief, who asked to be remembered in Paradise. He embraced the centurion, who gloried God. He embraces each one of us as we kneel in silence and contemplate those humble words of trust and filial devotion: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Jesus, for many people, is in the way. But for those who gaze upon the gift of the Cross, Jesus is the Way. In the beautiful words of Claudel:

**There is no cross of our living where His body will not fit.  
There is no sin of ours for which He has not a wound.**

(This "Opening the Word" column originally appeared in the March 28, 2010, edition of Our Sunday Visitor newspaper.)

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**These are the Stations of the Cross as translated from  
the French of Paul Claudel by Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P.  
in 1927.**

by [Very Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P., Paul Claudel](#)

*Although one or two translations of the Way of the Cross of Paul Claudel, French Ambassador to the United States, have been made, this new translation by the Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P., is now published on account of the high commendation which it received from the distinguished author, who finds it "remarkable in its sobriety and terseness".*

**First Station  
Jesus Is Condemned To Death.**

The end. And God by us is judged and sent to death.  
We wish no more of Jesus Christ. He vexes us.  
Our only king is Caesar; gold and blood our law.  
Kill Him, if such your will, but free our sight of Him.  
Kill Him! So much the worse for Him. If one must die,  
Barabbas set thou free, but crucify the Christ.  
On the high judgment-place Pilate the ruler sits.

"Speakest Thou not?" he cries. But Jesus answers naught.  
Then to the crowd: "In Him I find no wrong: yet, bah!  
He dies since you persist. I yield. Behold the man!"  
Behold Him, clothed in purple, crowned with piercing thorns.

His blood-stained, tearful eyes meet ours in one last plea.  
What can we do? We cannot keep Him with us now,  
A scandal to His own; a folly unto us.  
Sentence is passed; 'tis writ in Hebrew, Latin, Greek —  
The crowd still shouts; the judge still washes clean his hands.

## **Second Station**

### **Jesus Is Made To Bear His Cross.**

They clothe Him once again. To Him the cross is brought.  
"All hail", cries Jesus Christ, "Long have I longed for thee."  
O see, my soul, and fear! Pregnant the solemn hour  
When the eternal wood first pressed the Son of God.  
Then Eden's tree full-grown bore fruit in Paradise.  
Behold, O sinful soul, the end thy sin has served.  
God triumphs over crime; on every cross hangs Christ.  
The sin of man is great; but we are silent, mute.  
Heaven's conquering God debates not, but fulfills.

Jesus accepts the cross as we receive Himself.  
As Jeremiah said we give Him wood for food.  
How huge that awful cross; how cumbersome and large;  
Unyielding, painful, hard, a senseless sinner's weight.  
To bear it step by step till one shall die thereon!  
Dost Thou go forth to bear it, Saviour Christ, alone?

With patience may I bear what share Thou givest me.  
Each one must bear the cross ere cross his comfort be.

### **Third Station** **Jesus Falls The First Time.**

He lingers not but presses on to Calvary's height,  
At once the victim and the executioner.  
Then God, stricken in swift collapse, falters and falls.

What sayest Thou, O Lord, at this Thy primal fall?  
And as Thou knowest it, what thoughts arise within,  
When thus sin hurls its evil weight on helpless Thee?  
What answer gives the ground which Thou Thyself hast made?  
Other than virtue's path uneven is and hard.  
Roughened is evil's way with windings treacherous.  
Each turning must be made; each special roughness met.  
The foot will often fail, though heart may persevere.  
By Thy most holy knees whose weakness caused Thy fall,  
By Thy heart straightened at the fearful way,  
O Lord, by snare that trapped Thee and by earth that stung,  
Save me from that first sin that takes one by surprise.

### **Fourth Station** **Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother.**

Mothers, who saw in death your first and only born,  
Recall that night, the infant's last — his helpless groans,  
The water he refused, the ice, the rising pulse,  
And death advancing now with final surety.  
Put on again his tiny shoes, his little clothes,  
From thee he will be taken back to earth again.  
Farewell, my infant sweet, and life of my own self.

This station fourth is Mary who accepts in full.  
She waits for Him, the richness of all poverty.  
The tears dim not her eyes; parched is her mouth.

In silence absolute she looks at Him Who comes.  
Her heart accepts; accepts again. The cry is crushed  
Nor slightest utterance finds in her strong heart.  
She utters not one word. Her eyes are fixed on Christ.  
The mother sees her Son; the Church her Saviour true.  
To Him her spirit speeds — a dying soldier's cry.  
Before the eyes of God she opens her whole soul.  
No part of it refusal knows nor drawing back.  
And every fibre pierced, transfixed, accepts; consents.  
As God is here in Will divine, so is her will.  
Her heart accepts. She sees the Child her womb brought forth.  
In holy silence now she sees the Saint of Saints.

### **Fifth Station**

#### **Simon, The Cyrenean, Helps Jesus To Carry His Cross.**

The moment comes at length when one cannot go on.  
And then we find our touch with Thee, for Thou  
Dost use us, even unto force, to share Thy cross.  
So Simon there was drawn to bear his share of it.  
With strength he seized the wood and followed Thee  
Lest portion of Thy cross should drag or suffer loss.

### **Sixth Station**

#### **Veronica Wipes The Face Of Jesus**

Disciples all have fled. Peter denied Him thrice.  
Hurling herself 'gainst insults and the threat of death,  
Veronica receives His Face between her hands.

Teach us, O woman brave, to conquer human fear.  
To whom Christ is not an image but the truth,  
Will come the questioning glance of other men.  
He dwells on higher plane; he thinks apart.

Some strange love holds him distant; he is not the same.  
An adult man, he says his beads; he tells his sins;  
Friday he fasts; and with the women goes to Mass.  
Of course he rouses laughter, yet he irritates.  
Let him beware, for on him rests the eye of all.  
Let him beware each step. He, sign and symbol is.  
Each Christian, though unfit, is likeness true of Christ.  
The face his soul doth show is reflex small  
Of that true Face of God, debased yet glorious.

Let us behold again, Veronica, that veil  
Which keeps in trust the Face of our Viaticum.  
That sacred cloth imprints this Gatherer of grapes,  
Lifted to ecstasy by His own harvest's fruit,  
So that this likeness ever more may witness be  
Of how is mixed our spittle with His blood and tears.

### **Seventh Station** **Jesus Falls The Second Time.**

No stone has caused it, nor a halter drawn  
The soul itself grows weak and suddenly we fall.  
O years of middle life! O sin of one's own will!  
The days their purpose lack; our faith sees no beyond.  
For very long the way, and far, far off the end.  
Alone, alone we drift and comfort draws not near.  
O heavy-weighted time! Disgust that sickens self  
The more because the shadow of the cross endures.  
And then we stretch our arms, for one must swim or die.  
Ah, no! not to our knees we fall but on our face.  
Our body fails, 'tis true; the fall is of the soul.

Save us, O Lord, from hell of our own weariness.



## **Eighth Station**

### **Jesus Consoles The Women Of Jerusalem.**

Ere on the hill's steep side He climbs one further step,  
He lifts His hand o'er those who followed Him  
In tears — some women poor, each carrying her own child.  
Let us look on and listen, too, for Jesus speaks.  
The lifted Hand shows Him Who, Man, is more than man.  
This scene reveals the God Who suffered for our sake.  
And, since He is our God, His act is for all time.  
This day in very truth God suffers for our sins.  
From what, then, and at what a price has He saved us?  
Our tongue is beggared when we say "for this the Son  
Was forced to tear Himself from His own Father's side."  
If this the price at which we're saved, what then is hell?  
If our sick souls ask this, what of the Christless dead?

## **Ninth Station**

### **Jesus Falls The Third Time.**

Again I fall; prostrate I lie. This marks the end.  
I could not if I wished it once more raise myself.  
I lie as fruit that's crushed. I bear a weight too great.  
I have done wrong. My dead self weighs on me.  
Come, death! Easier 'tis to grovel than to stand.  
I welcome death beneath, not on, this wretched cross.

Save us, O Lord, from this last fall, this last despair.

And now one only thing remains — to drink the cup of death.  
The cross is lifted but the iron still must pierce.  
A third time Jesus falls; but Calvary's height is reached.

## **Tenth Station**

### **Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments.**

Behold the threshing floor where grain divine is bruised.  
The Father is revealed; the tabernacle rent.  
A hand is laid on God and all flesh suffers shock.  
Fear paralyzes all creation's deepest depths.  
And now let us take heart to lift our eyes to Him,  
Disrobed, of seamless garment stripped, Jesus all pure.

Nothing is left to Thee, for they have taken all.  
They plucked the robe from Thee, as yesterday  
They snatched from monk his cowl, from virgin nun her veil.  
Nothing is left wherewith he might beclothe Himself.  
In naked helplessness, as naked as a worm,  
Without defence He stands, exposed to sight of men.  
What, this your Christ? This mocked, derided one?  
This wretched man begrimed, a mass of wounds and sores,  
A subject He for alienists and for the courts?  
"Fierce bulls besiege me. Lord, deliver me from savage dogs."  
He is not Christ, nor Son of Man; He is not God.  
His gospel is a lie; His Father's not in heaven.  
A fool! A fake! Why speaks He? What holds His tongue?

The High Priest's servant strikes: a French Renan betrays.  
They left Thee stripped, but there remains Thy robe of blood;  
They left Thee naught, but still that gaping wound is Thine.  
Though God be hid away, here stands the Man of grief.  
Though God be hid, I see my Brother here Who weeps.

By Thy humiliation, Lord, by Thy deep shame,  
Pity the vanquished ones who to the stronger yield.  
And by Thy ghastly clothing at the final hour,  
Great pity have on all by bitter anguish pierced —  
The little child who thrice must bear the surgeon's knife;  
The wounded man whose wounds must be with pain re-dressed;

The husband shamed; the son who mourns a mother dead —  
Have pity on that love which our hearts must uproot.

### **Eleventh Station** **Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross.**

Our Lord no longer stands with us, but prone He lies,  
Thrown like a wounded stag amid the hunting pack.  
Thou hast come down to us; to our own level reached.  
One man sits on Thine arm; a knee is on Thy chest.  
The hand that twists Thy Hand contorts the Hand of God.  
The weakling Lamb tied by the feet is God in bonds.  
Thy length of arm, Thy height are chalked upon the cross.  
When He will taste the nails, His Face will be revealed.

The Son eternal, without measure, infinite,  
Has emptied Self into this human mould He craved.  
Behold in him Elias on the boy outstretched.  
Behold this, David's throne; this, pride of Solomon.  
Behold His nuptial couch with us so strong, so hard.  
How God is straightened when He takes our human form.  
The cross is placed. His Body, dislocated, cracks.  
As by a heavy wine press He is crushed and torn.  
With truth the prophet David said in ancient days  
"My hands and feet are pierced. Revealed My every bone."

O Saviour, Thou wert bound; escape was not for Thee.  
Upon the Cross the nails held Thee by hands and feet.  
I seek no further now with heretic and fool.  
This God, by these four nails constrained, suffices me.

### **Twelfth Station** **Jesus Dies On The Cross.**

He suffered, it is true; but now He suffers death.  
The huge cross trembles darkly as our Saviour breathes.  
Earth's power is done. To Him must now be left the work  
That He alone can do. That Body and that Soul  
In this One Person, God, have power without end.  
Exhaust they must and will each unknown way of pain.  
Alone He is, as Adam was in Eden's land.  
Three hours alone, His Soul alone has drunk the Wine.  
O ignorance unknown of God's own hidden life!  
Our Host is wearied and His Head falls lower still.  
He sees not Mary; and His Father, too, has gone.  
He drains the cup. He drinks the slow-advancing death.  
And yet He has not had enough of bitter drink,  
For His own voice all suddenly exclaims: "I thirst!"  
And in Thy thirst, O Lord, am I the one addressed?  
Hast Thou, O Christ, still need of me and of my sins?  
For me dost Thou await ere all be perfected?

### **Thirteenth Station**

#### **Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross.**

The Passion ends. Mercy, its fruit, forever reigns.  
Down from the cross, He lies within His mother's arms —  
Calvary perfected her will of Nazareth.  
The Christ Who, lifted up, bore openly the shame,  
His mother takes once more alone unto herself.  
And in those arms the Church guards well her well-beloved.  
What God sent forth, what Mary gave, what man has done —  
All, all is now within her heart forevermore.  
She holds Him, sees and weeps, and in her tears adores.  
She cerement and ointment is, and tomb and myrrh;  
Altar and priest alike; chalice and cenacle.  
The tabernacle door is gateway to the cross.

**Fourteenth Station**  
**Jesus Is Placed In The Sepulchre.**

That tomb wherein the suffering Christ, now dead, was laid,  
That sepulchre unsealed in haste that He might sleep  
Before He rose again and with His Father reigned,  
Is not a mere new burial-place — 'tis our own flesh,  
'Tis man, your creature, Lord, more one with Thee than earth.  
Thy heart is open and Thy hands are deeply pierced;  
Thou hast received, endured our bodies' every pain.  
No sin but is o'erreached by Thy almighty wounds.  
From altar here where Thou dost hide Thyself, come, Lord!  
Our hearts are open thrown. Come, Lord, and fill their depths.

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