

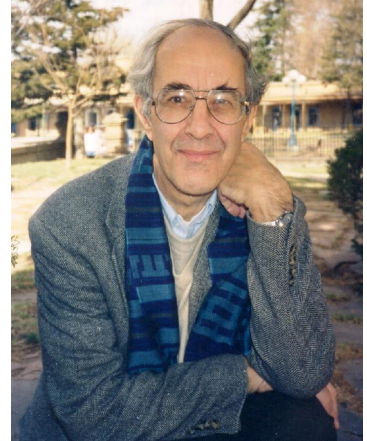
## Stations of the Cross

### *Walking with Jesus for Peace: A Reflection from Fr. Henri Nouwen*

**Leader:** “One year, during Holy Week, a small group of theology students invited me to join them in a prayer vigil at Electric Boat, the nuclear submarine shipyard in Groton, Connecticut.... On Good Friday we went to Groton to witness for peace; the leaders of the group asked me to lead the community in the Stations of the Cross....

As a child I had often made these 14 stations in church.... I remember well how my Dutch teenage friends and I walked from station to station in the chapel of our high school, many times a week during our lunch breaks. But as I grew older, the Stations of the Cross soon became a pious childhood memory. Who would have dreamt that decades later I would lead an ecumenical group of theology students in the Stations of the Cross on the streets of Groton in prayerful resistance against a potential nuclear holocaust?

We prayed fervently with words, songs, and silence. We heard the story of Jesus’ suffering in a way that we could not have heard it in any church.... Something new was happening to me that I had never experienced before. It was the deep awareness that prayer was no longer a neutral event without danger. Moreover, the words I had so often spoken from pulpits about death and resurrection, about suffering and new life, suddenly received a new power, a power to unambiguously condemn death and call forth life” (*Eternal Seasons: A Liturgical Journey with Henri Nouwen*, Ed., Michael Ford. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003.)



**Pause for a moment of reflection on the following questions:** *Where can you walk the Stations of the Cross this Lent to pray for peace in our world, to condemn death and call for life? Who can you pray with during this holy season to witness to the suffering of war and conflict?*

#### **FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH**

**Reader 1:** Weapons of war, drones, and illegal arms have brought death to hundreds of thousands of people in Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar, and other places around the globe – and the violence continues. Once again, in the least of these, Christ is condemned to die.

**Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question:** *How can we open ourselves to the immense suffering of Christ and of His beloved children?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

#### **SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS**

**Reader 2:** As people of faith, we are called to take on the challenge of standing for peace in a violent world. We must take on the burden of peacemaking in a difficult time.



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*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: Who are peacemakers that can inspire our own journey and strengthen us by their faithfulness to nonviolence?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

**Reader 3:** So many people fail to see others as their brothers and sisters – children of the same God – and thus hatred for the “other” rages in communities around the world. We fall with Christ again. *Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we promote both tolerance and respect for those who are “different?”*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

**Reader 4:** Women who have lost children in ongoing conflicts have met, wept together, and promised to work for peace in many communities. Mary is reflected in their tears and their hope.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we acknowledge and support the efforts of women who work for peace?*

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**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS

**Reader 5:** Many churches, religious congregations and faith-based organizations have joined together to work for the end of violence. These interfaith alliances, as they carry on the work of Christ, are a visible sign of peace.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: Why is it so important to have interfaith witnesses for peace?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

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## SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

**Reader 6:** In places such as Syrian refugee camps, aid workers and volunteers comfort those who have lost so much as conflicts continue to uproot so many. Doctors without Borders, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam International, and other groups offer medical care to those wounded and sickened by violence.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How do we bring comfort to those afflicted by violence?*

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**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

**Reader 7:** Efforts to bring peace to conflict areas are rejected by those who can only understand force



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and might, not the strength of peacemaking and justice for all. The call for peace is often seen as “unrealistic” by those in power – and those with much to gain by continuing conflict.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we commit to keep raising our voices for peace, “speaking truth to power,” and reject discouragement?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## EIGHTH STATION: THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS

**Reader 8:** We join in the weeping of so many women as they witness the destruction of war and the endless loss of life. They are often left behind to take care of children traumatized by violence. Too many suffer the violence of rape as a weapon of war.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we open ourselves to the pain of women in conflict zones and imagine what they go through?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

**Reader 9:** So many men and women who serve in the armed forces suffer from not only from injuries but also from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In their bodies and minds, they bring the violence of war back home to family and community.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: Where are the individuals and families in our own communities who need peace restored to their bodies and souls after the experience of combat and conflict?*

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**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.



## TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

**Reader 10:** War and conflict humiliates human beings in so many ways, including the abomination of torture, and it denies people their human dignity as well as their human rights. War wounds the human spirit deeply.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: Why are human rights and human dignity central to the message of Christ and our Church?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

**Reader 11:** Saint Pope John XXIII warned us in *Pacem in Terris* that any kind of war in the modern age can no longer be considered just, and Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis have echoed this

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belief. War and conflict are never the answer and only continue the “spiral of violence.”

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: What have we learned about violence only leading to more violence, not to peace?*

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**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

**Reader 12:** Day by day, the death toll mounts in too many conflicts around the world. The torments and cries of the dying must be heard, so we all can face the horror of violence.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we open our minds and hearts to hear the cries of those dying because of conflict?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

**Reader 13:** We are called to deep compassion for those who remain to bury and mourn their dead in the areas of conflict in our world today. May we see the toll of violence as they see it, “up close and personal.”

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How can we acknowledge the immense pain of those who are left to bury their dead, and can we pray for them and with them, in solidarity and compassion?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

**Reader 14:** Peace is still only a wish, a hope, a prayer in the darkness of these days before Easter, but we continue to hope for a rebirth of committed, sustained peacemaking in all parts of our world.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How do we nurture hope in the immense darkness of violence, conflict, and war?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## FIFTEENTH STATION: THE RESURRECTION

**Reader 15:** “Peace be with you” ... and Christ showed them his hands and his side. This grounds our faith in the possibility of peace. Christ is the Light and our hope. Peace be with you and all those who still suffer the violence of conflict.

*Pause for a moment of reflection on the following question: How do we move forward as peacemakers, strengthened by the promises of Easter and the Risen Christ?*

**Leader:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**All:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.