



**Stations of the Cross for Ukraine:
God of Peace, rescue your children.**

Unite our family.

End this war.

By Jim McDermott, S.J.

(adapted by Deacon Paul)



Leader (L): For hundreds of years Christians have walked the Stations of the Cross, a sequence of 14 works of art or prayer spaces in which the steps of Jesus' journey from judgment to the tomb are remembered. Particularly during the season of Lent, believers look to the stations as a way of seeing the world more and more through the eyes of Jesus and those who walked with him.

(L): This Lent, we are also confronted by the catastrophic invasion of Ukraine. Since the invasion began, Ukrainian American artist and photojournalist Tatyana Borodina, a former art director of America Magazine, has been gathering and publishing texts, emails and photos from people suffering from the violence at her Ukrainian-oriented magazine. Their stories capture the shock and horror currently being experienced in Ukraine.

(L): As a form of solidarity with all living in Ukraine and a prayer for their rescue, here is a form of the Stations of the Cross built from those stories.

All (A): God of Peace, in Lent you draw us together to witness the depth of your love for us. Allow that love now to intercede in the invasion of Ukraine. Rescue your children. Unite our family. End this war.

**Jesus, Lord, condemned, defiled,
May we too be meek and mild
As we tread your holy Way.**

**May we feel no bitter hatred,
When we too are persecuted,
Left alone to walk with you.**



Station One: Jesus is Condemned to Death

(L): We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

(A): Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

(L): Kateryna, Lugansk: The current Russian invasion of Ukraine began for us like in a Soviet movie: Early in the morning, at 5:15, I was woken up abruptly by the sound of a flying fighter jet. My husband looked at the phone and said that it had begun. After another 15 minutes, we heard a terrible explosion and the house shook.

(A): I ran to the nursery. The picture that I saw there will remain for me the main illustration of this war. My 10-year-old son – thin, in his underpants, still sleepy – was lying by the bed on the rug, curled up, covering his head with his hands, and at the same time, he was calm.

(L): He did just as I taught him. Two days before I was indignant that he still did not know how to tie his shoelaces.

(A): Lord, grant us a feeling of shock.

**Now the Cross as Jesus bore it,
Has become for us who share it,
The jeweled Cross of Victory.**



Station Two: Jesus Takes up His Cross

(L): Natalia, Kyiv: On the morning of Feb. 25, I did not plan to go anywhere. I wanted to be at home, bake bread in my favorite oven, grow flowers in the backyard. There was no talk of evacuation. On the contrary, my parents and eldest daughter and their friends came to our house in the suburbs of Kyiv.

(A): By lunchtime, everything had changed: I had thrown some things in the car, the children, our dog. Our eldest daughter refused to leave. My parents also stayed at home. I will never forgive the occupiers for my mother's words: "We have already lived our lives. You save the children."

(L): Yes, we understood for eight years that the attack on us was a matter of time; yes, we were taught the Jewish wisdom of the Holocaust: "Believe those who say I want to kill you." And still it is impossible to be ready for this. When it happens, the brain denies it.

(A): Lord, grant us a feeling of dislocation.

Weakened, prodded, cursed, and fallen,
His whole Body bruised and swollen,
Jesus tripped and lay in pain.



Station Three: Jesus Falls for the First Time

(L): Anna, Kyiv: On that day, around our house, literally in front of the gate and on the side of the road, there was a bunch of Russian military equipment. For a long time they just stood there. Then they began to move. Along the way, they fired at residential buildings. They didn't move fast. They shot thoroughly.

(A): The children and I hid in some corner under the stairs, away from the windows, crouched on the floor, trying to contain our panic.

(A): Lord, grant us a feeling of horror.

Jesus met his grieving Mother,
She who made the Lord our Brother;
Now the sword her heart has pierced.



Station Four: Jesus Meets his Mother

(L): Kateryna, Lugansk: When food shortages arose in our area, people appeared who distributed milk and sour-milk products, bread and pastries for free. Sometimes they are volunteers, sometimes they are the owners of small shops in our area.

(A): Once, near our entrance as the shelling began, a frail young woman with a tiny baby in a pouch ran down the path from the other end of the residential complex to where the milk was being distributed. She was immediately given two packets and offered more. She hesitated and said that she still had an older child at home and that would be handy, but others might not have enough. She took the third carton of milk only after she was convinced that there would be enough for everyone.

(L): At a time when Russian soldiers are deliberately shooting at children's hospitals, kindergartens, cars with people, crushing civilians with tanks, a tiny mother of two children, under the roar of shots, is worried that someone else nearby will have enough food. It was the first time in all my days that I cried.

(A): Lord, teach us to be generous.

Simon stopped in hesitation,
Not foreseeing his proud station,
Called to bear the Cross of Christ.



Station Five: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

(L): Natalia, Kyiv: I could not sleep. I was shivering as soon as I closed my eyes – I saw my parents saying goodbye to me and my grandchildren. Every sound seemed suspicious.

(A): In the morning I had to take a quick walk with the dog, but the sirens sounded. We just sat on the floor in the bathroom. My eldest son climbed into the cast iron bath, lay in it and sang. The youngest, sitting on the dog mat, asked curiously why we were sitting in the dark on the floor.

(L): Anna, Kyiv: The freaks are shelling the houses. A terrible horror. Two things flew into the yard with a whistle and explosions. Then in a respite, my son Kirill raises his head and says, "This is just fireworks in my honor!" I am amazed by his optimism. Happy birthday, son!

(A): Lord, teach us to be generous.

**Brave but trembling came the woman,
None but she would flaunt the Roman,
Moved by love beyond her fear.**



Station Six: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

(L): Natalia, Kyiv: At the border there is a queue of several kilometers. They say we were lucky to have to stay only a day. Others stayed for two or three days. You can't sleep; you need to be ready to move the car every few minutes. If you miss the queue, others will pass you by. The situation is tense, but volunteers are coming and going, literally persuading you to take hot food, sweets and fruit for the children.

(A): The Poles are incredible people. They carry food, clothing, children's things, household chemicals, medicines. They hand out free SIM cards, accommodations and transfers. Both municipal transport and railway tickets are now free for Ukrainians.

(L): The day after we arrived, we went to the station to help Polish volunteers meet our refugees. When you're at the train station feeding someone, calming them down with the mantra "Yes, I only arrived yesterday," it's a little easier. It's therapy, as Ukrainian poet Lina Kostenko once brilliantly formulated it: "Someone in the world is worse off than you."

(A): Lord, teach us to be generous.

Prostrate on the dust He crumbled,
Flogged in Body He resembled
All our brothers poor and scorned.



Station Seven: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

(L): Lyudmila, Mariupol: Here is hell. Constant shelling. We sit in the basement, sometimes we manage to cook food on a fire. A hole was dug near the entrance to go to the toilet. Very cold. We are still alive, but there is very little food left. As for the rest of our relatives, I don't know. There is no connection.

(A): Lord, teach us to be generous.

**May our sympathy for Jesus
Turn to those who here now need us,
May we see Christ bruised in them.**



Station Eight: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

(L):Kateryna, Lugansk: These days, I have a feel for what the concept of “sick horror” means. It is an almost tangible something that lives in the area of the solar plexus. Periodically it spreads its tentacles throughout the body from the inside, compresses every organ, every artery, vein, capillary. It was physically impossible to eat or drink, too. It was impossible to sleep; it was constantly very cold and no blankets and socks could save us. And I couldn’t cry.

(A): On the second day, fear turned into hellish hatred. It grows stronger every day and becomes almost tangible.

(A): Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

Jesus fell again in weakness,
Stumbling as we do, to lead us
Through our sorrow and our pain.



Station Nine: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

(L): Darla, Mariupol: We have been without water, electricity, gas, heating for eight days. Neighbors lit a fire under the house to cook food on it. We stood in line for six hours. There was no bread. Shops have been looted. All the roads around are mined by the Russian military. There are no corridors. It's not safe to drive because you can get blown up.

(A): Mom said that there was enough food for everyone for a maximum of a week. After that, there will be no more. They collect snow and boil it.

(A): Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

**Stripped and jeered by his own nation,
Jesus stood in desolation,
Giving all He had to give.**



Station Ten: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

(L): Natasha, Mariupol: Half a million Mariupol residents are cut off from life. There are no streets left with undestroyed houses. The bodies of the dead are buried in the courtyards of residential sectors. There is no light, heat, water, food, communications in the city. Children are dying of dehydration. The enemy cynically breaks the promised "green corridors," blocking any attempts to deliver food and medicines.

(A): Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

**Pierced the hands that blessed and cured us,
Pierced the feet that walked to free us,
Walked the hill of Calvary.**



Station Eleven: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

(L): Yaroslava, Borodianka: A shell hit my apartment in a four-story building – it is no more. Hiding with my mother in the basements of private houses. In Borodyanka, Kadyrovites, Chechnyan paramilitary soldiers who are working with the Russian army, are shooting at locals. Shelling is constantly being carried out. We are exhausted both physically and mentally. We are constantly crying.

(A): Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

**Life eternal, death defiant,
Bowed his head – the world was silent,
Through his death came life anew.**



Station Twelve: Jesus Dies on the Cross

(L): Elena, Kharkiv: On Feb. 28, my friend and her family decided to leave. A rocket hit one of the cars. The whole family burned to death.

(A): Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

**Stunned and stricken, Mary, Mother,
In your arms was placed our Brother,
"Full of grace" now filled with grief.**



Station Thirteen: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

(L): Anna, Kyiv: A column of Russian occupying equipment was standing right outside our gates, driving back and forth. But no one looked at them anymore; we just lay on the floor all the time. It was scary to raise our heads. For a week, we lived with the children and the cat in some nook under the stairs.

(A): The worst thing is that at some point you realize that if the explosions are a little further, then you react more calmly, and you even manage to sleep fitfully. The horror is that a person gets used to everything.

(A): Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Jesus, Lord, your gift accepted,
In three days You resurrected,
You did first what we shall do.



Station Fourteen: Jesus is laid in the Tomb

(L): Kateryna, Lugansk: My parents and I left our homes for the second time in seven years. I can't express these feelings. People ask me: Are four walls dearer to you than the lives of your loved ones? Of course not. But I perceive my home as a close friend, a living being. And now I again have the feeling, as in 2014, that I betrayed him, abandoned him and did not protect him.

(A): Now our family is safe. But I keep thinking that it would be better if I stayed at home. Even under shelling it would be easier for me than wandering around other people's apartments, without my things and in complete uncertainty about how long all this will last and whether my house will survive.

(A): Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Jesus, Risen, be our lover
In your food and in our brother
Lead us home to heaven with You.

Closing Prayer:

(A): Loving God, In the Stations of the Cross you show your faithfulness to us, faithfulness even to your death on the cross. Be faithful now to all living in Ukraine. Grant them the salvation you revealed at Easter. Bring us all closer to your kingdom. Amen.