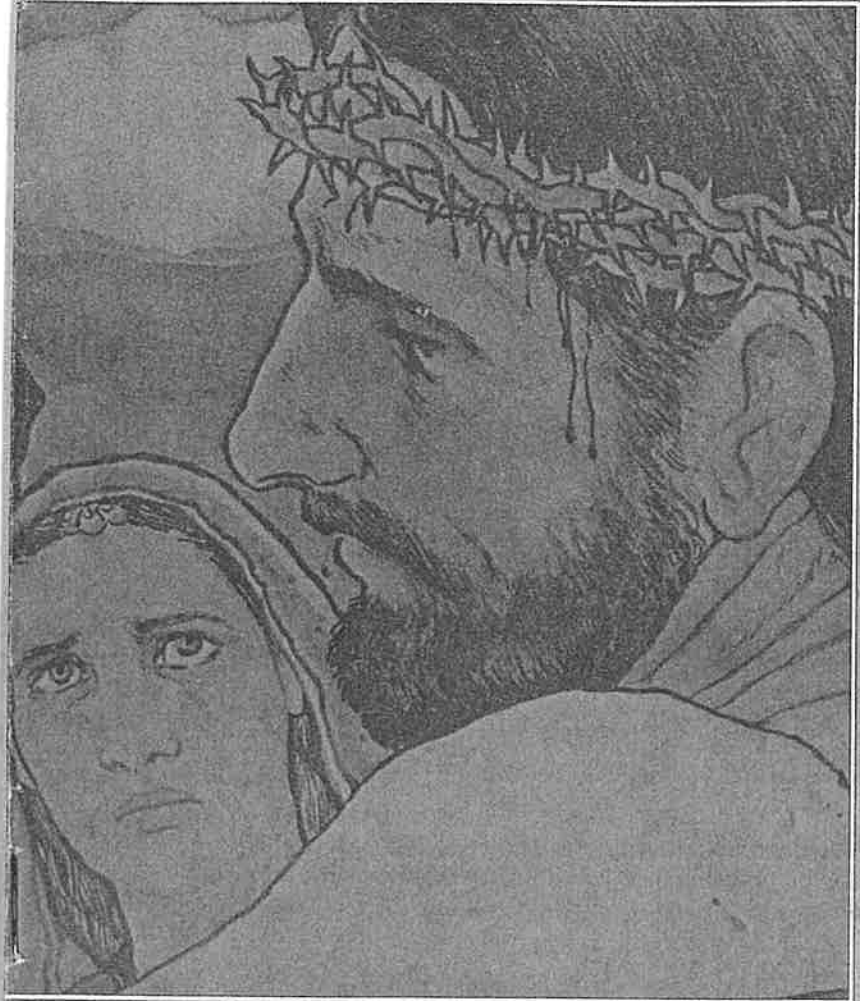


*A Personal*  
WAY of the CROSS



Isaias Powers, C.P.

## *Prayer*

God my Father, bless my memory, my imagination, and my prayer. As I journey with your Son to his tomb, help me to understand his way of showing how much you care for me, for all of us.

You guided Jesus through the last hours of his life. Thanks to him, you taught me that trust in your love is so important. His death has given me the greatest proof of your endearment.

Let me accept your gift, gain courage from it, and learn kindness by it. Let me really experience what was and is meant when Jesus died to do your will of love for me. Let me have such an experience of this that I shall never forget it—or you.

*THE FIRST STATION*

*Jesus Is Condemned to Death*

My Lord, you were unjustly tried by wicked men envious of the good you did. It must have been terrible to be hurt by slanderous words and have no chance to justify yourself.

I know the feeling. I too have been put down. Indeed, I have been put out of other people's lives. And there was no way for me to present my side—no court of appeals. Bitterness on the part of my enemies blocked all reasonableness, just as it was with you.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, help me to continue as you did. You knew your own goodness, even when those who condemned you refused to acknowledge it. Let me know my goodness, too. Never let me be crushed by those who put me on trial because I haven't met with their approval.

*THE SECOND STATION*

*Jesus Is Made to Bear His Cross*

My Lord, you were stuck with a larger share of responsibilities than anyone who ever lived. No one was, or is, ever able to rid the world of all its accumulated guilt. Only you.

And so you did. You didn't grumble about carrying the extra-heavy load. But I often do. When I have to do more chores, or spend more time listening to others (than they spend on me), or take on more responsibility than others—whenever I get stuck with more than my fair share of burdens—I complain about it.

But love is the issue of my service. So why do I ruin my love by cross words or a frowning face? You didn't ruin your love by such mean-spirited griping. You simply took up your cross without complaint.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, purify the way that I shoulder more than my share of responsibilities. Don't let me poison the love I give by my grumbling.

## *THE THIRD STATION*

### *Jesus Falls the First Time*

My Lord, because you were human there were limits to your strength. Physically you reached that limit somewhere on the way to Calvary. You were already weak—from loss of sleep, from the scourging, from being dragged to Pilate, then to Herod, then back again. So naturally you would fall. The cross was heavy and you were weak.

So what did you do about it? Something better, and simpler, than I usually do. I usually get upset with myself when I fall, or make a mistake, or can't remember things, or do a job less perfectly than I'd like to.

When I sin or "fall" in any of these ways, I get angry with myself. "Why can't I do things right?" I say. "What's the matter with me? How could I ever have been so dumb?" You never wasted your energy bawling yourself out like this.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, heal me of my perfectionism. When I fall—from clumsiness, thoughtlessness, or sinfulness—let me get up again, move on, and keep going.

*THE FOURTH STATION*

*Jesus Meets His Mother*

My Lord, it must have been painful for you to see that your way of love—your way or life—was causing your mother so much pain. This was part of your helplessness. You could only look on as she watched you pass by, each of you on the sidelines of the other's grief, powerless to take the grief away.

Similar things have happened to me. I think this is so with everyone. We don't mean to hurt our parents when we leave home, or to sadden a good friend when a big change comes up. Sometimes a decision must be made, and we can't fully explain ourselves. So with you and your mother: It had to be.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, help me realize that the right thing that I must do or say won't always be perfectly understood by friends and family. Let me gain strength from your love for your mother, even when you had to cause her sadness.

*THE FIFTH STATION*

*Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross*

My Lord, what a blow to your pride it must have been for you! You had to be assisted! You couldn't do it all on your own. And what inefficient help! It wasn't a friend who helped you; it was a stranger, a farmhand. Probably he did it all wrong. If I were you in that situation, I would have said to him, "You clumsy oaf! Get over on the other side! Quit lurching! Don't you see that you're giving me splinters? You're more trouble than you're worth!"

Jesus, by the grace of this station, help me to be less of a nag and more appreciative of people who mean well—even when they don't do well.

## *THE SIXTH STATION*

### *Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus*

My Lord, Veronica meant well, too. But she didn't do much good. It is amazing how many of these stations show that your passion was accepting love from others. First it was your mother. (She wasn't much help. Indeed, she made you more sorrowful. Just the same, you accepted the little that she could do for you.) Then came Simon of Cyrene who was forced to help you out. (He wasn't all that good at what he did, but you accepted it.) Now here is Veronica. What good did she do? Probably the napkin across your face only made the blood sting your eyes more sharply. And the sweat and dirt and blood would come right back after the brief reprise.

Yet you accepted her attempts to comfort you. You were gracious to her love, just as you always were.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, let me get better about letting others love me. Let me be grateful for their help—even when this help does not do me much good.



## *THE SEVENTH STATION*

### *Jesus Falls Again*

My Lord, I say "again" rather than "the second time" because it is "falling again" that gives me so much trouble. When I fall, or sin, or even make a mistake, I often wonder, "What will people think?" I worry about how they might be judging me for being such an incompetent individual or such an untrustworthy clod.

You fell, and more than once. Enough that you were hurt and weakened. You did not add to your sorrows by chastizing yourself just because your weakness was embarrassing to you.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, give me your Spirit. Then I will not be so sensitive to what other people may think of me for falling. I will just get up again—and when I fall again, get up once more.

*THE EIGHTH STATION*

*Jesus Meets Some Consoling Women*

My Lord, this was your greatest sorrow. You tried so hard to teach your disciples, but they left you. You worked long to impress the scribes and Pharisees, but they refused to be impressed. Then who was left? A group of women doing their good deed that day! They were strangers, but they publicly showed how sorry they felt for you.

If you were like me, you would have bawled them out and displayed your irritation by showing them they were not the "right ones" you wanted to weep for you. They tried to console you, but they just added insult to injury: They reminded you of the people you really wanted to be there.

My Lord, you never scolded them. You graciously accepted the fact that they meant well; you took the trouble to teach them, even though it pained you to speak.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, help me to be really present to the people who love me, even though I am hurt by those who don't. Let me not take it out on my friends just because I have been stranded by others that I thought, and wished, were friends.

*THE NINTH STATION*

*Jesus Falls the Last Time*

My Lord, we don't know how many times you fell as you carried your cross to Calvary, but there had to be a last time that might have tempted you to say, "That's it! I've had it!"

I know the experience. After a whole series of getting up and trying again, after a series of sadnesses, or deaths in the family, or frustrations preventing me from reaching a goal, I can still keep going. But then comes the last straw, and I want to call it quits—on myself, on my love, and on God, too.

Jesus, don't let me stay down. Give me the grace of this station so that I can somehow hang onto your courage and discover the strength I didn't know I had, and keep going—even after many falls.

## *THE TENTH STATION*

### *Jesus Is Stripped*

My Lord, I have never been publicly stripped of my clothes prior to crucifixion. Nothing that bad. But I have sometimes been stripped of my reputation. I've felt the hurt of hostile eyes behind my back. I've known people who "size me up" and "know my shortcomings" and "can't stand me" (for one reason or another). They embarrass me in front of my friends; yes, and they embarrass me before myself. Their words of criticism make me feel powerless and naked before them.

Jesus, give me the grace of this station when I am stripped like this. Don't let my critics weigh too heavy on my heart. If they bring up something I should change in myself, let me do so. But if they punish me by their words, or eyes, let me not wilt under their mean-hearted pickiness. Let me be proud of your love for me, even when others are determined to make me feel ashamed.

*THE ELEVENTH STATION*

*Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross*

My Lord, there was so much more you could have done. So much healing and teaching and "going about doing good." Now such sources of action are impossible. You are bored—literally bored—by nails in your hands and feet.

Yet, even so, you loved. You did not do so by doing, but by simply being, by being who you are for us, a man of love.

Please, Jesus, by the grace of this station, help me to know my worth. When I am stuck or powerless to do anything, even when I am bored in one way or another, let me link my powerlessness with yours. Let me be who I am, even when I can't do anything.

*THE TWELFTH STATION*

*Jesus Dies on the Cross*

My Lord, you gave up your spirit. It was a good death, putting your life in your Father's hands.

Jesus, I fear death. I even fear the little deaths that come my way. I get frightened when my hopes crumble, when a friend or member of my family leaves and lives a new life without me, when things like a job or my home "die to me" in the sense that they are no more. It's terrible to face death, even those "little deaths." I feel abandoned and scared. All seems lost.

You did it well. So must I. Let me understand, by the grace of this station, that I can trust in God. He will not turn me into nothing; God didn't turn you into nothing. Let me hope in this, even though my feelings and my mind tell me all is hopeless.

## *THE THIRTEENTH STATION*

### *Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross*

My Lord, when you died and were laid in your mother's arms, you had no thoughts. In this case, I have to do your thinking for you: What good was your life? What did you accomplish? How would you last in the hearts and lives of those you taught? Would your disciples continue as you instructed them?

You didn't know. All you could do was trust that you had done some lasting good and made a difference to the world you served.

That's all I can hope for, too. When I die, even when I "die" to people I have served and loved, I must die like you. Whenever there is leaving, there is a kind of dying. And I can't know for certain if anything I said or did for them has really rubbed off. I'm dead to what will happen in their future. I must let go, as you did.

Please, Jesus, give me the grace of this station. Then, when my death (and all my "dying") comes, I may know the worth of my love for others, even though I cannot see any results.

*THE FOURTEENTH STATION*

*Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb*

My Lord, now you experienced the worst kind of helplessness. Darkness. Nothing. You were completely alienated from all that a person can know about life. The saints have called such an experience the dark night of the soul. It is dryness making one absolutely incapable of helping oneself. The only thing to do is wait, wait for God's power to raise you up. Just wait in dark trust, not knowing where or when a new life may happen.

Jesus, by the grace of this station, when I must experience the terrifying demand that I wait for God to raise me out of darkness, help me to do what you did.

I know, in your case, the waiting time was worth it. You were ushered into a new life, better than before. I know I am linked to you with a gift of life stronger and fuller than the life my parents gave me. Let me keep hold of this faith. When the sense of helplessness is all around me, let me be helped by you to do my waiting well. Amen.