

Stations of the Cross – Facilitator Script

Gathering, Praying, and Acting for Justice

Giving Up Billionaires for Lent 2025

Welcome to *Stations of the Cross: Gathering, Praying, and Acting for Justice*, developed by NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice. Thank you for facilitating this event in your community.

Before beginning, assign a “Reader 1” and “Reader 2.” You can have the same two people serve as “Reader 1” and “Reader 2” for the entire event, or change with each station.

Remember to pass out copies of the half-sheet handout, so that participants can follow along with the Psalm response and the concluding call to action.

Opening

Reader 1: Two thousand years ago, God became fully human in the person of Jesus. Jesus lived as a Jewish man under the rule of the Roman empire, took on the work of a carpenter, and walked among the oppressed, impoverished, and outcast of his society.

We remember Jesus’ life, especially his suffering and death, during the season of Lent and on Good Friday. As we remember each station of Jesus’ Passion and death, we strive also to remember those who suffer at the hands of injustice in our world today. We pray for the grace to step out of our comfort zones, so that we may join Christ in transforming death-dealing systems and build a world of peace, mercy, and love — where all people can thrive, as God created us to.

Reader 2: During today’s prayer, each Station will include a scripture-based reflection, a Psalm response, a justice-based reflection, and a prayer response. For the Psalm response, all of us will together say or sing the words of Psalm 23 that are also on your handout: “Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.”

Station 1

Reader 1: Jesus is condemned to death. The Roman government that has oppressed the Jewish people for so long has now sentenced Jesus to torture and death by crucifixion, a sentence reserved for the poorest of society. Pilate, who gave the sentence, washed his hands in an attempt to pass the guilt along to the Jewish leaders.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Just as the Roman authorities arrested and condemned Jesus, the U.S. legal system locks up millions of our neighbors, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the world.

Far too many of us are subject to violent treatment by police, incarceration in inhumane conditions, and practices like solitary confinement, a form of torture—or, worst of all, execution. Why do we respond to social problems by caging our neighbors, or perpetuating violence through the death penalty? Why do we not revere our neighbors, visit the imprisoned, and work for real reconciliation and peace in our communities—and in doing so, honor Christ?

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to recognize you in every human being, especially incarcerated and condemned people. Give us the strength to resist society's pressures to demonize, dehumanize, convict, and kill our siblings, and instead insist on our shared dignity—even in the most difficult situations.

Station 2

Reader 1: Jesus carries his cross. Those in power force Jesus to carry his own instrument of death. This burden weighs heavily on him as he struggles underneath its load. Those watching can see clearly how he struggles along the path toward his crucifixion.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Many people bear invisible burdens in their daily lives. This is especially true today for many of our immigrant neighbors, family members, friends, and coworkers. They may carry a daily fear of being targeted, detained, or separated from their families by the cruelty of some people in power who use immigrants as a scapegoat. Many are afraid that ICE will raid their church, workplace, or even a local health care center. Some may even be fearful of driving, worried that a simple traffic stop will turn into an abduction. Children of immigrants may worry they will come home from school to find that their parents have been taken away.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us recognize the burden of the invisible crosses that some bear, especially our immigrant neighbors. Help us to greet our community members with hearts full of compassion. May we serve as Your witness in lightening their loads, offering our protection, care, and welcome.

Station 3

Reader 1: Jesus falls under the weight of his cross. It bears down on him, though he knows that he must rise and continue. How much harder must it have been for him to pick himself and the cross back up after falling?

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Around the world and in our own backyards, so many of our loved ones, neighbors, and children stumble and fall under the weight of hunger. Over 80 million U.S. households experienced food insecurity in the past few years. The weight of this hunger

bears down on our physical and mental health, and our ability to succeed in school or work environments.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see You in those without adequate food, and to both satisfy their hunger now and work for a world in which no one goes hungry ever again. We know that we produce enough food to feed the world. Help us to find new ways to ensure it is distributed in a way that leaves nobody out.

Station 4

Reader 1: Jesus meets his mother. Mary had walked with Jesus from the beginning. She had fled to Egypt when Herod wanted him dead. She had returned to her homeland, but not to the town she knew so well. Mary knew what it was like to live in a foreign land for the sake of providing life for her family. Now, back in her homeland, after all she had lived through out of love for him, she had to watch him walk to his death. Still, she was there to comfort and accompany him.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Now is another moment in history with massive migrations. More and more people are forced to flee their home countries, just like the Holy Family, searching for a life free of violence, poverty, and desperation. Refugees, people seeking asylum, and immigrants seek a good life for themselves and their families, just as all people do. Nearly all of us have moved at some points in our lives, yet it is immigrants and their families who face hateful and exclusionary words, actions, and policies.

Reader 1: Jesus, hear us and give us the courage to show compassion and welcome to all people, especially those who have traveled long journeys or faced persecution, whether they are newcomers or our long-time neighbors. Give us the compassion to look upon one another as Mary looked upon Jesus: with limitless love and concern.

Station 5

Reader 1: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross. Some say that Simon was forced, unwillingly, to carry the cross. Others say he was chosen because he showed sympathy. Though we don't know for sure, we know that Simon's act helped to lighten Jesus' load and that he began to develop compassion along the journey. Simon shows us what solidarity looks like: entering in to share the burden and travelling alongside the suffering person in front of us.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Our faith calls us to solidarity, and especially solidarity with workers. We know that in the past, workers have joined together to win better working conditions, better pay,

and protections against abuses. But today, we working people continue to face subsistence wages, unjust conditions, and not enough paid time off to care for ourselves and our loved ones. How can we foster solidarity with and among working people? How can we carry the load together, making it lighter for all of us?

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see You in all who are burdened, especially workers. Give us the courage to journey in solidarity with our siblings, like Simon, sharing the burden with compassion, even when it is hard. Guide workers across races, faiths, and ethnicities to join in solidarity — so that together we can insist upon the wages and working conditions that are consistent with the dignity of labor, and the dignity of human beings.

Station 6

Reader 1: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Making her way through the crowds, and the many people jeering at Jesus, a woman reaches out to give what care she can offer to him in his suffering.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: As Veronica tends to Jesus' body, seeking to alleviate what pain she can, so we are called to care for the bodies of one another with access to quality, affordable health care. Yet, the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States is medical debt. Too many of us cannot afford the staggering costs of the health care we need. We are forced to skip doctor's appointments, choose between glasses for our kids and medications for ourselves, or even forego lifesaving treatments, all while ultra-wealthy insurance executives grow their profits. In a health care system based on private profits, people die.

Reader 1: Jesus, hasten to us. Give us the grace to see You in one another and to know that when we care for our bodies, we are caring for You. Guide us in ensuring that our lawmakers protect access to quality health care for every person in our communities. Show us how we, like Veronica, can wipe the faces of Your people.

Station 7

Reader 1: Jesus stumbles and falls a second time, his face in the dusty ground.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Many of our siblings face death daily through structural and interpersonal violence. When we turn on the news or look around at our neighborhoods, it seems that war, drug violence, and gun violence are everywhere. This violence is the symptom of unchecked greed and wealth-hoarding, that drives war and instability and leaves our communities with too few resources and too many guns. Violence can only produce

violence. It is up to us to break the cycle with our nonviolent, compassionate action for justice, peace, and mercy.

Reader 1: Jesus, as we consider the violence You experienced, develop in us a nonviolent heart. Help us to hold victims, victim-survivors, and perpetrators of violence in compassion so that we can avoid contributing further violence to our world. You transform death into life; show us how to transform violence into peace and justice for all people.

Station 8

Reader 1: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. Along his way, Jesus encounters the group of women who weep for him. They outpour empathy and compassion toward him.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Too often, some people in power “other” our siblings and loved ones—including unhoused people, LGBTQ+ people, refugees and immigrants, single mothers, and Indigenous people. Some religious elites even spread the lie that only some people count as “true” Christians or “true” Americans, creating an exclusive, us-versus-them mentality. Instead, journeying with Jesus inspires in us awe at God’s diverse creation. We remember Jesus’ closeness to those who are “other-ed,” and the expansiveness of God’s love.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see You in those who society “others.” Grant us the empathy of the women who weep for Jesus. Give us the courage to embrace radical solidarity and build relationships with those who are “other-ed,” so that we may become Your Beloved Community.

Station 9

Reader 1: Jesus falls a third time. He hits the ground in humiliation. With each fall, he hits the ground harder, and struggles even more to rise again. He feels he has nothing left in him. Still, he must find a way to go on.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Many of our neighbors have fallen more than once before they find themselves unhoused. Though there are more than enough houses for all of us in the U.S. today, wealthy private investors buy up homes in our neighborhoods and hike up rents and housing prices. Far too many of us are left spending disproportionate parts of our income on rent or mortgage payments, or losing housing altogether — forced, like Jesus, to find the strength to face a society that passes harsh judgment on those without stable shelter.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to remember how close so many of us are to falling — often one lost paycheck or one medical crisis away from losing our housing. May You give us the grace to hold in compassion our neighbors without stable housing. Give us the grace to

work together to create a society where houses are for people, not profits, and where every person has a reliable and safe place to call home.

Station 10

Reader 1: Jesus' clothes are taken away. Just before hanging him on the cross, the authorities strip Jesus of the very little he has left on this Earth.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Some lawmakers and their ultra-wealthy backers try to distract us from their wealth-hoarding by stoking fear and division, pointing the finger at immigrants or queer or transgender people. When the powerful cast lots with our lives, our communities suffer. The reality is that beneath our apparent differences, we are connected in our shared humanity, and all equally the beloveds of God.

Reader 1: Jesus, help us to see the seamless garment that is Your people. Help us to withstand the temptation to tear it up and pass power, resources, and rights to the powerful few. Guide us in rejecting scapegoating and exclusion, so that we may join together in building the Beloved Community. Let us make our country a place where all are welcome, safe, and free.

Station 11

Reader 1: Jesus is nailed to the cross. His death is only a matter of time as nails are driven through his wrists and feet and the cross is lifted with his body attached to it.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: Today, the ultra-wealthy have an outsized influence in our politics, allowed to spend unlimited money to fund the campaigns of politicians who will protect their wealth-hoarding. These politicians then try to restrict our freedom to vote and to have a say in the decisions that affect our lives. As a result, we are left without the health care, housing, food, and safety that accord with our dignity as human beings.

Reader 1: Jesus, may we remember that we all have worth and dignity and are made in Your image. Give us the courage to answer our call to participate in shaping our society for the common good. Help us to build a political system that answers not to greed, but to the needs of Your people.

Station 12

Reader 1: Jesus dies on the cross. An innocent man is put to death by his government two millennia ago, and we still tell the story. He allowed himself to suffer such a death out of

solidarity with the suffering and the oppressed. He was willing to give his life for the sake of truth over lies, solidarity over division, and love over fear.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: God created a world of abundance, with more than enough resources for all people to thrive. Yet, some lawmakers allow these resources to be concentrated into the hands of a small group of billionaires, while billions of people on this planet go without adequate food, health care, housing, clean water, or education. This is not the reality of freedom and justice to which Jesus committed himself, even to death.

Reader 1: Jesus, we recall your warnings against greed and your call to share abundantly. Help us to not only share our personal resources, but also to create a tax system that ensures that resources are shared among all people, so that we may not enrich the already-wealthy but nurture the common good.

Station 13

Reader 1: Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and placed in his mother's arms. She holds the helpless body of her child, this time in total despair. She weeps for his life.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: We remember our Black and Brown siblings who continue to be killed unjustly, especially at the hands of police. Like Mary, their mothers face an unfathomable loss. Today, people of color in the U.S. still face discrimination in housing and employment, unjust treatment by the legal system, and the ongoing legacy of racist policies that have ravaged neighborhoods and schools.

Reader 1: Mary, we ask you to tear down our defensiveness, and make us tenderhearted like you. Help us recognize that our laws, systems, and practices still preference the white and wealthy at the expense of all others. Help us, people of all races and backgrounds—Black, Brown, and white—to resist attempts to divide us, repair our relationships, and together ensure that each of us has all that we need to thrive.

Station 14

Reader 1: Jesus is laid in the tomb. He is honored by being placed in a specially created spot, a sign of reverence toward the deceased.

All: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader 2: God our Creator has honored us by placing us on Earth. It is here that we are called to eat and be satisfied, to love and to nurture, to work and to rest. Earth is a gift for our care, not exploitation. But for too long, fossil fuel corporate executives have ravaged

the Earth for their own gain, leaving the rest of us with unclean air, polluted water and soil, and increasingly extreme floods and droughts. Some of our lawmakers enable this destruction. How can we allow this? How can we reciprocate the love God has shown to us by caring for this home and protecting it for those who will follow us?

Reader 1: Creator God, help us to recognize our planet as the common home for those who came before us, us here today, and the generations who will follow us. Root us more deeply into Your Earth, remembering that we are a part of creation, too. Make us not just protectors, but co-creators and cultivators of our shared dwelling place, the creation of Your heart.

Closing

Reader 1: Two thousand years later, we know that Jesus' death is not the end of the story. We know of the Resurrection. As we journey together, reflecting on Jesus' sufferings, we hold close to our hearts the suffering of the world today. Inspired by the life-giving, loving solidarity of Jesus, we renew our commitment to working together toward the Resurrection of our world: the coming of God's kingdom of justice to Earth.

All: Let the nations turn from war and encourage one another as good neighbors. O Blessed and Compassionate Friend, melt our hearts of stone, break through our fears and guide our steps toward the way of peace.

Reader 2: May we now go forth to serve God and love our neighbors.

Reader 1: One way we can do this is by sharing about this experience with the people in our lives, and together calling our Members of Congress to protect our communities by rejecting the dangerous budget reconciliation bill.

The current Republican budget reconciliation bill moving through Congress cuts our Medicaid and SNAP funding--in order to pay for trillions of dollars in tax giveaways for billionaires and more funding to deport and detain our immigrant neighbors. Together, we are calling our Representatives and asking them to REJECT this dangerous proposal and protect our health care and food. More information on this is in your handout.

This resource was created by NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice as part of our 2025 Lenten campaign, "Giving Up Billionaires for Lent." We thank you for spending time with us today. If you are not already connected with NETWORK, we invite you to learn more and join us at networklobby.org/lent-2025, or by emailing us at info@networklobby.org.