

CROSS EXAMINATIONS



Stations of the Cross

JAMES E. ADAMS



In praying the stations, we try to share with Christ the final hours before his death. On the way to Calvary, he said little that we know of, and the gospels offer only a few details. So when we pray the stations, we are invited to use our imagination to elaborate on what we know from the gospels.

These stations are in the form of Christ speaking from his heart. Some poetic license is used, as when Christ is said to “forget” or to have experienced other failings. Scripture, however, says Christ was like us in everything except sin, so such liberties surely are within the limits of sound theology. The precise words and thoughts may not be from the gospels, but they are inspired by Scripture and tradition.

Stations often have verses that are meant to be recited aloud by participants. *Cross Examinations* could be used in such a setting and recited aloud by one reader or perhaps by several persons taking turns, but it is intended primarily for personal reflection and silent meditation. Stations may be prayed at any time but are an especially appropriate daily prayer during Lent.

MATTHEW 27:19-26

I Am Condemned to Death

Pilate has just read my death sentence. I am to die on the cross. Should I rebel against Pilate? How can I do that? Pilate is not my enemy. He is an envoy of my Father and the voice of my human destiny...

Pilate told me when and how I would die. You may not get that blessing. You won't have a Pilate to tell you the place, the time or the circumstances of your death. Yet you stand condemned to death as surely as I was. You were destined to die the moment you were conceived. That is part of being human.

Do you think of that very often? If you thought about your death, you could see more clearly that some of the things you are most obsessed with are the least important. Even goals that seem



worthwhile wouldn't seem nearly so important if you think of death. You surely would not be so worried about money, clothes, cars and careers. These things don't make you precious. These things won't help you when your time to die comes.

I remind you of this not because my Father and I want you to be fearful of your future. Living in fear of death isn't what I want for you. I remind you of your death to help you live fully and freely as my brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters of my Father. In my death and resurrection, you will receive the power to do that.

JOHN 19:16-17

I Am Forced to Carry My Cross

My instrument of suffering and death has been thrust on me. Should I curse this heavy timber and those who laid it on me? No. The cross is neither bad nor good. My response alone determines whether it will be redemptive or destructive, helpful or worthless...

You also must carry the instruments of your own suffering and death. You were born with defects that you may control but never abolish. You have fatal flaws that cause pain and suffering for yourself and others. You want to be kind, patient and understanding, but at times you find yourself mean, short-tempered and cynical. Yet you must not curse yourself or your limitations.



That becomes like quicksand pulling you down lower and lower.

My cross did not come only from Pilate or from the Roman soldiers. Ultimately, my cross came when I took on my Father's work and became human. Your crosses are much the same. They are your credentials for being human. The question is not whether life brings crosses, but rather your response to them.

I embraced my humanity. You must embrace your humanity. Resisting crosses leads to self-hatred, hatred of others and bitterness. Some woods are stronger than steel because they bend. Learn to bend. Learn the wisdom of triumphing through your crosses rather than in spite of them.

ISAIAH 53:1-3

I Fall the First Time

I have just fallen flat on my face. I tried to avoid it. I wanted to stay on my feet all the way to Calvary. I wonder if I fell partly because I was trying too hard to keep from falling...

You can learn something from my fall. You also will fall if you try too hard to succeed all by yourself. I was so wrapped up in my efforts that I forgot to let my Father guide me. I forgot for an instant to let my Father work through me, to let him guide my next step.

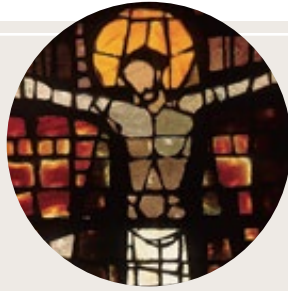
You are often tempted to take on more than you can do well. Or to take on goals that, however worthy in theory, may not be right for you or may be undertaken for inferior reasons. Isn't this



how it often happens in life? You decide what you want and then you say to yourself: I am going to achieve this goal, and when I succeed, even God will have to be impressed!

You do not need successes to get my Father's attention. When you succeed, it is because of his grace anyway. So what you would be holding up as yours is really his already. My Father wants you, not your successes.

In all you undertake, go first to him in prayer and ask what he wants. Try to learn my Father's will for you. Then, when you go to work, open your heart to him and let him work in and through you.



AN EASTER PRAYER

**“The right hand of the Lord is exalted,
the right hand of the Lord does wonders.**

**I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.”**

**Christ, the Son of the Living God,
accept from us this Easter prayer
and give us that joy of the new Life,
which we bear within us,
which only you can give to the human heart.**

You, the Risen Christ.

You, our Pascal Lamb!

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II

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