

Stations of the Cross for Ukraine:
God of Peace, rescue your children.
Unite our family. Stop war.



A man in Kyiv, Ukraine, mourns his mother, who was killed when an intercepted missile hit a residential building March 17, 2022, during Russia's continued invasion of Ukraine. (CNS photo/Thomas Peter, Reuters)

Written by Jim McDermott, March 18, 2022
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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.

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, has been gathering and publishing texts, emails and photos from people suffering from the violence at her Ukrainian-oriented magazine Elegant New York. Their stories capture the shock and horror currently being experienced in Ukraine.

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.

Opening Prayer

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.

Station One: Jesus is Condemned to Death.

In the first three stations of the cross, we ask God to help us share in the shock and horror felt by the people of Ukraine today.

Leader:

Kateryna; Lugansk, Ukraine: 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.

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.

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

All: Lord, grant us a feeling of shock.

V. God did not spare his own Son:
R. *But delivered him up for us all.*

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. *Amen.*

*Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.*

Station Two: Jesus Takes up His Cross.

Leader:

Natalia; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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.

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."

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.

All: Lord, grant us a feeling of dislocation.

V. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all:

R. For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Let us pray.

Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon them and us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*Holy God,
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Station Three: Jesus Falls for the First Time.

Leader:

Anna; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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.

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

All: *Lord, grant us a feeling of horror.*

V. Surely he has borne our griefs:

R. *And carried our sorrows.*

Let us pray.

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

***Holy God,
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In the second set of stations, we pray to grow in the generosity that Ukrainians have witnessed amidst their own suffering.

Station Four: Jesus Meets His Mother.

Leader:

Kateryna; Lugansk, Ukraine: 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.

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.

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.

All: Lord, teach us to be generous.

V. A sword will pierce your own soul also:

R. And fill your heart with bitter pain.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

O God, who willed that in the passion of your Son a sword of grief should pierce the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary his mother: Mercifully grant that your Church, having shared with her in his passion, may be made worthy to share in the joys of his resurrection; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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Station Five: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.

Leader:

Natalia; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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.

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.

Anna; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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!

All: *Lord, teach us to be generous.*

V. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me:

R. *Cannot be my disciple.*

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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Station Six: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Leader:

Natalia; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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.

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.

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."

All: Lord, teach us to be generous.

V. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts:

R. Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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Station Seven: Jesus Falls for the Second Time.

Leader:

Lyudmila; Mariupol, Ukraine: 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.

All: Lord, teach us to be generous.

V. But as for me, I am a worm and no man:
R. *Scorned by all and despised by the people.*

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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In the third set of stations we pray for the strength to not look away from what is happening in Ukraine.

Station Eight: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

Leader:

Kateryna; Lugansk, Ukraine: 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.

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

All: Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

V. Those who sowed with tears:

R. *Will reap with songs of joy.*

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Teach your Church, O Lord, to mourn the sins of which it is guilty, and to repent and forsake them; that, by your pardoning grace, the results of our iniquities may not be visited upon our children and our children’s children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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Station Nine: Jesus Falls for the Third Time.

Leader:

Darla; Mariupol, Ukraine: 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.

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.

All: Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

V. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter:

R. And like a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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Have mercy upon us.*

Station Ten: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments.

Leader:

; Mariupol, Ukraine: 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.

All: Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

V. They gave me gall to eat:

R. And when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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Station Eleven: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Leader:

Yaroslava; Borodianka, Ukraine: 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...

All: Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

V. They pierce my hands and my feet:

R. *They stare and gloat over me.*

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

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Station Twelve: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Leader:

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

All: Lord, give us the faithfulness to not look away.

V. Christ for us became obedient unto death:

R. Even death on a cross.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; who lives and reigns now and for ever. *Amen.*

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Have mercy upon us.*

In the final stations, we pray once more for the Lord to intervene in Ukraine.

Station Thirteen: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

Leader:

Anna; Kyiv, Ukraine: 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.

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.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

V. Her tears run down her cheeks:

R. And she has none to comfort her.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. *Amen.*

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Station Fourteen: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb.

Leader:

Kateryna; Lugansk, Ukraine: 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.

V. You will not abandon me to the grave:

R. Nor let your holy One see corruption.

Let us pray.

(Silence)

O God, your blessed Son was laid in a tomb in a garden, and rested on the Sabbath day: Grant that we who have been buried with him in the waters of baptism may find our perfect rest in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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