

THE STATIONS/WAY OF THE CROSS



Meditations by Passionist
Father Cedric Pisegna, C.P.

No Greater Love:

We hear love songs on the radio all of the time. Most times the lyrics speak of a romanticized and even erotic love. We celebrate Valentine's day by giving cards, flowers and chocolates. The great symbol of love shared on this day on cards is a red heart.

Along with music and the sentiments of Valentine cards, psychologists tell us that love is more than a warm feeling. Love is an over and over again decision, an act of the will. Those who advocate social justice will express love as generous proactive action. Love is some type of reaching out to those in need. The virtue of love is found all over the place in the Bible. The Bible is clear: Love is the greatest of virtues and lasts forever.

Love is like a precious diamond with many facets. The highest of virtues, love is feelings/emotion, choice, as well as gracious action. But as I have lived and learned, I've discovered: love is expensive. Love costs! Love is sacrificial. Those dating and married as well as parents raising children know that love is a giving thing. In order to truly love, you give until it hurts. God so loved us that he gave his only Son. God proves his love for us by giving us what was most precious to him: Jesus.

The heart of Jesus' teachings was love and he generously lived a life of love. He reached out to those on the margins and bore our sicknesses and burdens. He suffered misunderstandings and even the betrayal of those closest to him. The trials and tribulations did not deter him from giving and reaching out. He loved relentlessly. Even when being tortured on the cross he prayed for his murderers, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Jesus' passion reveals the extent of his love.

The late Fr. Bennet Kelley, CP, expressed it this way. "Jesus not only endured but accepted much suffering during his Passion: inner anguish, terrible fear and depression, abandonment by his friends, betrayal, deprivation of his freedom in injustice, lies told about him, excommunication, rejection by authority, especially by religious authority, bodily pain, utter fatigue, misunderstanding, helplessness, a sense of failure, the feeling of being abandoned by his Father, and finally death itself."

Love may sound romantic and be expressed through calming music and attractive red hearts, but the truth is: Love costs. Love is sacrificial. Love demands selfless generosity. Jesus' patience has won our souls! The willingness to suffer is the way God loves us.

In perhaps the most shocking verse in the Bible, we read: God proves his love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Ro. 5:8)

This startling verse reveals two truths: 1) God's love is unconditional and 2) The proof of God's love is revealed in the Passion of Jesus. If you want to know the fact of and the intensity of God's love, meditate on the cross.

Motto of the Passionists:

**"May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be Always in our Hearts"**

Contemplation of the Passion of Jesus is at the heart of Passionist spirituality. St. Paul of the Cross founded a community of priests, brothers and sisters to meditate on the cross of Christ and proclaim his love to the world. Along with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, our first vow is to remember/meditate on the passion and announce its meaning to all.

You are a Passionist and you probably don't know it! You may not have professed vows, but when you walk the stations of the cross and think about Jesus' sufferings, you are engaged in Passionist spirituality. When you pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary you are remembering Jesus' sufferings. Every time we attend Mass we "dynamically remember" (the theological word is anamnesis) the Passion of Jesus, such that the efficacy of his sacrifice is brought right into the present. The cross is the crux of Christianity.

When you meditate upon each station of Jesus' passion you are engaging in a supernatural act. You are connecting with the heart of the Son of God whose suffering love redeemed us. Staying awake with Jesus in Gethsemane and walking the way of the cross with him is one of the most significant ways to honor Jesus. I write about this at the fifth station when Simon carries Jesus' cross. If you want to carry Jesus' cross, simply remember what he went through for you and me.

Efficacious Fruit:

Meditation on the cross glorifies Jesus and connects us with him in ways beyond the ordinary. Thinking about the passion is an "open door" through which we go from the superficial to the supernatural. We become one with the "man of sorrows" and are actually able to unite our sorrows to his. If you want to bond deeply with a friend, take off the masks and reveal your pain to each other. A deep union will occur. You get closest to the heart of Christ as you share in his sorrows. This active imagination is also an aspect of the spirituality of St. Ignatius the founder of the Jesuit community. Put yourself in each scene and pay attention to what happens.

Besides communion with Christ, healing flows from the sufferings of Jesus. As you meditate in faith you may

find yourself being healed from guilt, shame and painful memories of the past. Isaiah 53, read on Good Friday, tells us, "Surely he has borne our pains and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole and with his stripes we are healed." Expect grace. Jesus' sufferings are medicine and a healing balm.

In addition, and most of all, you can receive the assurance of salvation as you reflect on Jesus' passion. Many have trouble forgiving themselves for past sins and present sinfulness. Primarily Jesus came to bear our guilt, win our forgiveness and secure the eternal salvation of our souls! As you meditate upon Jesus' sufferings may you know the Blessed Assurance he came to bring you. Through faith in his Passion, you now have right standing with God and are Heaven bound! "For the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus the Lord." (Ro. 6:23)

Each time I walk the stations I get various new insights and I pause to receive deeper healing. I receive new courage to face my own sufferings. I surrender anew to the one who loves me and saves me.

As you reflect on each station, may God grace you with the ability to focus and not run when the sorrow feels overwhelming. Jesus suffered intolerably and as we remember, we are entering a mystical sphere. God have mercy on those who move quickly through the stations just for physical exercise or upon those who ate popcorn during the Passion movie.

Walking the stations is an act of reverence. We are honoring and showing our utmost respect to Jesus by focusing on his pain. Such tribute honors Jesus and opens us up to receiving his love. We are remembering the one who humbled himself and stooped so low he braved an excruciating death for you and me. Although

divine, his “kenosis” (self-emptying) was so extreme that from now on, every knee in the heavens on earth and under the earth will bend and every tongue will acclaim Jesus as Lord.

No Greater Love:

Jesus taught about love often. In a nutshell his teachings can be summarized as: Love God with all that you are and love others. As I wrote, love has many facets. However, Jesus taught that the highest love you can show another is to give up your life for them.

The way of the cross is meditation on the demonstration, the proof, of God’s love for us.

St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionist community in 1720 preached, “The cross is the miracle of miracles. Everything is to be found in the cross. Jesus’ passion is the most stupendous and overwhelming work of God’s love.”

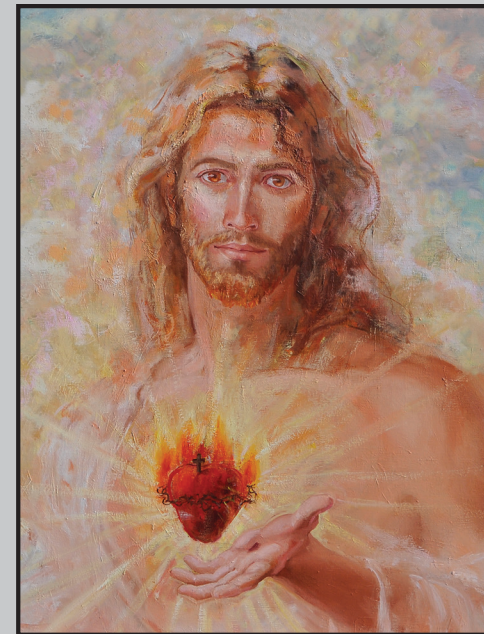
Certainly, God shows his love for us by creating us and blessing us with family, friends and resources. Every breath, every heartbeat, every moment is because of God’s love. But the remarkable proof of God’s existence and his love is to be found in the Passion of Jesus. Through Jesus’ crucifixion we find communion with God, healing for our every ill, and eternal life. Truly the cross is the miracle of all miracles!

Most of us want to “feel” or “experience” God’s love. God communicates his intense, affectionate, immense personal love for us in the passion. You may or may not feel anything at each station, but when you are finished, the whole experience will wash you with God’s love. The way of the cross is a means of helping you to get in touch with the unconditional love God has for you. Each suffering, each pain, each sorrow is but one facet of the gem that is God’s love.

The Passion breaks all of the boundaries we may place on love. Love is boundless, infinite and endures forever. Paul of the cross invited us to “immerse ourselves in the Sea of God’s love.” Oceans are seemingly endless and mysteriously deep. As we reflect on the Passion we are plunging ourselves into the endless ocean of the heart of God.

The meaning of the way of the cross? Communion with God. Personal healing. Receiving eternal life. Its true significance is: You are loved!

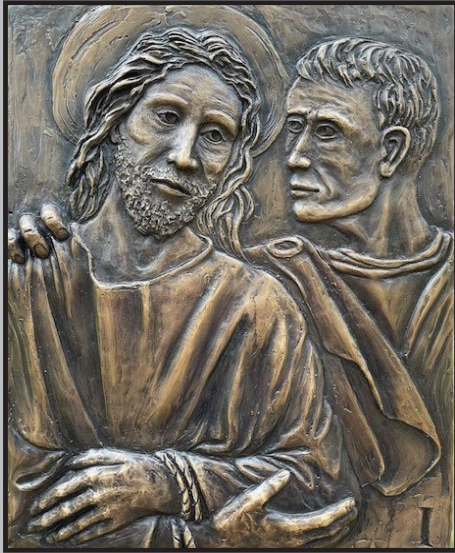
The way of the cross is a pilgrimage about God’s love. As you meditate and reflect, be open to receive grace. The passion is the door to receiving blessings. As Paul the apostle prayed: “I pray you will experience the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of God’s love and experience this love that you may be filled with all of the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:18-21)



Jesus' Sacred Heart

Station 1

Jesus is condemned to death



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

Cleansed by Grace:

Leader: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus:” (Romans 8:1). One day we will all stand before the Judgment seat of God. Everyone of us will be scrutinized. Our words and deeds will all be revealed. None of us has a chance! But God made a way...Jesus was completely innocent. We are completely guilty. Like the scapegoat in the Old Testament, the iniquity of all of us was laid upon him. Jesus is the lamb of God who *takes away* the sins of the world. You can stop condemning yourself for your sins of the past. Jesus bore damnation in order for us to be acquitted. The monumental reversal has occurred.

Response: “Jesus, I am not guilty through you!” Through your free gift, I am washed clean.”

Station 2

Jesus takes up the cross



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

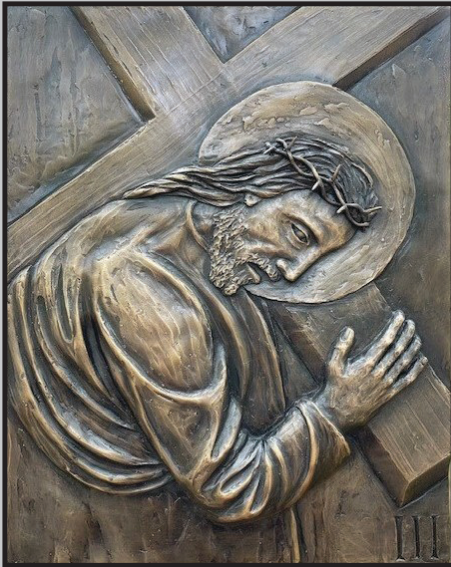
Be Brave!:

Leader: “It was the will of the Lord to bruise him:” (Is. 53:10). It wasn’t a Roman soldier giving Jesus the cross, it was God. The soldier was the intermediary. Jesus saw the cross as coming from God. He bravely accepted/embraced God’s will. God’s will involved suffering. As disciples we too must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. Our crosses come through intermediaries but are from God. Our individualized cross(es) will involve suffering but is(are) meant to purify us.

Response: As Jesus taught us, we now pray:
“Your will be done!”

Station 3

Jesus falls for the first time



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Get Up!:

Leader: “For though the righteous person may fall seven times, they rise again.” (Pro. 24:16) The weight of sin, guilt and condemnation is overwhelming. Jesus fell because he was bearing the heaviness of a fallen race. Although the weight was enormous, Jesus got back up and continued. Although we have bad habits, habitual sins and fail over and over, we can get back up. A child learns to walk only after several falls. We can learn from our mistakes and flaws. We all have the in-built tenacity to begin again.

Response: “Jesus, you got up and so can I!
I want to begin again.”

Station 4

Jesus meets his mother



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Walk Humbly with God:

Leader: “He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him. No beauty that we should desire him.” (Is. 53:2) This encounter was a moment of great humiliation for Jesus. To all appearances he looked like a failure. It seemed like his mission in life was for naught. Before his own mother, he was ugly and had nothing to show for his life. Yet, this indignity was but one aspect of his “kenosis” or self-emptying. His humiliation was for our honor. Jesus’ dishonor leads to our right standing before God.

Response: “Jesus, I worship you for your patient humility.” I am now a child of God!

Station 5

Simon helps Jesus carry his cross



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

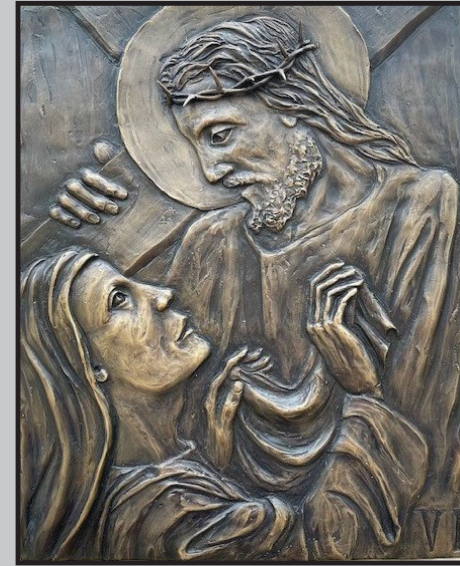
Remember Jesus' Sufferings:

Leader: "Carry each other's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:2) What an honor it would be to help Jesus! What a privilege to wash his feet or carry his cross. We can certainly do that today by reaching out to those in need. In a mystical way, we help Jesus carry his cross by being with him in his sufferings. Remembering his passion and walking with Jesus in his pain is shouldering his burden. We become another Simon as we walk with Jesus in his desperation. The motto of the Passionists is: *May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our hearts.*

Response: "Jesus, you will never walk alone. I will stay with you and remember always."

Station 6

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

Show Compassion:

Leader: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers..." (Heb. 13:2) Thank you God for the caregivers in life. Those who have compassion and show mercy. Nurses are ministers. Thank you for coming to us through doctors, police, fire personnel and caregivers of every form. In the midst of tribulation you always send comforters to strengthen us. I pray to notice the Veronicas in my life and to be such for others.

Response: "Jesus, I know that whatever I do for others, I do for you."

Station 7

Jesus falls a second time



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (Rise)

Bounce Back!:

Leader: “We must go suffer many trials in order to enter the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22) Being a disciple does not exempt us from failing. Jesus taught, “In the world you will have tribulation.” The journey of life includes many ups and downs. There are no padded crosses. Being a disciple of Jesus isn’t easy. No matter how you fall, you can bounce back. Resilience comes through God’s grace. When you get knocked down, try, try again.

Response: “Jesus you have shown me I am stronger than I think I am.”

Station 8

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(Genuflect)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (Rise)

The Cross is God’s Wisdom:

Leader: “The message of the cross seems foolish to the world, but it is the power and wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18) One of the greatest sufferings for Jesus was being misunderstood by the political and religious leaders. Harder still was having those he defended misinterpret him. In the song “Don’t cry for me Argentina” Evita asks the public not to mourn her. Jesus knew what he had to do and warned the onlookers about their own upcoming trials.

Response: “Jesus I will always follow you and trust you even when I don’t understand.”

Station 9
Jesus falls a third time



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

Be All In!:

Leader: "I am a worm and not a man, scorned and despised." (Ps. 22:6) Jesus is totally exhausted and overwhelmed by the grueling journey and the weight of the cross. There is no comfort or consolation and more torture looms. He is depleted physically and emotionally. Remember, this collapse is out of love for you and me. Jesus gives every ounce of energy and although totally exhausted, somehow gets up and presses on. He would suffer like this if you were the only one. He would also go through this again even though he knows the immensity of the pain.

Response: "Jesus, you died for me and I will live for you."

Station 10
Jesus is stripped of his garments



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

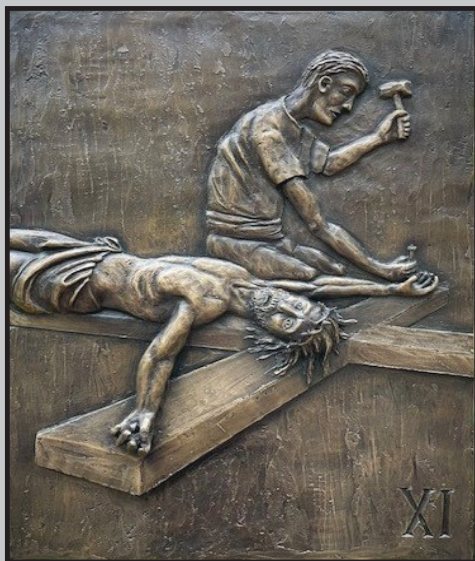
Inner Healing:

Leader: "I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself." (Gen. 3:10) The first effect of the fall was shame and the desire to hide. Many today have shame-based natures and reject themselves. Jesus bore the toxic shame of our immodesties and sexual dysfunctions. It's a great exchange: Our shame for his glory. Jesus' stripping clothes us with a new dignity. We are sons and daughters of God. We know who we are because we know whose we are. We are no longer hide from God but seek to be near to God.

Response: "Jesus, I will give you my shame. I will be true to myself and live in purity."

Station 11

Jesus is nailed to the cross



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

Receive Salvation:

Leader: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. You lay me in the dust of death.” (Ps. 22:14-15) There is a basic principle in psychology: The pain/pleasure principle. We naturally avoid pain and seek pleasure. Because of our disordered behaviors Jesus had to endure the worst pain/torment ever: A horrifying death on a cross. His pain was for a reason: Jesus accepted intolerable suffering to pay the penalty of our disobedience and sins. Even the hardest of hearts recognize Jesus went through this torture, not for himself, but for us. We owed a debt we could not pay and he paid a debt he did not owe.

Response: “Jesus, you have captured my heart by so great a love.” I receive your forgiveness won by your suffering.”

Station 12

Jesus dies on the cross



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

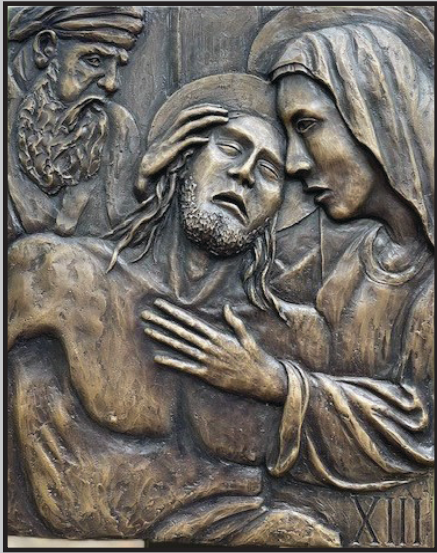
Receive Mercy:

Leader: “Jesus tasted death for the sake of us all.” (Heb. 2:9) Death is our primordial fear that is the foundation of all other fears. There are many questions: How? Where? When? Then what? As a 33 year old young man in his prime, Jesus faced what we all fear in order to defeat it and transform death into something different. Because of Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice Paul triumphs: “Death where is your victory? Death where is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55) As the pioneer of our faith, Jesus braved a path through death for us. Now death doesn’t separate us from God’s love but is the passageway that unites us to God’s love! “For, love is *stronger* than death.” (Songs 8:6)

Response: “Jesus because of you I can face my own death with courage.” I receive your forgiveness now.”

Station 13

Jesus' body is taken down from the cross



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

Grieve Well:

Leader: “Your own soul a sword shall pierce.” (Lk. 2:35) That dark day, there were two passions occurring simultaneously. Jesus’ excruciating pain and Mary’s agony of heart. As Simeon prophesied, a sword of grief devastated Mary. In my mind the greatest piece of art/statue ever sculpted was Michelangelo’s Pieta. No mother, especially someone as pure as Mary, should have to see the death of her son or daughter. People everywhere are grieving. Move through stages and grieve well. Find consolation through Mary’s intercession.

Response: “Mary, Mother of God, pray for me and for all who are grieving.”

Station 14

Jesus is laid in the tomb



Leader: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You.
(*Genuflect*)

Response: Because by Your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. (*Rise*)

We are “in” Christ:

Leader: “We have been buried with Christ through baptism into his death that just as Christ was raised from the dead we too may walk in newness of life.” (Ro. 6:4) Everything about Biblical Christianity is being “in” Christ. We don’t even pray in and of ourselves, but through and in Jesus’ name. Because we are “in” Christ we are no longer condemned. We can be resilient. Our shame has been taken away. Jesus has made a path through death and we shall rise again!

Response: “Jesus you are in me and I am in you.
Because we are one, I will rise!”

Receive Eternal Life:

Jesus suffered and died for you to experience abundance now and eternal life with God when you die. His suffering makes us right with God. Because of his passion we can receive the Holy Spirit and know God in a personal way. The Holy Spirit is eternal life, a new quality of life, that lasts forever! You must understand we do not deserve nor can we ever earn Heaven. Our entrance into the joys of Paradise have been merited for us through the sufferings of our Savior. I invite you to receive the life Jesus and his sufferings on the cross came to bring us: A relationship with the Holy Spirit and the assurance of eternity with God.

This prayer of self-surrender ratifies your baptism and confirmation by your “right now” choice. The prayer opens you to receive God’s grace. Surrendering to God is a truth all of the saints have taught us. It is also the genius behind the 12 Step program and recovery from any addiction. Note that surrendering to God is not a “one time” prayer, but an over and over, even daily spirituality. I invite you to give yourself: Heart, mind, soul and strength to God now as you pray:

Prayer of Self-Surrender to Jesus:

Jesus I just meditated on your sufferings.
I believe and know you were broken and crushed for me.
I believe I am saved by the blood of your cross.
I receive eternal life!
I give you my guilt, shame and inner condemnation.
I lay my burdens down.
I receive your Holy Spirit and communion with God.
Jesus, you surrendered all for me:
I surrender myself to you. Amen.

I pray God your Father will Bless you:
+ Father, Son and Holy Spirit.+ Amen!



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be always in our hearts.

Motto/Prayer of the Catholic
Passionist Religious Community

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Experience the newness of life that Jesus' resurrection brings! You can Rise!

We have been baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection. "We were buried with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Ro. 6:4)



The resurrection of Jesus was the momentous event in history. We believe we will rise in Christ on the last day. But there is more! Our Church teaches that we already participate in his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus can revolutionize your life now.

- Rise from passivity to new passion
- Rise from overwhelming emotions to stability
- Rise from addictions to lasting sobriety
- Rise from emptiness to new life in Christ
- Rise from a dry prayer life to life in the Holy Spirit
- Rise from your own ashes
- Rise from traumatic memories and experience healing
- Rise from indifference to make a difference

This book will change and influence the way you live. St. Paul wanted to know Jesus and the power flowing from his resurrection. (Phil. 3:10) You can know this life-energizing power too. Our resurrection isn't just for the hereafter. Rising in Christ is for the here and now. Experience resurrection today!

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