

The Way of the Cross for Teens

Walking with Jesus to Calvary

Leader's Guide

About the Book



The Way of the Cross for Teens—Walking with Jesus to Calvary gives a traditional Catholic devotion special meaning for young people. By connecting Jesus' Way of Sorrows with the life experiences of teens, this book invites young people to enter into the events surrounding Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection—the core of our Christian faith.

The book begins with a brief history of the stations of the cross and a description of the impact the devotion has on the faithful.

Then each of the fourteen traditional stations is presented in four steps.

- **Historical Narrative**—What happened?
- **Meditation**—What did it mean?
- **Reflection**—What does it mean in your own life?
- **Prayer**—How can Jesus help?

A brief fifteenth station is added as a conclusion to the book.

How to Use the Book

The Way of the Cross for Teens—Walking with Jesus to Calvary is designed to fit a wide variety of settings and uses.

For Personal Prayer—Young people can use *The Way of the Cross for Teens* on their own, as they might any other prayer book. But to help them become familiar with this devotion, you may want to introduce personal reflection on the stations of the cross in a group setting.

Take the group to your parish church, school chapel, or to a site that offers outdoor stations. Point out how each station is marked in the setting you have chosen. Then allow about 15 minutes for each young person to use *The Way of the Cross for Teens* to guide his or her private reflection on the stations. Some young people may choose to move from station to station. Others may choose to sit alone in a spot from which all the stations can be seen.

After about 15 minutes, have everyone gather together and share their thoughts and reflections. For ideas on how to stimulate dialogue within the group, see [Conversation Starters](#) for suggestions.

For Family Prayer—Parents will find that *The Way of the Cross for Teens* provides a good way for the whole family to experience an important Catholic prayer form. Teens can serve as prayer leaders, reading the **Historical Narrative**. Other members of the family can take turns reading the **Meditation** and **Reflection**, and everyone can join in for the **Prayer**.

For Lenten Devotions—*The Way of the Cross for Teens* can be used with a group of young people numbering anywhere from ten to several hundred. Assign the reading of the steps in the stations of the cross to different people, depending on how many are in the group. If each step of each station is assigned to a different reader, the book allows for approximately 60 different parts. For smaller groups, one person, acting as group leader, could announce each station and read the **Historical Narratives**. Another person could be assigned to read the **Meditations**, and another, the **Reflection**. Only three readers would be needed. No matter the size of their group, young people can say the **Prayers** together.

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The Way of the Cross for Teens allows you to create a service to fit to your own time frame. To use all four steps of each station, you will need about 45 minutes. A good way to shorten the service is to choose between the **Meditation** and **Reflection** and use only one.

If you intend to do the stations of the cross with a large group of young people, you may want to add appropriate actions, visual aids, or symbols to enliven the readings and prayer. You will probably need about an hour for this kind of enhanced service. For suggestions, see the **Group Activities**.

For Religious Education Classes, Youth Ministry Sessions, or Retreats—The features and flexibility of this book allow you to create a stations service that fits the time schedule and form of many kinds of groups. See **Group Activities** to make the stations of the cross come alive for your teens. Select the activities, symbolic actions, and visuals that match your group's particular situation and interests. [Conversation Starters](#) can help you stimulate discussion after you've done the stations with your group.

Group Activities

Dress the Part—Engage young people by having them dress as the characters involved in the stations. Dressed for the part, teens can improvise or create a script to act out the **Historical Narrative** of each station.

Naming Examples—Invite active participation by having teens name stories in the media today that serve as contemporary examples of the situation described in the **Meditation** and **Reflection** for each station. For example, for the **Meditation** in the first station, teens might name a situation in which they feel someone is being condemned unfairly or a situation in which someone has struggled to do the right thing.

Then ask the group to create a blessing or petition for the person or persons involved in the contemporary situation. That blessing or petition can follow the **Prayer**.

Candles or Incense—While teens pause for silent reflection, or after the line that introduces each **Prayer**, ask a member of the group to light a single candle. This can symbolize, as the number of candles increases, that Christ's death has brought light into the world. Use inexpensive votive candles. Or, if the candle stand for Benediction in your church holds fourteen candles, ask permission to use it.

As teens begin the **Prayer** or **Meditation** for each station, a member of the group could add a small amount of incense to lighted charcoal as the group, or a leader, says, "Our prayers rise like incense." You may wish to ask to use a censer for this, but a small portable grill would also work. Anyone in your group who has been an altar server will be able to help you with this activity.

Hammering and Nails—The action and sound of nails being hammered into a cross are effective in communicating the drama of the passion narrative. Ask one person to take four or five strokes with the hammer at the beginning or end of each station, or have group members take turns with the hammer.

Slides, Photographs, or Symbols—Visuals can be helpful in bringing the stations of the cross into modern times. A couple of weeks before you plan on doing a stations service, assign each station to a person or group. Ask that person or group to find a photograph, slide, or symbol to serve as a contemporary example of the situation being described in the **Meditation** or **Reflection**. Allow about a week for the visuals to be collected, and then meet with the group to plan the best way to display them. For a small group, photographs can be mounted and displayed on the walls in the area in which you will be doing the stations. Be sure to ask teens for their

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suggestions about the display because they are likely to have other, highly creative approaches, including a *PowerPoint* presentation on a PC or laptop computer.

If you are doing the stations with a large group, photographs can be mounted on transparencies to be shown to the whole group on an overhead projector. Or, ask the group to provide slides. If you have access to the necessary equipment, you might ask a group of teens to work together to create a *PowerPoint* slideshow using the visuals that have been collected.

Posters or Banners—To encourage further discussion of the stations of the cross, ask young people to name contemporary examples of persons, groups, or stories for each of the stations. When they have one example for each station, have teens find magazine and newspaper photographs, artwork, and headlines to illustrate the examples. If you are working with a large group, assign one example to each group of five or six. If your group is small, have the whole group work together to illustrate each example. Ask the group or groups to use the images they have found to make a poster or banner. Be sure to find a place to display the young people's work.

Mementos—Have available as many objects as possible that could serve as reminders of the stations—pieces of wood, nails, thorns, torn pieces of cloth, bits of natural sponge. After they have participated in the stations, ask young people to examine and talk about these objects. Give your own observation on one or two of the items. Ask teens for their own suggestions of other objects that would serve to remind them of the stations. Allow time for them to explain their selections. If possible have an object to give each teen to take away as a memento of the experience of the stations—a piece of wood, a thorn, a large nail, or a small wooden cross.

Roleplaying—If young people have already named contemporary examples of persons, groups, or stories for each of the stations, refer them to this list.

Or, have them create a list for this activity. Ask teens to roleplay some of these situations. In small groups, two or three young people will need to do the roleplaying while the rest of the group watches. In large groups, several groups of five or six can be assigned to each of several of the situations. Be sure to allow time after each roleplay to have the players tell how they felt in their roles and to have the audience tell how they felt as they watched.

Conversation Starters

Writing Prayers—Ask teens to write prayers for people who are examples of the sufferings mentioned in the **Prayers**—those unjustly accused of wrongdoing, those who have suffered failures, those who have seen loved ones suffer, and so on. If you are working with a large group, you may want to have young people work in groups of three or four. Be sure to allow time for teens to share the prayers they have written.

Walking a Mile in Their Shoes—Ask teens to list the people involved in the passion narrative—Pontius Pilate, Jesus, Mary, Simon, Veronica, Joseph of Arimathea. If possible, write the names on a sheet of newsprint or on a chalkboard as they are given.

If your group is small, ask each young person to pick one of these people, and complete this statement: “If I had been _____, I think I would have _____.” Teens may find it helpful to write their answers. Then, when everyone has had a chance to fill in the blanks, they can share their answers.

If you are working with a large group, ask teens to form groups of three or four and assign one person from the passion narrative to each group. Have a member of each group work as a recorder, to write down answers as they are given. After about ten minutes, ask recorders to share their small group's thoughts with the large group.