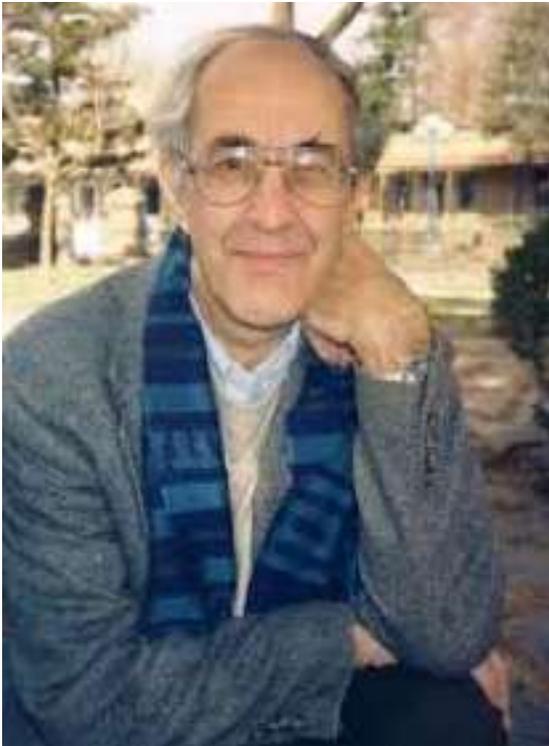


# STATIONS OF THE CROSS



## Walking with Jesus for Peace: A Reflection from Fr. Henri Nouwen

*“One year, during Holy Week, a small group of theology students invited me to join them in a prayer vigil at Electric Boat, the nuclear submarine shipyard in Groton, Connecticut . . . On Good Friday we went to Groton to witness for peace; the leaders of the group asked me to lead the community in the Stations of the Cross. . .*

*As a child I had often made these fourteen stations in church. . . I remember well how my Dutch teenage friends and I walked from station to station in the chapel of our high school, many times a week during our lunch breaks. But as I grew older, the Stations of the Cross soon became a pious childhood memory. Who would have dreamt that decades later I would lead an ecumenical group of theology students in the Stations of the Cross on the streets of Groton in prayerful resistance against a potential nuclear holocaust?*

*We prayed fervently with words, songs and silence. We heard the story of Jesus’ suffering in a way that we could not have heard it in any church. . . Something new was happening to me that I had never experienced before. It was the deep awareness that prayer was no longer a neutral event without danger. Moreover, the words I had so often spoken from pulpits about death and resurrection, about suffering and new life, suddenly received a new power, a power to unambiguously condemn death and call forth life.” (Eternal Seasons: A Liturgical Journey with Henri Nouwen, 2003)*

Where can you walk the Stations of the Cross this Lent to pray for peace in our world, to condemn death and call for life? Who can you pray with during this holy season to witness to the suffering of war and conflict?



## FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Weapons of war, drones, and illegal arms have brought death to hundreds of thousands of people in Afghanistan, Syria, the Congo, Ukraine, and other places around the globe—and the violence continues. Once again, in the least of these, Christ is condemned to die.



Can we open ourselves to the immense suffering of Christ and of His beloved children?

**LEADER:** Christ, help us to be present to the suffering of those caught in conflicts in this world.

**ALL:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

## SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

As people of faith, we are called to take on the challenge of standing for peace in a violent world. We must take on the burden of peacemaking in a difficult time.

Who are peacemakers that can inspire our own journey and strengthen us by their faithfulness to non-violence?

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## THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

So many people fail to see others as their brothers and sisters—children of the same God—and thus hatred for the “other” rages in communities around the world. We fall with Christ again.

How can we promote both tolerance and respect for those who are “different?”

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#### FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Women who have lost children in ongoing conflicts have met, wept together, and promised to work for peace in many communities. Mary is reflected in their tears and their hope.

How can we acknowledge and support the efforts of women who work for peace?

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#### FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS

Many churches, religious congregations and faith-based organizations have joined together to work for the end of violence. These interfaith alliances, as they carry on the work of Christ, are a visible sign of peace.

Why is it so important to have interfaith witnesses for peace?

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#### SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

In places such as Syrian refugee camps, aid workers and volunteers comfort those who have lost so much as conflicts continue to uproot so many. Doctors without Borders, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam International, and other groups offer medical care to those wounded and sickened by violence.

How do we bring comfort to those afflicted by violence?

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#### SEVENTH STATION: JESUS STUMBLES A SECOND TIME

Efforts to bring peace to conflict areas are rejected by those who can only understand force and might, not the strength of peacemaking and justice for all. The call for peace is often seen as “unrealistic” by those in power—and those with much to gain by continuing conflict.

Can we commit to keep raising our voices for peace, “speaking truth to power,” and reject discouragement?

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## EIGHTH STATION: THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS

We join in the weeping of so many women as they witness the destruction of war and the endless loss of life. They are often left behind to take care of children traumatized by violence. Too many suffer the violence of rape as a weapon of war.

Can we open ourselves to the pain of women in conflict zones and imagine what they go through?

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## NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

So many men and women who serve in the armed forces suffer from not only from injuries but also from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In their bodies and minds, they bring the violence of war back home to family and community.



Where are the individuals and families in our own communities who need peace restored to their bodies and souls after the experience of combat and conflict?

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## TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

War and conflict humiliates human beings in so many ways, including the humiliation of torture, and it denies people their human dignity as well as their human rights. War wounds the human spirit deeply.

Why are human rights and human dignity central to the message of Christ and our Church?

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## ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Pope John XXIII warned us in *Pacem in Terris* that any kind of war in the modern age can no longer be considered just, and Popes John Paul, Benedict, and Francis have echoed this belief. War and conflict are never the answer and only continue the "spiral of violence."

What have we learned about violence only leading to more violence, not to peace?

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## TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Day by day, the death toll mounts in too many conflicts around the world. The torments and cries of the dying must be heard, so we all can face the horror of violence.

How can we open our minds and hearts to hear the cries of those dying because of conflict?

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## THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

We are called to deep compassion for those who remain to bury and mourn their dead in the areas of conflict in our world today. May we see the toll of violence as they see it, "up close and personal."

Can we acknowledge the immense pain of those who are left to bury their dead, and can we pray for them and with them, in solidarity and compassion?

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## FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Peace is still only a wish, a hope, a prayer in the darkness of these days before Easter, but we continue to hope for a rebirth of committed, sustained peacemaking in all parts of our world.

How do we nurture hope in the immense darkness of violence, conflict, war?

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## FIFTEENTH STATION: THE RESURRECTION

"Peace be with you" . . . and Christ showed them his hands and his side. This grounds our faith in the possibility of peace. Christ is the Light and our hope. Peace be with you and all those who still suffer the violence of conflict.

How do we move forward as peacemakers, strengthened by the promises of Easter and the Risen Christ?

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**ALL:** By the power of your holy cross, challenge us to bring peace and justice to your human family.

