

Father Raymond Finch

**"For Christ also suffered for sins once... that he might lead you to God."□**

**1 Peter 3:18**

Dear Deacon Nguyen,

La Via Dolorosa.

Translated, the phrase means the "Way of Grief," the "Way of Sorrow", or the "Painful Way". It describes the route of Christian pilgrimage marking the Passion of Christ in Jerusalem, following our Savior through the most excruciating journey of suffering ever undertaken. It was there that Jesus bore the weight of the sins of the world in a gesture so sacrificial that we cannot begin to fathom the suffering.

That is why the Stations of the Cross are so meaningful. As we travel through each station, we gain a deeper understanding of our Lord's great self-giving sacrifice; we at once become more human and more Christ-like. It was when the Franciscans became the guardians of the shrines of the Holy Land that reproducing the scenes surrounding our Lord's condemnation, death and resurrection became a Lenten remembrance of Jesus' suffering.

Peter's first Epistle is an instructive guide on how to suffer. He tells us to repay good for evil, to be unafraid in the face of suffering, and to view suffering as a means of purging and refining us, as gold is refined in fire. At times, suffering for the good that we do is a part of the price of doing well! It's not the suffering itself that is desirable, but the love, solidarity and selflessness that results therefrom. And it is not that we are to cause or view it as the means through which we can undo our sins. It's simply entrusting ourselves to our Father in Heaven, for if we do, we will be blessed. There is power in firm purpose in the face of suffering.

**Prayer for 1st Sunday of Lent□**

## Via Dolorosa

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world and set me free from my past and from my pain, now joined with Your suffering for me.

I see Your hands, Your feet, Your side  
and see myself reflected in Your eyes.  
I look upon Your Cross and realize  
there is nothing I can do  
to make You stop loving me.

Help me therefore to pick up my cross  
for love of You and of all my brothers and sisters  
that others might find new hope this day.  
For by Your wounds, Lord, I am healed  
and by Your suffering I am set free,  
and by Your death I am made fully alive.

Amen.

~ Father Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

See another Lenten Reflection by Father Joe Veneroso, M.M.  
Dinh, let us pray in the words of our Holy Father as he presided over the Stations of the Cross at Rome's Colosseum last year: "O Christ, we ask you to teach us to never be ashamed of your Cross, not to exploit it, but to honor and worship it, because with it you have shown us the monstrosity of our sins...(the) injustice of our judgements and the power of your love." ("Pope Francis reflects on sin, Christ's mercy at Stations of the Cross"—The Catholic World Report, April 14, 2017)

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Father Raymond J. Finch, M.M.

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