This Way of the Cross considers the concept of pilgrimage. The Way of the Cross itself is a pilgrimage; a journey that follows Christ’s path of suffering and death. In this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis encourages us to set out on a pilgrimage of conversion to become kinder, more generous people. “The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is … a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination.” (Misericordiae Vultus, 14)

This Way of the Cross focuses on the suffering caused by climate change. Humanity, along with all of creation, is on a critical journey as we are challenged by climate change. Will we set out on a path of mercy; adjusting our patterns of consumption to lessen our carbon footprint and give Mother Earth a chance to heal? Will this journey become a pilgrimage towards sustainability and, ultimately, resurrection?
1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death.

Leader: We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?’” (Matthew 27)

Reflection: Jesus was an innocent person condemned to death. He was abandoned and faced his death sentence alone. Earth, our common home is also being condemned to death. Because of our patterns of overconsumption, global temperatures are rising and plant and animal species are dying off. Whole populations of humanity feel abandoned and left to face the perils of climate change, even death, on their own.

Laudato Si’: “This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her… This is why the Earth needs us. We must not allow the circle of life to be interrupted by a culture of death. At this moment, we have to make things right.” (Laudato Si’ 241)

Let us pray

Leader: Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

All: Heavenly Creator, open our eyes to our complicity in loss of life. Once acknowledging our failures to care for creation, renew our spirits to live mindfully and to work diligently for a better world.

2nd Station: Jesus takes up his cross.

Leader: We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “And carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went out to the place named The Place of the Skull.” (John 19:17)

Reflection: Jesus was forced to carry his cross, the very instrument of his death, to his crucifixion. There are portions of humanity who, like Jesus, are innocent and must carry the burdens of others’ sins. Ethiopia has one of the lowest carbon footprints of any country in the world, yet suffers severe drought caused by a warming climate.

Laudato Si’: “The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming.” (Laudato Si’ 51)

Let us pray

Leader: Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

All: Jesus, may we make real sacrifices to lessen our carbon footprint so that others can live. Bring to mind those who suffer the most from climate change so that our resolve is strengthened and we find joy and purpose in what we give up.

3rd Station: Jesus falls for the first time.

Leader: We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases.” (Isaiah 53:4)

Reflection: Jesus falls three times in the Way of the Cross. With each successive fall, he is weaker and struggles more to get back on his feet. People who suffer most from climate change disasters are those who are poor already and have little recourse to defend themselves or to get back on their feet. Often their home is the first to fail. Humble housing can’t withstand powerful winds and waters.

Laudato Si’: “The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world.” (Laudato Si’ 161)

Let us pray

Leader: Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

All: Gracious Spirit, when we fall into the temptation of overconsumption, remind us of those who suffer for it. When we learn of a catastrophe, help us contemplate the loss of people’s homes and so be moved to lessen our consumption and to share our resources.

4th Station: Jesus meets his mother

Leader: We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “A sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:35)

Reflection: What utter pain Mary must have felt for her Son. She had no recourse to soothe, heal and save her child. Mothers around the world grieve in helplessness as they see their children suffer and die. Over 3 million children die every year from malnourishment, while others die due to sudden disasters, to long and perilous journeys and disease.

Laudato Si’: “Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power.” (Laudato Si’ 241)

Let us pray

Leader: Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.” (Matthew 27:32)

5th Station: Simon helps carry his cross

Leader: We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

All: Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Scripture: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases.” (Isaiah 53:4)

Reflection: Simon had come into the city on the day of Jesus’ death. He found himself in the crowds along Jesus’ pathway to Golgotha, and was picked out by the soldiers to carry Jesus’ cross. Who carries the cross in times of climate crisis? The poor are always the first responders in times of disaster. While help from wealthy countries can take days and weeks, it is immediate neighbours who rush in to save, shelter, and support as much as possible.

Misericordiae Vultus: “Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!” (Misericordiae Vultus 24)

Let us pray

Leader: Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)
**6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** "Many women were also there, looking on from a distance: they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him." (Matthew 27:55)

**Reflection:** Veronica's compassion for Jesus overcame any fear that she might have had in stepping out from the anonymity of the crowds to wipe Jesus' face in front of the soldiers. She didn't count the possible cost, but stepped forward and responded in love.

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Holy Spirit, like Veronica, help us to forget ourselves and to step forward in a merciful and loving response to the pain that we see around us. Wipe away our fear to act, so that the suffering face of Christ that is present today can find consolation in our touch.

**7th Station: Jesus falls for the second time.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** "But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)

**Reflection:** A second fall and Jesus' struggle to rise up again is that much harder. Climate disasters not only destroy homes, but also sources of livelihood. Fishermen lose their boats; farmers lose their crops, small enterprises are washed away. How to rise up again? In the Philippines, typhoons become more powerful and fierce. They destroy the coconut groves and coastal reefs from which the people make their living.

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Creator God, deepen our sense of suffering within our global family and move us into action. Help us "to discover what each of us can do about it." (128)

**8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.**

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Enkindle within us a sense of shared responsibility in times of climate disaster. Move us, dear Jesus, to share the wealth from our employment so that others can regain their livelihoods, their "path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment."

**9th Station: Jesus falls for the third time.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** "Upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

**Reflection:** How can Jesus recover from a third fall? How can farmers suffering a prolonged drought rise up year after year and carry on? In the Sahel region of West Africa, small family farmers must face drought every 2-3 years rather than every 10 years, as they did before. They never have a chance to replenish their granaries. As such, families are torn apart as men migrate to find work to send money home to support their families.

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. … There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation." (25)

**10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** "But Jesus turned to them and said: Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children." (Luke 23:28)

**Reflection:** There is mutual empathy in this encounter between the women of Jerusalem and Jesus. There is shared pain. Women and children are disproportionately affected by climate change. While women themselves suffer, they share the pain of their children's suffering as well. It is future generations who will bear the brunt of climate change, especially those from the most vulnerable countries such as Honduras, the Philippines, and Ethiopia.

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** “Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.” (29)

**11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** "When they came to the place that is called The Skull, there crucified Jesus." (Luke 23:33)

**Reflection:** So utterly wasted through whipping and bearing the heavy cross, Jesus must still endure the searing pain of being nailed to the cross. What are the physical pains that people endure today that are due to climate change? Around the world there have been many deaths due to extreme heat. The elderly, very young and the sick are those who suffer most. It is estimated that climate
change will contribute to 250,000 additional deaths per year.

**Misericordiae Vultus:** “His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the maimed and the exiled… to be acknowledged, touched and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: ‘as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love.’” (15)

**Reflection:** We contemplate the starkness of Jesus’ death. He was condemned to death; he was tortured and hung on the cross. He breathed his last and died. Unless the human family changes course, can we expect anything less than death for those condemned to the impacts of climate change? Unfathomable death is inevitable if we choose not to change.

**Laudato Si’:** “What does the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ mean when “twenty percent of the world’s populations consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.” (95)

**Let us pray**

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Infinite Love, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future. May we yearn for the coming of your Reign of justice, peace, love, and beauty.

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**12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** “Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.” (Mark 15:37)

**Reflection:** What amazement Mary Magdalene and the other Mary must have experienced. Jesus’ death was so real and seemed so final. Yet, why did Jesus die on the cross, if not to give us new life and new hope? We are on a critical pilgrimage at this time in history and Jesus’ resurrection inspires us to live in a different way. We can choose to take the path of mercy, a new journey of living simply and sustainably so that the Earth heals and all of humanity and creation rise again.

**Laudato Si’:** “When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: what is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the Earth have of us? … Leaving an inhuman future to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.” (160)

**Let us pray**

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Hasten our spirits to a life of conversion, love and generosity. Quickens our steps along this path of renewal for the sake of the most vulnerable, for our own descendants, for the Earth, our common home.

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**14th Station: Jesus is placed in the tomb.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** “So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.” (Matthew 27: 59-60)

**Reflection:** Jesus had a dignified burial. Joseph of Arimathea had taken care to honour his body. Who are the Josephs of today? It is harsh and sometimes dangerous work for those who must bury the dead following disasters. The images of the countless people who do this noble work are on the evening news. They are unknown faces who provide dignity and decorum in times of sorrow and destruction. We feel gratitude toward them.

**Laudato Si’:** “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” (229)

**Let us pray**

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Give strength, O Loving God, to those who toil in times of disaster. So too, bless those around us who work to educate our communities; who encourage and inspire their neighbours to take action for the common good.

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**15th Station: Jesus rises from the dead.**

**Leader:** We praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

**Scripture:** “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.” (Matthew 28: 6)

**Reflection:** What amazement Mary Magdalene and the other Mary must have experienced. Jesus’ death was so real and seemed so final. Yet, why did Jesus die on the cross, if not to give us new life and new hope? We are on a critical pilgrimage at this time in history and Jesus’ resurrection inspires us to live in a different way. We can choose to take the path of mercy, a new journey of living simply and sustainably so that the Earth heals and all of humanity and creation rise again.

**Laudato Si’:** “For we praise you, O Christ and we bless you.

**Let us pray**

**Leader:** Let us pray (a few moments of silent reflection)

**All:** Divine Love, we choose the path of mercy, a new journey of living simply and sustainably so that the Earth heals and all of humanity and creation rise again. We “entrust the life of the Church, all humanity and the entire cosmos” to You. “Pour out Your mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future.” (Misericordiae Vultus 5)

**Amen**
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