

The Stations of the Cross with Blessed Alphonse Marie Eppinger for Priests

Since her childhood, Blessed Alphonse Marie saw in a priest God alone. When she had the opportunity to meet him, she watched him motionlessly for a long time saying, *“If only I could talk to him. He would certainly tell me about God.”* In the collection of books about Bl. Alphonse Marie, there is a book titled *“Prayers, Instructions and Exhortations of Ecstatic”*. In this book are instructions and exhortations for spiritual life. There we can also read about who are priests, how they should follow Jesus and a way, how to acquire the characteristics of a good priest. According to Bl. Alphonse Marie, priests are ministers of God’s graces. They are brothers and favorites of our Savior. They have to be worthy representatives of our Savior. Therefore, they have to follow Him and impress His face and virtues deeply into their hearts. They will obtain these characteristics in meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Let us walk now from station to station of Jesus’ Stations of the Cross with our Bl. Alphonse Marie. Immerse in silence, let us draw from her spiritual treasure, so she can teach us how to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Let us ask for the blessing and strength of all the priests in the world, especially those, who baptized us, led us to the First Holy Communion, and have been administered the sacrament of reconciliation. Let us pray for them lest they forget that they are still the elect sons of the heavenly Father.

Introductory Prayer

Heavenly Father, You give us the example in Your saints, among whom belong also Bl. Alphonse Marie, a great worshiper of priests. We ask You, listen to her intercession, whom we now invoke to guide us on this way of the cross of Your Son. May she, through the power of her intercession, obtain help from You, especially for:

- Priests, who although left their priesthood, remain Your priests for ever;
- Priests, who astray that the true light will enlighten them so they find a way and return to God;
- Priests, who are burdened that they will refresh in body and soul by the power of the Holy Spirit and will return to their priestly duties;
- Faithful priests that they will confidently follow their Divine Master on the way to the human soul;
- Zealous priests that they won’t be discouraged by misunderstanding and disappointment, but in humble prayer always acquire balance;
- Enthusiasm for all young men, who think about stepping into the footsteps of Your Son, Eternal High Priest.

We also give thanks for families, especially the mothers, who gave their sons-priests to God and the Church.

I. Jesus Is Condemned to Death

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Again Pilate questioned Him, ‘Have You no answer? See how many things they accuse You of.’ Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.” (Mk 15: 3-5) Behold the man! He was betrayed by Judas, rejected by His nation, and hurt and weakened by scourging.

A priest, who feels abandonment, conviction or contempt in his priestly ministry, Bl. Alphonse Marie encourages by these words, “The greatest grace which God granted to us in His sufferings is the Institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, and the priestly ordination, by which priests can administer the Sacraments. One of the greatest graces God has given us in his Passion is the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and the ordination to the priesthood, through which the Blessed Sacraments are bestowed. But we do not think enough about it. We have so little respect for the priests, and pray so little for them. We are far from thanking God for such great blessings. This causes great evil, and by the way, it is a great ingratitude to God. What a responsibility before God!

Nevertheless, we must admire the great mercy of God. Even though we are ungrateful towards God, He continues to give graces to show His mercy more and more. If a priest really considers the love of God for him, he cannot help it: he must melt into tears. The thought of Christ’s suffering teaches him to put everything useless aside and endure everything considerable with patience. He carries it not only with patience, but also with courage, because he always has Jesus, his divine Model, in mind.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, give strength to priests, who feel abandoned, betrayed, condemned, and fearful of the rulers of this world. Give us the grace to honor and support every priest, above all spiritually, in his demanding priestly ministry.

II. Jesus Carries His Cross

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Pilate handed Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; carrying the cross Himself...” (Jn 19:16-17) Such a huge burden! Such a heavy cross, placed on His shoulders after scourging, after torture of His head by the crown of thorns, after the great mental shocks...

A priest, who must daily bear his cross of obligations on his shoulders, Bl. Alphonse Marie gives counsel, “A priest should reflect on many truths of the Christian religion throughout the day, but mainly about the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. He should not forget the other religious objects, but the wounds of our Savior should be his main object of meditation daily.

In this meditation, the priest draws the most important lessons and obtains inner peace of mind.

If the priest finds himself in grief, concern, or trouble of his parish or believers, if he is depressed inwardly and finds some difficulties, he should turn his sight to the wounds of our Savior. This view makes everything easier and cheers him up, so eventually he desires to suffer with our Savior.

But all these cannot be expressed in words; the priest has to deeply feel it. If only I could tell all the priests how happy they are, how sublime their state is. If only everyone could feel how much God loves them.

A priest, who considers it all, draws so much courage that he is afraid of nothing, really nothing. Does not he live more only in Jesus, only for God alone? He finds and bears everything more easily and is completely filled with the love of God. This respect for the priests has placed God in my heart since childhood, but never did I feel it like I feel it now.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, give the spirit of sacrifice to priests who are tired, or in any danger of routine. Give us, who pray for them, the grace not to burden them, but to bear their cross with reverence and understanding.

III. Jesus Falls the First Time

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all.” (Is 53:6) The wood of the cross is heavy and presses Jesus’ wounded shoulders...

His hands are bound, so He could not protect Himself in the fall.

None of the priests are spared human weaknesses and falls. Therefore, Bl. Alphonse Marie warns all priests, “How terrible it is when a priest attaches himself to the world and seeks only the worldly things! Oh, how great a responsibility for him, if he forgets the grace of God and seeks ambition, so that God then has to withdraw his enlightenment from him.

What a great misfortune! And this happens so often that such priests no longer think of the dignity of their status and the infinite love of God for them. Therefore, they so easily depart from the love of God and seek only to please the world!

Oh, how they grieve God! What a great ingratitude! It cannot be said how much good is neglected, how much evil arises, and how Satan infinitely much gains from it. Oh, how terrible it is! These are the falls of priests. Therefore,” says Bl. Alphonse Marie, “I was driven by a great force to pray for the priests. I wished my bodily pains were even stronger, just to help the priests change their situation.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, our Savior, who falls under the cross of pain, we call to You asking for the grace of salvation for priests, who are tempted by sin and who are inclined to betray the holy priestly ideal and order. For Your bitter humiliation, have mercy on them. Help them to recollect and reject every temptation.

IV. Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Standing by the cross of Jesus were His Mother...” (Jn 19:25a) Mary, Mother of God, meets her Son Jesus on the way to Calvary. Her Immaculate Heart, filled with great sorrow, is deadly wounded. In spite of all despair, she stands faithfully with her Son, walks with Him and stands by His cross on Calvary.

Thus faithfully watches Bl. Alphonse Marie over priests. When priests visit her, she maternally speaks to them, “God grants the great graces only to the priests who are faithful to Him. It frightens me when I think of the great duties of the priests and the many graces that God grants them, and what the priest trespasses when he goes astray and seeks to please himself and the world. Without God, the priest cannot do anything. God does not deny him any mercy if he asks humbly and with confidence.

God cannot refuse anything to the priest, for the priest's status is so sublime. The priest is in fact a miracle, especially when he celebrates Holy Mass and administers the holy sacraments. He cannot do anything without a special grace; but God so easily comes to his aid in the guidance of the souls, and therefore, he works great and constant miracles. God does that to the priest who only seeks to glorify Him. This is an important point.

The power that the priest has received from God is so great and the love that God gives to him is so limitless that it is not possible for God to help him if the priest doesn't seek to awaken God's spirit in him. For this statement is so truthful, that many would be ready to pour out their blood. They feel obliged to thank God for such great mercy, which He showed them through priestly ministry, when the priest administers them the sacraments as a source of great comfort.”

Let us pray: The Blessed Virgin, you call the priests your most loving sons. Stay with them on their way of the cross. We entrust them to you as the most precious treasure of this world. Protect them and also send them good spiritual directors. Multiply their number with new priestly vocations.

V. Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“As they led Jesus away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus.” (Lk 23:26) Simon, we do not say anything that you helped Jesus grudgingly and out of coercion. Often we too take our crosses grudgingly and help others out of coercion. But the way you felt the blessing of the cross of Jesus, we also would like to feel the joy of accepting the burden of the cross and the pain of others and follow Jesus with peace and trust.

Everyone can get tired, and the priest is no exception. Therefore, Bl. Alphonse Marie recommends to the priests – good guides of holy souls – this important obligation, “We should pay attention to the inner motives of grace in those whom God has entrusted to our guidance. You cannot even imagine the good that comes with this. Without good spiritual guidance so many graces are lost. Thus many, whom God has predestined to perfection, are unable to move forward because they lack the necessary spiritual guidance.” Therefore, Bl. Alphonse Marie always prayed for her spiritual director and confessor, saying, “Jesus, my Love, grant my confessor the grace to know your holy will. Show him the way that he should lead me. Enlighten him, my Love, and grant him the grace to help me to know all my passions. Put in his mouth the words which will touch my heart. Grant him your grace to warn me against pride and selfishness. My Divine Spouse, I will plead to you until you will have mercy on me through my confessor. Behold, my Jesus, my Love, I want to see your will in the word of my confessor. Please, talk to me through his mouth. Enlighten my spiritual director and help me to be obedient.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we thank You for our priests, spiritual directors and confessors. Many times they helped us to bear our crosses of mundaneness of everyday life and saved us from falling, swaying or stepping out of the way. Let us pray for them eagerly that the Lord gives them the necessary gift of the Holy Spirit.

VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced.” (Is 50:7) How Jesus’ face is disfigured! The face of Man of suffering! The most beautiful face among the people is covered with dust. A woman from the crowd with a compassionate heart is not afraid and helps. Jesus accepts her service and despite His suffering, He thinks of how to reward her.

It often happens to a priest that, despite all his efforts to meet man, he encounters misunderstanding, underestimation, criticism and judgment. Bl. Alphonse Marie comforts every priest, telling them that the Lord knows about it and despite suffering, He doesn’t forget to reward him. She adds, “Our Savior opens the priest’s heart and imprints His image in it. It often happens that this image of Jesus Christ is outwardly visible in the priest, in his features and gestures, so that he represents our Savior among the faithful and becomes the Savior’s living image.” Alphonse Marie put these anxieties and worries into the words of the following prayer:

“My Jesus, I owe you immense gratitude. I never stop to thank You for this teaching. I want You to be constantly before my eyes and to put You deeply into my heart. I am afraid that I could easily abandon Your grace. You know my weaknesses. Have mercy on me and give me more and more lessons. Please help me, my Jesus, to understand Your lessons more and more distinctly and clearly. For You, it is easy to push it deeply into my heart and soul; it costs You nothing, my God.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we implore for Your grace to never criticize and by bold judgments add more sufferings to the priests. On the contrary, may every priest feel loved, understood and safe in our vicinity, where he will find relief from the sufferings caused by people around him.

VII. Jesus falls a Second Time

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of Him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted.” (Is 53:4) A wooden cross fell hard to the ground from Jesus’ shoulders and His body collapsed helplessly to the ground. Broken knees bled and instead of compassion, only swearing from the crowd fell on His wounded body.

A priest too, may find himself on the ground and off the road, where he seems to have lost everything and ended up in complete despair. Bl. Alphonse Marie speaks to these degraded servants of the altar, saying, “Remember that danger is all around and it is great. In particular, a priest should guard against negligence in prayer. The smallest tepidity he feels in himself is a difficult temptation. At the moment he notices tepidity in himself, he should realize that it is a secret snare from the evil

enemy. It is especially negligence in meditation. If a priest ceases to practice meditation, it becomes an obstacle to obtain the many graces God has prepared for him. Then, a priest should be careful making useless visits; otherwise, he drifts into threefold danger: In danger of not performing his prayer with devotion and with a concentrated mind; in danger of various temptations to which he exposes himself. He does not think of it in the beginning, but afterwards Satan overwhelms him; and that he talks and cares too much about worldly things, which will consume him completely.

As soon as the priest no longer has the image of the divine Savior in his sight and enjoys the world and vain things, he is already exposed to danger. A priest should beware when he is tempted internally to disobey and to resist his superiors. That is dangerous, a way to go astray. It happens when he begins to reprimand his spiritual superiors and speak of them with contempt. Then he begins to talk passionately and throws himself into many things. This is a very common cause.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we intercede for priests, who have no longer strength to detach from their weaknesses, from the situations that bind them, and from the mistakes they fall into again and again. Hear our prayers for these priests, to ignite a spark of hope in them, but also our willingness to pray and sacrifice even more for them.

VIII. Jesus Speaks to the Women

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented Him.” (Lk 23:27) It was He, the Lord, who a while ago accepted the compassionate act of Veronica, but now He refuses crying women out of compassion, saying, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for your faults and for those of others!” (Cf. Lk 23:28-29)

According to Bl. Alphonse Marie, the best expression of compassion for the suffering Savior is refusing opportunity to sin, correcting our weaknesses and getting to know us better. Therefore, she recommends the priests, “During the meditation on Jesus’ cross, a priest will know himself, what he is, as a priest, in the sight of God. In the name of Jesus, he should continue the work of redemption. The souls that Jesus preciously redeemed are now entrusted to him. He is responsible to mediate to these souls the grace of redemption, save them from eternal condemnation and lead them to heaven. In the contemplation of the cross, the priests learn to understand the nobility of their state, as well as they are the brothers and favorites of Jesus Christ. They also learn adequately to express gratitude to God for the great love that he has shown them. It would be a terrifying ingratitude if a single soul were lost through their guilt.” At the end, Alphonse Marie adds, saying, “God is everything. His presence is fullness. Where He is not, there is emptiness and nothing is there.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we intercede for all priests. Looking at Your suffering, may they to be an example in rejecting even the slightest opportunity for sin, which is the cause of Jesus’ torture on the cross. May not they speak to us in vain; may we not take their words superficially, but may we receive the truths, we hear, responsibly into our hearts and lives.

IX. Jesus Falls the Third Time

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me; still, not My will but Yours be done.” (Lk 22:42) Jesus is near death from exhaustion, abandoned and broken under the cross. As if there was no one who would be willing to help Him in this inhumanly difficult situation. Evil's worst weapon is depression and tepidity.

How values tepidity and depression Bl. Alphonse Marie? She says, “The reason that so many priests leave the priesthood is because they remember this day with little seriousness, and so they easily become or have already become unfaithful to their promise, first in little things and then in larger ones. Then they begin to search for themselves, yielding to vanity and inner pride. Gradually, pride and selfishness increase and the spirit of the world takes over and captures their hearts more and more. This is the reason of all tepidity and carelessness in meditation. Such a priest is finally disgusted by all spiritual things. It starts with little things. If he pays a little attention to the little mistakes, he falls even deeper into the greater ones. The passion, especially the passion of sensuality, grows more and more, which weakens the mind more and more. Let every priest beware of this temptation in him, constantly pray for his superiors, and cling to God; for as he prays for his superiors, he prays for himself, too. Oh, if only I can tell all the priests how important these things are, which are considered to be so small and which bring them into such great things.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, let the priests never fall into depression and tepidity, for You have promised that none of us will be tested beyond our strength. Lamb of God, You have accepted all the excessive burdens of sins and punishments for us. Lord, for Your third fall under the cross, help the priests find a way out of every crisis and realize the value of the gift of priesthood.

X. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced.” (Is 50:7a) Behold, the Lord of heaven and the earth is deprived of everything, naked and broken in the midst of ridicule, evil and hatred of men. There is only one road to Calvary: to walk selflessly and be deprived from everything, which still binds us to this world.

During meditation it is also necessary to free oneself from everything and stand in God's presence. This is one of the important advice of Bl. Alphonse Marie. She continues with appeal, “While meditating, one has to be free of everything and often call on our dear Savior for help and assistance through inner sighing and stopping so that one can meditate properly. This is an important lesson. We should not rely on knowledge, but seek only to obtain grace, help, and enlightenment from God. We should have nothing else before our eyes but the glory of God and how His name can be glorified and the salvation of souls promoted. We should demand nothing but fulfill the holy will of God. We should free ourselves more and more. Always remember that we can do nothing without the grace of God. We should never rely on our learning, but we should learn more and more to forget and to die ourselves.

We should always show our dear Savior our misery and sigh for his help. We should always call Him for help, but we should do it with great confidence and childlike. The simpler and more childlike we call God, the more attentive He is to us. It is astonishing: if a priest has offended God so much, God is always ready to forgive everything. Even so, when the priest is unfaithful, God is always ready to receive him again with open arms. Words cannot be found to express it; it has to be meditated.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, for the bitterness of this moment of exposure and ridicule, we ask for the gift of immaculate purity for every priestly heart and the gift of faithfulness to their priestly vows. Send on their way holy priestly examples, who would help them to resist temptations of this world. Lord, set on fire new manly and brave hearts for the holy priestly ideal. May the priests always serve You worthily, as their Lord and their only Love.

XI. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole.” (Is 53:5) The nails tear nerves and pain in the hands and feet is unbearable. Jesus’ tortured body is raised in height and the Lord hangs over the heads of the crowd in terrible pain. This is also the hour of priestly ordination. It is the hour of choice for life and death.

Secure spiritual leader of priests, Bl. Alphonse Marie assures those who are in a difficult position, saying, “A priest should remember the day he was ordained and the promise he made to God. This is a point that the priest considers minor, but it is important. The memorial of his ordination is a new grace and gives the priest more and more courage.

What particularly strengthens a priest is the remembrance of the happy day on which he promised obedience to the most reverend bishop. It would be good if a priest would often consider these great graces, the inner comfort and contentment, and the determination and the promises he made to the Lord.” She adds, saying, “When Jesus Christ opens His Heart to us, we learn especially the following:

- Despise the world. Do not enjoy it;
- Do not regret any effort and fear nothing when glorifying the name of Jesus and Mary is needed. Draw from the Heart of Jesus boldness and strength.
- Learn how necessary and how beneficial are the inner and outer mortifications and loneliness and seclusion. Thus we will enjoy the surrender of our lives to God.”

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, let the priest, but also all people in their state of life, cling to Jesus Crucified with all their hearts and surrender their whole life to Him. For God so loved us that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish.

XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Take this and share it... This is My body, which will be given to you... This is My blood, which will be shed for you for the remission of sins...” (Cf. Lk 22:19-20) Where there is a priest, there is everything; no one can give anything more. None of the people, except the priest, can bring God in the living sacrifice of Holy Mass and give Him in the sacramental meal.

Bl. Alphonse Marie, from her experiences, says, “If priests always have the image of our crucified Redeemer before their eyes, they may find solace in Him and become more and more zealous in venerating the names of Jesus and Mary. Contemplating the Passion of Jesus Christ, the priest looks into the heart of our Savior and learns to know all the truths of salvation. The Lord gives him all the knowledge he needs, even in secular science, so that when the opportunity arises, he can even silence the most learned. He learns many of these truths of our salvation in contemplation, others in reading or in the unceasing conversation with God. Kneeling down, I trembled every time when I meditated about Jesus’ suffering in the Oil Garden or His cruel crucifixion. With the growing desire to contemplate the suffering of Jesus and of the love to our suffering Redeemer, the love and respect for our priest increased in me, because he gave me such sacred and comforting instructions, and I saw in him the Person of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, Bl. Alphonse Marie asks, “In preparation, in thanksgiving, and during Mass, and in all that we do for God, we must proceed very simply and childlike, and firmly trust in God's grace. Thus we escape pride and great fear as well. Especially the priest should beware of pettiness and timidity. The love God has for the priest and the paternal attention God gives him is immeasurably great.”

Let us pray: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for the priests, who are the most precious gift for us. Thank You for the Holy Masses offered for us, and which unite us with You. Lord, give us the grace that, thanks to the priests, we may receive the sacraments of our salvation and leave the world receiving the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick. Lord Jesus, we want again and again to entrust ourselves to the blessed priestly hands. Thank You, Lord, for all priests, who accepted the invitation to the Father’s house for the eternal feast of the Lamb.

XIII. Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

“Now there was a virtuous and righteous man named Joseph [...] He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” (Lk 23:50-53) Tradition says that Jesus was put into the arms of Mary, Mother of God. There was sorrow and hope in the heart of Mary. Sorrow that people refused God’s Son and hope that Jesus always fulfills what He has promised through the Mother of God.

Bl. Alphonse Marie shared with the priests another experience of veneration of the Mother of God, saying, “How good it is when a soul holds and desires to fulfill the will of God in all things and yields in everything to the holy will of God. To such a soul, God comes wonderfully to help, sometimes in the moment when a soul thinks least of it. Wondering how this can be achieved at all? The easiest way to do this is to walk in the presence of God at all times, and often to remain with the loving Mother of God asking her for intercession. A soul that has a great desire for perfection and holiness must always turn to the Mother of God. Thus a soul makes great progress and gains

great graces through Mary's intercession. This talk is of persons who strive for perfection and holiness, and consider them most necessary. If only I could say to all souls who feel that desire that they should turn to the Mother of God with great confidence because she comes to them with a special aid. For none of such requests remain unheard of with the Mother of God. If you do not receive her aid right away, you should still continue to ask her. Oh, that's an important lesson!

We think so little of it that since we obtain all graces only through Mary, there are so many who are cold and indifferent to her. Yet, we cannot have such a love for Mary without special grace. To obtain this grace we should turn to saints who venerated the Mother of God in a special way. Oh, what gains such a soul, who feels a great longing to love the Mother of God and to follow her in the virtues! It is certain that a soul turns to the Mother of God with a childlike trust; the soul never leaves unheard and always obtains many graces from God through Mary's intercession. Mary is too good. She cannot do otherwise; she cannot refuse anything; her love is too great."

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, grant Your priests and all of us great love and true devotion to Your and our heavenly Mother. May every grace, we receive through the intercession of the Sorrowful Mother and through the priest of Christ, not be in vain, but brings rich fruit of salvation for the Church and for the whole world.

XIV. Jesus Is Laid in the Sepulcher

L: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

V: Because by Your cross You have redeemed the world.

"They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where He had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day for the tomb was close by." (Jn 19:40-42) A rock-hewn tomb rolled with a stone is not the last station. Who dies with Christ knows that he will rise with Christ to the new life.

Bl. Alphonse Marie says, "I often offer my suffering for priests to find their priestly dignity, the nobility of their state, and lead a vocation-based life in God's service." The Lord said to our Blessed Alphonse Marie in a vision, "Like St. Teresa of Avila, You also will suffer much. Like her, I will save many priests through you." The fact that Alphonse Marie as a young Elizabeth was visited by priests, to whom she had to point out their faults, was an unbearable suffering for her, but she bore it bravely and patiently for the good of the Church. On the other hand it should be noted that when Elizabeth offered her sufferings for the priests, she felt immense comfort in her heart and she experienced an indescribable peace of mind. She states elsewhere that her heart was filled with indescribable love and trust in Jesus and from that moment she rested completely calm in God, with a feeling of inner joy." She was asked several times to pray "for the Diocesan priests" and "for all servants of the Altar" that there may be a rebirth of life in priestly ranks. She gladly helps the priests by saying the following prayer so they may find fertile ground for the proclamation of the gospel and their pastoral ministry, "Dear Jesus, have mercy on this parish! May all parishioners know the graces You give them. Have mercy particular on the parents; enlighten them that they care well of the souls of their children. Have mercy on the youth; ignite their love for virtues and piety; ignite them by Your love."

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, thank You that You made Yourself a prisoner in the tabernacles, silent and hidden, and yet speaking to our hearts. As long as we have priests, we also have a tabernacle. Lord Jesus, give us priests and help us work with them and make it easy for their blessed work. We ask You, give us new and holy priests.

Closing

Lord Jesus, we stand at the end of the Stations of the Cross, which does not end with a grave, but with Your glorious resurrection. We are happy to meet You. We pray for the priests and for the vocations to the priesthood. We ask You to put in the hearts of priests the willingness to zealously proclaim the Gospel both in a favorable and unfavorable time.

We thank You for a blessed life and meditations of Bl. Alphonse Marie and for the priests, for whom we have said this prayer.

May the ministry of the priests reveal the presence of God in today's world and may the priests be the true joy of the Church. May their lives be an encouragement to young men who even today are called to the path of the priesthood. According to the words of Bl. Alphonse Marie, may they become God's favorites of our Redeemer.

Lord Jesus, grant us new priests.

Lord Jesus, give us holy priests. Mary, Mother of priests, pray for us.

Blessed Alphonse Marie, by your powerful intercession, intercede for our priests and be their caring spiritual mother in their priestly service to God and the Church. Amen.

For the intentions of our Holy Father Francis: *Our Father...*, *Hail Mary...*, *Glory Be...*