

This *Way of the Cross* was composed at the Martyrs Shrine in Midland, Ontario in June, 2021.

The Scripture Passages were taken from the NRSV translation of the Holy Bible.

The passages on the Residential Schools are, with only a few exceptions, exact quotations from the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada submitted on December 31, 2011 and printed in *They Came for the Children*. This book can be obtained from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Chancellor's Hall, 177 Dysart Road, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 or by email at NCTR@umanitoba.ca

The prayers were composed by Robert Foliot, SJ

I JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. (Mark 14.60-64)

Reader 2: The TRC wrote, "For over 100 years, Aboriginal children were separated from their parents and raised in overcrowded, underfunded, and often unhealthy residential schools across Canada. They were commonly denied the right to speak their language and told their cultural beliefs were sinful. Some students did not see their parents for years. Others – the victims of scandalously high death rates – never made it back home."

Leader: Creator God, help us to be in solidarity with the Indigenous people, especially the survivors of the Indian Residential School System. They missed the experience of nurturing love from their parents and families. Heal their wounds. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

II JESUS ACCEPTS THE CROSS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: It was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your King!” They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” He asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. (John 19.14-17)

***Reader 2:* The children were taken away from their parents and brought to institutions so far away. Their clothes were replaced with uniforms. We remember how 6 year-old Phyllis Webstad’s precious orange shirt was taken away from her on the very first day, and how she cried herself to sleep. Her grandmother had let her choose that shirt, when they went shopping to prepare for school. She was so proud of it. It was taken away, right away. And she never got to wear it again.**

Leader: Creator God, help us to pray for these little children who were asked to carry such a heavy cross alone and far from home. May their Guardian Angels take them now and bring them the joy of knowing that they are safe forever in Your loving arms. Lord, bless the children. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when he took his heavy cross?

XV JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: The angel said to the women, “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. Go quickly and tell his disciples.” They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28.5-9)

***Reader 2:* After 120 years, the residential school system is no more. The TRC listened to all the testimonies from survivors. It issued a full report and 94 calls to Action. Highly visible monuments to honour the survivors and all the children who were lost to their families are being erected. And apologies have been made by government, churches and the religious groups who ran these schools. A delegation of Indigenous Leaders and Church leaders are preparing to go to Pope Francis to inform him and to invite him to make an apology, possibly on our land. Indigenous peoples are emerging. Some are assuming positions of influence as historians, lawyers, artists & media hosts.**

Leader: Creator God, continue to send your Spirit to our land. Continue to help us to live in harmony as brothers and sisters with the Indigenous peoples of our land.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia (Leonard Cohen)

XIV JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: 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. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27.59-60)

***Reader 2:* Since the revelation of the unmarked graves at residential schools, pairs of small shoes together with orange t-shirts bearing the words “Every Child Matters” and flowers have been placed at the sites of former residential schools. They have also been placed before government buildings and on church steps. “These shoes represent something deeply holy and are a call to compassion, to have hearts ready to suffer with those who suffer at the enormity of the loss the shoes represent.” Cemeteries and burial grounds are holy. There we remember. From there we send our loved ones back to the Creator.**

Leader: Creator God, help us to not merely remember that these children died lonely deaths. Help us to notice how much damage was caused by the residential school system to the children, to their families and to the generations that followed. Help us to care enough to want to bring healing, and to want to ensure that similar evils never happen again. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

III JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me, before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. (John 15.18-20)

***Reader 2:* The TRC wrote, “Residential schools prevented elders from teaching children long-valued cultural and spiritual traditions and practices, and they helped kill languages...The purpose of the residential school system was to separate children from the influences of their parents and their community, so as to destroy their culture. Countless students emerged from the schools as lost souls, their lives soon to be cut short by drugs, alcohol, and violence.”**

Leader: Creator God, forgive our pride and our narrow-mindedness. Help us grow in understanding for those so damaged by Residential Schools. Lord have mercy.

Were you there when he stumbled and he fell?

IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19.25-27)

Reader 2: **One student said, "I was very, very young when I was taken to the residential school. I only got to go home for summer vacation. There I was told, 'This lady is your mother, and this man is your father. They are your parents.'" I did not know them. I had no affection for them. I never recall being hugged. So, I never hugged my children. I never told them I loved them. I grew up without parents and never learned how to parent. I only knew the ways of the school."**

Leader: Creator God, give us a compassionate heart as we look on the dysfunction of some families. Indigenous people truly love their children. There is nearly always lots of love, but sometimes no experience of how to raise and discipline a family. How can you teach what you were never taught? Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when he saw her in the crowd?

XIII JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jewish authorities, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed his body. (John 19.33-34, 38)

Reader 2: **The TRC wrote, "Chronic underfunding and overcrowding undermined the health of students attending residential schools...Violations of regulations regarding overcrowding, and poor diet contributed to the spread of infectious illnesses and diseases. Many children were buried in school cemeteries. In some cases, parents never were told what had become of their children. The memoirs of former residential school students are filled with remembrances of death and disease."**

Leader: Creator God, it must have been so frightening and so hurtful for these children to die in a foreign place away from family. Without the ceremonies of their culture, they were put into graves, which now are unmarked. May we never forget them. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they took him from the cross?

XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23.44-46)

Reader 2: **The TRC wrote, "The damage extended far beyond the numbers of children who attended these schools; families, communities, and cultures all suffered. Students were estranged from their families and communities; cultural, spiritual, and language transmission was disrupted; education did not prepare children for traditional lifestyles or emerging economic opportunities (which often were limited); parenting skills were lost; and patterns of abuse were developed that continue to have an impact on communities today."**

Leader: Creator God, some have used the word "genocide" to describe what Canada did to the Indigenous peoples. Lord, forgive us. Maybe some of our ancestors knew, and others did not know all they were doing. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when he died upon the cross?

V SIMON OF CYRENE CARRIES THE CROSS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. (Mark 15.20-22)

Reader 2: **One student testified, "When we arrived at the school, not only were we renamed because they could not pronounce our names, we were given a number. We were called by number all the time. The teachers used to call, '39 where are you?' or '25 come here right now!' There was no one there to help us, to love us, to take us in their arms and to take the hurt and tears away. That loneliness was unbearable. No one cared whether we lived or died."**

Leader: Creator God, help us to feel the alienation and the hurt so many of these children felt. They felt as if nobody cared. They felt like objects. They wanted their families to help them carry their heavy Cross, but they lived too far away. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when Simon helped him on?

VI VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: The righteous will say, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Mt 25.37-40)

Reader 2: **The TRC wrote, “While many former students point to a teacher who took an interest in them, helping them learn, develop a skill, or excel at a sport, the reality is that, in most schools, there were too few teachers and too many responsibilities...Classes were large – between 40 and 50 students – and included students of all ages. Given these constraints, teachers fell back on recitation and drill. The school lacked readers, textbooks, and a library.”**

Leader: Creator God, we pray for the staff of these institutions. They too were victims of an ill-conceived system intended to take the Indian out of the Indian Children. Lord have mercy.

Were you there when she wiped his bloody face?

XI JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said, “Father forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.” One of the criminals hanging there abused him: “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.” But the other spoke up and rebuked him. “Have you no fear of God at all,” he said. “You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case, we deserved it; we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.” (Luke 23.33-34a, 39-41)

Reader 2: **“Harsh discipline prompted children to run away, often at great risk to themselves. Runaways were subject to punishment and humiliation... One boy said, ‘When I came to the school I started wetting the bed. What was really bad about it was I couldn’t stop. I wanted to. I tried everything. They would take our sheets and wrap them around our heads and make us walk past all the other kids.’”** (TRC: *They Came for the Children*)

Leader: Creator God, many Indigenous populate jails and penitentiaries. Help us to care. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they nailed him to the cross?

X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: They offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he had tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots. (Matthew 27.34-35)

Reader 2: **“Despite the shortcomings of the system, some students were able to adjust to it, and others achieved significant accomplishments.” One student said that the residential school was a good experience for her. She got a good education; she even learned her language better, because she helped a priest learn the language. And she learned her Catholic Faith. When asked if there was anything bad about the school, she answered, “They made me ashamed to be an Indian.”**

Leader: Creator God, forgive us for the times we do not respect the culture and identity of Indigenous people. Heal us from the self pride that makes us look down on them and exclude them. Heal us from our judgmental thoughts and actions. Cleanse us of our prejudice and the systemic racism that has permeated our society. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they stripped him of his clothes?

VII JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Surely, he has borne our infirmities and carried our disease; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53.4-6)

Reader 2: **One student said, “If we were heard speaking our own language, we were punished. We were made to write on the board one hundred times, ‘I will not speak Indian any more.’” Many Indigenous languages were lost, because those who attended residential schools never knew them enough to hand them on to their own children.**

Leader: Creator God, in speaking our maternal languages we recall our roots. There is a comfort that comes and often an understanding of the depth of meaning. One cannot experience this with the same depth of memory and meaning as when one speaks one’s own Indigenous language. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when he fell down once again?

VIII JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: A great number of people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” (Luke 23.27-28)

Reader 2: **One person said, “Although my brother and I did not attend residential school, we didn’t really escape it either, as it visited us every day of our childhood through the replaying over and over of our parents’ childhood trauma and grief, which they never had the opportunity to resolve in their lifetimes.” This massive disruption of Indigenous families contributed to the “Sixties Scoop” in which huge numbers of Indigenous children were sent to foster care in non-Indigenous families, often resulting in alienation and further loss of identity.**

Leader: Creator God, help us to realize the generational consequences of our sins, and help us to become more understanding of the deep wounds many Indigenous people carry because of their family history, wounds which never seem to heal. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when they wept because of him?

IX JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to your word. When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. (Psalm 118.25-28)

Reader 2: **“The residential school system often amounted to a system of institutionalized child neglect, compounded by the behaviour of specific individuals who used their authority and the isolation of the school to physically and sexually abuse those in their care...The church and government preferred to deal with these matters as quietly as possible. The lack of publicity often made it possible for a dismissed abuser to find work at another school in another part of the country.”** (TRC, *They Came for the Children*)

Leader: Creator God, these children were sent to residential schools to be cared for. Instead of being protected, nurtured, and cared for, some were violated and hurt to the very core. Lord, have mercy.

Were you there when he fell down to his knees?



THE

WAY

OF THE

CROSS

Residential Schools

