

The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion for many centuries because they enable us to engage actively with the path of suffering walked by Jesus. They originated when early Christians visited Jerusalem and wanted to follow literally in the footsteps of Jesus, tracing the path from Pilate's house to Calvary. They would pause for prayer and devotion at various points. Eventually those pilgrims brought the practice back to their home countries and ever since then Christians of differing traditions have used this form of devotion.

The selection of stations here are the traditional stations and whilst they include some people and events not recorded in the Bible, such as Veronica wiping the face of Jesus and the times Jesus falls under the weight of the cross, they invite us to meditate on the mystery of Christ's suffering and thereby allow us to enter the deep mystery of Christ's redeeming work.

As we keep Holy Week and Easter this year, unable to gather together or use our church buildings, we are inviting all those who join us through our online worship resources to travel back spiritually with us to the time of Jesus. As we do so, we contemplate how Jesus who walked on this earth 2000 years ago continues to walk with us today. We also pray that he will bring his love and transforming grace to us and all those we pray for.

Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father,
we pause from the cares and concerns of our daily lives
to spend a few moments reflecting upon the events
surrounding the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.
Send your spirit into our hearts,
increase our faith and deepen our hope in the resurrection.
We ask this in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray.

Silence for personal prayer and reflection.

God of power and mercy,
in love you sent your Son
that we might be cleansed of sin
and live with you forever.
Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death
that we may learn from his example the way we should go.
We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to death

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him. But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So, Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder and handed Jesus over as they wished

(Lk 23: 22-25).

Meditation

There you stand before the crowd after being beaten. You never deny yourself, yet humbly accept the punishment given to you by those who had witnessed your miracles. It's easy to look at this scene now and think, 'How could they have accused you and condemned you to death? All you did was love every person you met.' Yet they are not alone in their condemnation of you.

Pause

How often do I ignore the person no one wants to talk to? How often do my words condemn you in the way that I speak about others? It was not only the Jews and Pontius Pilate who condemned you, but I stand next to them shouting just as loud, 'Crucify Him!'

Pause

**Jesus, forgive me for the ways in which I condemn and pierce others with my words and actions.
Help me to love like you and to learn from your example.**

The Second Station: Jesus carries the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

[Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it

(Mk 8:34-35).

Meditation

By now you have endured a sleepless night, betrayal by your friends, and a beating that is too horrible to fully imagine. You've been whipped, stripped, and spit on by countless faces, some of whom last week treated you as royalty as you entered the city. And now, they hand you a cross to carry. The weight of it is far more than any number of pounds we can figure. For in carrying the cross, you carry the weight of our sins.

Pause

How often do I forget that you have carried the load for me? How often do I try to carry things on my own, not allowing you to help me? It was not only the sins of the world that you carried; it was my sin, my selfishness, my pride, my anger. Each added more weight to the load. And it was not only my sin you carried but also my burdens, my worries, my fears, my sadness, my insecurities. Each you carried step by step up towards Golgotha, the place of the Skull.

Pause

Jesus, help me not to forget the load that you carried for me. Give me the strength and the courage to let go of those things that separate me from you.

The third Station: Jesus Falls for the First time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted

(Is 53:4).

Meditation

As you walk through the narrow streets, every movement, every jolt burns and reopens your wounds. The pain along with the weight of the cross becomes too much and you fall. In boxing, when a fighter falls and is too beaten to continue, the fight is stopped by the referee. Yet, there is no one there to stop the battle that you fight for us. Even though you know what still lies ahead, you do not stop and somehow find the strength to continue.

Pause

How many times have I fallen in my walk? Too many to count, I'm sure. So many times when I fall I don't feel like getting back up and trying again. There are too many temptations that I am faced with that feel too fun and easy to do because so many around me are doing them.

Pause

Jesus, help me to remember your courage and perseverance when you fell. Give me the courage to get back up when I fall. Help me remember that it is worth it to live as you lived.

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**Because by your Holy Cross
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Reading

Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too”

(Lk 2:34-35).

Meditation

Amid all the shouts and jeers from the crowd that move like a wave in your mind as you struggle to remain conscious, one voice stands out. At first it is so faint that you wonder if it is real, but then as your eyes meet and you see her face you are not surprised that she is there for you. She has always been there for you. Her ‘Yes’ to the Father has been a light in the darkness. And now, here in your darkest hour, she is there.

Pause

There are so many times when I feel alone in my struggles. It seems that no one understands what I am going through, no one seems to care. How many times have I hidden things from my family and friends out of fear of what they would say, or what trouble I would be in when all they want is to love me?

Pause

Jesus, help me to remember that I am never alone in my struggles. Help me know the love of family and friends for me and when life is hard, help me to remember the light of your love in my life.

The Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus carry his Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus

(Lk 23:26).

Meditation

The soldiers who had beaten you all day had what appears to be a moment of compassion. Yet instead, their selfish motives override their opportunity for charity. They only want to follow their orders to get you up to the place where you will be crucified. How beaten you look that they decide to grab Simon a Cyrenian out of the crowd to help you carry the cross. He follows behind you, walking in your steps, helping you move forward. You press on, knowing that the worst is yet to come.

Pause

How often do I pass up an opportunity to help someone in need? Do I let what others may think of me stop me from reaching out?

Pause

Jesus, open my ears to hear the ways that you call me to serve. Help me follow Simon's example of helping others. Help me to know what it means to be a true and faithful servant.

The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account

(Is 53:2-3)

Meditation

By now the thorns cut so deeply into your head that even seeing where you should step next is almost impossible. Up to this point all who approach you, other than your mother, either shout at you or spit in your face. As Veronica approaches, she walks differently than the others. As she reaches out her hands and wipes your face with her cloth, suddenly her face of compassion becomes clear. No words are necessary, both your eyes say it all. For in that moment, your dignity as a man is restored.

Pause

How many times have I forgotten that each person is made in your image and likeness and therefore deserves my respect? Do I make others objects of my pleasure and ignore their humanity? Veronica courageously stepped forward and dared to treat you differently than everyone else. Could I do the same?

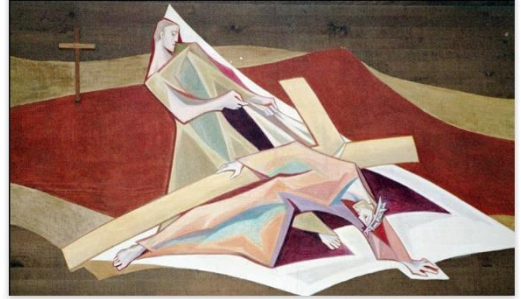
Pause

Jesus, help me to see your presence in others. Give me the courage to follow Veronica's example of treating others with love even when no one else does.

The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people... Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain

(Isa 53:8.10)

Meditation

The soldiers are enraged at you for falling this time. They can't understand how Simon's help is not enough. In their anger they hit you again and again before they remember that you have to be alive to be crucified. The beating stops, but the shouts and taunts become louder and harsher. At this moment you can stop this! You are the Messiah and have the power to reveal yourself to everyone there. But you know that it would not fulfil all that is written about you. You know that you must be faithful to all of the Father's promises to His people. Remembering your love and your faithfulness you get up, and now with your wounds full of dirt and each step embedding it deeper, you keep going.

Pause

How many times have I failed to follow through on my promises? Or worse yet, how often have I lied even to people I care about? Do I remember your faithfulness even when I fail?

Pause

Jesus, help me to believe in your faithfulness and love for me. Give me the grace to follow through on my word to others. Help me to be a person of integrity.

The Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



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Reading

A number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

(Lk 23:27-31)

Meditation

Their wailing sounds like a funeral. They cry and weep as if you are already dead. While air still passes through your lungs and your heart still beats, to them, you are dead. They know you are on your way to be crucified and because of the beating you have endured you already look like you should not be breathing at all. Yet in this moment consumed by death, you speak words of life and say, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me.'

Pause

Do I listen to your words in my life? How often have the things I've watched or listened to led me away from you? Have I allowed the gospel of Life to reign in my heart?

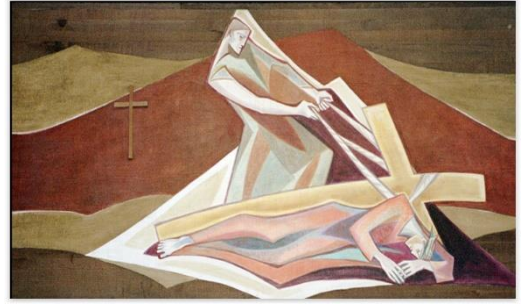
Pause

Jesus, help me to listen to your words of life. Show me ways that I can put you first.

The Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

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 turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all

(Isa 53:5-6)

Meditation

Again, you fall, this time from sheer exhaustion. Only your will presses you forward while your body refuses. How difficult it must be to be you, fully God and fully man. God knows that this has to be finished and that it is not yet complete. Man feels the excruciating pain and every bone in your body wants to stop right here and move no further. Somehow both join together and you muster the strength to get up. You vow to not fall again because now you can see the place they are leading you to. You know the end is close and so you press on.

Pause

How many times have I let my flesh win over my spirit? How often have I chosen to sin rather than to follow your way? Was it my sin that became too heavy that you fell this third time?

Pause

Jesus, help me to follow your ways. Help me remember your victory over my sin. Give me the grace to recognize when I sin and the desire to sin no more.

The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**Because by your Holy Cross
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Reading

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top

(Jn 19:23)

Meditation

In some ways to get to this point is a relief because you know this is almost over. In other ways it is terrifying because you know the worst pain possible for man to endure is still waiting for you. By now your bloodied cuts have dried into your garments, because of this they act as a layer of skin for you since so little of your own remains. As the soldiers strip you bare it is not the nakedness that is painful but rather the vicious tearing of your skin. The cuts that had closed, now reopen and once again a river of blood runs all over your body. You are stripped of your dignity as a man, for even animals are given a swifter, less painful death.

Pause

How often have I judged others by the way they look or what they are wearing? Do I find my own self-worth and self-identity by the clothes I wear or the way I look?

Pause

Jesus, help me to look past the outside of others. Help me not to judge them by how they look or what they wear. Help me to find my self-worth and identity in you.

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

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. Then, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing"

(Lk 23:33-34).

Meditation

Lying down on wood is not foreign to you. The first place you were laid when you came into this world was a wooden manger. There you were laid in love and now it is out of love that you lay here on this wooden cross. The soldiers pull your right arm out beside you and then horrific pain flows through your entire body. The nail pierces not only your hand but also your whole body. The soldier pounds it in, only stopping to wipe your blood off his own face. Again the nail is driven into your other hand and the pain jolts your entire body. Pain shoots up your legs as they nail your feet.

Pause

In reflection, I am angered by the soldiers. I can't understand why they are doing this to you and yet what is hardest to realize is that not only am I in the crowd watching all of this, but I'm also one of them nailing you to the cross. How many times has my sin become a strike of the nail into your body? How often do I turn away from your mercy?

Pause

Jesus, I'm sorry for nailing you to the cross with my own sin. Help me to seek your forgiveness and mercy for the times that I sin.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the Cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**Because by your Holy Cross
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Reading

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. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent"

(Lk 23:44-47)

Meditation

Above your head is the inscription, 'King of the Jews'. As you use every last ounce of life left in you to lift your body so that you can speak, you do not look the part. Yet, every word out of your mouth is one of love, truly from another kingdom. The faces of all humanity must flash before your eyes as one by one you recount whom you are doing this for. And finally you say, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit...it is finished.' You breathe your last and it looks as though this is the end.

Pause

Jesus, help me never forget your love for me. Help me to know that you died for me. Fill me with comfort in knowing that I never suffer anything you don't understand.

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews

(Jn 19:38-40).

Meditation

The first arms that held you in this world are also the last. Your mother was told a sword would pierce her heart the day she presented you as an infant to the Father. Now as she holds your body that is mangled beyond recognition she sees not only the man she now holds, but also the child she held and her heart is pierced. Your comfort to her will come but in this moment she has only the Father to be with her in her sorrow and pain. All hope seems gone.

Pause

How many times have I lost hope in you? How often have I doubted your ability to be God in my life over all things?

Pause

Jesus, help me to trust in you. Help me to place all of my hope in you and give me peace in knowing that you are Lord over all things.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is placed in the tomb.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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



Reading

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there

(Jn 19:41-42).

Meditation

You are laid to rest by Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, Mary your mother and a few other women. As your body is anointed, Mary Magdalene remembers your eyes penetrating her heart. Tears stream down her face along with the others there as they too remember your love. They wrap your body in clean linens and lay it in a new tomb. The stone is rolled over the entrance and now it surely is the end. Up to this point, death is final. While those you have lived with, laughed with and cried with are in their heightened sorrow believing all is over, you are conquering sin and death.

Pause

How many times has death felt like the end? When I've lost a loved one it can be so hard to remember your victory. How often do I miss the opportunities to say, "I love you" to those special people in my life? Do my family and friends know how I feel about them?

Pause

Jesus, help me always remember that death is not the end. Give me the strength to say the words, 'I love you' to those people in my life that I do love. Help me to love every person not just in words but also with my actions.

Jesus, I love you, I need you, and I trust you. Amen.

Concluding prayers

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom
in the words our Saviour taught us.

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Closing prayer

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

