

† The Way of the Cross †

The devotion known as the Way of the Cross (also referred to as The Stations of the Cross) is an adaptation to local usage of a custom widely observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places in that city traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death. The number of stations, which at first varied widely, finally became fixed at fourteen. Of these, eight are based directly on events recorded in the Gospels. The remaining six (numbers 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 13) are based on inferences from the Gospel account or from pious legend.

[A hymn or other song may be sung.]

Bold text: all respond

OPENING DEVOTIONS (*at the altar*)

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

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Officiant and People

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.**

We will glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ:
In whom is our salvation, our life and resurrection.

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Assist us mercifully with your help, O God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The procession goes to the First Station.



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.

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate. And they all condemned him and said, "He deserves

to die.” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. Then he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

God did not spare his own Son:
But delivered him up for us all.

Jesus is condemned unjustly. Today, we too condemn people unjustly, perhaps because of their skin color, their gender, their politics, or their non-conforming way of thinking. Who else do we condemn? (*silence*) There are also people who are condemned, asked for forgiveness and served their sentence, but does our society really believe that people can change or do we continue to condemn them over and over again? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

God of the accused and the accusing, who made the mouths, the ears and the hearts of all in conflict. May we turn ourselves towards that which must be heard, because there we will hear your voice. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



SECOND STATION

JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. Although he was God’s Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter; and like a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.

The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all:
For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

There are crosses that we all carry, some are obvious and others we take great care to hide. There are the burdens of illness, pain and disability, of old age, dependence, and caring for someone who no longer knows who we are. There are the burdens of constant fear, of loneliness and of isolation. The invitation of Jesus on the cross is to hand over these burdens to him. Which burdens should you hand over to Jesus? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Burdened God, who bore the weight of the wood on torn shoulders, we pray for the torn and the burdened, that they may be held together by guts and goodness. Because you were held together by guts and goodness. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



THIRD STATION

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and was born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is the Lord our God.

Surely he has borne our griefs:

And carried our sorrows.

Look at Jesus fall under his cross. He might have fallen on the street or be slouched by St. Mark's back gate. He doesn't look much like God there, but he didn't look like God when he fell into the dirt on the way to Calvary either. The crowds look on with disdain. Like the crowd, we often have only condemnation and rejection for those we see as outcasts or sinners. We judge them without knowing

about their trials, scourging and crowning with thorns. Do we even suspect the part we might have played in knocking them down? What do we do to help them? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (pause)

God of the ground, whose body was—like ours—from dust, and who fell—like we fall—to the ground. May we find you on the ground when we fall. Oh, our falling fallen brother, may we find you, so that we may inhabit our stories and ourselves.

Amen.

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



FOURTH STATION

JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

To what can I liken you, to what can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What likeness can I use to comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

A sword will pierce your own soul also:

And fill your heart with bitter pain.

Jesus' mother carries the burden of witnessing the suffering of her son and ultimately of the loss of Mary and Jesus' earthly relationship. This was not of either of their making. We see Mary in parents of today. Those who watch their children relinquishing their life to addiction and suicide for example. Where else do you see the loss and breakdown of parental relationships? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Mary, Mother of Jesus, you met your son at the end, in a place beyond words, and must have felt faithless, empty and alone. We pray that we may have the grace to live with our own stories of failure, knowing that love can continue even when things end. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**

FIFTH STATION



THE CROSS IS LAID ON SIMON OF CYRENE

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:
**Because by your holy cross you have redeemed
the world.**

As they led Jesus away, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his

cross and follow me. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me:
Cannot be my disciple.

Look at Jesus who lies hidden and unknown beneath every person in need. Across our world we see human suffering in the faces of strangers and in the faces of our City Heights neighbors. We see suffering in the faces of those struggling with war and civil unrest, in the faces of those in ICE detention centers, and of those dealing with the loss of life and destruction of property and in so many other places. How are you "Simon" to the suffering of those close to you and those in the wider world? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Simon of Cyrene, stranger from afar, you were a help to a man unknown to you. We pray for all who help, that their aid may actually be helpful; that their kindness may be truly kind. Because yours was, even though you knew you couldn't do enough. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



SIXTH STATION

A WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

We have seen him without beauty or majesty, with no looks to attract our eyes. He was despised and rejected; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of humans. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts:

Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Veronica is moved to pity by Jesus' plight. Imagine the scene: the crown of thorns digging deep into Jesus' forehead, the burden of the cross and crown leading to sweat and blood trickling down. Then, a spontaneous movement from a compassionate woman. Pushing her way through the crowd, not stopping to think of how the soldiers might react, Veronica gently wipes Jesus' face and eases his suffering with a small act of kindness in a world bound up in hatred and cruelty. When should you have had the confidence to go against the crowd and reached out to someone who was unpopular or unloved?
(*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Veronica, your story is doubted but valuable. You did what you could even though it was very little. May we do the same, even when we doubt. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,**

Have mercy upon us.



SEVENTH STATION

JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to their own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

But as for me, I am a worm and no man:

Scorned by all and despised by the people.

All around us people are overburdened by the crosses they carry, they struggle and sometimes fall, at times repeatedly. We too sometimes fall, maybe repeatedly. Do you show compassion for those who fall repeatedly? Do you have compassion for

yourself when you fall? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

God of the Fall, You felt the fall when your body fell to the ground a second time. Gather all who fall. Gather all our fallings. Gather the voices. Gather the breath that's forced from our bodies. Because falling, too, has a story. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



EIGHTH STATION

JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

There followed after Jesus a great multitude of the people, and among them were women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

Those who sowed with tears:
Will reap with songs of joy.

Look at Jesus and listen to his message for us today.

Weep for children who are abused. Weep for women who are victimized. Which other groups of women and children should we weep for? Who else should we weep for? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Women of Jerusalem, while you mourned, Jesus saw you and spoke to you—he in his sorrow seeing you in yours. May we see each other, even when we feel unseen. Because when we see each other, we are seen ourselves. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



NINTH STATION

JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light. He has besieged me and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. Though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes. “Remember, O Lord, my affliction and bitterness, the wormwood and the gall!”

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter:

And like a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth.

Many in our world today feel that they are at that moment of final falling, that their burden is too much to carry. They cannot bear any more. Crushed by the weight of their cross they feel unable to get up, unable to go on. In Jesus we find our hope and our encouragement. The third fall of Jesus reminds us that even in our moment of complete helplessness, in our own Calvary, we can stand up again. Who in your life could use a reminder that Jesus is with us and that Jesus is our strength? Name them in your heart and pray for them. Pray for your own Calvary. (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Jesus of the dirt, you were led to death because of how you lived. Help us live like this; walking and falling, and walking and falling, like you, in the ways of the living and the dead. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**

TENTH STATION



JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means

the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And they divided his garments among them by casting lots. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing."

They gave me gall to eat:

And when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.

Look at Jesus and the absolute indignity inflicted upon him. Left to be naked and exposed. Nowhere to hide, no way to retain even the smallest scrap of respect or dignity. Teased and taunted, jeered and mocked. How does our society, how do we strip people of their dignity? Where and how do we mock or taunt others? When do we treat people as objects? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Jesus of the flesh, naked you came from the womb and naked you were made for the cross. What was designed for indignity and exposure you held with dignity and defiance. May we do the same, because you needed it, because we need it. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**

ELVENTH 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.

When they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him; and with him they crucified two criminals, one on the right, the other on the left, and Jesus between them. And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

They pierce my hands and my feet:
They stare and gloat over me.

Jesus continues to be crucified in the ten children who die every minute of hunger in our world. He is crucified in all who are maimed, damaged and displaced because of war or gun violence. He is crucified in all who are marginalized in our society because of their race, sexuality or gender. He is crucified in those who are abused physically, sexually or emotionally. He is crucified in those who are trafficked across the world. He is crucified in the exploitation of the earth and its resources. How do you crucify or contribute or condone this continuous crucifixion of Jesus? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Jesus of Nazareth, this cross was torture. It only gives life because you made it hollow. Bring life to us Jesus, especially when we are in the places of the dead. Because you brought life even to the instruments of death. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**

TWELFTH STATION



JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished!" And then, crying with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And he bowed his head, and handed over his spirit. (*pause*)

Christ for us became obedient unto death:
Even death on a cross.

As Jesus dies on Calvary, he challenges us to love our enemies, to let go of hurt, to ask for forgiveness and when we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive, to ask God to do help us do it, or to do it for us. Which 'enemies' should you forgive? Whom should you ask for forgiveness? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Jesus of the imagination, you never grew old, always a young man, and most of us grow older than you did. When lives are cut short the living question the meaning of living. May we live with meaning, even when meaning fades, making meaning so that we have something to live for. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



THIRTEENTH STATION

THE BODY OF JESUS IS PLACED IN THE
ARMS OF HIS MOTHER

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

All you who pass by, behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. My eyes are spent with weeping; my soul is in tumult; my heart is poured out in grief because of the downfall of my people. “Do not call me Naomi (which means Pleasant), call me Mara (which means Bitter); for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”

Her tears run down her cheeks:

And she has none to comfort her.

Mary’s grief is our grief too. As Mary cradles the lifeless body of her son, she stands with all parents who have held their children close to them in death, she stands with all who have experienced the death of a loved one. Mary grieves with all who sorrow for someone’s death. Whose death—close to you and only barely known to you—do you grieve? Can you entrust the departed back to God? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Mary, Mother of Death, you held the corpse of your young son—the worst of fears—in your arms, as he went where we have not yet gone. We mark this with silence and art. May we be able to sit with and endure painful silence, especially when we want to run away from it. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**



FOURTEENTH STATION

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

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

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb.

You will not abandon me to the grave:

Nor let your holy One see corruption.

There are times when we are overcome by the darkness of the tomb, by the countless deaths that we experience each day, but the answer to all our grieving and

despair lies in this place. The grain of wheat sown in darkness and in death has yielded. Jesus' death was not in vain. What do you see around you that gives witness to that? (*silence*)

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Jesus of the unexpected, for at least some of your life this was not how you imagined its end. Yet even at the end, you kept steady in your conviction. Jesus, keep us steady, keep us steady. Because, Jesus, we need you to keep us steady. **Amen.**

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.**

CONCLUDING PRAYERS BEFORE THE ALTAR

Savior of the world, by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us:

Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.

Let us pray. (*pause*)

We thank you, O God, that you have delivered us from the dominion of sin and death and brought us into the kingdom of your Son; and we pray that, as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his love he may raise us to eternal joys; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

To Christ our Lord who loves us, and washed us in his own blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Amen.

[Thank you for your participation.]

Sources (used with adaptations): *The Book of Occasional Services* (2022). *Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community*, Pádraig Ó Tuama. *The Stations of the Cross*, The Church of St. George the Martyr in Newbury. *Justice and Peace Stations of the Cross*, Diocese of Shrewsbury (Commission for Justice, Peace and Responsibility).

You may have noticed that St. Mark's stations are a bit different from typical Stations of the Cross. The images they display are from the civil war in Syria (2011-2024). While the war is 'over' the situation remains volatile with ongoing clashes between various factions, including the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and remnants of the Assad regime. The humanitarian crisis continues, with millions displaced and reliant on aid.