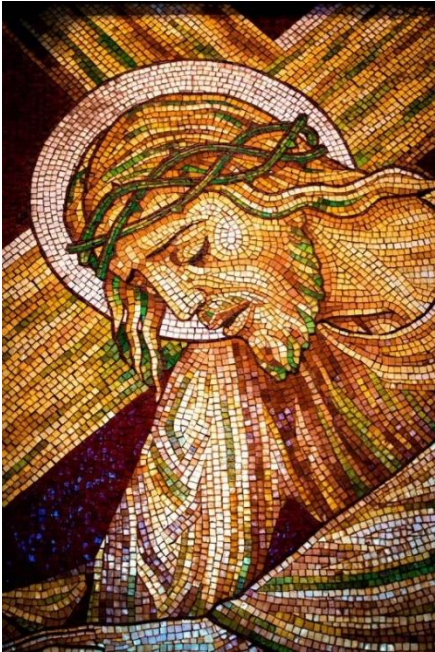


## Stations of the Cross



From the earliest of days, followers of Jesus told the story of his passion, death and resurrection. Very early in Christianity, Christians were already gathering at Christ's tomb to pray. By 313 AD, in the time of Constantine, pilgrims were beginning to travel to the Holy Land to retrace the steps of Christ.

As Christianity spread across the globe and contention developed in the city of Jerusalem, it was no longer easy or even possible to visit the holy sites. By the 1500s, people all over the world started creating replicas of the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the 14 stations we now know and celebrate.

When we pray the Stations of the Cross, we are united with these people. In the 1500s/1600s, Stations of the Cross began to be placed in churches. In 1731, Pope Clement XII solidified the fourteen Stations of the Cross.

The word "station" comes from the Latin word that means "to stand" or "rest". We are walking from Christ's trial to his crucifixion at Calvary and we stop and stand at certain sites (stations) that commemorate various events that took place along the way. The Stations of the Cross is also referred to as "The Way of the Cross", "Via Dolorosa" or "Way of Sorrows."

As you come to each station, stop, pray, read the Scriptures, pray the prayers and contemplate the situation before moving on. As you walk from one station to the next, your walking becomes a devotional act, because you are walking with Jesus as he walks to Calvary.

## HOW TO PRAY THE STATIONS

At each 'station' we very often begin by naming the station, and by saying **'We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you'**, to which others present may respond, **'Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world'**.

At the end of the station it is quite common to say a prayer such as the following:

**I love you, Jesus, my love above all things,  
And I repent with my whole heart of having offended you.  
Never permit me to separate myself from you again,  
Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.**

Not all of the stations are recorded in the scriptures; they owe much to the creative imagination of Christians who wanted to follow Jesus in this last journey of love. You are invited to use your imagination to remain lovingly and attentively with Jesus in his passion. Try to link this with whatever is going on in your own life or the lives of others at present to each individual station.

## FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

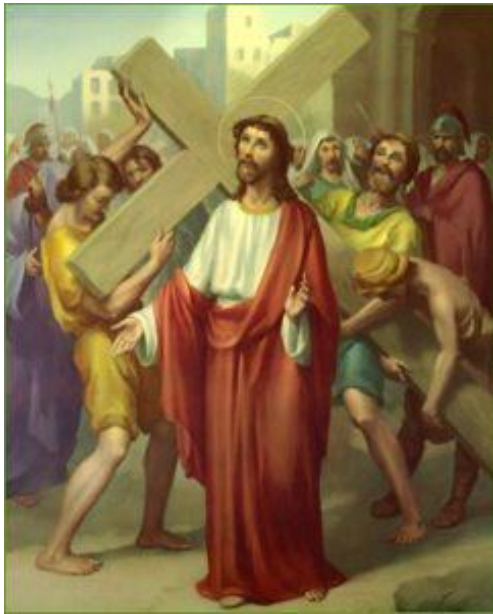


Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?” They answered and said to him, “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.” Then Pilate said to them, “You take Him and judge Him according to your law.” Therefore the Jews

said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,” that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered him, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all.” (John 18:28-38)

## SECOND STATION: JESUS ACCEPTS THE CROSS



And he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things, and to be rejected by the elders and the high priests and the scribes, and to be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said the message openly. And Peter, taking him aside, began to scold him. And he turned, and, seeing his disciples, scolded Peter and says, ‘Get behind me, Satan. Because you are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.’ And summoning the crowd with his disciples he

said to them, ‘If someone wants to follow after me, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:31-34).

And so they accepted Jesus. And carrying his cross for himself, he went out to the place known as Skull Place, which in Aramaic is known as Golgotha, where they crucified him. (John 19:17)

### THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME



The Stations of the Cross include three falls. None of them is found in any of the gospel narratives, so they have emerged from the creative imagination of Christians devoutly meditating on Jesus's last hours.

And Judas Iscariot (one of the Twelve) went off to the High Priests to betray him to them. And when they heard they rejoiced; and they promised to give him money. And he started to look to see how he might betray him at an appropriate time. (Mark

14:10-11)

## FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Clopas and Mary the Magdalene. And so Jesus, seeing his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved says to [his] mother, 'Woman, look – your son'. Then he says to the disciple, 'Look – your mother'. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. (John 19:26-27)

There are two possible ways of looking at this episode. The first is to rejoice that Jesus, even in his last moments was able to look lovingly on others, and to set up his mother and his beloved disciple as the start of a new dynasty. The second is to recognise the appalling sadness that his mother is feeling.

## FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS



And they conscript a certain passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenean coming in from the countryside, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they take him to the place Golgotha, which when it is translated is 'Place of the Skull'. And they tried to give him wine flavoured with myrrh – but he didn't take it. And they crucify him. And they 'divide his garments, casting a lot over them [to see] who would get something'. (Mark 15:21-24)

Notice that Simon is an African (he comes from Cyrene, which is in Libya). He also just happens to be around; he has no apparent interest in Jesus, but is just 'coming in from the fields'. Nor did he volunteer to help this convicted criminal go to his fate. Mark uses a rather rare word that means 'conscripted'. So he had to be forced into it. Nevertheless it seems that something may have happened to that African on that Friday afternoon, for Mark tells us that he Simon was 'the father of Alexander and Rufus'. Now Mark is not one to waste words, and presumably the reason that he shares this information with us is that Rufus and Alexander were known to his church. This in turn means (we may assume without making too much of a leap) that on that Friday afternoon their father came to faith in this unlikely Messiah.

## SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



As Pilate sat on his judgement-seat, his wife sent to him, saying, 'have nothing to do with that righteous person; for I have suffered a great deal in a dream today on his account'. (Matthew 27:19)

The story of Veronica is not told in the gospel accounts of Jesus' passion. But there is a legend about a woman of that name who performed the kindness of wiping Jesus's face as he walked to his death, and was rewarded by having the image of Jesus's face printed on the cloth that she has used. And if you press it 'Veronica' could be Latin-Greek for 'true likeness'.



## SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



Once again, there is no scriptural warrant for this station, however probable the story may be in itself; so here is another story of a disciple who falls.

And Peter was still below in the courtyard. And there comes a single little slave-girl of the High Priest. And seeing Peter warming himself she had a good look at him and says, 'You were also with the Nazarene, [that] Jesus'. And he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying'.

And he went out into the forecourt. And the little slave girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This [fellow] is from that lot'. And he again denied [it]. And again after a little the bystanders started to say to Peter, 'You must certainly be [one] of them: you're a Galilean'. And he began to curse and swear, 'I don't know this fellow you're talking about'.

And immediately for the second time a cock crowed. And Peter remembered the word, how Jesus had told him, 'Before the cock crows twice, three times you will deny me'. And he thought of it and wept. (Mark 14:66-72)

Not very long ago, Peter had been boasting 'even if I have to die with you, no way will I ever deny you'. This had been in response to Jesus's quiet prediction: 'Amen I tell you, you, today, on this very night, before the cock crows twice, will deny me three times', and we rather wish that Peter had not spoken, for here is his first opportunity to put his money where his mouth is, and see what happens.

Jesus is on trial in an adjacent room, and is saying almost nothing; Peter says far too much. When Jesus does speak, he tells the truth; Peter lies. Jesus stands up to the High Priest, Peter is terrified by one whom Mark describes as 'a single little slave-girl of the High Priest' (and you can hardly be more insignificant than that).

## EIGHTH STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



A great crowd of people was following him, and also [a crowd] of women, who were mourning him and weeping for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t be weeping over me. No – weep for yourselves and for your children. Because, look! Days are coming when they will be saying, “Congratulations to the women who are barren, and the wombs that have not given birth, and the breasts that have not suckled”. Then they will start saying to the mountains, “Fall on us”, and to the hills, “Cover us”. Because if they do these things when the wood is green – what might happen when it’s dry?’

And two other criminals were led out with him to be executed. (Luke 23:27-32)

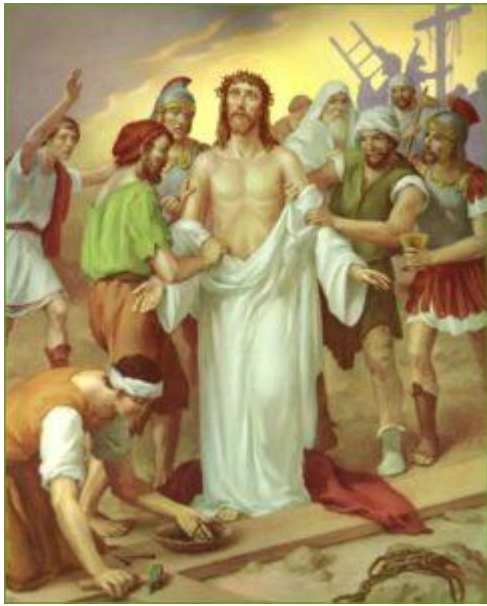
Once again, it is the women in this situation who show great courage. It is they, and not the men, who are prepared to stand out against the crowd and show their sadness (and presumably disapproval) at what is happening to Jesus. Notice also Jesus’s ability to see the needs of others in this lethal situation in which he finds himself. He also delivers a very challenging prediction of the days that will come upon Jerusalem and its population. Meanwhile he is identified with the criminal classes.

## NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME



And a certain young man was following along with him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And they arrest him. But he cast aside the linen cloth and fled naked. (Mark 14:50-52)

## TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



And they tried to give him wine flavoured with myrrh – but he didn't take it. And they crucify him. And they 'divide his garments, casting a lot over them [to see] who would get something'. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the inscription of his charge was inscribed 'the King of the Jews'. (Mark 15:23-26)

## ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium; and they gathered the whole cohort round him. They undressed him and put a scarlet cloak on him; and they plaited a crown made of thorns and put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. Then they genuflected before him and had fun with him, saying 'Hail – King of the Jews!', and they spat on him, and took the reed and beat him on his head. And when they'd had their fun with him, they took the scarlet cloak off him, and took him out to crucify

him.

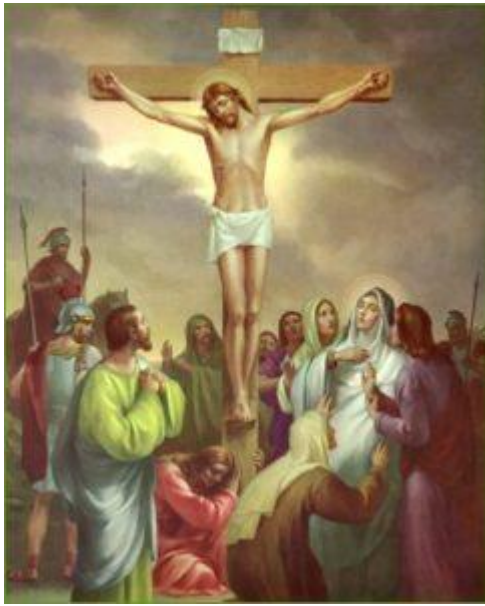
And they came to a place called Golgotha, which means 'Skull Place'. They gave him a drink of wine mixed with gall. When he tasted it, he refused to drink it. They crucified him, 'dividing his garments', and 'casting lots'. And they sat down and kept watch on him there. And above his head, they put the indictment against him: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. The passers-by abused him, and shook their heads, and said, 'You are [the one] who destroys the Temple and rebuilds it in three days – save yourself, if you are Son of God, and come down from the cross!'

Similarly the Chief Priests had fun with the scribes and elders and said, 'he saved others – he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we'll believe in him. "He trusted in God; let [God] deliver him now, if he wants him". Because he said, "I am Son of God".'

Similarly the bandits who had been crucified with him reviled him. (Matthew 27:33-44)

## TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



And when it came to the sixth hour, darkness came on the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus shouted in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, eloi, lema sabachtani?’ which when it is translated is, ‘My God, my God, for what purpose did you abandon me?’ And some of the bystanders hearing [this] started to say, ‘Look – he is calling on Elijah.’ And someone ran and filled a sponge with vinegar and put it round a stick and gave it to him to drink, saying, ‘Wait – let’s see if Elijah is coming to take him down. But Jesus, letting out a great shout, expired. (Mark 15:33-35)

After this, Jesus, knowing that already everything was brought to perfection, in order that the Scripture might be perfected, says, ‘I thirst’. A vessel lay there, full of wine vinegar. And so, wrapping a sponge full of the vinegar on a piece of hyssop offered it to his mouth. And when he had taken the vinegar, Jesus said, ‘It is perfected’. And inclining his head, he handed over the Spirit. (John 19:28-30)

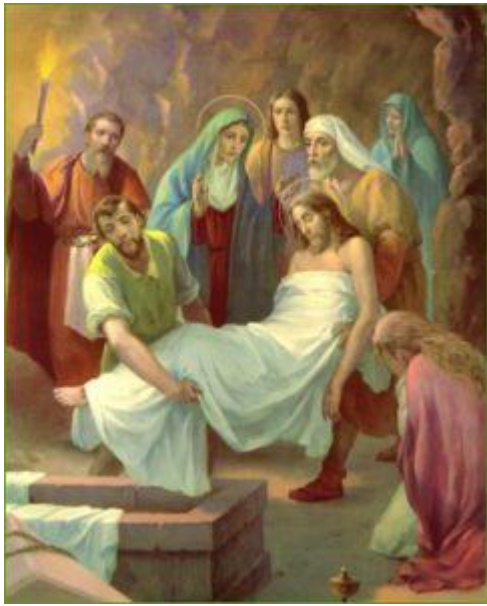
## **THIRTEENTH STATION: THE BODY OF JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND LAID IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS**



Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judaea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be registered along with Mary, his betrothed – who was pregnant. It came to pass while they were there that the days were fulfilled for her to give birth and she brought forth her son, the first-born; and she wrapped him round with swathing-bands, and laid him down in a feeding-trough, because there was no room for them in the lodging-

house. (Luke 2:4-7)

## FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



And when it had already become late, since it was Preparation Day, which is the day before the Sabbath, there came Joseph, the one from Arimathea. He was a reputable Councillor; and he was also waiting for the Kingdom of God. He was daring enough to go to Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he was already dead (or: was surprised that he should be already dead). And he summoned the centurion and asked if he was long dead. And when he had confirmation from the centurion, he gifted

the corpse to Joseph. And he bought a linen cloth and took him down and wrapped him in the linen cloth and placed him in a tomb which was hewn out of rock. And he rolled a stone onto the door of the tomb. (Mark 15:42-47)



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