

Stations of the Cross

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(from *Eggs and Ashes*, Ruth Burgess & Chris Polhill)

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First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Optional response to precede each Station of the Cross:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you
BECAUSE, BY YOUR HOLY CROSS,
YOU HAVE REDEEMED THE WORLD.

Bible Reading – Mark 15:1–5,11–15

Jesus was taken in chains to Pilate. The chief priests were accusing Jesus of many things, so Pilate questioned him. ‘Aren’t you going to answer?’ he said. ‘Listen to all their accusations.’ Jesus refused to say a word and Pilate was amazed. Pilate spoke to the crowd. ‘What do you want me to do with this one you call King of the Jews?’ They shouted back, ‘Crucify him!’ ‘But what crime has he committed?’ Pilate asked. They shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’ Pilate wanted to please the crowd, so he set Barabbas free for them. Then he had Jesus whipped and handed him over to be crucified.

Meditation

Pilate asked what crime Jesus had committed.
It was a good question.
Jesus had annoyed the religious leaders, of that there was no doubt.
He had been critical of social and religious structures.
He had healed the villagers;
he had told stories to the crowds;
he was probably a threat to public law and order;
but was that enough to condemn him, to end his life?
But he would not defend himself –
the storyteller was silent now
and the crowd was noisy,
and Pilate handed him over to be crucified.

Prayer

For those on trial this week and for those appointed to judge them:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Optional chant between each station: ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom’ (Taizé) or ‘Behold the Lamb of God’ (John L Bell and Graham Maule).

Second Station: Jesus takes up his cross

Bible reading – Mark 15:16–20

The soldiers took Jesus inside, to the courtyard of the governor's palace and called together the rest of the company. They put a purple robe on Jesus, made a crown out of thorn branches, and put it on his head. Then they began to salute him: 'Long live the King of the Jews.' They beat him over the head with a stick, spat on him, fell on their knees and bowed to him. When they had finished mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Meditation

Soldiers
taking the chance for a bit of fun.
They had a heavy day ahead.
Soon they would have to put on their public face –
disciplined, controlled, efficient.
But for now a bit of a lark with the lads
with no risk of recrimination.
Dead men tell no stories,
and Jesus was going to his death.

Prayer

For those appointed to keep public order,
and for those tempted to abuse their power:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Third Station: Jesus falls the first time

Bible reading – Isaiah 53:1

Who would have believed what we now tell?
Who could have seen God's hand in this?

Meditation

Jesus was exhausted.
He was in pain.
He was going to his death.
The cross was heavy and he fell.
He was flesh and blood like us,
he was struggling.

Prayer

For those who are tired or in pain:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother

Bible reading – Luke 2:22,25,34,35

The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, ‘This child is chosen by God for the destruction and salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.’

Meditation

She was going to be there at his end –
she who had been there with God at his beginning.
She was his mother.
She had fed him and cradled him
and watched over his growing.
Whatever he had said and done,
he was still her son
and she would not desert him now.
Whatever pain of his she could embrace she would.
And in the meeting of their eyes
there was love,
suffering and shining.

Prayer

For parents whose children are in pain or in trouble:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus to carry his cross

Bible reading – Mark 15:21

On their way through Jerusalem they met a man named Simon, who was coming into the city from the country, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

Meditation

Simon from Cyrene,
father of Alexander and Rufus,
what a tale you had to tell your children!
You helped Jesus,
you gave him your strength on the streets of Jerusalem.
Willing or unwilling,
you, Simon, have become part of his story,
and he part of yours,
for you helped him
when he needed you.
What would we give to be Simon?

Prayer

For a willingness to serve you, in friends and in strangers,
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Bible reading – Matthew 25:35–36,40

I was hungry and you fed me,
thirsty, and you gave me a drink.
I was a stranger and you received me in your homes,
naked and you clothed me;
I was sick and you took care of me,
in prison and you visited me.
Whenever you did this – you did it for me.

Meditation

Wiping faces, dirty faces;
faces full of sweat and tears,
faces covered in chocolate and in jam.
Wiping faces is something we try to do gently and lovingly,
something that soothes and cleanses,
something that brings healing.
Wiping faces is something we do for those who are young, or old,
or in pain, or in trouble,
wanting them to know that they are cherished and loved.
And when we wipe the faces of God's little ones,
we are wiping the face of God.

Prayer

For those whose faces we wipe
and for those who wipe away our tears:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

Bible reading – Isaiah 53:7

Ill-treated and afflicted,
he never said a word.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter house,
like a sheep dumb before its shearers,
he never opened his mouth.

Meditation

I am finding it hard to watch you, Jesus,
to see you struggling,
to see you on the ground.
Into your silence I want to shout:
'Why do they keep on hurting you?
What have you done wrong?'

Prayer

For those who today will struggle and fall:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Bible reading – Luke 23:27,28

A large crowd of people followed Jesus; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, 'Women of Jerusalem, don't cry for me, but for yourselves and for your children.'

Meditation

Weep for the mothers and children of Jerusalem,
for Israeli and Palestinian,
for Jew and Moslem and Christian,
for the strangers in their midst.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
Pray that her people may live together in justice.
Pray that all people may live together in peace.

Prayer

For those who live in places of conflict and danger;
for peacemakers and peacekeepers in every land:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time

Bible reading – Isaiah 53:4–5

He endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God; but because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.

Meditation

I am not sure if I can watch this much longer.
In his pain I see my pain,
in his falling I feel myself falling,
in his cross ... in his cross
I am included.

He carried it for me –
for me, and my enemies, and my friends.

Prayer

For those whom I love,
for those whom I struggle to love,
for those who find me difficult:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

Bible reading – Mark 15:22–24

They took Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. They tried to give him wine mixed with a drug called myrrh, but Jesus would not drink it. Then they crucified him and divided his clothing among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get each piece of clothing.

Meditation

Stripped now –
of clothing
of disciples
of friends.
Alone,
naked and vulnerable,
with nothing to protect you from the pain to come.

Prayer

For those deserted by friends,
for those who are alone and vulnerable:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Bible reading – Luke 23:35,49

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him; the people stayed there watching him, the leaders jeered at him and the soldiers mocked him. Some women, his friends from Galilee, looked on at a distance.

Meditation

We look on from a distance:
a distance of time and space and culture,
a distance of a (time and place) in Lent.
And for us it hurts to watch Jesus dying,
even at a distance.
It hurts to know that we are being rescued.
It hurts to know how much we are valued and loved.

Prayer

For the depth of your love for us, we thank you.
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross

Bible reading – Luke 23:44–46

It was about twelve o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole country until three o'clock. And the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father in your hands I place my spirit.' He said this and died.

Meditation

In your hands he placed himself:
all that he was,
all that he had ever been,
all his beauty,
all his obedience,
all his loving.
In God's hands he placed himself.
He was returning to his father,
he was going home.

Prayer

For all who have died today,
for all who love them and will miss them:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Bible reading – Mark 15:42–46

And when evening came, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Joseph took the body down and wrapped it in a linen sheet.

Meditation

Pietà.
Jesus is dead and lies in the arms of his mother.
Death is hard and final
and yet, whatever happens on this earth,
children never die to their mothers.
In the memory of those who loved them, loved ones remain.
And for us, and for all God's people,
our hope is safe in God.
From swaddling bands to grave clothes,
all the days of our living and dying,
we are cradled and wrapped in love.

Prayer

For our families and friends who have died,
for ourselves as we carry their stories:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Bible reading – Mark 15:46–47

Joseph placed the body in a tomb which had been dug out of solid rock. Then he rolled a large stone across the entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching and saw where the body of Jesus was placed.

Meditation

The door is shut now,
and the world sighs and waits.
And we wait in night's darkness,
longing for the morning,
longing for the light.

Prayer

For all who are waiting.
For all who are longing for light:
God in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Fifteenth Station: The resurrection

Bible reading – Mark 16:1–7

After the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Very early on Sunday morning, at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they said to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ It was a very large stone. Then they looked up and saw that the stone had already been rolled back. So they entered the tomb, where they saw a young man sitting on the right wearing a white robe, and they were alarmed. ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he said. ‘I know you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is not here. He has been raised. Look! Here is the place where they put him. Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: He is going to Galilee ahead of you. There you will see Him, just as He told you.’

Meditation

We go on our way
and Jesus goes ahead of us.
We do not need to be afraid
for Jesus is risen.
God is love –
and love is more powerful
than fear or death or evil,
and we are greatly loved.
And we are grateful.
Thanks be to God for redeeming the world in love. AMEN

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