

The Stations of the Cross

It is for freedom Christ has set you free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

Leader: Lord Jesus, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. Help us, that we may become more aware of your spirit and learn to live our lives according to your Way.

All: Amen.

Station I : Jesus is sentenced to death.

Leader: The entire assembly rose up and led Jesus before Pontius Pilate. They started his trial by saying: "We found this man subverting our nation and calling himself the Messiah, a king." They demanded loudly that he be crucified, and their shouts increased in violence. Pilate then decreed that what they demanded should be done. Luke 28

All: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. John 3:16

Reflection on the Station:



Beaten and weary, You are brought before a judge and the crowd is asked to choose. Even as You desire otherwise -- yearning for the love of Your people, You know they will choose the creature over their Creator. "Give us Barabbas!" they yell, and, with sad heart, You prepare yourself for the grueling way of the cross to Calvary. Innocent, you are condemned to death, betrayed by those who claim to love You and those who claim to be upholding Your truth even as they pass judgment. The crowd clamors for Your blood, not realizing that it is only through Your blood that they will live. How ironic. We think that by ridding ourselves of You, we will be free. And you give us what we wish -- freedom -- using even our evil to raise us up to You, if we will only see and accept. How different is the choice for man or God. In choosing our own selfish way, we choose death. In choosing You, you use our death to lift us to life in You. Pilate washes his hands of guilt, and, in doing so, washes his hands of you. Evading the truth of our guilt means rejecting you. We cannot be Yours if we do not admit what we are, sinners in need of mercy.

Prayer: When I feel my hands chained in a courtroom, let me remember that your hands too were tied roughly when you were made to stand before Pontius Pilate. When I come before judges, Lord Jesus, let me feel that you are near to me. If I am sentenced Lord, don't let me despair; instead, let me trust that you will be with me in everything that happens to me. Innocent or guilty, I give my life into the Father's hands as you did. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station II : Jesus accepts his Cross

Leader: The guards stripped off Jesus' clothes and wrapped him a red military coat. Then they began to mock him. They spat at him and beat him. Finally, when they had finished tormenting him, they stripped him of the coat, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. Matthew 27:27-31

All: It was *our* infirmities that he bore, *our* sufferings that he endured. Isaiah 53:4

Reflection on the Station:



You accept the cross, knowing fully the agony to come. You take upon battered and bleeding shoulders the weight of all our sins. From dead wood You will bring the fruit of everlasting life. In the Garden of Eden it was a living tree and our disobedience that brought death into the world. Now, You turn our world upside down, as You show us the true way to life, through the dead wood, and your obedience to the Father, as you accept the suffering of the cross. In rejecting the temporary life, which seems so appealing and gratifying, we will know the joy of eternal life in heaven, with You. In dying through the cross we will live forever. You shoulder all our pains with us as You walk the way of Calvary. All the way of Calvary, the way of the cross, will be blessed by Your blood. We can be united in You, through the humanity You share with us by Your incarnation, and through the blood You shed for us on the Cross. We hold on to our hope despite our pain, despite our hardship. In taking up the cross You show us to trust in the Father no matter the obstacles before us.

Prayer: Jesus, in my cell, let my heart change as I think of the cross that crushes and bloodies you. Lord Jesus, let me promise you that I will not cause others pain, that I will not be a heavy cross for others to carry. Jesus, my Savior, here locked away, I will take up my cross, heavy as it seems to me, and I will carry it without anger or hatred or bitterness. Help me to follow you! Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: **Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.**

Station III : Jesus falls for the first time

Leader: He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole. By his stripes we were healed. The Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth. Isaiah 53: 4-7

All: God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to Himself, and He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. 2 Corinthians 5:19

Reflection on the Station:



Soon after taking up the cross You fall for the first time. So early in the way You are on the ground; God, face down in the dust. The knowledge of the burden of carrying our weight becomes clearer. The nearly overwhelming impact of the hideous crush of sin, the evil pressing down, makes You stumble. All the while the crowd mocks and insults You, clinging to their sins, even as You are lifting them away. We treat You as our scapegoat, heaping pain and ridicule and indifference upon You as You seek to save us. We put our God face down in the dust so we do not have to bear Your gaze upon our evil.

***Prayer:** Jesus, I have stumbled and fallen many times. That's probably why I am where I am now. Please don't let the cruelty of people stop you from being compassionate and forgiving to someone like me. Look with mercy on me, for I have sinned. Help me Lord never to gang up on anyone else who has fallen or sinned, no matter what they have done. Teach me to be as forgiving as you are. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station IV: Jesus meets Mary, his mother

Leader: Rejoice and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning. For thus says the Lord: As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you. When you see this, your heart shall rejoice; the Lord's power shall be known to his servants.

All: "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."

Reflection on the Station:



You meet Your Mother on the way. Seeing her brings relief and regret. For a mother to see her Son so tortured wrenches Your heart. What a pain to You to know her grief. She is helpless to save You, but is granted the power to relieve Your suffering merely by her presence. She supports You in Your way of the cross and shares in Your anguish. She is there in the intimacy of a meeting in which you are kept physically apart but are united in love. You seek to comfort her in her sorrow. She stands by in love and constant prayer, never yielding to hatred for those who are turning away from You. She understands the need for love and its redemptive power especially when faced with the cruelest and most vindictive evil.

***Prayer:** Jesus, when I have gotten visits, I have often seen the pain and the tears that my family feels when they see me. Sometimes Lord, it is harder to take than my own frustration at being locked up. Sometimes I think back to things that I did to hurt my family, or ways that I didn't help or that I ignored them, and my heart wants to break with guilt. Lord Jesus, help me to be as good to my loved ones now as I can be and strengthen them in this hard time. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: **Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.**

Station V : Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross

Leader: As the chief priests, the ruling class, and the people led Jesus away, they laid hold of a man named Simon the Cyrenean who was coming in from the fields. They forced him into service to carry the cross. A great crowd of people followed him.
Luke 23

All: If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be. John 12:26

Reflection on the Station:



You allow Simon to help You in carrying the cross. He is a simple man, a farm worker coming in from the fields. He is humble and knows what it is like to be down and out, so he helps You in Your time of greatest need. Do we not know what a gift You are giving in the cross? In the cross lies our salvation and our unity. In the cross we are never alone. In the cross we are our brother's keeper, helping each other and making reparation for the wrongs we have inflicted. In the cross we give You to each other and lift the barriers of sin. In the cross we are Your Body, sharing in Your passion and in the ultimate triumph of eternal life, freed from all the ungodly restraints and allure of the world. In the carrying of the cross lie our atonement and our joy.

***Prayer:** The other inmates around me Lord, also carry many heavy loads; their fears for their families, their sins and sense of guilt, the uncertainty of their future, anger, frustration and sadness. Lord Jesus, show me how to help them carry these crosses. Make me strong enough not to shut myself in my own little world, but let me reach out to others with your help. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station VI: Veronica wipes Jesus' face

Leader: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

All: As often as you did this for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me. Matthew 25:40

Reflection on the Station:



Veronica sees Your need and offers her compassion. In such a little and tender way she reflects Your kindness and Your courage. Stepping out from the crowd, she risks arrest herself, along with jeers and public contempt and thereby obtains the only approval that counts. In wiping Your face she serves a simple need, clearing Your sight from the dripping blood and dirt as the flies gather. From this small act comes the greatest blessing. She is given Your image reflected in her kindness. In helping you to see, she is shown the perfect vision, the beatific image of the face of God. Touched by Your grace, and in union with You, her humanity is made holy. She becomes a mirror of Your love and compassion.

Prayer: Jesus, I would like to be so filled with sadness at your suffering that I would try to do something about it. I want to see your face in anyone who is suffering or in pain. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station VII: Jesus falls the second time under the cross

Leader: Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD--how long? . . . How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O LORD my God! Psalm 6: 1-4 & Psalm 13: 1-4

All: It was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death. Phil 2:8

Reflection on the Station:



Now all assistance is exhausted. There will be no more help for You, no further kindnesses to encounter on the way. From now on, until the triumph over the tomb, there is only the misery of loneliness. You fall in this loneliness, again overcome by the weight of evil, the physical and emotional wounds so cruelly inflicted, even as you trudge on with Your heavy burden. The crowd still roars in contempt. There is no pity for a God face down in the dust a second time. The crowd is at the peak of its lust for blood, its determination for revenge for crimes never committed. The crime of innocence in the face of our guilt is enough for us to want to impose dehumanizing injury, to rid ourselves of the evidence of goodness and purity before us. We cry all the louder for You to be punished. The mockery continues. We say You are not God enough for us, and then treat You as we should not treat a man.

Prayer: Here, locked away, O Lord, I want to my life over to you. But Jesus, you know I still fall and sometimes I fall hard. The good way of life that you call me to, well, sometimes it seems far away. Sometimes I give in to my own weakness, my own way of still being trapped by the ways I choose to live. I fall and I fail you. Lord, don't give up on me! Be at my side to pick me up and put me on the right path again. Help me to ask for forgiveness and start over again on your path. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: **Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.**

Station VIII: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

Leader: A great crowd of people followed Jesus, including women who mourned and cried for him. Jesus turned to them and said: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children.” Luke 23:27-28

All: I give you a new commandment: love one another. John 13:34

Reflection on the Station:



The women weep for You but they do not realize that their own guilt and that of their children is more deserving of tears. It is they who are more grievously hurt than the innocent victim. While Your Body is wracked and deformed by pain, their piteous cries hide the deadly ugliness of sin-stained souls. It is this sin that kills You. We kill because we want to be God. But that is what You are offering us through Your Incarnation – a share in Your divinity! You show us the royal irony of our rebellion. In rebellion we reject the very thing we want, Your divinity. But we cannot have it unto ourselves. We and our children have it only through You. In You we have the light of eternity. We weep because we think a man is dying to this life. We are so attached to this world. But You tell us to weep for those who lose eternal life by separating themselves from You.

Prayer: Show me Lord, how to comfort my loved ones in my situation. Let me be patient and understanding with them, let me never start arguing with them, and if they speak harshly, let me respond peacefully. Help me to love them and not to control them or make demands. Comfort my family and bring them lots of peace as we face my time of incarceration. Make us a stronger family Lord, but if that doesn't happen, even though I really want it, then comfort me and help me to continue to love them as I feel their distance from me and my loss of them. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station IX : Jesus falls for the third time.

Leader: Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. John 12:25-27

All: **Whoever wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.** Matthew 16:24

Reflection on the Station:



Your strength utterly depleted, You fall a third time. Taunted mercilessly by temptations to turn away from Your mission, and weakened by the fatigue of constant pain, You once again stumble into the rocky dirt. Pathetic and broken, You bear the sneers and insults and profanities of a blaspheming crowd that wants a worldly leader to confirm them in their own power. God in the dust? Ha! They yell. We do not see the nobility of redemptive suffering, the majesty of meekness. We seek comfort and worldly prosperity and acclaim while You, our God and Creator, lie prostrate before us, humbling Yourself on the ground, crawling in dirt for us. How much more can we expect from a God we accuse of not caring, of lacking in love for us? And still You persevere amidst hatred, pride, and ridicule and the great satanic temptation to dismiss us as unworthy of Your love.

***Prayer:** Jesus, teach me to surrender my life into the Father's hands. Let me place in his hands the anger I feel inside of me, the frustration of being here, all my temptations, my hopes and my fears, the darkness and sadness that sometimes surround me, all the misunderstandings that come my way, all the other inmates I see every day. Everything in my life, Lord, I surrender into the hands of the Father, and ask only that He send me His love, His forgiveness and His peace. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: **Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.**

Station X : Jesus is stripped of His clothes.

Leader: When the crowd brought Jesus to the site of Golgotha, which means “Skull Place,” they tried to give him wine drugged with myrrh, but he would not take it. Then they crucified him and divided up his garments by rolling dice for them to see what each should take. Mark 15:22-24

All: Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth.
Isaiah 53:7

Reflection on the Station:



They mock You in Your nakedness, thinking they are revealing how pitiful this God is. In fact, they are showing how God has exalted man by becoming man – bare in his manhood. By seeking to reveal You as mere man, we fail to realize that in Your very manhood lies our divinization. In Your incarnation You have raised us to Yourself. The soldiers seek to leave You nothing, but You are God and cannot be made nothing. They want You to be shamed in Your nakedness, as Adam and Eve were shamed. But You are God and are not shamed. They think to reveal guilt but show only innocence. You consent to be naked in Your innocence, transcending the stain that Adam and Eve brought in guilt. We try to hide our sin, our flaws, by clothing ourselves. You, in innocence, are naked and You see all. Your robe is sought like a carnival prize, a souvenir of execution. Is that what we want, just a token of You?

Prayer: Jesus, You know how degrading it is to be strip-searched. There will always be people who disrespect me: C.O.'s and inmates who open old wounds of anger or hardness in my heart and make me want to respond to them with violence in word and action. Here, disrespect can become a game of power or strength or toughness. Jesus, show me how to act as you did on the way to your death. Let me find my strength and peace in you. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station XI: Jesus is nailed to the cross.

Leader: They crucified Jesus and two other criminals as well, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing” Luke 23:33-34

All: God has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins. 1 John 4:10

Reflection on the Station:



Wounded, mangled, made to bleed, You consent to the violent attack of the hammer. Patient in Your agony, You allow the cruel penetration of Your Body to make us one with You. You give Bread of life to fill us as You receive our nails. From Your love You bleed. For love of us, for love of the Father, the Child bleeds for the children. Brother bleeds for the brother who is killing Him. You become one with the cross, absorbing completely the burden of sin, allowing it to permeate You – all the rage and loneliness and anxiety and despair and hatred and lust and greed and incessant lies of all mankind through all the ages, sinking into You, filling You up and still You love.

***Prayer:** Jesus, what goes through your mind as they throw you to the ground and kneel on your arms so that they can steadily drive iron nails into each of your hands? Then they tie your legs to the cross so they can force your feet together and pound the nails through them and smash them tight against the wooden board. Are you even able to think as you feel so much physical pain, a pain that becomes even worse when they pull the cross upright and your whole body’s weight falls suddenly and horribly on your nailed hands and feet? You stay on that cross, leaning forward, suffering because each breath you take means that you have to pull on your nailed hands and push up on your nailed and bloody feet. Jesus, I know I will never suffer as much as you did, and you did it because you loved me. Jesus, help me to be faithful to you. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station XII: Jesus dies on the cross

Leader: When noon came, darkness fell on the whole countryside and lasted until about midafternoon. At that time Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Then uttering a loud cry, he breathed his last. Mark 15:33-37

All: Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation! 2 Corinthians 6

Reflection on the Station:



You hang on a cross with but a few faithful friends at Your feet. Your Mother is there as her Son bleeds to death. Even captured on a cross and expiring from the torture, there is no mercy for You, yet You plead for mercy for us. You even give us the Mother You chose for Yourself. And in Your passion, without solace, alone in the midst of the crowd, cut off even from Your Mother and the beloved disciple, You are man utterly alone. Defiled even as You die, cursed and ignored with no possibility of human comfort, You cry from the cross Your agony. At this moment, filled with all the despair of every human heart, You tear away any veil between man and God and plunge into the total hell of sin to purge it for us. It is the final acceptance of death. And then You die in trust that the Father will receive You.

Prayer: Jesus, as I think about your death, I ask forgiveness for anything I have done to hurt anyone. I place at the foot of your cross anyone who is a victim of what I have done. I ask you to bless them and keep them close to you. I ask that you change me so that no one else will ever be a victim of my actions. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station XIII: Jesus' mother and friends lower his body from the cross

Leader: There was a man named Joseph, an upright and holy member of the Sanhedrin, who had not been associated with this plan of action. He approached Pilate with a request for Jesus' body. He took it down and wrapped it in fine linen. Luke 23:50-53

All: Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering Lamentations 1:12

Reflection on the Station:



Your Body is given to Your Mother. In her womb You were welcomed into human life. Now You go to her in death. Your Mother is entrusted with the Body of Christ. She cleans it in love and wipes away the signs of the evil inflicted upon it. So it is with us. Your Mother welcomes us into her arms and heals and soothes through Your grace. She is the Mother of the Church, the Mother who accepts the mangled, the bereft, the brokenhearted, even as condemnation is heaped upon her. She takes into her embrace a Body that is accused of irreverence, of presumption, even criminality, and protects it with maternal care.

***Prayer:** Jesus, they take your body down from the cross and place it in your mother's arms: she holds you for a few moments. Does she remember how she held you when you were a baby or a little boy? Do her clothes become stained with the blood that flowed from a hundred places on your body? Do words exist that can describe the cry of grief that comes from her now. Lord Jesus, wake up within me compassion for all the women who suffer from the sufferings of their children. Let me know a little of their grief and sorrow. Let me sense it in the sadness of your mother at your death. Amen.*

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.

Station XIV: Jesus's mother and friends lay his body in the tomb

Leader: Taking Jesus' body, Joseph wrapped it in fresh linen and laid it in his own new tomb which had been cut from a formation of rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away. Matthew 27:59-60

All: With your blood you purchased for God people of every race and tongue, of every people and nation. Revelation 5:9

Reflection on the Station:



Your Body is laid in a tomb. You allow Yourself to be placed in a tomb by us. We voluntarily seek the tomb by turning away from You. To be separated from You is to condemn ourselves to death. But we see it differently. We think we can place You far away, outside ourselves, in a tomb, while we live. But the only life is in You. In casting You away we give ourselves to death. We seal our hearts against You and make of ourselves the tomb. How often we do this in receiving the Eucharist, taking You into a tomb we do not open to You and treating You as dead? How often do we put the Body of Christ into a tomb, saying it serves no purpose for us, that we can live without it? We turn away from Your Church, but she will prevail in Your Resurrection. She emerges from every apparent tomb. And in our death to self the Body of Your Church is continually renewed.

Prayer: Jesus, your friends do what they can to clean up your body; they bury you in a borrowed tomb. When the stone rolls over the entrance, they walk away, weeping and exhausted. Their dreams died with you that day. They could not have seen the glory of your Easter rising from the dead that was yet to come. Jesus, where I am now often seems like a tomb, like a complete end of my life – the death of every hope and dream I ever had. How can I get through this time Lord? Even if I get through it, my future often looks empty or like an endless series of more problems. Send me Lord, the glory of your resurrection to fill me with hope. Fill my heart with your Peace and hope. Lord Jesus, my savior, teach me to love. Amen.

Leader: We adore you O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your cross you have redeemed the world.