

# Why do the Stations of the Cross?



The most important reason for reviving the practice of making the Stations of the Cross is that it is a powerful way to contemplate, and enter into, the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself to us. It takes the reflection on the passion out of my head, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves my senses, my experience and my emotions. To the extent I come to experience the love of Jesus for me, to that extent the gratitude I feel will be deep. Deep gratitude leads to real generosity and a desire to love as I have been loved. First, just a note about the history of the stations:

## The History:

From the earliest of days, followers of Jesus told the story of his passion, death and resurrection. When pilgrims came to see Jerusalem, they were anxious to see the sites where Jesus was. These sites become important holy connections with Jesus. Eventually, following in the footsteps of the Lord, along the way of the cross, became a part of the pilgrimage visit. The stations, as we know them today, came about when it was no longer easy or even possible to visit the holy sites. In the 1500's, villages all over Europe started creating "replicas" of the way of the cross, with small shrines commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the set of 14 stations we now know and were placed in almost every Catholic Church in the world.

You can do this ongoing...

You can do one a day, for two weeks. I can do several at a time, and just do them, when I get a chance. I can do all 14 at a time, and return to them in my prayer and imagination as I do them. The most important thing to remember is that this can be as personal as I'd like it to be. One of our common religious struggles is to realize that we are not alone. The Good News is that Jesus entered into our life's experience completely - even suffering and death - and that he fell into the hands of a Loving God, who raised him from death to life. We can have complete hope that suffering and death have no complete hold on us. We will all share eternal life with him, if we can fall into the hands of the same Loving God. And, along the way, we are not alone. Jesus is with us as one who knows our suffering, and the death we face. That can be deeply consoling.

## How to do the Stations of the Cross.

### The Context:

The first point to note is that this is prayer. It isn't an intellectual exercise. It is in the context of my relationship with God. I could read through the text of each of the stations, and look at the pictures, but that wouldn't necessarily be prayer. This is an invitation to enter into a gifted faith experience of who Jesus is for me. It becomes prayer when I open my heart to be touched, and it leads me to express my response in prayer.

The second thing to remember is that this is an imaginative exercise. Its purpose is not a historical examination of "what really happened" on that day in history. It's about something far more profound. This is an opportunity to use this long standing Christian prayer to let Jesus touch my heart deeply by showing me the depth of his love for me. The context is the historical fact that he was made to carry the instrument of his death, from the place where he was condemned to die, to Calvary where he died, and that he was taken down and laid in a tomb. The religious context is that today Jesus wants to use any means available to move my heart to know his love for me. These exercises can allow me to imaginatively visualize the "meaning" of his passion and death.

The point of this exercise is to lead us to gratitude. It will also lead us into a sense of solidarity with all our brothers and sisters. In our busy, high tech lives we can easily get out of touch with the terrible suffering of real people in our world. Journeying with Jesus in the Stations, allows us to imagine his entry into the experience of those who are tortured, unjustly accused or victimized, sitting on death row, carrying impossible burdens, facing terminal illnesses, or simply fatigued with life.

# Praying the Stations of the Cross

To pray the way of the cross requires only that you meditate before each station. Before each station you may say:

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

## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
take me along that holy way  
you once took to your death,  
Take my mind, my memory,  
above all my reluctant heart,  
and let me see what once you did  
for love of me and all the world.



## The First Station: Jesus Condemned

Pilate brought Jesus outside and said to the people, "Look at your king!"

At this they shouted, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

"Behold your king," says Pilate.  
"Away with him," the people shout.  
And they sent you to your death.  
Lord Jesus, Word made flesh,  
Light for our dark world,  
God come to save us,  
may we never send you away.



## The Second Station: Jesus carries his cross



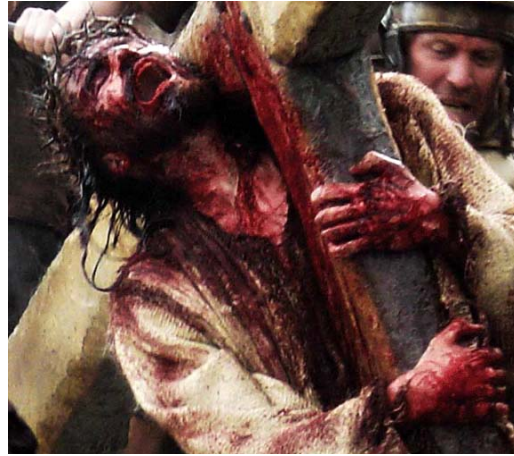
Jesus was led away,  
and carrying the Cross by himself,  
went out to what is called  
the Place of the Skull, Golgotha.

You were led to Calvary, Lord,  
carrying the cross by yourself.  
Yet was the cross only yours,  
or was it also mine you bore?  
By your holy cross, O Jesus,  
make me strong and able  
to take up the cross I must bear.

## **The Third Station: Jesus falls**

Jesus emptied himself,  
and took the form of a slave,  
being born in the likeness of men.  
He humbled himself,  
to death and a Cross.

How strange to see you fall  
as anyone does who cannot go on.  
And yet you rise again to take the  
few steps more you can.



By your first fall, O Jesus, give your risen grace to those who fall and cannot rise.

## **The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother**

Simeon said to Mary his mother: "This child  
is destined to be the downfall and the rise of  
many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed.  
And you yourself shall be pierced with a  
sword, so that the thoughts of many hearts  
will be laid bare."

O Mother of my Savior,  
you stand beside your Son.  
With love beyond all telling,  
you share his grief as one.  
How shall I know your sorrow,  
your tears beyond compare?  
Deep in my heart stand watching,  
and call my memory there.



## **The Fifth Station: Simon helps carry the cross**

A man named Simon of Cyrene, was coming  
in from the fields, and they pressed him into  
service to carry the Cross.

Simon, coming in from the fields,  
was pressed to carry your cross.  
Did he come to know you, Lord,  
walking by your side?

By your meeting with the Cyrenean,  
may we find you in the stranger,  
and in the needy we meet.



## **The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes Jesus' face**

He who welcomes you welcomes me; and he who welcomes me, welcomes him who sent me. And I promise that whoever gives a cup of cold water will not want for a reward.

A woman named Veronica  
kindly washed your face with a towel.  
Such a simple thing!  
A towel, a cup of water, a loving word.  
By your meeting with Veronica, Lord,  
help us value such small things,  
so great when given in your name.



## **The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time**

But I am a worm and no man; the scorn of all, despised by the people. All who see me scoff at me.

Can God fall, a mighty God,  
whose hands uphold all that is?  
By your second fall, O Lord,  
remember how weak we are,  
remember our helplessness,  
remember our human frailty,  
and come to our assistance.



## **Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women**

A great crowd of people followed him, including women who beat their breasts and lamented over him.

Women wept as you passed  
and you said, "Weep not for me  
but for your children."  
Keep the grace of this meeting  
alive in our hearts, Lord.  
Keep us concerned  
for humanity's children.



## **The Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time**

I am like water poured out; all my bones are racked. You have brought me down to the dust of death.

Like water poured out,

your strength is gone. You fall as if to the dust of death.  
By your third fall, O Lord, give us courage before our trials  
and patience to go on. Help us in our need.

## **The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped**

They stripped off his clothes  
and began to mock him saying:  
"All hail, king of the Jews!"

They divided your garments  
and cast lots for your clothes.  
Stripped of all dignity,  
you had nothing of your own.  
By your despoilment, O Lord,  
clothe us in your mercy  
which is rich beyond words.

## **The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross**

After carrying his Cross, Jesus came to the  
Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha).  
There they crucified him and two others with him.

Nailed to the cross,  
you know how many feel  
who, bound by circumstance,  
year by year get nowhere.  
By your riven hands and feet, Lord,  
help those fixed to a cross  
by long illness or misfortune.



## **The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies**

Jesus said, "I thirst!" and they gave him wine.  
"It is finished!" he cried, and gave up his spirit.

Once the prophet said: "Who can believe our report?"  
God's Servant, crushed in sorrow, pierced for our offenses!  
Shall we not stand watching, Lord, mourning the sins you bear,  
rejoicing in the pardon you bestow?

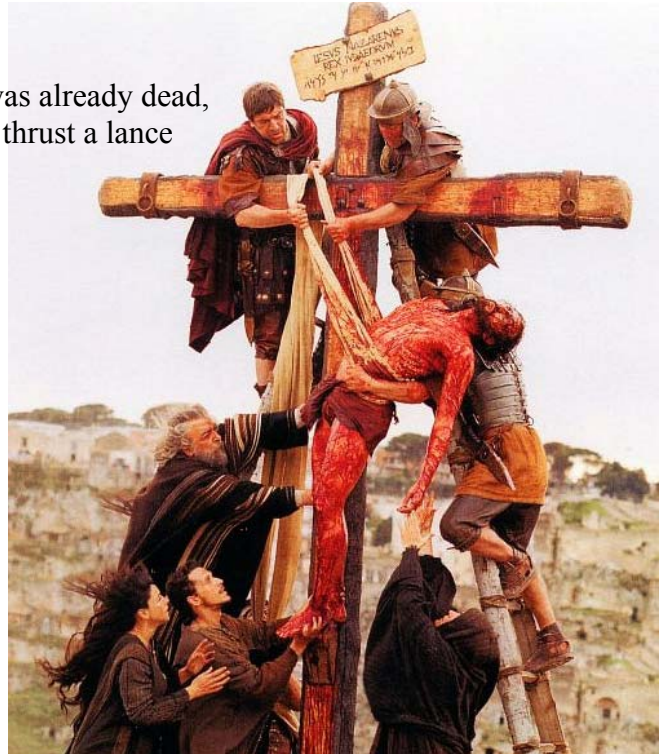


## The Thirteenth Station:

### Jesus is taken down from the cross

When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers thrust a lance into his side, and blood and water flowed out.

Resting in your mother's arms  
when taken from the cross,  
you died trusting a Father's care,  
faithful unto death.  
By your holy death, O Lord,  
give us an unflinching trust in God,  
commend us to your Father's hands.



## The Fourteenth Station:

### Jesus is buried

Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in perfumed oils. Then he buried Jesus in a tomb close at hand.

You were buried in a garden tomb,  
like a seed fallen into the ground,  
waiting to rise again.  
Lord, help us rise again  
after dying with you.  
May all who have fallen asleep  
rise again.



## Christ rises

On the third day he rose again.

Suddenly, without warning,  
Jesus stood before them and said, "Peace!  
Do not be afraid!  
Go and carry the news to the others  
that they are to go to Galilee  
where they will see me." Mt 28

### **Mark 14:**

*22 As they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and asked God's blessing on it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take it, for this is my body."*

*23 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood, poured out for many, sealing the covenant between God and his people. 25 I solemnly declare that I will not drink wine again until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." 26 Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.*

