

The Way of the Cross

† The Gathering

The ministers enter in silence.

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Matthew 16.24,25

Once we were far off, but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood, for he is our peace.

Ephesians 2.13,14

An appropriate greeting may be given.

A minister may introduce the service and then says

Let us pray.

A brief moment of silence follows.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:

grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ First Station:
Jesus judged by Pilate

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.
Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15.14,15

Reflection / Meditation

Pilate sits in judgement: Jesus stands condemned. He stands with all who throughout history suffer persecution, destruction, injustice, calumny, war, the pride of others, and abuse. At this moment, the Word by whom the heavens and the earth were made embraces the silence known to every victim. From the cross there will be one last

exultant cry: It is accomplished. The victim slain will rise again as the Lamb triumphant who gives voice in judgement for those who have stood with him.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were condemned to death for political expediency: be with those who are imprisoned for the convenience of the powerful.

You were the victim of unbridled injustice: change the minds and motivations of oppressors and exploiters to your way of peace.

To you, Jesus, innocent though condemned, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

† Second Station:

Jesus carries the cross

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Mark 15.20

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are you when people abuse and persecute you . . .”

Jesus identifies the blessedness of the abused and persecuted with prophecy. Persecution can be the response of the un-free towards those who are no longer bound within restrictions that limit the ability to speak the word of God, particularly when that word is a hard one to hear and accept. Truth in the person of the Word was disconcerting to Pilate and he had it silenced for the sake of a quiet life. Are we not similarly tempted sometimes?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you carried the cross through the rough streets of Jerusalem:
be with those who are loaded with burdens beyond their strength.
You bore the weight of our sins when you carried the cross:
help us to realize the extent and the cost of your love for us.
To you, Jesus, bearing a cross not your own,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

¶ *Third Station:*

Jesus Falls the First Time

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet, Isaiah

Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4-6

Reflection / Meditation

“... and speak all kinds of calumny against you.”

A fall in public is embarrassing, but people generally come forward to offer help. Not in this case. Jesus is alone. The force and extent of his humiliation are as relentless as the ground that rises up to hit him. Calumny, for all that it is a spoken thing, is no less real in its effect. A single word can destroy trust, dignity, hope, and life itself. Think of the word that betrayed Anne Frank to the Nazis. And once spoken, we cannot take that word back. It is our judgement.

Prayer

Remind us often Lord,
when we are feeling
proud,
arrogant,
beyond reproach,
pleased with ourselves,
self sufficient in our ways,
that for such as us
and better
and worse

you walked a road
that took you to a cruel cross,
and rose again to show us where
we might look for rescue
as from this lofty perch
we fall.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

† *Fourth Station:*

Jesus meets his mother

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘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.’

Luke 2:34-35

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are the peacemakers.”

As Jesus meets his mother the recollection of peace is a refreshment that evokes the safety of home. Peace is not the absence of physical exertion or the elimination of difficult emotions, but a deeper sense of connectedness that mutually enhances dignity, trust and hope. Here we might paraphrase: blessed are the homemakers, the people who offer from what they have an environment in which others find a welcome the betokens the generosity of the Holy Spirit, so evident in Mary’s life.

Prayer

Inscribed upon our heart,
the maker’s mark,
indelible,
the Word of God,
‘Love’
beautifully written,

heartfelt,
that all God's people
might know
that we are precious,
children
of a heavenly Father
becoming family together,
and may eyes lift upward
as we listen together
to hear angels worship.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Fifth Station:*

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Mark 15.21

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are those persecuted in the cause of right.”

The consolation for them is simply stated: ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ The subsequent parables in Jesus’ teaching indicate that there are many surprising ways to participate in the life of the kingdom.; prostitutes make their way in before Pharisees, for example. The perception that justice is the kernel of righteousness permits the inclusion in the kingdom of many whose heroic living out of its values might call our own priorities into question. Would I risk being a Simon of Cyrene?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were worn down by fatigue:
be with those from whom life drains all energy.
You needed the help of a passing stranger:
give us the humility to receive aid from others.
To you, Jesus, weighed down with exhaustion and in need of help,

be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

¶ *Sixth Station:*

Veronica offers her veil to Jesus

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

Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Isaiah 53:2-3

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are those who show mercy.”

The consolation of this Beatitude is a mirror image: ‘mercy will be shown to them’. For Veronica, as has fascinated religious artists throughout the centuries, the consolation is the imprint of the face of Jesus. In our photographic age the notion of a ‘true likeness’ (the meaning of the name, Veronica) has become a technical matter of little merit or significance. But for the person seeking blessedness it is a moral, spiritual matter in which there can be discerned a deeper resemblance – the image of God.

Prayer

Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord,
come, all who are weak,
taste the living water
that I shall give.

Dip your hands in the stream,
refresh body and soul,
drink from it,
depend on it,
for this water
will never run dry.
Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

† *Seventh Station:*

Jesus falls a second time

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

Reading

A reading from the book of Lamentations

I am one who has seen affliction
under the rod of God's wrath;
he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;
against me alone he turns his hand,
again and again, all day long.

Lamentations 3:1-3

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”

In Christian devotion the cross is viewed as a tool or instrument: of death, but more significantly in the creation of new life. The image of the cultivation of the earth suggests itself, with the cross as a plough with which Jesus has first cleared the debris of our neglected and overgrown lives, making us ready to keep, or plant, the seed of the gospel. When the cross presses heavily on you, the footprint of the master gardener is close by, preparing you with skill and loving care for tender new growth.

Prayer

This is love.
Not that you spoke words of comfort,
walked with the unclean and unloved,
shared wisdom, bread and fish,

brought healing into lives
and challenged the status quo.

This is love.

That you spoke the word of God,
walked a painful road to the Cross,
shared living water, bread of life,
brought Salvation to the world
and died for the sake of all.

This is love.

It is a seed
sown in the ground,
which germinates,
blossoms,
and spreads its sweet perfume.

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***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Eighth Station:*

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

Luke 23.27-31

Reflection / Meditation

"Weep for yourselves and your children."

The capacity to weep is one which we regard with suspicion. Tears can be produced in synthetic emotion, and we probably know when we are indulging in that or being willingly manipulated by media use of this power. The danger with such misuse of our tears is that we might damage an important capacity and gift: the physical manifestation of deep compassion, and expression and symbol that is more eloquent than words. True tears are a gift to lavish on others and ourselves with great care.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, the women of Jerusalem wept for you:
move us to tears at the plight of the broken in our world.
You embraced the pain of Jerusalem, the 'city of peace':
bless Jerusalem this day and lead it to the path of profound peace.
To you, Jesus, the King of peace who wept for the city of peace,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

† *Ninth Station:*

Jesus falls the third time

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

Reading

A reading from the book of Lamentations

It is good for one to bear
the yoke in youth,
to sit alone in silence
when the Lord has imposed it,
to put one's mouth to the dust
(there may yet be hope),
to give one's cheek to the smiter,
and be filled with insults.
For the Lord will not
reject for ever;
Although he causes grief, he will have compassion
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

Lamentations 3:27-32

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

The description ‘poor in spirit’ is not an excuse for disregarding material poverty. But the identification of poor in spirit points us to those who are so easily overlooked or whom we impoverish by a thoughtless word or gesture. What we describe as self-esteem is that measure by which worth is recognised. Only when we perceive the reality of this worth in the sight of God do we learn the importance of raising the fallen, embracing the lost, and giving thanks for our own rescue in Christ.

Prayer

Forgive those things we have done
which have caused you sadness,
and those things we should have done
that would have brought you joy.

In both we have failed
ourselves,
and you.

Bring us back to that place
where our journey began,
when we said that we would follow
the way that you first trod.

Lead us to the Cross
and meet
us there.

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All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Tenth Station:*

Jesus is stripped of his garments

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him.

Matthew 27:33-

36

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are the lowly.”

We see the process of stripping differently according to need and context. With a picture or piece of furniture in need of repair, it is an essential part of the process of restoration. With a person, as a public spectacle, it seems to be a sign of degradation. But perhaps blessedness comes at the cost of being stripped; for us too, it's part of the process of restoration. The recovery of 'true lowliness of heart' lies in the stripping away of pride, fear, and the defensiveness that makes us other than we really are.

Prayer

Jesus, Lamb of God,
when you walked this earth
you did not consider
heavenly equality,

though that was yours to choose,
but took the role of servant,
and in humility
and obedience
allowed the rough nails of our sin
to be hammered into your flesh
for the sake of our salvation.
And so it is
that we acknowledge you
as Lord of all,
to the glory of God the Father,
Son and Spirit, Three.

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***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Eleventh Station:*

Jesus is nailed to the cross

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Mark 15.24

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are the pure in heart.”

In group discussion about the beatitudes, the one about the pure in heart often emerges as the favourite. Why? Perhaps because vision is the sense by which our curiosity is most immediately satisfied. To want to see God is the obvious expression of our longing to know God. But if the promise to the repentant thief is our guide, purity of heart as the condition for the vision of God depends first on seeing ourselves as we really are. Only a contrite, loving heart can sustain the intensity of paradise.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you bled in pain as the nails were driven into your flesh: transform through the mystery of your love the pain of those who suffer.

To you, Jesus, our crucified Lord,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

¶ *Twelfth Station:*

Jesus dies on the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mark 15.34-37

Reflection / Meditation

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right."

Hunger and thirst are very physical sensations that point to a need for material satisfaction. So 'what is right' also pertains to this sphere, as

the ordering of creation in the way God intended. Blessedness is exposed on the cross in Jesus' act of re-ordering a disoriented world. The action is material, as it is spiritual and eternal, and within it emerges the source of our satisfaction. The torn curtain gives access to the holy of holies – eternity, while blood and water satisfy us now in sacramental signs.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you died on the cross
and entered the bleakest of all circumstances:
give courage to those who die at the hands of others.
In death you entered into the darkest place of all:
illumine our darkness with your glorious presence.
To you, Jesus, your lifeless body hanging on the tree of shame,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

¶ *Thirteenth Station:*

Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to his mother

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

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him.

Matthew 27:54-55

Reflection / Meditation

"Blessed are you who are poor."

Being and having are linked. We can dismantle people's dignity by the way in which we take their possessions. Even the redistribution of misappropriated or improper wealth must be characterized by transparency or justice, or new injustices will surely follow. But when the body of Jesus is taken down from the cross, the justice of God's mercy begins to be revealed, as properties are redistributed. What we had and he had not is now his: our death, taken lovingly, and from which we derive new life.

Prayer

You were a man of suffering
acquainted with grief,
loved and despised in equal measure.
You understand humanity,

know our failings,
love us despite the people that we are.
When we, like Peter, deny you
by word or action,
forgive us.
When we, like Judas, are tempted
to follow a different path,
forgive us.
When we, like those in the crowd
allow you to be crucified,
forgive us.
Bring us to the foot of the Cross
to stand next to the one who,
looking into your eyes declared
'Surely this is the Son of God'

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***All* Amen.**

***All* Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **Fourteenth Station:
Jesus laid in the tomb**

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Mark 15.46

Reflection / Meditation

“Blessed are those who mourn.”

Grief is human, as death is. The reality of the incarnation is thus profoundly expressed at the tomb of Lazarus: ‘Jesus wept.’ Though it can turn us in on ourselves, grief is not essentially selfish; it is the expression of love for another, and the registering that, capable of loving and being loved, we experience a new, painful limitation when the receiver and giver of our love dies. Blessedness is found in having loved; consolation in living the eternally reciprocated love of the Trinity.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Lord of life, you became as nothing for us:
be with those who feel worthless and as nothing in the world’s eyes.
You were laid in a cold, dark tomb and hidden from sight:
be with all who suffer and die in secret,
hidden from the eyes of the world.
To you, Jesus, your rigid body imprisoned in a tomb,

be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.

¶ *The Conclusion*

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom
in the words our Saviour taught us.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ

delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

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

Christ was manifested in the body,
vindicated in the spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed in throughout the world,
glorified in high heaven.

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

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

May God bless us,
that in us may be found love and humility,
obedience and thanksgiving,
discipline, gentleness and peace.

All Amen.

The ministers depart in silence.