

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

Jesus is condemned unjustly by those who did not understand him and by those who were frightened of what he did and said. Perhaps they sensed that this man could make a difference, that he could turn their world upside down.

We continue to condemn people unjustly today. People are condemned because of the colour of their skin, their gender, their beliefs, because they are born with a disability, because they don't conform to our way of thinking, the list is endless. There are also the people who have been justly condemned, who have been found guilty, served their sentence and asked for forgiveness. Does our society really forgive; really believe that people can change or do we continue to condemn them over and over again?

We Pray

Jesus, what a terrible injustice to see you condemned to death. Your own people, the Roman judges and the soldiers didn't recognise that you were the Son of God. Give us the grace to see, respect and love you in all people, both innocent and guilty. Change our hearts that we may see with new eyes those we might otherwise condemn.

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

There are burdens that we all carry, some are very obvious and others we take great care to hide. There are the burdens of illness, pain and disability, of old age, dependence, and caring for someone who no longer knows who we are. There are the burdens of constant fear, of loneliness and of isolation. The invitation of Jesus on the cross is to hand over these burdens to him.

We Pray

May we see your presence Lord in all the burdens we carry today. Help us to share our burdens more freely, not to be afraid to acknowledge our fears and our pain. May we be more aware of the crosses that others bear and make time to alleviate their burden. May your face shine on each one of us through the crosses we bear.

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

Look at Jesus fall under his cross. He might have fallen into the gutter or be slouched into a doorway. He doesn't look much like God there, but he didn't look like God when he fell into the dirt on the way to Calvary either. The crowds look on with disdain at this man whom they see as a sinner, who has been condemned to death by the authorities.

Like the crowd, we often have only condemnation and rejection for those we see as sinners. We judge them without knowing about their trials, scourging and crowning with thorns. Do we even suspect the part we might have played in knocking them down? What do we do to help them?

We Pray:

Jesus, it's easy to see your image in saints. Help us to see you in the sinners too. You had a place in your heart for the divorced Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the good thief, and for those who crucified you. Give us this same compassionate heart.

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

Jesus carries the heaviest burden of the loss of his family; the sundering of the earthly, loving relationship between mother and child. This was not of his making. The violence inflicted upon him etched into the very heart of his mother, as she watched the agony of her son.

We see Mary's pain in the mothers and fathers who watch their children giving up their life to drugs, addictions and suicide, in the women and men who suffer violence and the ongoing threat of violence in their home from spouse or child. We see Mary's pain in the child coping with the breakdown of a parent's marriage, in the couple trying desperately to rebuild their relationship and family anew.

We Pray:

Jesus, we remember the gaze that rested between you and your mother. In that moment of pain there was also a moment of deep and enduring love. Jesus, give us the courage to bring that love into the deepest recesses of our homes, to our children and to our spouses, to those places of fracture and disharmony in our circle of relationships.

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.

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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

Look at Jesus who lies hidden and unknown: beneath every person in need. Across our world we see human suffering in the faces of strangers, in the faces of those struggling for democracy in the Middle East and beyond, in the faces of those dealing with the loss of life and destruction of property. People we know of, but do not know, must live with the aftermath of the ravages and destructive forces of nature – coping with floods and drought, with the devastating effects of climate change...

We Pray:

Lord, help us to grasp our opportunities to be a Simon in our world. In those times when we can help, let us have the generosity to do so. May we continue the spirit of Simon through our support of all who work to alleviate suffering in our world. Lord, may we have the humility to accept all the Simons along our road who reach out to help us in our moments of need.

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

Today the visible face of Christ, the Church, stands before us still wounded and disfigured; disfigured by its own sins of abuse of children and power, and creased with the wounds of hurt and betrayal. Bearing these scars, the face of Christ calls us to look upon and heal the sin of our Church.

We Pray:

Jesus, give your wounded Church the courage of Veronica so that we may wash the face of Christ clean from the disfigurements of our sin. Help us to bring healing to the scars that hide the beauty of your face to our world. Give us the faith to continue to build your Church as a visible sign of your love and compassion.

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.

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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

All around us people are overburdened by the crosses they carry; they struggle and sometimes fall. There are those who have lost their jobs and feel that they have little hope of finding another, those who live with the prospect of unemployment, and those who struggle to keep others in work. There are those who suffer because of failures in our financial, health and political systems. Jesus is with each one of us however we fall and there he chooses to love and save us.

We Pray:

Jesus, from deep within yourself, you found the courage and strength to get up once again and continue the journey. Give us your strength to keep going even when hope is dim.

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.**

Reflection / Meditation

¶ **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

Look at Jesus and listen to his message for us today.

Weep for the children who are abused.

Weep for the women who are victimised.

Weep for men and women who suffer from the tyranny of today's body image that controls their lives and prevents them from feeling lovable.

Weep for the young who cannot find a job or a way in life.

Weep for the old who are forgotten.

Weep for people who starve in the shadow of abundance.

Weep for people who are homeless, in exile or seeking refuge.

Weep for them.

We Pray:

Lord, open our hearts to the suffering of all people in our world. Give us the generosity of spirit to help us recognise their pain, the courage to challenge the systems that place intolerable burdens on them and the compassion to support them.

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

Many in our world today feel that they are at that moment of final falling, that their burden is too much to carry. They cannot bear any more. Crushed by the weight of their cross they feel unable to get up, unable to go on. Some may look for relief in addiction. Some may look to escape through suicide.

In Jesus we find our hope and our encouragement.

The third fall of Jesus reminds us that even in our moment of complete helplessness, or our experiences of depression, in our own Calvary, we can stand up again. Jesus is with us and Jesus is our strength.

We Pray:

Lord, we pray that when our strength fails, when our hope fades and when our spirit grows weary that we will put our unbounded trust in you.

In turn may we bring your love, in a word or action of comfort to another, in their moment of meaningless, depression or despair.

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.

https://

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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

Look at Jesus and the absolute indignity inflicted upon him by society. Jesus continues to be stripped of his dignity in those who have their good name taken from them and the intimate details of their lives exposed through the media. Society takes on the role of judge and jury as we curiously devour the details. Jesus is stripped again when men, women and children are portrayed as objects in the media, on screen and across the internet.

We Pray:

Forgive us Lord for being an irreverent mob prying into people's lives. Forgive us for being consumers of gossip under the name of 'news'. Let us never expose anyone. May we respect the dignity of others and leave judgement to God. Let us see the good in those around us and so enable them to reach their full potential.

Prayer

¶ **Eleventh Station:**

Jesus is nailed to the cross

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.

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

All Amen.

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

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

Jesus continues to be crucified in the ten children who die every minute of hunger in our world. He is crucified in all who are maimed, damaged and displaced because of war. He is crucified in all who are marginalised in our society because of their race, sexuality or gender. He is crucified in those who are abused physically, sexually or emotionally. He is crucified in those who are trafficked across the world. He is crucified in the exploitation of the earth and its resources.

We Pray:

Jesus, we pray on behalf of those who cannot reach out to you at this moment. We pray for all victims of violence; those who suffer it and those who inflict it. We pray especially for children, for the elderly and those too vulnerable to defend themselves. May victims of cruelty and oppression know that you are always with them.

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

There is much to seek forgiveness for in our world today, hunger, poverty, violence, abuse, war, neglect, corruption, the list seems endless. Each one of us praying these stations could continue the list on our own behalf and indeed on behalf of those who have hurt us.

As Jesus dies on Calvary, he challenges us to love our enemies,
to let go of hurt,
to ask for forgiveness
and when we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive,
to ask God to do it for us.

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

We Pray:

Let us stand with those who watched and prayed in silence while Jesus breathed his last. As we cannot measure love, so we cannot dilute this ultimate act of love and forgiveness with words. Let our love span the silence. Lord! Let our love and forgiveness speak your praise.

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

Mary's grief is our grief too. As Mary cradles the lifeless body of her son and offers him back to the Father, she stands with all parents who have held their children close to them in death:

those lost through accidents or acts of violence,
those who have died by suicide,
those who died suddenly or after illness.

Mary grieves with all who sorrow for loved ones: parents, siblings, family members, friends.

We Pray

Help us Lord to accept the partings that must come. Help us to offer our loved ones back to you as Mary offered her son. Faced with the silence of death, let us not despair but find hope. May the finality of death not oppress us. Help us to trust in you, the Lord of the living and the dead.

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

There are times when we are overcome by the darkness of the tomb, by the countless deaths that we experience each day, but the answer to all our grieving and despair lies in this place.

The world is now the tabernacle of God. The grain of wheat sown in darkness and in death has indeed yielded a rich harvest. Our presence here gives witness to that. Jesus' death was not in vain.

We Pray:

Jesus, each day you put before us life or death. Help us always to choose life. We pray for all those we have known who have died, and for those who have no one to pray for them. We ask for the gift of faith when we are faced with the darkness of the tomb and our own death approaches. May we have eyes to see the promise of new life that the darkness can hold.

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

*A response may be made to the preceding stations. This might
take the form of praise, penitence, intercession or some other
relevant action, accompanied by silence or singing.*

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

The Lord's Prayer is said.

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.