

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

~ A Guide for Prayer and Meditation ~

The most important reason for 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 our heads, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves our senses, our experiences and our emotions. To the extent we come to experience the love of Jesus for us (each of us), to that extent the gratitude we feel will be deep.

THE FIRST STATION Jesus is condemned to die.

Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth, by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said “yes” to God, and placed his life in god’s hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

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

THE SECOND STATION Jesus carries his cross.

Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. It represents the weight of all our crosses. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.

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THE THIRD STATION Jesus falls for the first time.

The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life of so many on this earth? He lays on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue.

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THE FOURTH STATION Jesus meets his mother.

Jesus’ path takes him to a powerful source of his strength to continue. All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord”. Now, they look into each other’s eyes. How pained he must be to see her tears. Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God binds them together.

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THE FIFTH STATION **Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.**

Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his own burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying his burden on his own.

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THE SIXTH STATION **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. His face shows the signs of his solidarity with all who have ever suffered injustice and vile, abusive treatment. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face—his gift to her. And, for us to contemplate forever.

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THE SEVENTH STATION **Jesus falls the second time.**

Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion, he stares at the earth beneath him. "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." Now he can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

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THE EIGHTH STATION **Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.**

The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing he can't remain to help them more in this life. He knows the mystery of facing the separation of death.

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THE NINTH STATION **Jesus falls the third time.**

This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. Summoning all his remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic, yet paying a price he deserves.

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THE TENTH STATION **Jesus is stripped.**

Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the ultimate vulnerability of the defenseless. No shield or security protects him. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.

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THE ELEVENTH STATION **Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

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THE TWELFTH STATION **Jesus dies on the cross.**

Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your hands, I commend my spirit."

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THE THIRTEENTH STATION **Jesus is taken down from the cross.**

What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lays in his mother's arms. He has truly died. A profound sacrifice, complete.

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THE FOURTEENTH STATION **Jesus is laid in the tomb.**

They take the body of Jesus to its resting place. The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty, or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.

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BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD