

The Stations of the Cross

Incorporating images taken in Franciscan Chapel of the
Apparition (Holy Sepulchre Church, Jerusalem)


Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Station One

Jesus is condemned to die



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of John 18:37

Pilate asked him, 'Are you a king, then?'
Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king.
I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth.'

Reflection: Jesus was not intimidated by Pilate's power and the lies of the people. He had spent his life standing up for truth and justice; he wasn't going to stop now.

It is nerve-wracking when I am called to stand up for what is right. It is tempting to say nothing, especially if mine is a lone voice. But if I fail to speak out I feel uneasy, because I know I am not being true to myself; to the person God calls me to be.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that when I stand up for fairness and truth I am never alone; you are before and beside me, strengthening me always.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).

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Station Two

Jesus takes up his cross



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew 27:31

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Reflection: Jesus was used to being pointed at; he didn't act like other people, he didn't fit in, he was 'different'. But while many had admired Jesus' new teaching, now things were beginning to change. In just a few hours Jesus was mocked and rejected by almost everyone.

It's unnervingly easy to be swayed by a crowd; for a clearly held view to be sullied by fear and animosity. It takes faith and courage to maintain a position that differs. Greater still is the love required to stand alongside one who is mocked by many.

Prayer: Lord, grant me clear sight and courage, so that I may resist the sway of the crowd, and stand firmly alongside those 'others' made in your image and likeness.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).

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Station Three

Jesus falls for the first time



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 40:30-31

Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young people stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

Reflection: It must have taken a while for Jesus to adjust to the weight of the rough wooden cross. His first steps would have been unsure; made worse by the push and shove of the jeering onlookers. Without help he was bound to fall.

Each new step and stage of life brings its challenges. It's easy to stumble as we readjust. Falling is inevitable sometimes. But through faith in God's love for us, we have the strength to get up and walk on.

Prayer: Lord, guide my steps as I journey through life. When I stumble and fall, may I always remember that you are ready to pick me up; working through others, supporting me to stand and walk on.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Four

Jesus meets his mother



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 2:34-35

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.'

Reflection: Scripture tells us that Mary stored Simeon's words in her heart. How often over the years must she have wondered about their meaning and worried about their fulfilment?

It's unlikely Simeon's prophecy could have prepared Mary for the piercing pain of Good Friday. Since Jesus' birth she has spent her life trying to protect and care for her son. Now, as he carries his cross, she can do nothing but watch.

Prayer: Lord, mothers around the world show Mary's constancy and courage: guiding their children through life's triumphs, setbacks and losses, only to let them go. Strengthen all mothers as you strengthened Mary. May they find in her a confidant and ally of faith, hope, and love.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Five

Simon helps Jesus carry his cross



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 23:26

As the soldiers led Jesus away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Reflection: Simon didn't want to get involved. He was just trying to pass through the crowd; to get on with his day. But he was picked out and forced to help. And it changed his life forever.

Sometimes we turn away when asked to help. Perhaps like Simon, we don't want to get involved. Or we feel there is little we can offer. Or we're afraid we'll make a fool of ourselves. But the world is changed by people stepping forward to do whatever they can to share the load of another.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust that when others ask for my help they believe I can make a difference. Give me the courage to step forward and get involved.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Six

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew 25:40

The King will answer them, 'Amen I tell you, whatever you did for one of these brothers and sisters of mine, even the least of these, you did it to me.'

Reflection: Little is known of Veronica. All we are told is that she stepped from the angry crowd to wipe Jesus' bloody face.

It is often said how brave Veronica must have been to do this. But maybe her compassion was so strong that fear couldn't stop her offering the little care she could give.

Compassion means we feel the pain of another deep in our heart. It allows us to identify with their struggle. Compassion can cost us tears, and pain. Yet it can motivate us to step out of our ordinariness to help ease the world's suffering.

Prayer: Lord, foster in me a compassionate heart, brave enough to share another's pain, humble enough to shed a tear, big enough to shelter their hopes; ready, always, to care.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Seven

Jesus falls for a second time



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from St Paul to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

We are often troubled, but not crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed.

Reflection: The wood of the cross and the people's rejection must have weighed heavier and heavier on Jesus' heart - and his body. It must have been ever harder to go on as he stumbled through the streets of Jerusalem.

Sometimes life delivers a series of blows and we feel as if we can't take anymore. It is then we recognise the value of resilience. Resilience strengthened by faith: that no matter how low we feel, with God's help we can rise up again.

Prayer: Lord, remind me when life is hard, that you never leave me to face my difficulties alone. Help me to see that you work through others; picking me up and restoring my strength.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Eight

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 23:27

A large crowd of people followed him; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him.

Reflection: Amidst the jeering crowd there was one group of women who refused to turn their back on their friend and teacher, Jesus. These women withstood pressures to deny him or run away. Although it made them outsiders, their faith in Jesus remained steadfast.

Sometimes it can be difficult to live out our faith when the world around us doesn't. We can feel pressured into 'fitting in' by not wanting to 'stand out'. It takes courage to remain faithful to a way of life and to support others as they follow their chosen path.

Prayer: Lord, in this often fickle world, help me to be steadfast; faithful to my loved ones, faithful to the Gospel, faithful to your Son. Never let the pressure to fit in prevent me from standing out.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Nine

Jesus falls for a third time



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the prophet Micah 7:8

Our enemies have no reason to gloat over us.
We have fallen, but we will rise again.
We are in darkness now, but the Lord will give us light.

Reflection: Jesus has almost reached the end. By his third fall many will have considered him a failure. How could someone who performed miracles and awed thousands now look so helpless?

The world has always prized successful people. But the lesson of the cross shows us that it is human to fail; and that God is with us through every stumble. God lets my failures teach me to be humble, resilient and forgiving, not just of my own limitations, but those of others too.

Prayer: Lord, there are so many reasons as to why we fail. Lack of effort, lack of support, lack of belief. Help me to give witness to the truth that, with You, there are always fresh starts.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).

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Station Ten

Jesus is stripped



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Mark 15:22-24

The soldiers took Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means 'The Place of the Skull'... and divided his clothes among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get which piece of clothing.

Reflection: After carrying the weight of a criminal's cross, being jeered at and falling down in front of the whole crowd, Jesus' dignity is now stripped away further as the soldiers take his clothes and leave him naked.

I know I am made in the image of God. Yet sometimes I don't act in a way that is worthy of this; when I fail to respect myself or when I fail to acknowledge the God-given dignity of others.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes and my heart, that I may see your image in all those around me. Give me the courage to stand up for the dignity of every person, including myself.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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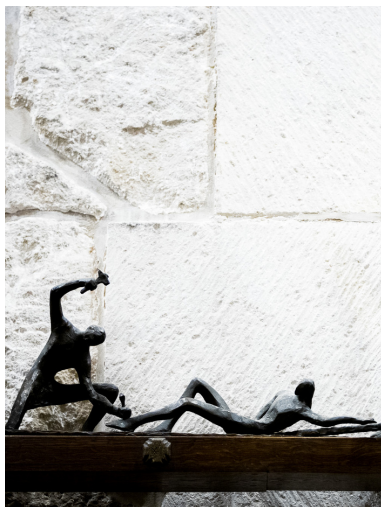
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Station Eleven

Jesus is nailed to the cross



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 23:33

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals.

Reflection: It is difficult to know what caused Jesus the greatest suffering; the physical pain of being nailed to the cross or the cruel injustice inflicted on him.

The cruelty on the news and in society causes its own suffering too. It can make me feel despondent. I find myself asking: what's happening to the world? How can some people be so cruel? Has it ever been as bad as this?

I pray and ask God, why don't you act? Why don't you do something? Then I remember he has: he made me.

Prayer: Lord, may I never forget that with each kind word and merciful act, I help to create a culture of love, that counteracts a culture of hate. Remind me that my love makes a difference.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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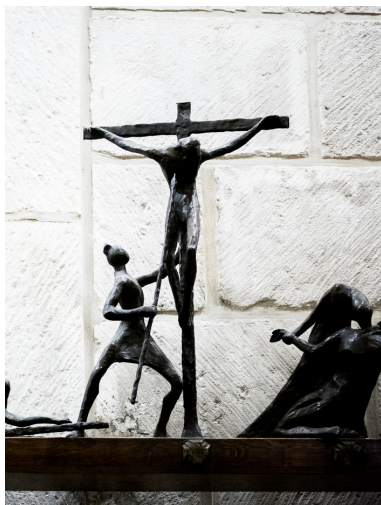
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Station Twelve

Jesus dies on the cross



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of Mark 15:34. 37

At about three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice... ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

Then with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Reflection: It is shocking to think that at this, his darkest hour, even Jesus doubted the Father’s presence. Shocking too for those gathered to watch. Is that how it ends? Have God and goodness gone?

It can be unnerving when someone we look up to begins to doubt themselves. We expect them always to be sure, to inspire and guide. Should we now doubt them as well? Or should we remain loyal and help restore their faith?

Prayer: Lord, help me to stay faithful in the darkest of times. When others lose hope, give me the grace to help them find it.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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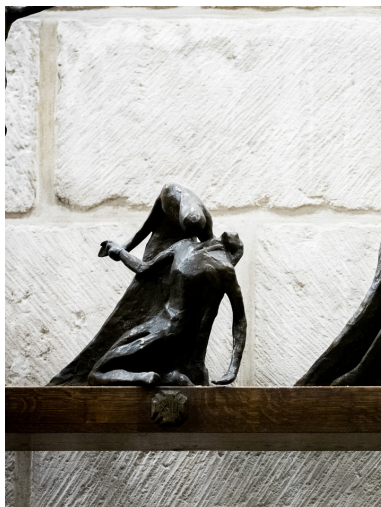
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Station Thirteen

Jesus is taken down from the cross



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of John 19:38

A request was put to Pilate by Joseph from Arimathea, that he might take away Jesus' body. And Pilate gave permission. So he came and took his body away.

Reflection: Joseph of Arimathea was a follower of Jesus. Unable to prevent his degrading death, Joseph and a few other loyal followers, now do all they can to ensure Jesus is finally treated with dignity and care.

During his ministry and through his death, Christ taught us that life is changed when we die, not ended. The love and care we show those who have died is a reflection of their inherent dignity.

Prayer: Lord, may I always pay my respects to those who have died: visiting their place of rest, lighting a candle, cherishing their memory. Prompt me too to support those left grieving; through prayer, a visit, and acts of care.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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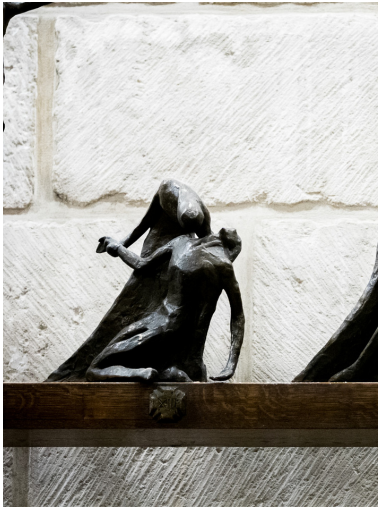
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Station Fourteen

Jesus is laid in the tomb



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of John 19:41-42

There was in the place where he was crucified a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. And so there... because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus.

Reflection: It is apt that Jesus' tomb was located in a garden, a place where the cycle of death and new life is witnessed as the seasons pass. When they laid Jesus in the tomb, his followers had no idea of the new life that was beginning to rise; a life that would change all time.

I am so used to seeing suffering and death in our world. Sometimes I want to close my eyes to it all. But the lesson of the cross teaches us to keep our eyes and hearts open for signs of new beginnings. God's love and light are always at work, especially in the darkest times.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes, to notice beauty in our world, kindness in people, love all around me, and Your risen Son, everywhere.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).



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Station Fifteen

The Resurrection



Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A reading from the Gospel of John 20:21

He came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

Reflection: On the evening of his resurrection, Christ appeared to the disciples. John's Gospel tells us that the disciples were in hiding because they were afraid. Afraid of enemies. Afraid of retribution. Afraid of the unknown.

And so, the first word Jesus says to them is 'Peace'. A small word with huge significance. A word that dispels fear. A word that requires participation. A word that heralds new beginnings.

Then Jesus sends the disciples out. Filled with his peace. Called now to share that peace with the world. To be missionary disciples. Confident, that life in Christ is eternal and full of hope.

Prayer: Father, your Son went to his death because of our hatred. Then rose again because our hatred is never stronger than your indomitable love. Give us the courage to go out and share your love, your mercy, your peace. Today, tomorrow, together. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be).

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