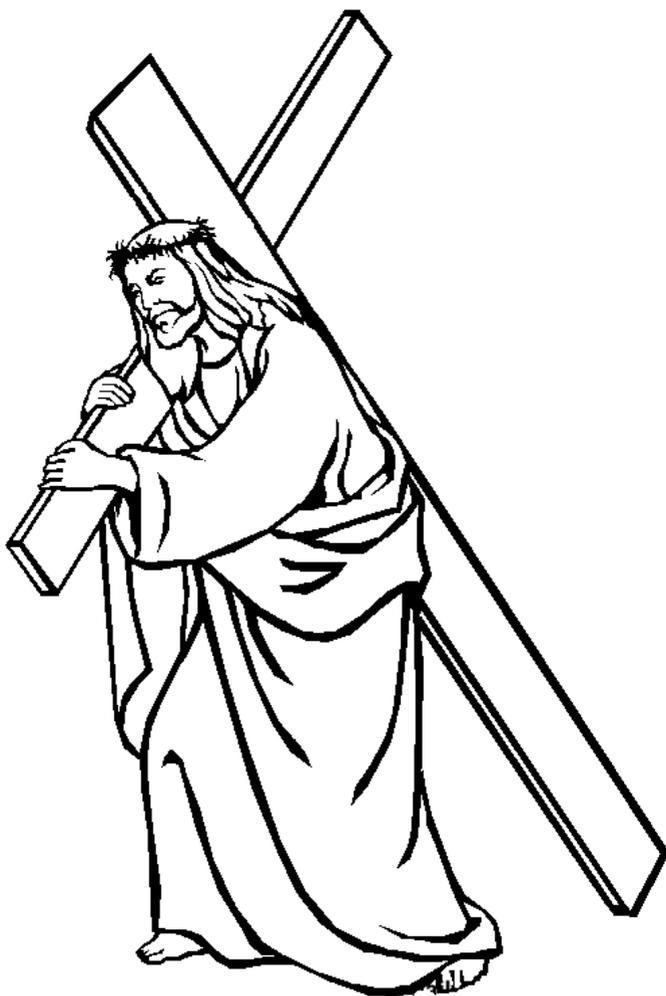


Stations of the Cross

Reflections by Anthony Kelly, C.Ss.R., STD



Introduction

Since the early Christian tradition, pilgrims visiting Jerusalem would visit the places where Jesus walked and lived. They also spent time visiting and praying along the road where He journeyed to His crucifixion. Over hundreds of years this tradition has developed and we now have a set of 14 stations that we can meditate on and pray with. Part of this prayer involves a pilgrimage. As we contemplate the steps that Jesus walked, we are encouraged to literally move to a different place. Even if we are praying the Stations by ourselves, we can walk, or change posture (kneeling/standing /sitting) in between each one.

The Stations help us to contemplate the suffering that Jesus experienced and to remember why – His love for us. As we think about Jesus' suffering on the Cross we are also able to unite our own suffering with His. We know that whatever difficulties we are facing, Jesus is there to walk beside us. He suffers with us, we are not alone.

For more ideas on how to pray the Stations of the Cross with a youth group, see the 2014 AOY Lenten Resource available from www.cam.org.au/youth/resources

Opening prayer:

Holy God, Loving and Merciful One,
we come to you in the darkness of our world.
The weight of our cares and our responsibilities,
of our struggles and longings,
lies heavy upon us.
Yet, in our hope we know our paths lead to you,
that your Holy Spirit is within us,
and that Jesus has gone before us as our way.
Because he bore the cross of all the world,
we gather now to follow him,
to receive from him the peace the world cannot give,
the joy that no one can take from us,
and the energies of new life.

The first station: Jesus is condemned to death



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Jesus stands before Pilate. The innocent one is condemned by the powers of this world, to be stripped, beaten and executed on the cross.

Pause: Lord Jesus, let us enter into your silence.

You have said everything you had to say.

Now you have no further words, as you hear the judge's verdict,
and the cries of the crowd calling for your death.

Your silence is our strength: as you left everything in your Father's
hands,

so now do we, knowing that an infinite love will find us wherever we are.

We pray for all who are unjustly condemned, for all who feel disgrace,
for all who suffer from the merciless judgments of our world.

As we stand with you, stand also with us,

a light against the surrounding darkness.

The second station: Jesus accepts the cross



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

On that back torn by scourging, the rough wood of the cross is now loaded. He takes the first stumbling steps of his way to Golgotha. He is bearing the sins of the world, the load of our guilt, of our selfishness, of the hard, cold heaviness of loveless lives.

Pause: Lord Jesus, let us go with you on your journey.

In your strength, we accept

all the sufferings, large and small,
involved in following

the path of justice, honesty and care for others.

We pray for all who are weakened in their struggle,
who are near to breaking point,

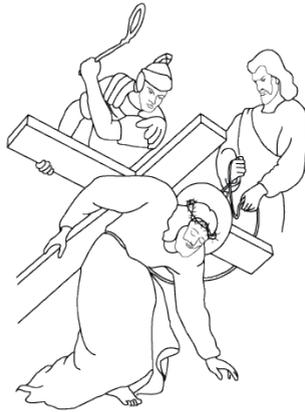
that their hope not fail

and their hearts not grow hard.

As we go with you, be with us on our different ways,

that we might meet in you, and find support in your love.

The third station: Jesus falls the first time



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

The climb is long, the path is narrow, the load is heavy, the taunting crowd presses close, the guards hurry him on. He trips; and falls beneath the weight across his shoulders...

Pause: Lord Jesus, you fall into our darkness
to meet us there
in the weakness of doubt and discouragement.
We pray for all who fall,
for all who have found the burdens of life too heavy,
the road too long
and help far away.
Be their courage now,
and by your fall
lift us all up in new strength.

The fourth station: Jesus meets his mother



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

The sword pierces Mary's heart as she sees her Son bloodied and disfigured on his way to execution. He hears that beloved voice; and looks up through a haze of pain. Eye meets eye; heart meets heart: and out of that tide of shared suffering rises the question: is this where love leads? Where can it take us now?

Pause: Lord Jesus, by the love you felt for this woman,
by the love she felt for you, open our hearts
to the suffering of the humble and the good of this world,
all who feel so defenceless against violence and hatred.
May love keep on being love, no matter what the pain,
and light our way...
Mary, by the sword that pierced your heart,
waken our hearts to that love
that has been shown us
in the passion of your Son.

The fifth station: Simon helps Jesus



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

This dark-skinned man from distant Africa is pressed into service. He is a farmer, coming from his fields to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. By helping the weakening Jesus, he found the beginning of faith: for his sons Alexander and Rufus were to become known to the early Church.

Pause: Lord Jesus,
in opening our eyes to our suffering neighbour,
you come to us yourself.
Help us to see the face of the other
who will be without help
unless we have time,
unless we reach out,
and make room for those we so easily overlook.

The sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



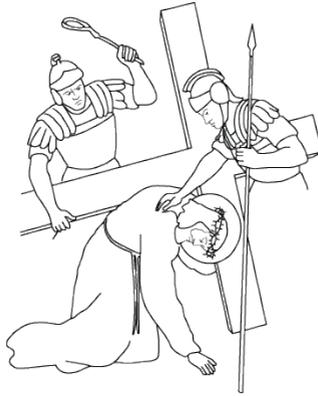
Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

The dust and the blood running down his swollen face cloud his vision. A courageous woman defies the crowd and wipes his face her veil. He sees her clearly now; and in the light of his gaze, the splendour of an infinite love shines upon her.

Pause: Lord Jesus, by the love that drew Veronica to you,
make each of us a healing presence in your world,
to use our hands to wipe away
the grime and the tears of life,
to see ourselves and others
as your mercy sees us all...
Inspire us to find the beauty
that lies hidden in our world,
to go beyond our prejudices,
harsh judgments and disappointments
to detect your grace at work in every life,
and to treasure every element of your creation.

The seventh station: Jesus falls the second time



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

He is forced on, pulled beyond those loving meetings with his Mother and the good Veronica. Even though Simon is there to help, he is drained of strength and falls once more to the ground.

Pause: Lord Jesus, by the weakness you suffered for our sake,
make us patient with ourselves and others.
Teach us to have time,
the way God has time,
for the whole unfinished business
of our lives and our world.
Guide every step we take,
and help us not to become bitter
or intolerant in disappointment;
so may we graciously accept,
along with the joy,
the pain that is the inevitable condition
of growth and life and being together.

The eighth station: Jesus speaks to the women



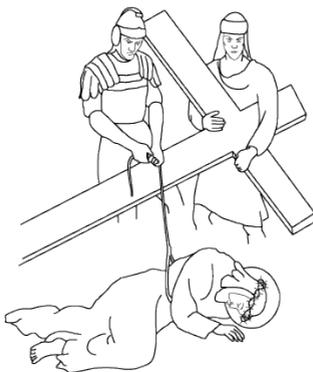
Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Once more He hears the voice of love and tenderness. Once more it is the voice of women, mothers with children in their arms. Those who were closest to life, who knew how vulnerable and fragile our lives can be, these saw the full horror of what was taking place. He turns toward them: “Weep not for me but for yourselves and your children”.

Pause: Lord Jesus, help us to answer the evils of our world
with a great defiant hope,
in a strong protest
against all that is loveless, degrading and violent.
May your compassion give us the energy
to conquer hatred though the power of your love
and in all the patient works of mercy and justice.
Help us never to be so absorbed in ourselves
As to forget the sufferings of the weak and the defenceless.
Teach us your own compassion...

The ninth station: Jesus falls the third time



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

In staggering those final uphill steps, all strength leaves him, and he falls once more. Each step felt like the end of the journey. He can go no further. And yet, one final effort... He staggers forward, and is dragged to the place of execution.

Pause: Lord Jesus, may the Spirit of your love
urge us onward.
Do not allow us to give up,
whatever our weakness,
however often we fall.
Help us to see our world
through the eyes of the crushed and the broken,
that we might all grow more closely together
and support one another along the way
in the love you have shown us.

The tenth station: Jesus is stripped



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

His clothes are pulled from him, and the soldiers cast lots for his last blood-stained possessions. He is left naked to the world... Love has stripped him of everything: "For our sake, he became poor..."

Pause: Lord Jesus, when we are stripped of everything,
and left with nothing but what only God can give,
clothe us with your very self.
When in the midst of life
we feel lonely and at a loss,
defenceless before the evils of the world,
clothe us with your sense of God's unfailing presence.
When, finally, death comes near,
clothe us with the perfect peace of trust in you.

The eleventh station: Jesus is nailed to the cross



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

He has been betrayed, abandoned by his followers, condemned, mocked and tortured. Now the cross, the most hideous form of execution known to the ancient world, the ultimate deterrent reserved for rebellious slaves. The nails pierce flesh and nerve, and he is lifted up in the sight of all: Behold the Man.

Pause: Could this be how God appears in our world?
Open our hearts, Lord Jesus, to true wisdom,
the wisdom of that love revealed in you,
that alone gives life:
“ the love that bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things”—
the “love that never ends”.
In place of the misery of selfishness
free us to choose the way of an ever greater love.
We adore you, O Christ,
and we bless you,
because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.

The twelfth station: Jesus dies on the cross



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

In his hours of agony, of desperate struggle for breath, a great darkness seemed to be gathering over the land. He barely spoke again... some groaning words of prayer and forgiveness. Then a final loud cry: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit". His head falls forward, and he is dead.

Pause: Lord Jesus, remember me
when you come into your kingdom...
In doing your Father's will,
you poured out your life as one great act of love.
Join us to yourself
in life and in death.
Be our life, our food, our resurrection.
We commend to your mercy
all who are dying at this moment,
that you will be for them,
and for us who will follow,
the fountain of endless life and undying love.

The thirteenth station: Jesus is taken down from the cross



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

It is a poor tortured body that his faithful ones now unfasten from the cross and place in the arms of Mary. The blows, the thorns, the lash, the nails, the spear have all left their mark. As his friends embraced him for the last time, they must have thought of the ancient prophecy: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases ... he was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities...”.

Pause: Crucified Lord, draw us more deeply into unity
as members of your Body throughout the world.
Unite us in the sympathy of love
and in a communion of faith,
so that your Church will be purified in holiness
and be a sign to the nations.
Though we are earthen vessels,
make us witnesses
to the peace, the healing and the hope
you offer to all creation.

The fourteenth station: Jesus is laid in the tomb



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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

The once wonderful radiance of this life is no more. He had made God so real, and brought such joy and hope into the hearts of the hopeless. But it all led to the cross. He is dead now ... and buried. He joins the uncountable millions of those who died before him and those who would die after. He has gone down into the world of death. What now?

Pause: Lord Jesus, by your descent into the world of the dead,
fill all life, all death, all time
with your presence.

Be the deepest centre of our lives,
so that nothing in all creation
will separate us from you:
may your love grow within us
to cast out all fear,
and become a hope that knows no bounds.

The fifteenth station: the empty tomb (optional)

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

Response: For by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

This station is not like the others. If something momentous has not happened, the path we have followed would have been a journey to nowhere, to end in defeat and the blackest despair. But, something happened. In the simple words of our faith, we say: he is risen, he is not here. Love has proved stronger than death, stronger than any death we know... The silence is now not the silence of death, but the silence of what no eye has seen, no ear heard, no human heart conceived, of what God has prepared for those who love him.

Pause: Lord Jesus, you are no longer in the tomb
because you are present in all creation:
you meets us in every neighbour;
you are present in every moment;
you dwell in our hearts.
No, the grave has not held you..
Truly, the night is over
and the true light is already shining.
You change our tears into joy,
a joy no one can take from us,
in the peace the world cannot give.
We hear you speak in the depths of our being:
“As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved you. Abide in my love “ (Jn 15: 9)



Concluding Prayer:

Most loving God,
you so loved the world
as to give your beloved Son
that we might live.

As we have followed his path of suffering
even to death, death upon a cross,
may we feel in our hearts
the victory of his resurrection
and the gentle power of your Spirit.

May we find new energies
to serve our suffering neighbour,
and to work for your glory.

May your kingdom come!
May your will be done on earth
so that in heaven

we may all rejoice
together in your presence.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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