

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

For hundreds of years, “The Stations of the Cross” have been used during Holy Week as a means to draw people into the drama of Jesus’ final days on earth, and to deepen peoples’ understanding of the depth of God’s love for all creation. This guide has been prepared to assist you to move through a “Stations of the Cross” worship experience focusing on God’s peace.

At each station you are invited to read the Scriptures and meditations, reflecting on the words and moving at your own pace. Take your time! Listen for the movement of the Spirit. And allow God to speak to you. Come, and let us worship God.

STATION ONE: THE GARDEN



Maundy Thursday places us in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayerfully pondering the fate of Jesus. After washing the feet of his disciples, and sharing the fruit of the field and vine, Jesus challenged his friends to . . . “go and do likewise.”

But on this night, serving others was far from their minds. They were still trying to process betrayals and denials, reflecting upon what would happen to them, if something ever happened to Jesus. Everyone was feeling a little anxious.

Fortunately, the garden was a peaceful place. Quiet and centering, it brought Jesus and his disciples close to creation, and thus close to

the Creator. Jesus knew all that was ahead, so being in a peaceful and quiet place gave him the strength he needed to go on.

In a world where peace often appears to be so absent, we followers of Jesus need to be intentional about finding and creating peaceful moments. We need to be mindful of God’s call to be still, and to center ourselves on all that is holy.

As you read the following hymn, and quiet your spirit as you prepare for this self-guided time of worship, begin to focus on the peace of God. Mindfully slow your breathing to release some of the anxiety that you are carrying with you today.

“Come and Find the Quiet Center”

Come and find the quiet center, in the crowded life we lead. Find
the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed;
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes that we can see, all the things that really matter, be
at peace and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace.
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, touches base; making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun, raising courage when we’re shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other’s pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain;
there’s a place for deepest dreaming, there’s a time for heart to
care, in the Spirit’s lively scheming,
there is always room to spare.

STATION TWO: THE SWORD



The peacefulness of the garden was shattered when Judas arrived...

Matthew 26:47-52

47 . . . With him was a large crowd carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 (He) had given them a sign: "Arrest the man I kiss." 49 Just then he came to Jesus and said, "Hello, Rabbi." Then he kissed him. 50 But Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him. 51 One of those with Jesus reached for his sword. Striking the

high priest's slave, he cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put the sword back into its place. All those who use the sword will die by the sword."

Few things shatter the peace of the world today more than violence: the violence of war, the violence of crime, the violence of abuse.

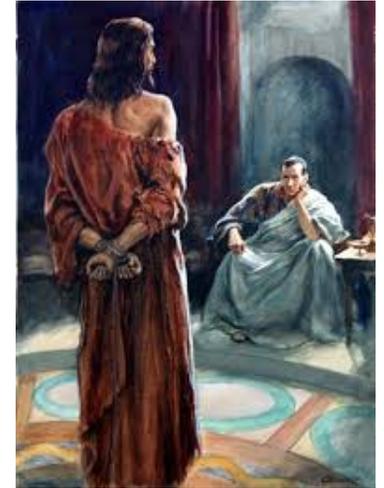
Jesus' way is never a way of violence. God is a God of peace: thus the call to us to become PEACEmakers. What might that look like for you? How might we become peacemakers in our homes, in our churches, in our communities, and in our world?

STATION THREE: THE ABUSE

The third station of Good Friday moves us from the garden, to the temple, to the courtyard of the palace. Pilate is the local representative of imperial Roman authority, and in this place he will challenge Jesus to declare who exactly is king.

Mark 15:2-21

Pilate asked (Jesus), "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do[a] with the man you call[b] the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 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.



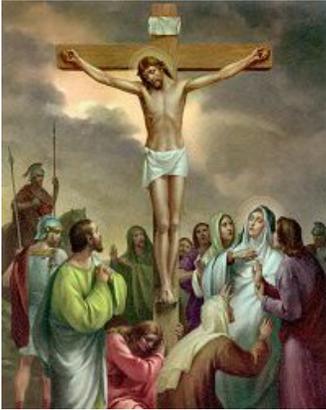
Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in a direct challenge to the powers and principalities of Rome, and now he is being forced to deal with the consequences.

Speaking truth to power – especially to the powers of the government – often has consequences. But Jesus could do no less. Like the prophets of old, Jesus knew that one's citizenship in the empire could never take precedence over one's citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Has your faith ever put you at odds with our government? How did you respond? How were your actions perceived?

Today, which flag flies the highest on your flagpole – the American flag or the Christian flag? Who is your king? And how does your answer to these questions influence the way you live?

STATION FOUR: DEATH



After being challenged by both the religious and political authorities, Jesus was taken to be crucified.

Luke 23:26, 33-46

As the soldiers led him 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 . . . (And) when they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right,

the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

As you reflect on the death of Jesus, allow your heart to be moved. Allow yourself to be transported back to the actual events of this day and put yourself in the sandals of those who were there. Imagine the pain of Mary, who watched her son die. Consider the loss John must have felt as he was forced to say goodbye to his dearest friend. Experience the transformative moment in the conversation between Jesus and the thief. And feel the pain that Jesus himself felt as was forced to accept his destiny . . . thorn, nail, and spear.

As you allow yourself to grieve the death of the Christ, you are invited to light a candle to symbolize your love for and commitment to the Messiah.

After doing so, spend a few more moments silently reflecting on Jesus' call to live as he did. What are the consequences of such living? . . . the positives, as well as the negatives?

Next, reflect on some of the 'crosses' that we deal with today. In order for us to fully grasp the Gospel message – that the cross has no power over us – we need to know what that cross is! What are the sins, the habits, the attitudes, the addictions that burden and condemn you? What crosses are you bearing?

STATION FIVE: THE BURIAL



"Were You There?"

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Luke 23:50-56a

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man,⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God.⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph

and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home, and prepared spices and perfumes.

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

After removing him from the cross, but before placing him in the tomb, Jesus' body needed to be washed. And this task was likely given to the women.

Can you picture them going to the well, and filling a jug with water? Touching the water that would eventually wash the body of our Savior, they no doubt remembered Jesus' many teachings involving water. Perhaps they reflected upon his baptism in the Jordan River; or perhaps they remembered the stories of Jesus calming the storms on the Sea of Galilee.

The image of water is powerfully significant in our faith tradition. It reminds us of the cleansing, renewal, and transformation that are such important dimensions to our walks with God. It reminds us of our baptisms. And it reminds us of the thirst that only God can quench.

May the same water used to cleanse the body of the Christ 2000 years ago, cleanse the Body of Christ in the world today. May it cleanse us, the Church.

In the silence of these moments, consider what needs cleansing in your own life. Silently acknowledge and confess all that those things that keep you from God; and then repent of them, mindful that to 'repent' means to change directions.

You are invited to touch some water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead, on your lips, and on your heart. Allow those actions to be a prayer for this day . . . a prayer that Jesus might be in your mind, on your lips, and in your heart.

Amen.

STATION SIX: SATURDAY SHADOWS (Waiting)

Often we jump straight from the grief of Good Friday, to the glory of Easter Sunday. But in between those two days, was Saturday—a day of wondering, wishing, and waiting.

Jesus' family, friends, and followers must have wondered "What now?" Surely they were wishing that things had turned out differently; but at this point, all they could do as wait . . . for whatever was ahead.

Think about the amount of time we spend waiting: in doctors' offices and in grocery stores; in lines and in traffic; at stop lights and crosswalks; for our kids and for the metro; for test results and college admission letters – the list goes on and on. Some estimates indicate the average person, over a lifetime, spends more than six months doing nothing but waiting.

It has been said that after suffering, "waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter."

Have you found this to be true in your life? Read the Psalm below:

Psalm 130:1-6

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits. And in God's Word, I put my hope. I wait for the Lord; more than watchers for the morning, more than watchers for the morning.

What are you waiting for these day? Have you ever found God in the midst of your waiting? Has the waiting ever deepened your trust in God?

As you prepare to leave the 'Stations', reflect one last time on the events of this day, 2000 years ago.

The events changed the world. Have they changed you?

"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!"

