

Stations of the Cross for devotion at home

The following is meant as a simple way for us to walk the Way of the Cross together, though we're apart. I hope anyone who decides to try this devotion uses the following suggestions to the extent that makes sense for them. I'm going to begin my own Stations at noon on Good Friday; I include the times I hope to do each part of the Stations in the programme below, in case readers would like to synchronize their devotions with one another's.

The *Via Crucis* ("Way of the Cross"), generally known in English as the Stations of the Cross, has a fascinating history, though much of it has been lost in the mists of time. The earliest development seems to have occurred in 12th Century Jerusalem, with the gradual evolution of the Good Friday procession into a more formalized route under the guidance at the time of the Franciscans to whom Pope Clement VI had given the mission of overseeing the holy sites. This development involved the establishment of *stationes* along the way — standing places where the procession would stop for a devotion — and these became associated with pious stories like that of Veronica and the meeting with Mary.

The Franciscans, wishing Christians who could not travel to the Holy Land to have some means of participating in the devotion, built shrines to recreate the stations, and these shrines later became the icons one may see in many catholic churches today, whether Roman or Anglican, the sign sometimes reduced to a Roman numeral indicating one of the fourteen stations traditional since the 18th Century.

The devotion has for some Christians, including me, an almost ineffable, mystical significance. The mingling of space and movement and myth (in the sense of holy story) creates a space for meditation and holiness unlike any other devotion. It is my hope that this domestic version of the stations may bring some of that metaphorical vastness, that unity with our savior across time and space, into our lives at a time when our literal spaces are close and confined.

Preparation

Find seven places in your home or your workspace to serve as your Stations. Ideally, you'll be able to stand in front of each one (*station* literally just means "standing" or "standing place"), and put your phone, tablet, or printed copy there for reading and contemplation. If not, you can simply hold this programme however works best, and perform the station that way.

If you wish, take a little Wikipedia journey, beginning with [the entry on the Stations of the Cross](#) and traveling out in any direction that suits your interest.

Rite

I give two options for prayers at each station: broadly speaking the first is a more contemporary take on the Way of the Cross, while the second is more traditional; generally speaking, the first is lower-church in flavor and the second higher. I will say both options when I make my stations, but I imagine that many pilgrims will say only the first. In any case, the programme provides ample time both for saying all the prayers and for meditating on the station.

There is no right way (or, of course, wrong way) to do the stations. No prescribed ritual has ever been laid down. Here is what I will do for each station:

1. Sing the hymn-verse(s) I provide, as I move to the place I've chosen for the station.
2. Contemplate the image.
3. Sing the antiphon, "We adore thee, o Christ."
4. Read the prayers.
5. Contemplate the image.
6. Say the Lord's Prayer.

I urge you to sing, if you feel like it — but only if you feel like it. I find reciting hymns and chants as poetry to provide its own special entrance into the mysteries of our faith.

12n The beginning

Option 1: Almighty God, whose most dear son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through the same thy son Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, our adorable Saviour, behold us prostrate at thy feet, imploring thy mercy for ourselves and for the souls of all the faithful departed. Vouchsafe to apply to us the infinite merits of thy passion, upon which we are now about to meditate. Grant that, while we trace this path of sighs and tears, our hearts may be so touched with contrition and repentance, that we may be ready to embrace with joy all the crosses and sufferings and humiliations of this our life and pilgrimage. Amen.

12:01 Jesus carries the Cross



El Greco, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, ca. 1577-87

Faithful cross! above all other, one and only noble tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be:
sweetest wood and sweetest iron! sweetest weight is hung on thee.
"Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle," v. 1 (166)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: O God, who by the passion of thy blessed Son didst make an instrument of shameful death to be unto the means of life: Grant us to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, grant us, by virtue of thy cross, to embrace with meekness and cheerful submission the difficulties of our state and to be ever ready to take up our cross and follow thee. Amen.

12:05 Jesus falls for the first time



Michael Willman, *Jesus Falls for the First Time*, ca. 1672-78

Lo, the good shepherd for the sheep is offered,
The slave hath sinned and the son hath suffered.
For our atonement, while we nothing heeded, God interceded.
"Ah, holy Jesus," v. 3 (158)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: O Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his back to the smiters and hid not his face from shame: Grant us grace to take joyfully the sufferings of the present time, in full assurance of the glory that shall be revealed; through the same thy son Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, who for our sins didst bear the heavy burden of the cross and fall under its weight, may the thought of thy sufferings make us watchful over ourselves, and save us from any grievous fall into sin. Amen.

12:10 Jesus meets his mother, Mary



Niclaus Weckmann, *Holy Family*, ca. 1500

Who on Christ's dear mother gazing, pierced by anguish so amazing,
born of woman would not weep?

Who on Christ's dear mother thinking, such a cup of sorrow drinking,
would not share her sorrow deep?

Stabat mater, v. 4 (159)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: Father in heaven, by whose grace the virgin mother of thy incarnate Son was blessed in bearing him, but still more blessed in keeping thy word: Grant us who honor the exaltation of her lowliness to follow the example of her devotion to thy will; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, by the compassion which thou didst feel for thy Mother, have compassion on us and give us a share in her intercession. O Mary, most afflicted Mother, intercede for us, that through the sufferings of thy Son we may be delivered from the wrath to come. Amen.

12:15 Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



Mattia Preti, *Saint Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus*, 1674-75

O sacred head, sore wounded, defiled and put to scorn,
O kingly head, surrounded by mocking crown of thorn,
What sorrow mars thy grandeur? Can death thy bloom deflower?
O countenance, whose splendor the hosts of heav'n adore!
"O sacred head, sore wounded," v. 1 (168)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: O Lord our heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be ministered unto but to minister: Bless, we beseech thee, all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, the same thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, may the contemplation of thy suffering move us with the deepest compassion, make us to hate our sins, and kindle in our hearts more fervent love of thee. May thy image be graven on our minds, until we are transformed into thy likeness. Amen.

12:20 Jesus fall for the second time



Église Notre-Dame-des-Champs, Avranches, Manche, Normandie, France, contemporary

To mock your reign, O dearest Lord, they made a crown of thorns;
set you with taunts along that road from which no one returns.
They did not know, as we do now, that glorious is your crown;
that thorns would flower upon your brow, your sorrows heal our own.
"To mock your reign, O dearest Lord," v. 1 (170)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: O God who hast bound us together in a common life. Help us, we beseech thee, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, falling again under the burden of our sins, and of thy sufferings for our sins, how often have we grieved thee by our repeated falls into sin? Oh, may we rather die than offend thee again. Amen.

12:25 Jesus is nailed to the Cross



Hubert Maestas, Stations of the Cross Shrine, San Luis, CO, 1990

Calv'ry's mournful mountain climb:

There, adoring at his feet,

Mark the miracle of time,

God's own sacrifice complete.

"It is finished!" hear him cry;

Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

"Go to dark Gethsemane," v. 3 (171)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross that he might draw the whole world unto himself: Mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Option 2: O Jesus, nailed to the cross, fasten our hearts there also, that they may be united to thee until death shall strike us with its fatal blow, and with our last breath we shall have yielded up our souls to thee. Amen.

12:30 Jesus is placed in the tomb



Goya, *The Burial of Christ*, 1772

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh, it makes me tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
"Were you there," v. 4 (172)

V: We adore thee, o Christ, and we bless thee.

R: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Option 1: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray thee to set thy passion, cross, and death between thy judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living, pardon and rest to the dead; to thy holy Church peace and concord; and to us sinners everlasting life and glory; for the with the Father and the Holy Spirit thou livest and reignest, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Option 2: O God, we too will descend into the grave whenever it shall please thee, as it shall please thee, and wheresoever it shall please thee. Suffer our sinful bodies to return to their parent dust; but do thou, in thy great mercy, receive our immortal souls, and when our bodies have risen again place them likewise in thy kingdom, that we may love and bless thee for ever and ever. Amen.

12:35 The conclusion

Christ for our sake became obedient unto death,
even the death of the cross,
wherefore God also hath highly exalted him
and given him a Name that is above every name.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever, one God, world without end. Amen.