

# St. Mark's Stations of the Cross

## The Way of the Cross



## A Lenten Journey

*The Stations or The Way of Cross imitates the practice of visiting the places of Jesus' Passion in the Holy Land by early Christian pilgrims. The first stations outside Palestine were built in Bologna in the fifth century. This devotion was encouraged by the Franciscans, and it became common in the fifteenth century. The number of stations for prayer and meditation in the Way of the Cross has varied, but it typically includes fourteen stations. Each station may have a cross and an artistic representation of the scene. Episcopal Glossary*

Read the gospel stories as you contemplate the stations. Each gospeler tells this story but you will pick up on some interesting differences and consistencies from Mark to John.

*Mark 15, Matthew 27, Luke 22&23, John 19*

## Station I: Jesus is condemned to death    Station II: Jesus takes up His cross

“As soon as it was morning...”

So begins the account in the 15th chapter of the Gospel according to Mark in which Jesus is bound by the religious authorities and temple police and handed over to certain death under the political authority of the Roman Empire. The night before, lest we forget, it was one of his inner circle of friends, his disciple Judas Iscariot, who had colluded with the power structures of corrupted religious authority and accepted a bribe of 30 pieces of silver to betray his friend. While it's tempting to shy away from Judas, the painstaking reality is that it is also his beloved friend Simon Peter who at first tries to follow but in quick order denies, not once but three times, any association with Jesus as he is being led from prayer in the Garden at Gethsemane into the ruthless jurisdiction of the high priest. As soon as it was morning, the religious authorities of Jesus' own people handed him over to the provincial governor of the Roman Empire, Pontius Pilate, who was not exactly known for his love and care of the Jewish people.



We have to begin our journey with Jesus here, in this awful place of human betrayal thrust into the crucible of abusive structural power. I'm not honestly sure which is worse: the pain that comes when those we love turn their backs on us, or the pain that is inflicted by corrupt and self-serving authorities who care little if any for the worth of a person. Wherever we fall on that question, we are confronted with the heart-wrenching reality that Jesus is condemned to death experiencing the worst of what human beings can do to one another: personally and institutionally.

As soon as it was morning, all that ugliness was on display. And yet, in the same morning light, we also see Jesus. Jesus, light of the world, joined with humanity willingly even knowing full well that all of this betrayal and power-brokering was part of the human condition. In the earliest hours of

the morning with friends hiding and enemies scoffing, Jesus was condemned to death, and Jesus took up his cross. This happened in public: in full view of all who continued to gather to witness the spectacle. But ugliness did not have the last word. The fuel of prayer, the fire of divinity within the person of Jesus was also on full display. That is, after all, what light does best: exposes, illuminates, scatters the darkness.

As soon as it was morning, the Light of the World took up the instrument of death.

Sometimes the brightness of new light is so overwhelming that it blinds us, overwhelming our senses. It takes our eyes time to adjust to the light, to see Jesus not as beaten and rejected but in his suffering, bearing on his own human frame the liberation of all



who were and are oppressed. When Jesus takes up his cross, it is an act of love that stands in defiance of hatred, fear and oppression. Jesus transforms the cross from an instrument of death at the hands of the empire and creates instead a pathway of love and unspeakable grace.

As we walk the way of the cross with Jesus, our eyes will see the pain and the agony but we will also encounter opportunities to bear witness to that boundless love: in beloved faces, steadfast witnesses and expressions of mercy and transformative grace.

Allow your eyes time to adjust to the light and dispel the fear. Christ, our Light, has taken up the cross and walks this journey with us, just as we walk with Him. *Rev. Sarah Kye Price*

### **Station III: Jesus falls the first time    Station IV: Jesus meets his mother**



Living into who God created me to be  
Every obstacle in my way becomes a stepping stone  
Noticing with each step, the stronger I become  
Tentatively letting go of fears and doubt

Jesus was sent to this earth with a purpose and for a purpose. Being of God but in human form, he struggled with temptations, doubts and fears just like us. How many times has fear of failure stopped us from moving forward. Sometimes the weight of our calling can be so heavy. We start to question our ability and even if we heard God's call on us correctly. During this time the solitude of our journey becomes magnified. We naturally look to others to support and uplift as we go through life. What a rude awakening when we realize that some journeys are meant to be completed alone. This can feel like abandonment and cause pain if we're honest. Imagining Jesus taking that walk alone, the weight of the cross; his purpose, bearing down on his back and hearing the ridicule from others, what heartbreak. In the midst of all of this he looks over at his mother. As mothers around the world, we are there in our children's pain, praying that it be put upon us instead. We know that ultimately we can only remind our children all that was taught to them and to remember they have all they need to continue on the journey.

*Karen Franklin*

## Station V: Simon of Cyrene carries the cross Station VI: Jesus meets Veronica



When I reflect on these stations, I consider both the actions of Simon and Veronica. On one hand, Simon did not volunteer to help carry Jesus' cross – he was forced to do so by the Roman soldiers. However, he is still an important part of the suffering and redemption of Christ. My guess is that Simon was most likely terrified when he was ordered to carry the cross for Jesus. After this scene, we never hear about him again but, in this brief moment, he offers compassion and mercy in doing for Jesus, what Jesus could no longer do for himself.

In life, we don't always get to choose the burdens that we carry, but as Christians, we are called to always help one another when we can, even if doing so would not have been our first choice. As followers of Christ, we bear the struggles of others with love and compassion, and therefore we reflect and connect with Jesus' own sacrifice.

In the next station, in a moment of great compassion and empathy for Jesus, Veronica steps forward and wipes the face of Christ.

While Gospel accounts vary in terms of who witnessed Christ's crucifixion, there were people there to bear witness. However, few people dared to help or provide comfort during the last moments of Jesus' life before he was crucified. In the midst of immense cruelty and suffering, Veronica steps forward and comforts Jesus in the one way she can, by wiping the blood and sweat off of his face. Veronica's simple gesture reminds us that no act of love is too small. When there is pain and suffering in the world that often gets ignored, we are called to respond with love, compassion, and empathy, in any way we can, no matter how simple.

During the season of Lent, I encourage us to ponder on these questions: Just as Simon carried the cross for Jesus, how can we be more willing to shoulder the burdens of those around us? And, in our lives, how can we offer compassion, even in the most simple ways possible?

*Carter Strite*

## Station VII: Jesus falls a second time Station VIII: Jesus speaks to the Women



**The Seventh and Eighth Stations of the Cross** offer us poignant images of who Jesus is as he makes his way to the Cross and who we are therefore, called to be as we continue along our journey of life.

**The Seventh Station** depicts Jesus falling for the second time. It is an image not found in any of the Gospels and yet is utterly believable as it communicates a truth that may well extend beyond historical fact. As we look at the image, we ask ourselves, “How could he not be falling?” He has been beaten, stripped, humiliated, and condemned. He is being paraded through the market square, amidst crowds of people, some may gaze upon him in horror, others of whom most likely jeer, and some who simply shield their eyes and perhaps those of those of their children from the scene playing out before them. The physical agony and mental

anguish Jesus was experiencing in these moments was overwhelming, the exhaustion, almost unimaginable. The wonder is not that he collapsed and fell a second time. The wonder is that the story does not end here. Somehow, Jesus musters the strength to stand back up, to keep going, to continue on his way, not to relief, not to balm for his wounds, not to a pillow upon which to rest his head, but to the Cross.

As Jesus makes his way, we then see the scene depicted in **the Eighth Station**...Jesus speaking to the women of Jerusalem. This event is referred to in the Gospel of Luke, but only in Luke, the Gospel most concerned with the disenfranchised. And who could have been more disenfranchised, lower in the social order of the time than women? And yet here we see depicted, the same worn out, brutalized, condemned to death man who just recently fell flat on his face, so depleted was he, stopping to speak to women! You see, even on the way to the cross, Jesus did not disregard women. He offered comfort to them not only for the present moment, but for the times he knew would yet come. Jesus recognized that his suffering would not end all suffering and he knew that in the midst of suffering, just as in the midst of anger and even great joy, sometimes the greatest relief comes from tears...the tears that release all the emotion too great to bear, the tears that blend with others when they are shared together, the tears that perhaps even allow space for hope when perhaps there seems to be none.

**So, it is in these two Stations of the Cross that we are reminded of our calling and encouraged on our journey.** When it all feels like too much for us; when we are exhausted by the world around us, by all we are responsible for and all we cannot control, when we are depressed and see no possible way forward through the darkness, when we have stumbled and fallen not once or even twice, but more times than we can count and are coming to the conclusion that there is simply no good reason to even try to stand again and keep going, we see the face of Jesus. We see a man who despite it all, stood back up and walked forward, one foot in front of the other, one step at a time.



And as he did so, as he continued on his path, he reminded us that we do not make our journey alone. Others are all around us, they have their own stories and sorrows, none should be rendered invisible. Even during our most trying times, we are called to be a people who see others, who take the time and make the effort, who demonstrate kindness and show empathy.

We are to follow Jesus in knowing that the least of these are the beloved children of God, and that we are called to share with him in bearing their sorrow, we are made for the sharing of their tears. That is our calling. That is a way we are a blessing.

And it is a way we too are blessed, for we are not only called to the giving, we are created for the receiving as we too are the least of these, we too can know the relief of sorrows and burdens shared, and we too can be supported and uplifted in those moments when others, seeing our tears join theirs with ours and together we share in the heart of God. *Karen Hardison*

### **Station IX: Jesus Falls a third time    Station X: Jesus's clothes are taken away**



Under the weight of the cross, exhausted and weary, Jesus, in his humanity, falls, not once, not twice, but three times. It is almost impossible to imagine the strength and love that it took for him to keep walking forward to his death. What a burden he was carrying for us all.

Especially now, we all carry burdens that may feel like too much, too hard to hold onto. The weight of lost jobs and relationships, uncertainty about the future, and financial challenges weigh us down. We may turn inward looking at our own burdens and miss seeing those around us who carry their own heavy loads as well. As Karen Hardison said earlier, "Pay attention." Our friends, our neighbors, our family, and those who we do not yet know all keep moving forward, and sometimes backward, one step at a time. This station is a sign of hope for all of us who keep stumbling and getting back up again; losing our tempers, repeating mistakes. Jesus gives us the grace to get up

and keep going. We can welcome each other with compassion as we imagine Jesus was looked upon with love by his followers and family. We have no idea what everyone is carrying on their shoulders.

*“Here is what we seek: a compassion that can stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it.” Fr. Greg Boyle*

When Jesus finally reaches the place where he will die, the soldiers take away his clothes, leaving him naked and vulnerable. The last shred of human dignity, the covering of his body is removed. Jesus is dehumanized by the soldiers. This suffering is on top of all that has happened to him so far, the betrayal, the scourging, the ridicule. His great, unconditional love for us makes it possible for him to endure the unthinkable.

What part do we have in restoring the dignity of our brothers and sisters around us? How can we offer love and compassion? Do we see Jesus in the kindness of others, in the hopelessness of others, in the fear of others? How can we reach out a hand of friendship? Jesus, help us to move away from looking inward and instead, turn outward to bring your love and light to others.

*“Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone – we find it with another.”*  
Thomas Merton  
Nora Thompson

### Station XI: Jesus is nailed to the cross Station XII: Jesus dies on the cross



Christ’s seven last words spoken from the cross draw us to the climax of this earthly life and ministry fulfilled. Let us ponder them.

**“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** (Luke 23:34)

A supplication to God for forgiveness for those who crucified him, a final act of compassion.

**“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”** (Luke 23:34)

To the repentant thief, a promise of salvation and eternal life for those who believe.

**“Woman, behold your son...Behold your mother.** (John 19:26-27)

Jesus entrusts his mother’s care to John, even in those final moments Jesus cares for his family.

**“My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”** (Mathew 27:46 & Mark 15:34)

A cry of pain and anguish, a fulfillment of Psalm 22, reveals the magnitude of his suffering for the sins of the world.

**“I thirst.”** (John 19:28)

A fulfillment of Hebrew scriptures and acknowledgement of his physical suffering.

**“It is finished.”** (John 19:30)

His earthly ministry is completed, humanity’s sins are covered and forgiven.

**“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”** (Luke 23:46)

Jesus’s giving up of his spirit, accepting death and trusting in his Father.

**Now please click on the link below**, read along and listen to this poignant musical reflection on Christ’s life.

[My Song is Love Unknown](#), *Samuel Crossman 1623-1683, Church of England Minister, wrote the text in 1664, was set to music by John Ireland, English Composer, in 1925. Sanford Eberly*

### **Station XIII: Jesus is taken down from the cross Station XIV: Jesus is buried**

It is interesting to note that there is no specific Gospel reference to the mother of Jesus handling his body at the foot of the cross. Indeed, John is the only account that actually names her as a witness. Mark and Matthew mention Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (or Joseph), and other mothers. Luke simply groups the women followers as looking on from afar. All the Gospel writers tell us that it was Joseph of Arimathea who took Jesus’ body away. But the earliest tradition of the Stations includes Mary holding her dead son. The pieta. A moment that has been celebrated in beautiful art for centuries. Why? For me the last two stations work in tandem, showing us a double entombment, because we must reflect on both Jesus, fully human, and Jesus the Son of God.



For Jesus the man, we see the deep grief with which Mary finally holds the ruined body of her son and looks closely at the wounds that were inflicted on Him. He is mutilated, devoid of color, lifeless. Memories of other times she held him in her lap must have engulfed her—perhaps his tiny hand, his hearty laugh, his steady voice. Now, he is just gone. Her heart is overcome by loss and sorrow. Mary is holding on to the last vestiges of this person she so loved, and she must let him go. She holds the whole aching world in her arms. We are there with Mary; we also embrace Jesus



the human being one more time. But we also must say goodbye to the man, who is to be taken away. Life is gone. Where is God?

Joseph of Arimathea moves us to Station 14. He has petitioned Pilate, and they take this ravaged body to a quiet and safe place. Not fully understanding Jesus' own words, so not thinking further ahead, they are simply trying to get him away from the dogs and carrion birds, from the possibility of further sacrilege to his already abused body. But the tomb is where we know that they are handing him over to God. Here is where his human form is released to His Father. We know that Jesus died so that we may live. The tomb is our way to resurrection. Our darkness and helplessness will be overcome by Christ's light.

As we live through these two stations, we are called to remember those who grieve, those who It is interesting to note that there is no specific Gospel reference to the mother of Jesus handling his body at the foot of the cross. Indeed, John is the only account that actually names her as a witness. Mark and Matthew mention Mary, the mother of James and Joses (or Joseph), and other mothers. Luke simply groups the women followers as looking on from afar. All the Gospel writers tell us that it was Joseph of Arimathea who took Jesus' body away. But the earliest tradition of the Stations includes Mary holding her dead son. The *pieta*. A moment that has been celebrated in beautiful art for centuries. Why? For me the last two stations work in tandem, showing us a double entombment, because we must reflect on both Jesus, fully human, and Jesus the Son of God.

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As we live through these two stations, we are called to remember those who grieve, those who have lost loved ones. We are called to remember and bless those who have been made to suffer, the oppressed and the ravaged. We are reminded of hope, consolation for all our pain and despair. We are called to bring His light into dark places. We remember that the tomb is not the end of the story. *Penny Adams*



## **Stations of the Cross 2025 Contributors**

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Our Stations of the Cross were given to the church by Pat Pearman in loving memory of her late husband.

Photography by George Collier