

Stations of the Cross



Adapted from *The Book of Occasional Services; Praying the Stations of the Cross: Finding Hope in a Weary Land* by Margaret Adams Parker and Katherine Sonderegger; and *Stations of the Cross for Peace between Israel and Palestine* by the Diocese of Westminster <https://rcdow.org.uk/>

Opening Prayer

O Lord God, whose mercy is over all your works, be present in power and great blessing on those who would walk this way of the cross in pilgrimage. As they fall, strengthen them; as they weep with the sorrows of this world, console them; as they bear burdens others thrust upon them, lift them up. You only are high and lofty; you alone eternal; you alone the goodness and life of all the living. Bend down your ear to your creatures' cries. Lift up the lowly, O Lord, and make this earth once again the paradise of your creation, where the leaves of every tree are for the healing of the nations, and where every spring is a river of life. Above all, we pray, make us to know your Son, his passion, and his passionate life. Break open our hearts to be as his, moved with pity, consumed by zeal for righteousness, a prisoner of hope, waiting and searching for the risen life that opens every grave and makes all things new. All this we ask in the name of the crucified and risen One, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished. (Luke 23:23-25)

Reflection

Jesus stands before us, open to our gaze, bound and vulnerable, sorrowful. Elie Wiesel offers this indictment: "It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes."

We participate in the abandonment of Christ. Because of the death of Jesus Christ, the sin of abandonment is known for what it is: the willingness of humankind to ignore suffering so that our own lives are pursued conveniently and without interruption.

Let us pray for the strength to turn aside from our preoccupations, to see truly, to acknowledge in heart and mind the suffering that Christ undertook for our sake, and—through that awareness of Christ's suffering—to look on the sorrows of the world.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all who are imprisoned, justly or unjustly;
- + for those who hold others prisoner;
- + for all those who are tortured or who torture;
- + for those held prisoner by disease, poverty, famine, or disaster;
- + for those bound by fear or loneliness.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.
Amen.

Stay with Me

The musical score for "Stay with Me" is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Stay with me, re - main here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray." The first system covers the first two lines of lyrics, and the second system covers the last two lines. The piano accompaniment features block chords and simple harmonic movement.

Text: Taizé Community

Music: STAY WITH ME, Jacques Berthier, 1923–1994

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The Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. (John 19:16–17)

Reflection

How perverse, how sadistic it is to make the condemned carry the instrument of their own execution. Jesus embraces the rough, splintering beam. As the jagged cross cuts through his skin, he momentarily closes his eyes in prayer before taking the first steps towards Calvary.

At the outbreak of war, people instinctively reach for different things – for loved ones, for food and water, for weapons, for news... In the face of danger would my first thought be for my own self-preservation or of solidarity with the suffering and the weak?

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all who carry heavy burdens;
- + for those weighed down by fear;
- + for those living with pain, disease, or long illness;
- + for those caring for the sick;
- + for those keeping watch over the dying;
- + for those homeless who must bear their possessions on their backs.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death -even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8)

Reflection

The Son of God stumbles and crashes to the ground, the weight of the cross crushing him against the stone cobbles. Deprived of sleep, weakened by the beatings and baiting of the soldiers and guards, a cacophony of abuse ringing in his ears, Jesus is overwhelmed by this blitzkrieg of pain. There are many watching the scene who delight in his fall – this man who has been such a threat to their authority now being publicly humiliated and shamed. This should be the end of all that.

In war there is a need not just to overcome your enemy but to break their spirit and bring them to their knees. Victory comes from the total annihilation of the other – this is the way of war. Have there been times when I have delighted in the falls and defeats of others?

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all whose tasks and sorrows are beyond what they can bear;
- + for those carrying the burden of illness;
- + for those fallen beneath the weight of poverty or homelessness;
- + for those stricken by shame, guilt, or fear;
- + for those suffering from violence, oppression, or degradation.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Grieving Mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; Who can heal you? (Lamentation 2:13)

Reflection

Wives and mothers are often sent away from the battle zone for their own safety, leaving the men in the firing line. But Mary will not, cannot leave her son in his hour of need. Fearlessly and faithfully, she comes forward to offer Jesus, through a tender touch and a gentle gaze, the love and support she has given him since the very first moment of his life. Love is more powerful than any threat or force. Love is stronger than death itself. Her heart pierced with grief, Mary unites herself with every mother who has lost a child through tragedy or violence.

War tears families and friendships apart. The deepest human bonds ruptured through separation and exile, loved ones taken away perhaps never to be seen again. Desolation and despair. Consider all the families who grieve at this time and all families separated by war.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

for all who witness the suffering of those they love;
for all those who watch beside a sickbed;
for all those who keep vigil with the dying;
for those who fear for a missing or wounded child;
for those who grieve for a loved one in danger.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....
In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Fifth Station: The Cross is Laid on Simon of Cyrene

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

As they led away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

Reflection

War is like an earthquake, sending out shock waves far from its epicenter. More and more people are shaken by its impact. And so it was that Simon of Cyrene, an innocent passer-by, was dragged from the crowd and forced to help Jesus carry his cross. The soldiers, seeing their prisoner's frailty, fear he will not make it to the place of execution. Simon is a conscript, forced into service against his will, but these brief moments by Jesus' side may change his life forever.

Are we passive observers, passers-by in the struggle between good and evil? Or, like Simon, do we help those in need, the weak and the wounded, to carry their cross?

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for those who carry our burdens;
- + for those who stand beside us in times of sickness and danger;
- + for those who shield us from harm;
- + for those whose love supports and carries us across dark places;
- + for those whose hands prepare for us food and warmth and shelter;
- + for ourselves, that we may have the grace to allow others to assist us.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Sixth Station: A Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of my people. My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. My eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the young women in my city. (Lamentations 3:48-51)

Reflection

Brutality cannot be stopped by yet more atrocity but it can be exposed and shamed by tenderness and compassion. Such was the effect of one woman's daring to step out of the crowd to offer Jesus the soothing balm of her dampened cloth on his bloodied and beaten face. An exquisite sensation of relief, of human care shielding him from the shrapnel and shards of others' rejection. Jesus inspired in her this heroic act of service through his own example of selfless care for so many. She stands there on behalf of all whom Jesus has touched and transformed through his own healing mercy.

Survivors of conflict often tell stories of those who, in the midst of humanity's most barbaric actions, perform acts of heroic courage and self-sacrifice. May we live in this spirit, not afraid to stand out from the crowd and reach out to those in need whatever others may say. May we, too, respond to carnage with compassion.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all who comfort the suffering;
- + for those who minister to the sick and dying;
- + for those who accept the help we offer;
- + for those who support the unlovely and the unloved;
- + for those who go into dark places to bring them light;
- + for those who know in us the goodness and beauty we do not see.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls For The Second Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. (Psalm 31:11-12)

Reflection

Once again Jesus collapses under the burden of it all, this relentless bombardment of human hate. His bloodied body stains the ground, his open wounds and lacerated skin turning crimson. How fragile, how soft and fleshy our bodies are when our defenses and securities are taken away from us. We are so easily cut apart. Who could imagine there was so much blood in one human body?

The walls and floors of military and civilian hospitals in war zones are smeared with blood. So many who die in war die from bleeding. Shrapnel cutting through veins and arteries. Civilians are the softest target – bombed in their homes and schools, caught by snipers while risking a search in the open street for food or water. Soldiers too – their helmets and jackets no match for bullets and bombs. Consider all medical and emergency teams who try to patch up and save the fallen, bleeding casualties of war.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all those stricken and afflicted;
- + for those who have fallen over and again;
- + for those felled by pain and illness;
- + for those struggling with addiction;
- + for those immobilized by fear;
- + for those who struggle to stand upright beneath their burdens.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:27-31)

Reflection

The spectacle of condemned criminals carrying their cross to their place of execution outside the city walls had become almost a routine occurrence at festival times. It was a constant reminder to the Jewish people of the consequences of rebellion and resistance against their Roman oppressors. But people still found ways to show their opposition, such as the band of women, mostly mothers, who stood along the execution route where they mourned for the prisoners as they passed by. It was their act of defiance against this institutionalized slaughter.

We might expect Jesus to thank the women for their resistance to power and their solidarity with the condemned, but instead he warns them that the time will come when they and their children will also become victims of this violence. Evil, like a virus, seeks to multiply and spread – it is voracious and all-consuming. War is a cancer which, once started, we struggle to contain. There are no winners only losers in war – it is a tragedy for us all. We are all invaded. We are all infected.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all who face darkness in their lives;
- + for those who fear for themselves and their future;
- + for those grief-stricken for their children and grandchildren;
- + for those who live in times of war and strife;
- + for those who live in places of famine or disaster.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls a Third Time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)

Reflection

Calvary is in sight, not far to go now. But Jesus is surrounded, under siege from all sides. The human spirit can cope with so much, but when the attacks become relentless and our life-lines are cut, we become overwhelmed and everything falls apart under the sheer pressure of it all. Jesus too is on the brink of breakdown – trembling, barely able to take another step. And yet from within he hears his Father's voice and picks himself up for one last push.

So many people are on the edge of collapse, fighting for survival in our world today. Victims of war, hunger, and crime; climate refugees; people forced from their communities and homes by crippling poverty, the threat of starvation or the atrocities of persecution and conflict. Torn away from their roots, they seek sanctuary in unknown lands at the mercy of human traffickers and gangs. Where will all those living on the edge find the hope and help they so desperately need?

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all those who are brought low;
- + for those imprisoned by despair;
- + for those with no hope for recovery or healing;
- + for those ground down by poverty, fear, or illness;
- + for those who are wounded by oppression, violence, or degradation.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did. (John 19:23–25)

Reflection

Exhausted, his head throbbing with the incessant noise and dehydration, Jesus finally reaches the hill of Calvary. Now the soldiers begin their sacrificial rite. First his body is stripped naked – nothing left to hide behind or give any sense of human dignity. Total exposure, the removal not only of his blood-soaked garments, but also of any human rights.

The victims of war likewise lose all they have – their home, possessions, food, water, health care, family... Stripped of all, they become totally defenseless. This is not just individuals but also whole peoples – the majority of humanity dispossessed and vulnerable while the powerful few look on and cast lots for their clothing.

Who will respond with compassion to those stripped bare in our world today? Who will clothe the naked, feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, restore dignity to the broken and bleeding?

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all those who are stripped and exposed;
- + for those who have lost their homes and possessions;
- + for those who are shorn of their name and reputation;
- + for those whose sense of their own worth has been taken from them;
- + for those without health, or home, or companionship.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Luke 23:33)

Reflection

The Creator of the universe is pinned to the cross, his hands and feet immobile, impotent. The soldiers with well-trained efficiency hammer the iron nails through flesh and bone, inflicting pain beyond pain on the condemned. And then the raising of the cross into the ground with a shuddering jolt which tears at the prisoners' wounds. Now the real torture begins – the slow asphyxiation as the prisoners struggle to pull themselves up to breathe. Every gasp for air costs them so much.

As war becomes more desperate, more extreme tactics are used, such as the deployment of chemical weapons, often on civilians – toxic weapons which burn the lungs and skin of their victims. These weapons are designed to cause the most horrific pain and suffering to break the spirit of those they are used against. Pray that God would take from our human hearts this terrible desire to make others suffer, cleanse us of cruelty and inhumanity, and restore in us God's image and likeness.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all those who are pierced by fear;
- + for those scourged by poverty or disease;
- + for those transfixed by anger, hatred, or self-loathing;
- + for those held hostage by oppression or prejudice.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies On the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

Reflection

For three hours Jesus hangs on the cross, conserving every bit of energy so as to have the strength to speak his final words and, in his dying, give the most powerful lesson of his life. To love to his final breath, to continue to minister to both friend and foe, to care for those closest to him. And above all to live his loyalty and love for the Father to the very end.

In war there are clearly defined sides – opposing armies with different uniforms, weapons, languages and military objectives. But on the cross, as throughout all his life, Jesus does not divide people into sides. He prays for all – the righteous and the unjust, the oppressors and the oppressed, Gentile and Jew. Beneath the different armor and uniforms we are simply men and women, flesh and blood, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters – Jesus offers his life for us all.

Silence

Prayer

Lord, help us, faced with so many divisions in our world today, to remember our common humanity, our shared dignity as children of the one God as we pray together

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.

(Jeremiah 31:15)

Reflection

The finality of death. A body which even a short time before had breathed and pulsed with life now stiffens and shrinks. A mere shell it seems, left behind as the soul journeys on... And yet the respect and reverence we naturally show to a corpse speaks of its continued sacredness. This has been a work of God's hands, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Some believe that, after Jesus was taken down from the cross, his body was placed for a short time in his mother's arms. Jesus ends his life as he began it – in Mary's tender care.

In war some of the fallen are honored with a dignified funeral, even a hero's farewell. But for so many there is no such ceremony as they are entombed in rubble and ruins, or hastily hidden in unmarked graves by alien hands. How many loved ones wait in vain for them ever to be found or identified. There should be dignity in death as in life. Lord, help us to show reverence to every human life.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Christ, as we meditate on your passion, hear our prayers:

- + for all those who mourn the death of one they loved;
- + for those who hold in their arms the body of a loved one;
- + those who feel their lives broken and shattered;
- + for those who cannot see their life beyond this death;
- + for those who cannot grieve or weep.

We pray also for all those we name now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts....

In the name of the One who loved us to the end, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend.

Amen.

All sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

(Mark 15:42–47)

Reflection

The crowds have all gone home – rushing to prepare for the Passover feast before the sun sets. There is a sudden silence and stillness where before there was so much rage and raw emotion. Jesus' body is brought to a garden and laid in the earth, like a seed which will bear fruit in due time.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for peace in all countries plagued by war in the world today. Silence the weapons of war. Change the hearts of those who choose war. Comfort and console all who suffer, on all sides. May children's songs replace the din of bombardment, bullets and bombs; may freedom and hope be restored and renewed; and may we, as a human family, reject division and empire, greed and domination. May we walk your path of peace. Lead all those involved in violence and war along the road to reconciliation. Just as out of the tomb you rose to new life, so too, we pray, that out of the world's devastation, you will bring light and grace. In your holy name we pray. **Amen.**

All sing: **Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

Closing Prayer

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.