

PRAYER

Jesus, in the darkness of the tomb,
you were surrounded by love,
by grief and by fear,
as your body was prepared for burial.

Walk with us.

May we feel the comfort of your love for us.

And may we turn outwards
to share that love with others,
with the same generosity
and gentle loving kindness
that you showed to all.

Walk with us Jesus.

Linda Jones CAFOD

EASTER POEM

Behold the man,
Who in frailty walks,
Towards his cross shaped throne.
Arms outstretched,
Love enfleshed,
To welcome sinners home.

Behold the man,
Whose healing hands,
Were once nailed to cursed tree,
Hope restoring,
Grace declaring,
To set the shackled free.

Behold the man,
Whose beaten body,
Was laid in garden grave,
Death defeated
Hell retreating,
Humanity to save.

Behold the man,
Whose silent corpse,
Was raised to reign as King.
Love embracing,
Joy empowering,
For him the saints will sing.

© Rev'd Jon Swales

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



OPENING PRAYER

We come together to travel the road to the Cross with Our Lord. May our journey fill us with new blessings as we wait in hope for the resurrection.

THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"The death sentence came as no surprise. I've been getting under their skins: speaking up for the poor, the downtrodden, widows, orphans, tax-collectors, prostitutes – anyone at the bottom of the pile. The religious leaders hated my direct style; it challenged their authority and power. Things were bound to come to a head sooner or later. It suited them to get rid of me."

A homeless person huddled in a shop doorway, a Big Issue seller on the street corner, a kid bullied in the playground. Alone, forgotten, invisible. People hurry on by without a second glance.

THE SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I could hardly stand under the weight of the cross, it was so heavy. I was thinking over everything that had happened: the mock trial; the mob clamouring for my blood; the rough treatment by the soldiers. Worst of all, betrayed by Judas, one of my best friends, and abandoned by those closest to me. When it came to the crunch, Peter, my right-hand man, denied three times over that he even knew me!"

We can be so wrapped up in our own lives that we don't notice the needs of those around us. We prefer a fun night out to staying in with a friend who's feeling down.

THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"The cross was so hard to carry – such an awkward shape and unbelievably heavy. I was already weak from the beatings. All of a sudden, I lost my footing, stumbled and fell straight to the ground. My knees were cut, my hands bloody, my whole body aching from the pain. The soldiers just laughed and pushed me roughly, shouting at me to get up again."

THE THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"My name's Joseph. I'm from Arimathea – it's a Jewish town. I've been a follower of Jesus for a while now, but in secret. Okay, so I didn't join in with the other members of the Council when they turned against Jesus, I was too scared for my own safety to stop them. Well maybe I can do something now. I plucked up my courage and went to Pilate to ask for the body. He seemed surprised, but he said 'yes' – to be honest, I think he was feeling guilty about what he'd done. He knew Jesus should never have been executed."

Joseph of Arimathea knew that Jesus was wrongly accused but he was too afraid of the people in authority to speak out. He didn't want to risk his own skin. Then something happened that changed everything: Jesus died.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I feel really bad that I kept quiet about being a disciple. I should have worried less about what people think. But I can make amends now. I've got an empty tomb prepared ready for him. Nicodemus came with me – he used to visit Jesus too, but in secret, under cover of night. After what's happened this week, I guess it's time for us both to come out from the dark."

Like Joseph and Nicodemus, we may be slow to make a commitment, but God's patience is boundless - he never gives up on us. As we journey through life, let us pray that we may be channels of God's love to everyone we meet.



THE ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I know I must find it in my heart to forgive my tormentors. They are only playing their part in this unfolding drama. But surely, they must know I am innocent of the charges against me, unlike the criminals who hang either side of me.

One of them mocks me, urging me to call on God to save me if I really am His Son, but the other stops him, saying no, they deserve their fate. He asks for my mercy and forgiveness. I am touched by his humility – it will earn him a place in heaven with me today."

Often, it's easier to say nothing, even when you know something is wrong: to hide your embarrassment with a joke or a throw-away remark. But there is another option: choose to speak out for what is right, just like the 'good' thief on the cross.

THE TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I've been hanging here for hours now in this scorching hot sun: a slow, agonising way to die. This thirst is unbearable. I call out for a drink but all they give me is vinegar, bitter tasting and sour, like the bitterness of the crowd who were so eager for my blood.

But now it is over.

Tomorrow they will realise how much I loved them and they will begin to understand."

When people let us down and we feel utterly alone we can glimpse a little of the suffering Jesus endured in his final moments on the cross.

But we know that this is not the end of the story. We know that without Jesus' death on the cross there could be no resurrection and no promise of eternal life.



It's so humiliating falling down in public. And we also 'fall' every time we look stupid in front of our classmates or our friends; every time we're made fun of for not saying or doing the 'right' thing or not wearing the 'right' clothes; every time we don't match up to the expectations of the crowd.

THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS COMES FACE TO FACE WITH HIS MOTHER

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"My mother has to watch, helpless, as I am jeered at, spat on, insulted, pushed around. How can she bear it? Yet she stands there silently accepting everything that is happening, just as she accepted God's astonishing request to give birth to me. She was only a teenager, unmarried, but she didn't stop to worry about what people would say. She put her trust in God and said 'yes' without hesitation. Now it's my turn to do as God asks and say 'yes.'"

Mary's trust and openness to God led her to hope in what seemed to worldly eyes to be impossible. Can we, like Mary, have the courage to step out in faith into the unknown, accepting God's loving guidance for our lives? God asks us to trust Him and stay open to the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the right direction.

THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS CARRY THE CROSS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I'd just come in from the country, minding my own business. Before I knew what was happening, I was forced to carry the cross. I didn't want any part in it but, hey, when a hulking great soldier is pointing a lance in your face, you don't stop to argue. I picked up the cross, put it on my back and carried it up the hill for them. Man, it was some weight! I nearly fell down several times. By the end I couldn't even stand up straight.

I don't know what this guy Jesus had done to deserve such a horrible death. I should have spoken up for him but I was afraid that they might turn on me, so I kept quiet."

Do we sometimes stand by and say nothing for fear of what others might think or say? Perhaps a kid being picked on in the playground; or someone being accused of something we know they haven't done; people being teased or left out just because they are different.

THE SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"I didn't stop to think whether the soldiers would hit me or push me away. I had to do something. Blood was streaming down his face from the crown of thorns on his head. They'd pressed it down so hard that the spikes stuck right into his skin. He bore it so humbly, never made a fuss or tried to pull it off – maybe he didn't have the strength."



"I was standing quite close to him, so I used my veil to wipe away some of the blood and sweat. It was all I could do."

Are we bold enough to go against what others say and reach out to someone who is unpopular and unloved? Or do we go along with everyone else so as not to lose face?

THE SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"As if the first time wasn't bad enough, now here I am falling down again. I had tried so hard to carry this heavy cross with dignity. But I had to be utterly broken to stand alongside all those who suffer humiliation and despair. This way, I can look them in the eye and say: 'I understand your pain, I am one with you.'"

Looking a failure in front of others is a nightmare. It's so embarrassing. Even if it's not happening to you but someone else, that's bad too. You feel so awkward. How do you react? Do you just laugh it off or do you look the other way?

THE EIGHTH STATION: THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"It was just so awful. Jesus was being beaten by the soldiers and dragged along, forced to carry his cross. And all the time, the crowd were screaming: 'crucify him.' It was more than we could bear to see him suffering so much."

"We tried to be brave but then someone started to cry and that was it: we couldn't hold back the tears any longer. We all started weeping and wailing uncontrollably."

It's easy to go along with the crowd and get sucked in to their emotions – sometimes you don't even realise it's happening. And you can say 'how awful' when you hear of someone's suffering without really letting it touch your heart. It takes a jolt to see that true compassion means getting involved, getting your hands dirty, doing everything you can to help.

THE NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"Now I've fallen down again and I can scarcely find the strength to pick myself up. The pain and humiliation are almost too much to bear."

"Last night, when I prayed alone in the garden, I asked my Father to release me from this burden, not to ask this of me. But even as the words left my lips, I knew that it had to be this way. Words alone would not have been enough to show my love for mankind. It had to be undignified, degrading, pitiful. Nothing less would do."

Sometimes you think things just can't get any worse, you've reached rock bottom. And you have to face your problems on your own because no one understands what you're going through.

THE TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

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

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

"As if I hadn't already suffered enough, now they tear my clothes from me, leaving me naked and exposed. They taunt me, calling me a king, but now I am lower than the poorest beggar in the land. But all this must be endured to show them how much I love them, despite everything that has happened, every harsh word, every beating, every indignity."

We all want to look good, keep up with the latest fashion, fit in with the crowd. But there's a danger of the label taking over and pushing aside our true identity. Underneath the designer clothes, who are you? Can you let the 'real you' shine through?