

# Good Friday Prayer Stations



Throughout Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, God's people are called to remember (for example, Psa 105). But they are not called to remember events for the sake of the event. They are called to remember because those events are part of who they are, and what they will become. It is in this mode of remembering, of re-presenting the events of the past as part of a living story that has not yet ended, a story in which we still participate, that the events become more than dates and places. They become markers of a journey as those who were no people become a people (Ex 6:7, 1 Peter 2:10), as those who grope awkwardly in the darkness come into the light of God's presence (Isa 9:2, John 8:12), as those who were far off draw ever nearer to God and his grace.



The journey of our Faith as modern Christians is not only a journey through history that can be marked by events in the past. It is also a journey of our own personal commitment to God, of our own growth as a community of Faith and as individuals maturing from self-centered children into faithful servants. It is a journey that we need to remember just as deeply and profoundly as we remember the journey of God's people across 3,000 years of human history, or the journey of Jesus from Pilate's Hall to Golgotha.

Most of us, especially in the West, are used to thinking of the crucifixion of

Jesus as an event happening at a certain time and place. Of course, the crucifixion was such an event. But it is more than that. It is a truth about God and how he works in the world with human beings. It is that truth about God revealed in Jesus and his actions that provides us with an important touchstone for our own journey.

In our eagerness to celebrate Easter and the resurrection, we often rush too quickly through Holy Week, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Too much of the week, especially as it draws to an end in Good Friday and Holy Saturday is much too messy for Christians accustomed to the language of triumph and praise to give much attention. In doing so, we miss the tremendous significance of the Cross as something more than a symbol of the crucifixion and death of Jesus as prologue to the resurrection, or as a symbol of a theological doctrine of the atonement. As Jesus himself taught his disciples on more than one occasion, the Cross symbolizes something far more profound than suffering and death, and perhaps even more significant than theologies of the atonement.

The Stations of the Cross is a liturgical way to reenact that journey as a meditation of worship, an act of devotion to God. To think that the event of Jesus' journey to the Cross was a one time event in history is to misunderstand the role of remembering. For in remembering this event by walking the Stations of the Cross we are not just reenacting a 2,000 year old event. We are making our own journey, and in the process confessing our own dependence upon God.

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Most of us, if we are honest, must confess that we do not live in the triumph of Easter Sunday all of the time, or even most of the time. Life simply does not work that way. No matter what victory we claim as Christians, the realities of life are too often difficult to bear even for people of Faith. We sometimes struggle on the journey, trying to understand the inequities of life large and small. Sometimes we are misjudged and misunderstood by others. We suffer physical and emotional pain as part of being human. All too often we experience painful endings. Marriages fail. Children make destructive decisions. Friends betray us. Loved ones die. Sometimes the world becomes dark and hopeless, like the world of Good Friday as Jesus journeyed to the Cross.

If we follow Jesus on his journey, we begin to understand that in Jesus' sufferings we see our own journey mirrored in his. Oh, we are not likely heading to such a cruel and humiliating death. But in those somber hours of our own "dark night" we experience similar emotions of helplessness and sometimes hopelessness. To face such darkness we need some glimmer of light, some hint of hope beyond endings, some model of perseverance that comes from a faith that does not know the outcome yet is willing to trust God with it.

The value in the Stations of the Cross lies in the simple twofold enacted confession. First, life is sometimes dark, painful, and brings endings. That reality will not go away even for the Son of God. Second, God does some of his best work in the darkness as we persist in the journey, even when that journey leads to Golgotha. Resurrection Sunday has no meaning without Good Friday. This journey reminds us of the darkness as a basis to celebrate the light.

In this sense, we need to remember that the Stations of the Cross are primarily a context for prayer and reflection. We can too easily go through the motions of worship without really allowing ourselves to encounter God. But as we open our hearts and minds to God in this symbolic journey, we are lead to communion with God that draws us closer to His love for us. It also allows us to identify with Jesus as he identifies with us. We are drawn to contemplate, not only the suffering and pain of our own journey mirrored in His, but as we follow the Christ we are compelled to identify with those around us who suffer in their own journey.



**READ**



**REFLECT**



**PRAY**



**SING**

## Station 1: In the Beginning...



### **READ:**

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Colossians 1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Gen 2: 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."



### **REFLECT:**

"...all the beauty of the world, the beauty that calls our admiration, our gratitude, our worth-ship at the earthly level, is meant as a set of hints, of conspiratorial whispers, of clues and suggestions and flickers of light, all nudging us into believing that behind the beautiful world is not random chance but the loving God." (N.T. Wright, For All God's Worth)

"If we are created in the image and likeness of God, then whatever good, true, or beautiful things we can say about humanity or creation we can say of God exponentially. God is the beauty of creation and humanity multiplied to the infinite power." (Fr Richard Rohr)



### **PRAY:**

Psalm 148



### **SING:**

All Creation Worships You

You are God and we praise You  
You are Lord and we acclaim You  
You are eternal Father  
All creation worships You  
All creation worships You  
All creation worships You, Amen

## Station 2: In the Garden with God



### **READ:**

Genesis 3:1-7 3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Psalm 103: 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.



### **REFLECT:**

Pick up a stone and carry it with you for the duration of the night as a representation of your sin and areas of your heart that might be hardened to the Spirit of God



### **PRAY:**

In a moment of silent reflection ask God to speak to you this weekend to prepare your heart for his work.

## Station 3: The Garden of Gethsemane



### **READ:**

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:39-46)

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (Matthew 26:45-46)



### **REFLECT:**

The scene in Gethsemane is shocking. It stretches our understanding and boggles our simplistic explanations of who Jesus really is. In Gethsemane, perhaps more than in any other scene of the Gospels, we see the fully human Jesus, the One who "in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This means, among other things, that Jesus understands when we are tested, when we are weak, when we aren't sure we want God's will for our lives. In Jesus, we have, not a god who is watching us from a distance, but One who knows our every weakness, and who is there to help us in our time of trial.

Whatever picture of Gethsemane you keep in your mind, may you let the text of Scripture fill out its meaning. May you be encouraged to come before God with complete honesty, holding nothing back. May you pour out your heart to the Lord. May you wrestle with God's will for you. As you do, know that Jesus understands, and is there to help you.

Jesus knew all the pain and suffering he was about to experience. Can you sense his anguish? Do you feel his struggle? Yet he still says "not my will, but yours be done". Jesus' sacrifice wasn't a spur of the moment decision. He deliberately chose to take the journey to the cross - in spite of the great cost.



### **PRAY:**

Is there an area of your life where you need to make a choice to love and sacrifice, where you are struggling to do His will - or feel overwhelmed as you follow Jesus? Where do you want to grow in your trust and obedience to Jesus.

Plant a seed in the dirt and as you do ask God to grow your faith and trust in him like he trusted the Father in Heaven.

## Station 4: Condemned by the Sanhedrin



### **READ:**

Luke 22:66-71 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"



### **REFLECT**

When we confess Jesus as Christ or Messiah, we're acknowledging him as our personal Saviour, but we're saying more than this. We're also recognizing that he came to inaugurate the kingdom of God. Though this kingdom won't fully come until Jesus himself brings it, we get to share in the blessings and responsibilities of the kingdom now. Our calling as followers of Jesus is to do the works of the kingdom, so that the reign of God might invade this world.



### **PRAY:**

Lord, the Jewish officials didn't understand what it meant for you to be Messiah, and they condemned you as a criminal worthy of death. Your own followers didn't understand what it meant for you to be Messiah, so they scattered and hid in your hour of crisis. Help me not to be like these! Help me to understand what it means when I confess you to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God. And may this confession lead me to a life of true discipleship. Let your kingdom come, Lord, and your will be done, on earth as in heaven. And let this happen in my life, even today!

Amen.

## Station 5: Denied by Peter



### **READ:**

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:69-75)



### **REFLECT:**

The greatest single cause of atheism in the world is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, and walk out the door and deny him with their lifestyles... that is what an unbelieving world finds unbelievable. (Brennan Manning)

Even though Peter failed, he was never condemned or rejected by Jesus. Nor are we.. Though you and I might never deny Jesus in such a blatant way as Peter did, we might indeed deny him in less obvious ways, also because of fear. Have you ever sensed that the Lord was urging you to do something for his sake, but then you chickened out because you were afraid?

Have you known what it's like to downplay the significance of your faith in some conversation because you were afraid of what people might think of you?

Have you ever let fear keep you from experiencing the fullness of life in Christ?

What is the antidote to such fear? We overcome fear by leaning more fully into the strong arms of God, and knowing that he will never let us go.



### **PRAY:**

Personal: in silence are there areas of your life where there is fear? Hold those out to Jesus.

Corporate: are there areas where we corporately feel 'fearful' - let's pray for those together. (Witness, culture, violence, boldness...)

## Station 6: Judged By Pilate, Whipped and Mocked



### **READ:**

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. (Matthew 27:11-14)

But he (Pilate) had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. (Matthew 27:26)

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. (Matthew 27:27-31a)



### **REFLECT:**

To an outsider it may look like Jesus is succumbing defeat. However, from God's perspective Jesus is standing in strength, rooted in God's love, against the injustice done to him. When we are accused of something want to defend ourselves. Yet here Jesus shows neither defensiveness nor violence, even though his life is at stake.

Some deaths are quick. Some deaths are noble. This death was neither. It's one thing to kill a man It's another to shame and humiliate him.



### **PRAY:**

What do we want to pray before Jesus who bore great suffering for us.



### **SING:**

When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died  
My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride

Forbid it Lord that I should boast Save in the death of Christ my God  
All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His Blood

See from His head, His hands, His feet Sorrow and love flow mingled down  
Did ever such love and sorrow meet Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine That were an offering far too small  
Love so amazing, so divine Demands my soul, my life, my all

## Station 7: Simon Carries the Cross



### READ:

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. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. (Luke 23:26 )

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)



### REFLECT:

What a shock this must have been for Simon! After traveling almost a thousand miles from Cyrene in northern Africa to Jerusalem he found the city jammed with pilgrims who, like Simon himself, had come to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. On his way into the city, he stumbled into what might have looked from a distance like a parade. But then, as he drew near, Simon saw the horrific spectacle of a badly beaten man stumbling as he was forced to carry the beam of his cross on the way to being crucified.

What must Simon have felt? Angry at being inconvenienced? Annoyed - my plans have been interrupted? Reluctance - I am not ready to do this?

Jesus invites us to follow him, but even though he is our Lord, he doesn't force us against our will to join him. Rather, he beckons to us, calling us to take up our cross and offering abundant life in return. As he once said to those who who interested in following him: If we take up the cross of Christ, we will lose our lives, only to discover that we have found true life in Him.



### PRAY:

Are we ready to pray Galatians 2:20? We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. The life we now live in the body, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.



### SING:

I have decided to follow Jesus I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus No turning back, no turning back

The cross before me the world behind me The cross before me the world behind me  
The cross before me the world behind me No turning back, no turning back

Though none go with me still I will follow Though none go with me still I will follow  
Though none go with me still I will follow No turning back, no turning back

## Station 8: Nailed to the Cross



### READ:

“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. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:33-34)



### REFLECT

Jesus' talked a lot about loving enemies and forgiving others. But here at the cross he goes beyond words and ideals and teaches us with an example With the nail digging into his flesh and the hammer hovering... He offers forgiveness

So in your life, who are the soldiers with nails and hammers that you could extend forgiveness to? Who do I need to sort free from my resentment at this moment in my life?



### PRAY:

ALL: We stand before the cross and wonder  
We stand before the cross and fear  
We kneel before the cross and weep  
We pray before the cross and rejoice

To know the cross is to know Christ  
To feel the cross is to feel Christ  
To gaze at the cross is to gaze at Christ  
To carry the cross is to be a Christian  
and not until then



### SING:

At the cross, at the cross I surrender my life  
I'm in awe of you; I'm in awe of you  
Where your love ran red, and my sins washed white  
I owe all to you, I owe all to you Jesus

## Station 9: It is Finished



### **READ:**

46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.” (Matthew 27:45-49)

The curtain of the temple was torn in two and Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:45-49)

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28-30)

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”  
Matthew 27:54



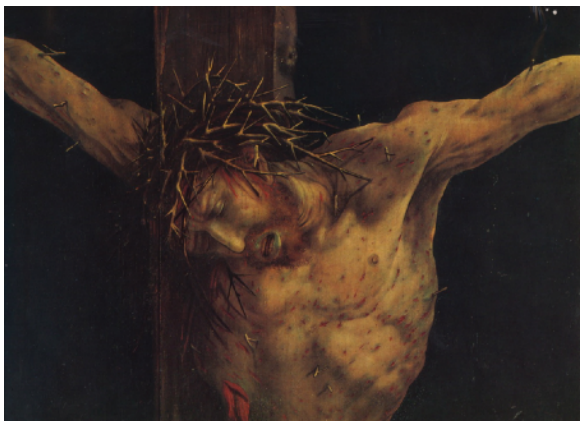
### **REFLECT:**

Can you hear the sounds of the scene? A cry of anguish, the final breath of Jesus, the sorrow of the disciples and mother Mary, the taunts of onlookers, the ripping of the curtain and the rumbling and quaking of the ground, the final words of Jesus, and a confession of faith of the centurion.



### **PRAY:**

It is time to be silent once more. Take in the moment of the final breath, the final moment of the human life of Jesus.



## Station 10: Buried in a Tomb



### **READ:**

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night.

Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. (John 19:38-41)



### **REFLECT:**

Jesus, disgraced and mistreated, is honourably buried in a new tomb. Nicodemus brings a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight, which gives off a precious scent. In the Son's self-offering, as at his anointing in Bethany, we see an "excess" which evokes God's generous and superabundant love. God continues to offer himself unstintingly.

A large stone is rolled in to close the tomb and all go home. What a sad day it has been for so many people... yet hope is coming.



### **PRAY:**

ALL: Lord, today we remember the fact that your death wasn't some charade. You really died. Thus, you experienced the ultimate penalty for our sin. We will never be able to understand fully the wonder of your death. But we can grasp the fact that your real death opened up the door for us to experience real life. Face with such a merciful mystery, we cry: "Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"

Amen!

## Station 11: Letting Go



### **READ:**

If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.



### **REFLECT:**

Let the rock in your hand symbolize every sinful attitude and action  
Let the rock in your hand symbolize all that you wish you weren't  
Let the rock in your hand symbolize the shadow within  
Let the rock in your hand symbolize the brokenness you have experienced  
Let the rock in your hand symbolize the brokenness you have caused



### **PRAY:**

Go to the basket at the cross and drop your stone in... and let your sin die with Christ... and sing with the new heart that Jesus gives us forgiven and made new.



### **SING:**

Jesus, all for Jesus All I am and have and ever hope to be  
Jesus, all for Jesus All I am and have and ever hope to be

All of my ambitions hopes and plans I surrender these into Your hands  
All of my ambitions hopes and plans I surrender these into Your hands

For its only in Your will that I am free For its only in Your will that I am free

