

14 Stations

The Way of the Cross

A LENTEN MEDITATION

With portrayals by affiliates of the
**Interfaith Assembly on
Homelessness and Housing**
Photography by David Michalek

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Some text and ideas borrowed from the Online Stations of the Cross,
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INTERFAITH ASSEMBLY on
HOMELESSNESS
AND HOUSING

The Way of the Cross

Where he leads me, I will follow; where he leads me, I will follow;
Where he leads me, I will follow; I'll go with him, with him, all the way.

Opening Devotions

Leader: Jesus said, "If any would come after me, let them take up their cross and follow me".

People: Teach us, O Lord, the way of the cross. Help us to see it and know it. Give us the courage to pick it up, and strength to hold it. May we have companions to help us share it, and grace to endure it. May we have the love to carry it to the end.

Leader: Jesus knew that his life was consecrated to God, and he shows us how to live entirely to God. He shows us how to love courageously, to take up our own work, and to give ourselves for the sake of the world which God adores.

People: We would follow where you lead us, O Lord. Though we falter and stumble, in darkness and fear, guide us to a love which tramples down death, for the sake of Jesus, with whom we walk and through whom we pray. Amen.

The People process to the first station, singing:

I'll go with him through the judgment; I'll go with him through the judgment;
I'll go with him through the judgment; I'll go with him, with him, all the way.



Station One
Christ is sentenced to death

The First Station: Jesus is condemned to die

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: When it was morning, the priests and elders and the whole council met together. They bound Jesus and led him away to Pilate. He was accused of many things. Many people shouted for his death, saying, "Crucify him!" Pilate brought Jesus out, had him flogged, and handed him over to be executed. Here, Jesus stands as one with all who have ever been unjustly accused and condemned, including those we condemn to poverty through our apathy and excess.

Deacon: Seeing him condemned our hearts are convicted of our indifference towards the poor. We remember that he died unjustly to break the injustice and oppression we allow towards our neighbors. We contemplate his utter surrender to us, for us.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you surrender to our killing blows meted out daily to the least of your brothers and sisters, at our very hands, even as we promise to love you and to serve them. We crucify you daily, and yet you place yourself between us and the guilt and death we deserve. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Two
Christ accepts the Cross

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.

Reader: The Roman soldiers stripped Jesus and put a scarlet robe on him. They twisted thorns into a crown which they put on his head. They mocked him and spat on him and then took him away to crucify him. Jesus went out to Golgotha, “the place of a skull”, bearing his own cross. Here, Jesus takes upon his shoulders all the crushing weight of human misery and suffering, our own, and the sorrows we inflict on his people.

Deacon: Seeing him stagger under the weight of the wood we know that we, ourselves have made his burden heavier by refusing to bear our responsibility for those who most need us. We remember that he carries us even as we refuse to carry others. We contemplate how closely he holds us, just as we are.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you bore the full weight of those rough beams of wood on which you would die. You bore the full weight of our humanity. And yet, we refuse to bear your life in us, balking at the smallest burdens of love. But you never fail to hope in us, and grow us up in your likeness. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Three
Christ falls the first time

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.

Reader: The path that Jesus was made to travel to the hill where he died, was a long one, so to make an example of him to more people. He was exhausted and weak, from fasting and blood loss. His heart was broken and his spirit terribly grieved. Lying on the ground he knows the crushing weight of ordinary life for so many people, how impossible it can seem to get up and go on.

Deacon: Seeing him there, drained of hope, we know we have made others to stumble and fall under the intolerable burdens of our hate and fear. We know he goes down to any depths to free and heal us all. We contemplate his utter self-emptying for us.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you lift the burdens of our own making and bear us up when we would collapse in terror or grief. We are too weak and selfish to stand upright in love. We stumble and fall because we fail to walk in your light. But you enlighten us, still, and place upon us the gentle yoke of your servant love. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Four
Christ encounters his mother

The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his afflicted mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus' path takes him to this powerful source of strength so he may go on. As their eyes meet, how pierced-through her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her sorrow. Here, Jesus bends to the agony of every mother who has ever lost a child, especially to a violent death. And Mary joins the stream of women who, through history, have bitterly wept for their children, like Rachel, refusing comfort, "for they are no more."

Deacon: Seeing their bond of love, we think of all the mothers who live impoverished and endangered as they raise their children alone. We remember the thousands of children over whom God broods as a mother, but whom we abandon to scarcity, hunger, illness and hopelessness. We contemplate the mother-love in God's heart.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, your love for all people is a mother's love, reaching out to gather us under your broad and gentle wings. But we squander your tender care for ourselves, and refuse to share it with others. Still, you love us to the end, sharing your own heart with us, and calling us to heal your beloved world. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Five
Simon helps Christ carry the Cross

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.

Reader: As they led Jesus away, they came upon a man of Cyrene, named Simon, who was coming into Jerusalem from the countryside to celebrate the Passover. And they forced him to help Jesus, by laying his cross on Simon's back. Here, Jesus enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He feels his own utter impotence and his desperate need of someone, anyone, even a stranger.

Deacon: Seeing him in this tortured and helpless posture, seeing Simon share in his humiliation, we know we have too often left others to suffer and struggle alone. We remember how Jesus never leaves anyone alone in their sorrows, and has always preceded and followed us in our saddest journeys. We contemplate his constant presence to us.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, we would help you, but only if it's not too hard and only if we get something in return. We would help your people but never dirty our hands. We would carry your cross but only for just a few steps and only if you were going our way. And yet, still, you ask us to follow and to give ourselves to any who need us. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Six
Veronica wipes the face of Christ

The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

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

Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Seeing blood, sweat, and tears wash over Jesus' face, Veronica broke with safety and tradition, running to him, removing her veil in public, and using it to wipe his face. Like Isaiah's "suffering servant", Jesus' face had been horribly marred, bruised, and wounded. His face shows his solidarity with any who have ever suffered violent torture and abuse. He bears the ugly wounds we inflict upon each other when we angrily lash out to punish or control. And Veronica shows us the tender compassion we are called to apply to every wound.

Deacon: Seeing her love, we feel the sting of our own wounded lives, and we remember how Jesus' wounds are the source of our healing. We remember that, in touching the bruises and sores of another, we apply balm to our own broken lives, and to Jesus, himself. We contemplate the wounds he bears for us.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you truly felt each drop of blood and sweat, and truly cried each tear that stained your face. But we have failed to see your face and touch your sorrows, so lost are we in our own. And yet, you always gaze upon us in patience and mercy, never looking away from our need of you. Teach us to see your face and to wipe your tears in the sadness of every other person. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Seven
Christ falls for the second time

The Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

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

Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls again to the ground. In the deepest exhaustion, he stares at the earth beneath him. He remembers that we are dust, and to dust shall he and all of us return. Now as his ankles and knees fail him, he feels the profound weakness of disability and disease, and aging itself. He endures the weight of the world, the oppression of every sin.

Deacon: Seeing him there, we know how it is to feel beaten down, unable to stand, and to wish for death. We remember the millions who never rise to freedom and joy, whose hopelessness makes them fall, again and again. We know we have lain ourselves down in callous disregard when we ought to have stood for the sake of another. We contemplate his falling under the weight of our hard hearts.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you have offered the yoke of your love, but we accept, instead, the yokes of bondage that make us fall. You have lain at our feet and we have trampled your love. And yet, still, you lift us and any who fall, and bring us up from the dark where we try to hide from you. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

Processing to the next station, the people sing:

I can hear my Savior calling; I can hear my Savior calling;
I can hear my Savior calling; I'll go with him, with him, all the way.



Station Eight
Christ encounters the weeping women

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.

Reader: Among the great crowd of people who followed Jesus were some women who bewailed and lamented him. They and their children had come to comfort and thank him. Jesus had broken social and religious rules to stand for women, to offer them healing and freedom, and to call them to discipleship. Even in his last hours, he sees them as companions to whom he may speak the grief in his heart: Do not weep for me, but for yourselves and your children.

Deacon: Seeing his love for the women, we remember how he struck down the oppressive rules of religion and culture, and looked with respect upon all who lived at the margins. We see him seeing us, and his gaze heals and calls us. Seeing the faces of these women, we see the face of loss and fear, and tender compassion. We contemplate his sorrow as he looks upon ours.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus we mourn for all the wrong things, and fail to weep for our sins against you. We have kept the rules which break and divide your people, while ignoring your commandment to lay down our lives for love's sake. But you have broken the curse of sin, that we might begin each day anew in the service of your love. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Nine
Christ falls the third time

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.

Reader: This last fall is intolerable, devastating. Surely Jesus cannot go on. He is the image of Job, whom “God has besieged and wrapped in bitterness and tribulation”, who “dwells in darkness, like the dead of long ago, who cowers in ashes and whose teeth grind on gravel”. His executioners look upon a broken man, paying a price he deserves to pay. But he is innocent, lying down with all whose lives have been given or taken for the sake of others, and all who have died unseen and alone.

Deacon: Seeing him, we know there are thousands who lie each night in shelters or the streets, who are pulled to their feet by the harsh light of day in a world that marches on without them. We remember that Jesus was at home among the downtrodden and that our own rest will be found at the feet of all whom we serve in his name. We contemplate his place at our feet, serving us always.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, though you loved us with passion, and carry us now in your heart, still, we blame you when life presses down on us. We refuse to endure, to be brave, or to trust you to save us. Yet you never let us go, nor go on without each one of us. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Ten
Christ is stripped of his garments

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.

Reader: When they came to Golgotha, they offered him wine to drink mingled with gall. But when he tasted it, he would not drink it. They stripped him and divided his garments by casting lots. Part of the cruel shaming was his nakedness. He is utterly exposed, defenseless, and completely vulnerable. All has been taken from him. He stands as one with all who are stripped of power and dignity, exposed and plundered, left for dead.

Deacon: Seeing him there, unclothed, we remember all whom we have failed to cover with safety and love. We see how much of himself he reveals and gives to us, holding back nothing. We know he asks us to clothe ourselves in deeds of mercy and to redress the injustice of his people. We contemplate how he bares his soul for each of us.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you gave your body to be whipped and your face to be spat upon. You gave your heart into our careless keeping. You have dressed us in robes of righteousness that we have dirtied and torn. And yet, you never hide yourself from us, and you call us to open our hearts and lives. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Eleven
Christ is nailed to the Cross

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.

Reader: They crucify Jesus with two criminals, one on his left and one on his right. Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet. As the cross is lifted up, his whole weight hangs on those nails. Struggling to pull himself up so to breathe, bleeding more profusely, his life slips away. Those who pass by deride him. He is one with every person whose life is taken by another, all victims of genocide and war, of domestic violence, drunk driving, desperate crime, and those who sit on death row.

Deacon: Seeing him there, we know it is the violence of our own hearts, which holds him to the cross. We know that our racism, ignorance, apathy, and carelessness daily allow the murder of his people. We remember that each life is precious to him, including our own, and that he weeps at our dying, and dies that all might live. We contemplate his surrender to death at our hands.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you stretched out your arms of love on the cross and we nailed them to the wood. We, ourselves, fixed you to your death and we still do. You always accept the blows of our fear and stubborn pride. There is no pain or agony you have not borne. You stay with us through all our dying, whispering to our cold hearts, the hope of new life in you. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Twelve
Christ dies on the Cross

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.

Reader: With only Mary, and John, and Mary Magdalene still there to support him, Jesus surrenders his life. Crying with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,” he bows his head and breathes his last breath. But even at this shameful end, the seeming failure of his mission, the abandonment of his community, the despair of even God, whom he thought had forsaken him, he entrusts himself to God.

Deacon: Seeing him as he dies, we are tempted to comfort ourselves with our knowing he’ll rise again. But we remember that, for him and the few who still loved him, this death was as final and real as any human death. His body was broken, cut, bruised, cold, heavy, and still. He died the worst of all deaths, in terror, confusion, and searing pain. We search for words to console his friends, but none come to our lips. We contemplate his trust in God to the end.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you died as we all die, but utterly alone, and wailing for the God you thought had left you. And we forsook you, as we still forsake so many who die in lonely despair. You surrendered even your final breath to your Father’s will. You gather us up into that surrender and ask us to trust you all the way to the end. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Thirteen
Christ is taken down from the Cross

The Thirteenth Station: The body of Jesus is placed in the arms of his mother.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you;
Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus' lifeless body bears the horrible marks of his death, but also the imprint of every one who has touched and held him in loving gratitude. His body is finally at rest, bathed in the tears of his mother. She strokes his face and caresses every wound. She can't imagine a life without him. She struggles to breathe, and holding him close, shuts her eyes to the world which dares to go on in spite of her sorrow. She shares the godforsakenness of all who have lost the meaning and center of their life.

Deacon: Seeing her, we feel our own crushing grief, our own broken hearts, our own helplessness to save ourselves or anyone else, our own impotent silence in the presence of another's heart-sickness. We know we live in fear and denial of death, even as we are addicted to all of the things which rob us of life. We confess our terror of dying and our failure to hope in eternal life. We contemplate our own grief, which he heals with his love.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, as you were laid in your mother's arms, so has our God placed you in our hearts and lives, but we have refused to embrace you as our own. And yet you always hope and wait to rise in us. We would die to ourselves, that we might truly live in you. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to the next station, saying:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.



Station Fourteen
Jesus is laid in the Tomb

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.

Reader: In the evening, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. He took and wrapped the body in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, hewn in a rock. Jesus succumbs to all the powers of death that taunt and terrorize us. In his death, he descends to hell so to rescue us from death's hold.

Deacon: Seeing his tomb, we think of all the hopeless, lifeless things in which we bury our freedom and joy in life. We feel entombed by our sins, and we lock away others in our unforgiveness. Through the cold hardness of our hearts, we consign ourselves and others to loveless lives. Looking beyond the stone, we know his body is being remade into a living one, and will return to us in the flesh and blood of a new family, sisters and brothers of every color and race. We let our fear and hate die with him, and we look to rise in the new community of love, washed in his blood and nourished by his body.

A brief silence is observed.

Let us pray.

People: Jesus, you came as a stranger to our world, born in a strange, cold place, and buried in a stranger's cold, dark tomb. We never gave you a home. And yet, still, you choose our sad, dark, frightened hearts as your eternal resting place. Though we seal our hearts to your people and your love, still you break open our prisons and lead us in an embracing love. Expressing our thanks, and accepting your forgiveness, we seek your grace to change. Amen.

The People process to stand or kneel before the altar, singing:

Where he leads me, I will follow; Where he leads me, I will follow;
Where he leads me, I will follow; I'll go with him, with him, all the way.

Concluding Prayers at the Altar

Lord Jesus Christ, as we kneel at the foot of your cross, help us to see and know your love for us, so that we may place at your feet all that we have and all that we are.

To Christ our Lord who loves us, and washed us in his own blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and the world God loves, to him be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.