



Holy Trinity Church, Horfield, Bristol

Creating connections through the inclusive Catholic
tradition in worship, welcome and service



Stations of the Cross, 2nd March 2024 Through the eyes of Mary

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In the name of the Father ✝...

Lord, as we follow your journey today through the eyes of your blessed mother Mary, may we, like her, be changed by our encounter with those who walked with you on your journey to the cross; to be open to your message of self-emptying love, and demonstrate that love in our lives today, and always.
Amen.

The first station: Jesus is condemned to death.

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

“Crucify him, crucify him!”

I see my son as Pilate shows him to the people – disfigured and unrecognisable. I am deafened by the outcries of the crowd. My maternal heart is drowned in sorrows. The very thought that my Son, my God and my life has to die is, unimaginable.

At the beginning, Mary had received in her body the seed of God’s life. Through her willingness to co-operate with God’s plan, God had taken on our human nature: perfect love in human form. Throughout Jesus’ earthly life, Mary continued not only to nurture, but to support his ministry in very practical ways. “Do as he tells you” she directed the servants at the wedding feast. Unlike Mary, Pilate’s heart was divided. He knows that Jesus is innocent, and he looks for a way to free him, but at the same time he is afraid of the crowd and so his self-interest becomes more important than what is right.

With Christ and Our Lady, let us offer this station for all who hold positions of authority, that they may use their positions for good, and that we may always advocate for those without a voice. Amen

The second station: Jesus receives his cross

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou has redeemed the world

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.

I see that the crowds are restless and await my Son with fury to make him take the cross already prepared. I see my son lovingly gaze at the cross and before taking it up, he kisses it. He establishes a portion for each soul to make them heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Strong enough to hold the weight of any person, the wood laid upon the shoulders of Jesus bears the weight of the world. He faces it with endurance and it will ultimately be a royal road. Yet, in the humanity he has received from Mary, the cross is as heavy and cruel as for any other. He can hardly stand under the weight of it, the weight of disappointment of his betrayal.

With Christ and Our Lady, let us offer this station for all those who are bearing heavy burdens, and those who are weakened by wounds inflicted by others; and for ourselves that we may be given strength to bear our own cross. Amen

The third station: Jesus falls for the first time

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, 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.

I see my Son taking the first steps under the enormous weight of the cross. He falls beneath it. As he falls, he bangs against the rocks, and the thorns are driven more deeply into his head. I see he does not have the strength to get up, so his enemies, irritated, force him to stand up with kicks and shoves.

Jesus our high priest is one who sympathises with, and shares our human weakness. These are the days of his flesh. From Mary he has received a power he does not have in his divinity; the power to die. From him, we who believe receive the power we do not have; the power to live. This journey is the journey of life; our life. By the grace of God's forgiveness we can be given the encouragement to rise up when we fall.

With Christ and Our Lady, let us offer this station for all who feel the church has abandoned them, and for insight and compassion from those who govern the church **Amen.**

The fourth station: Jesus meets his mother

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.

I, unable to endure our physical separation any longer, hasten my steps to give Him my last embrace and dry his face that is completely covered in blood. I search for him, but as I approach, the soldiers notice it, and they strike and push him, preventing me from saying goodbye. The torment I experience is so overwhelming that I feel I am about to die.

Mary's heart was a treasury. In that heart, she had kept the words of the angel spoken at the beginning "do not be afraid, Mary" and in it she had pondered all the events surrounding the birth of her son. Her heart carried Jesus as she watched him grow and begin his ministry. Now in this dark hour, her heart knew the sorrow, but also the fidelity and courage of a mother.

With Christ and our Lady, let us offer this station for all those who have caring responsibilities and for the work of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, especially its ministry to those who are hurting. **Amen**

The fifth station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world
He who loves his sister and brother, abides in the light.

I see my Jesus undergoing untold sufferings. His enemies, fearing that he may die under the cross, compel a Cyrenean, Simon, to help him carry it. What a harrowing blow to my heart that is, being unable to sustain my dear Jesus in his many overwhelming pains.

Mary could not carry Jesus' cross in a physical sense, yet she continued to walk beside him, distraught at his suffering. Yet in that moment, she saw, too, the love and compassion of another outcast, Simon. Like Jesus and Mary he was an outsider, and so easy prey for a gang of bullying soldiers. And Simon himself was changed in that encounter.

With Christ and our Lady, let us pray for the despised, for those who are 'labelled as different'. Labels which negate the need for a proper relationship; reinforcing prejudice. We pray that we may find the courage to be rebels for justice for the different **Amen**

The sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,

Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Come, my heart says, seek his face. Your face Lord do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

I see my beloved Son, overcome with weariness. He can hardly walk. I see that he stops and tries to look. I ask myself what is it. What is he looking for? Then I see Veronica, fearless and courageous approach him with a cloth and dry his face. He leaves his face impressed on the cloth as a sign of gratitude.

In the Hebrew bible, we hear believers yearning to see the face of God. In Jesus Christ, that face is made visible. At first, Veronica saw only a bloodied and bruised face, but as she stepped forward to bring comfort to this condemned man, the image of the true God was impressed on her heart. In the man of sorrows, she sees the face of God.

With Christ and our Lady, let us offer this station for our own insight; That we may live out the Gospel message to 'love one another as I have loved you' and reflect the face of Christ by what we say and do, and see the face of Christ in all we encounter today **Amen**

The seventh station: Jesus falls the second time.

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused! So be it! Your house will be left to you desolate.

His enemies, disapproving of Veronica's loving gesture, flog, push and shove him along the way. He moans, and falls under the cross. The soldiers watch, dispassionate, cold.

Something physical is happening to Jesus. Even with Simon's help, the weight of the cross combined with the weakness caused by his wounds is too much. The tradition of Jesus' falls beneath the weight of the cross remind us of the falls of humanity – from the moment of Adam's fall in the story of Genesis, through to our own falls through moral weakness or selfish pride. It is humanity with its back turned to God that lies fallen in the dust. But Jesus shared our weakness so that we may share his strength. He falls in order to raise us up.

With Christ and Our Lady, let us offer this station for ourselves when we are unable to resist temptation. Let us pray for those who are hurt by the weakness and failure of others, and those who do not know the assurance of God's unconditional love. **Amen**

The eight station: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Do not weep for me

A few more steps and again I see him stop, and yet, under the weight of so much suffering, his love does not stop. On seeing the women weeping, he forgets himself and consoles them, but at the same time prayerfully challenges.

The women of Jerusalem fulfil a pious duty to weep for a condemned man, but their grief is formal and ritualistic. Jesus' words to them point us to a deeper truth: sentimental piety on its own is not enough, but must lead to true conversion of heart. Do we stand and express sorrow and consternation at the woes of the world, shed a tear but then turn away?

With Christ and Our Lady, let us offer this station for all those facing choices; for strength to be bold, to be unpopular, to stand up for justice, to make decisions in the Spirit, which transform lives. **Amen**

The ninth station: Jesus falls the third time

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

He said to him the third time, Simon Son of John, do you love me? Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord you know everything you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

On hearing my son speak, his enemies become furious. With ropes they pull and push him with such rage that he falls. As he falls he bangs against the stones. I see him touch the ground and gasp in his blood, but his enemies what to make him stand. They pull him up by his hair, and kick him, but all in vain. I can see he is dying. My heart is breaking.

The fall of Jesus speaks to fallen humanity and to our own falls, but the Church falls too; through lack of unity, through our fear to embrace and celebrate diversity, our failure to acknowledge radical new possibilities. In all this, the Gospel goes unproclaimed. When the church fails, we drag down the name of Christ. But he is the resurrection and the life, and his power can raise us up.

With Christ and our Lady, we offer this station for all those times when we have wounded the body of Christ through our thoughts, words or deeds. That through grace, we may hear your call to repentance. **Amen**

The tenth station: Jesus is stripped of his garments

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,

Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

*Why are your garments red, your clothes as if you have trodden the winepress?
I have trodden the winepress alone.*

My son is stripped of his garments, with such fury that He collapses to the ground, almost dead. I see that he is shivering and an icy mortal sweat invades his most sacred humanity. How I want to hold him in my heart and warm him. How I long to give him my life and blood in exchange for his.

As the soldiers remove Jesus' clothing, they remove every last shred of his dignity, judged by the eyes he is exposed to. Jesus once more takes on the condition of fallen humanity, when we are stripped of all we surround ourselves with, and come face to face with God.

With Christ and our Lady we offer this station for our acknowledgement of the futility of the self-deceit with which we clothe ourselves before God. We pray for the gift of self-knowledge and self-awareness. And we pray for all those whose dignity has been removed through the inhumanity and cruelty of others. For those who are victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Amen

The eleventh station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him.

I see my son expressing his love to the cross when his enemies command him to lay himself on it, and promptly he obeys. As I see him extend himself on the cross, I want to press him more tightly to my heart and kiss him. I do not want to leave him. It would be more bearable to be nailed to the cross with Him, for true love tolerates no separation.

Jesus has been brought up with the sound of hammer and nail on wood. He knew from Joseph how to drive a nail home. But at twelve he declared that he must be about his father's business. Yet, he could have little imagined that faithfulness would demand his submission to these Roman carpenters who nailed his body to the tree. He submits to the excruciating pain. The glory that is his is veiled, but in truth, his hour approaches. God always has a way of bringing good out of evil. The Cross is the abiding sign of the power of his Grace. There can be no real Grace in our lives without the cross. As Jesus calls us to take up our cross, and follow him, it is an invitation to us.

With Christ and our Lady we offer this station for vocations, in all their myriad form. As Mary said "yes" to God that through grace we may respond to our calling. **Amen**

The twelfth station: Jesus dies on the cross

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said "I thirst".

At the foot of the cross, my Son grants me, with his dying lips, my motherhood of all humanity, and the gift of all my children. Shortly afterwards, among untold physical convulsions, he breathes his last. After his death, all nature is shaken, the sun darkens and the earth quakes, all the elements are affected and it seems they weep at my dear Son's death.

This moment of unspeakable and abandoned death is the most intense moment of divine revelation. God reveals his power through powerlessness. Because from the cross we see that there can be no greater strength than the strength of selfless love. In this finished-ness, is our beginning.

With Christ and our Lady we offer this station for our own intentions.... **Amen.**

The thirteenth station: Jesus is taken down from the cross.

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,

Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

If we die with Christ, we shall live with him, too.

I see a soldier approach my son and with the thrust of a lance, pierce his heart, causing the last drops of water and blood to gush forth. I see they are preparing to take him down from the cross. So, I accompany his other dear disciples, to remove the nails from his most sacred hands and feet.

Jesus is dead. Yet, before the body is wrenched from the cross and put into the hands of Mary, the fluids flowing from his body provide us with an image of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist which will be at the heart of the church. Even in this moment of immense grief, the hidden God is preparing the way for something new, as a community of faith begins to take shape. And Mary, the God bearer who said “yes” to God is at the heart of this profound experience; she gave of herself, at great cost, a single mother, a refugee, to bring forth the Word made flesh. And as she was overshadowed, so the Spirit overshadows bread and wine, and he is with us.

With Christ and our Lady we offer this station for all those who will die today, for those who wish they will die today, for the bereaved, and for the Church, that we may be bearers of hope. **Amen**

The fourteenth station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.

We adore thee O Christ and we bless thee,
Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world

Do you know that all of us who have been baptised with Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by his baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of God the father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

I prepare myself for the final sacrifice of burying the lifeless body of my son. Resigned to the will of God, but oh the words of Simeon come into my mind that a sword will pierce my heart. The pain is visceral, but nothing, nothing compared to that of my beloved.

Jesus is entombed out of sight, that precious body now lying cold on a stone slab. Yet, it is not a tomb, it is a womb and in just a few days new life will burst forth. And our cries will be cries of joy.

With Christ and our Lady we offer this station for all those who have lost hope, who are entombed by the hands of others. For the people of Gaza, Palestine, and Israel, for Ukraine and Russia. That they may be raised to new life. **Amen**

Station of the Resurrection from the chancel

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over and looked into the tomb and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her “woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him. When she had said this she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her “Mary” she turned to him and said “Rabbouni”, Mary went and announced to the disciples “I have seen the Lord”.

With Christ and our Lady, let us share in the triumph and joy of his risen life, in the forgiveness he brings, the strength he brings and the promise of restoration to all, given in his resurrection. Let us pray that the whole church will be filled with this new life, and brought to unity in Christ, that all might know and worship Jesus as Lord. Amen.

Anima Christi

Our Father....

The Grace...

Caroline Plaice

Church warden. March 2024