

The Way of the Cross

***Scripture and Prayers on the
Passion and Death of
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***

**by the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Drawings by Jack Monteith

INTRODUCTION

The Stations of the Cross combine art, sculpture and movement to recreate Christ's walk to Calvary within the walls of the church, allowing the faithful to make a "pilgrimage to Jerusalem" and be drawn closer to the Christ who walked there.

The stations tradition developed during the time of the Crusades (12-13th cent.). Their number and subject matter have varied widely, from as many as 30 to as few as five. The 14 of current practice first appeared in the 16th century and were fixed in 1731 by Pope Clement XII, consisting of nine gospel scenes and five scenes from popular tradition.

While many have found the stations from tradition questionable, I have chosen to include them all. These stations are like parables with a message, much as Jesus taught in parables. The falls of Christ (stations 3, 7, 9) while not scriptural, could well have occurred in fact, given his all night interrogation, scourging and loss of blood. Theologically, the falls witness to the weight of our sin which crushed Christ. Jesus' encounter with Mary on the road to Calvary (station 4) simply expands on the same encounter at the crucifixion as recorded in John's gospel.

The woman wiping Jesus' face (station 6) likely derives from the veil with Christ's image (i.e., *vera icon*, true image, hence the name Veronica), which has been kept in the Vatican since the 8th century. Without debating the veil's authenticity, the station teaches that the true image of Christ occurs in our loving one another. To illustrate this, I have retitled the station and included the story of Jesus' anointing by the woman of Bethany which begins the Passion narrative in all four gospels. The five stations from tradition may be omitted if desired.

The Stations of the Cross are intended to be a devotion that is prayed and walked by one or more persons, traditionally on Fridays, and especially during Lent. The stations themselves may be as simple as black paper crosses and Roman numerals along the walls of the nave, or as elaborate as the great artistic renderings available in church supply catalogs.

NOTE FOR THE LEADER: At each station, announce the number of the station and its title, then read the parts marked (L:), following *kneel/stand/bow* rubrics as indicated. Allow a significant amount of time during the reflection at each station for personal prayer. Do not rush this reflection time. It is the heart of the devotion. A crucifer may lead the people from station to station, beginning and ending at the altar.

TLW, Good Friday 1992

OPENING PRAYER

Before the Altar

Stand

In the name of the Father, and + of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."
(Matthew 16:24-25)

Christ has humbled himself and become obedient to death:

Even to death on a cross.

Mercifully assist us, O Lord God of our salvation,

**that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts
whereby you have given us life everlasting; through your Son, Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen**

(Opening Prayer for Passion Sunday)

Let us follow the way of the cross:

In the name of our Lord. Amen

*Stand and move to the first station, while singing the following to the tune
"Stabat Mater" (see page 19 for music).*

**Jesus, Lord, condemned, defiled,
May we too be meek and mild
As we tread your holy Way.**

**May we feel no bitter hatred,
When we too are persecuted,
Left alone to walk with you.**

THE FIRST STATION

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." After flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (Matthew 27:1-2,22,24,26b)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

By a perversion of justice:

He was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. (Isaiah 53:8-10a)

Let us pray. Almighty God, your Son was rejected and condemned to die by your own people. Grant that we may never reject his word of truth and salvation, but follow him all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

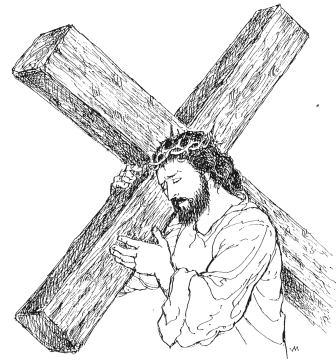
**Now the cross as Jesus bore it,
Has become for us who share it,
The great cross of victory.**

THE SECOND STATION

Jesus Carries His Cross

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

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 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 19:1-2,16b-17)



Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

I gave my back to those who struck me:
And my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord GOD who helps me. (Isaiah 50:6-9a)

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, your Son laid aside all power in order to take up the cross and show us the depths of your love for us. Increase our willingness to bear our own cross, for love of him and for love of others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

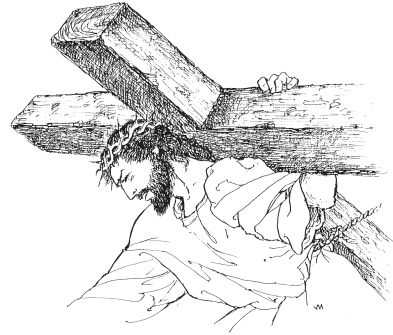
Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Weakened, prodded, cursed, and fallen,
His whole body bruised and swollen,
Jesus tripped and lay in pain.**

THE THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls the First Time

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



Justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us; we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We stumble at noon as in the twilight, among the vigorous as though we were dead. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. (Isaiah 59:9,10b,15b-16)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection

Three times I appealed to the Lord about this:

That it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

(2 Corinthians.12:8-10)

Let us pray. Lord God, your Son chose to be weak before the powers of this world, and you worked your power through him. In our time of weakness, help us to turn to you, that your power may work in us also; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

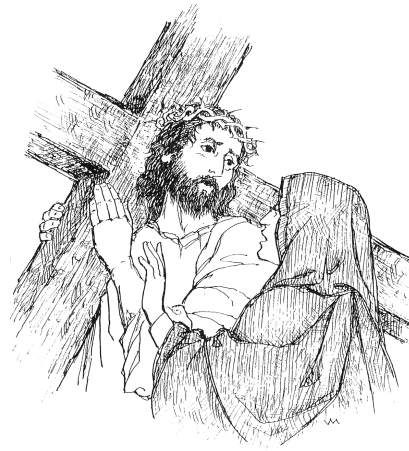
Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Jesus met his grieving Mother,
She who made the Lord our Brother;
Now the sword her heart has pierced.**

THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother



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

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:26-27)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

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." (Luke 2:34-35)

Let us pray. Father of mercies, a sword of grief pierced deep into the heart of Mary as she witnessed her Son's passion. As we share in her sorrow by walking the way of sorrows, may we also share in the joy that is to come, the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Simon stopped in hesitation,
Not foreseeing his proud station,
Called to bear the cross of Christ.**

THE FIFTH STATION

Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

As the soldiers led Jesus 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)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

A disciple is not above the teacher:

Nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

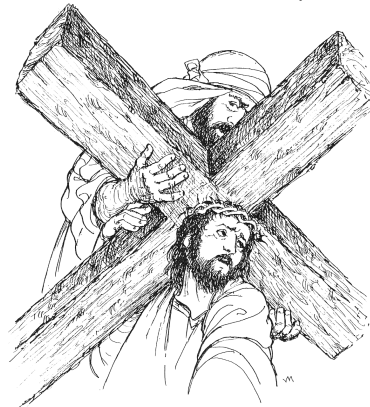
(Matthew 10:24-25a, 37-38; 11:29-30)

Let us pray. Loving Father, you have called us into fellowship under the cross of your Son that we might bear your love to all in the world. Help us to be as willing as Simon to bear the burdens of those in need, that all may be called out of the darkness into the light of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Brave but trembling came the woman,
None but she would flaunt the Roman,
Moved by love beyond her fear.**



THE SIXTH STATION

A Woman Offers Comfort to Jesus

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Before the betrayal, a woman came to Jesus with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial." (Matthew 26:7-9,10,12)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

Then the righteous will answer him:

"Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:37-40)

Let us pray. O God, your Son's passion shows us that loving others holds great risks that make us tremble and reluctant to act. Strengthen us in our faith and our resolve to take those risks and to see your Son in our needy brothers and sisters; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Prostrate on the dust he crumbled,
Flogged in body, he resembled
All our people poor and scorned.**



THE SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Second Time

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)



Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

Blessed are the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:3,5,8,11-12)

Let us pray. Gracious Lord, as we walk the way of sorrows, it pains us to know that it is our fallenness in sin that crushes Christ under his cross. Yet by his suffering, we are raised up and made whole. Strengthen us in our baptismal vows and forgive us always for the sins that make us fall, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**May our sympathy for Jesus
Turn to those who here now need us,
May we see Christ bruised in them.**

THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

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." (Luke 23:27-28)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Let us pray. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are but mortal flesh, and the span of our lives is very brief. Help us to see our frailty and affliction as a sharing in Christ's frailty and affliction, and through them, the path to life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

*Stand and move to the next station,
singing:*

**Jesus fell again in weakness,
Stumbling as we do, to lead us
Through our sorrow and our pain.**



THE NINTH STATION

Jesus Falls a Third Time

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



I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. I lie down among lions that greedily devour human prey; their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords. They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it themselves. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast.
(Psalm 57:2,4,6-7a)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

My God, my God:

Why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like baked clay, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. (Psalm 22:1-2,14-15)

Let us pray. Almighty God, there are times when life's burdens weigh down upon us, and our faith is so drained that we feel forsaken and abandoned by you. Yet you never forsake those who are your own. As you raised your Son from death to life, from despair to joy, so be present in our lives and raise us to hope in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Stripped and jeered by his own nation,
Jesus stood in desolation,
Giving all he had to give.**

THE TENTH STATION

Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes

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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

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." (John 19:23-24a)



Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

All of you must clothe yourselves with humility:

In your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:5b-7,10)

Let us pray. Lord God, your Son endured humiliations and indignities beyond compare, yet without complaint. Keep us humble in our work and daily lives with a willingness to put others before ourselves as Jesus put us before himself; through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Pierced the hands that blessed and cured us;
Pierced the feet that walked to free us,
Walked the hill of Calvary.**

THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

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

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Jesus. 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. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:32-34a)



Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

When we were dead in trespasses:
God made us alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, despite his wounds, Jesus showed his love throughout his passion: for his mother, for the women of Jerusalem, for the good thief, even for those who nailed him to the cross. Bind us ever to that love, and help us to look beyond ourselves and our sufferings in order to share that love with others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Life eternal, death defiant,
Bowed his head -- the world was silent,
Through his death came life anew.**

THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

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



It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

When you make his life an offering for sin
He shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:10b-12)

Let us pray. Who would have believed it, O God? Who would have thought that the Savior would die? Yet in the world's darkest hour, you snatched him out of the jaws of death, crushing sin and death underfoot. Keep us ever close to his cross and death, now and at the hour of our death; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Stunned and stricken, Mary, Mother,
In your arms was placed our Brother,
"Full of grace" now filled with grief.**

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross



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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

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. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, *Pilate* granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth. (Mark 15:42-43,45-46a)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

I will pour out a spirit of compassion:

And supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

Let us pray. Gracious Lord and Consoler of all who mourn, comfort us in all our partings. Turn the darkness of death into the brightness of day for those we love. Help us always to put our faith in you and entrust our loved ones into your infinite care; through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and move to the next station, singing:

**Jesus, Lord, your gift accepted,
In three days you resurrected;
You did first what we shall do.**

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb



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

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. *He and Joseph* took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:39-42)

Kneel/sit and pause for reflection.

Thus says the Lord GOD:

"I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD. (Ezekiel 37:12-13a,14)

Let us pray. God of hope, you have promised that if we are buried with Christ in the waters of Baptism, then we too will rise with him to new life. Make us ever mindful of our baptism and remove all stain of sin from us through repentance, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Stand and return to the altar, singing:

**Jesus, risen, be our lover
In communion and each other,
Lead us home to heav'n with you.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Before the Altar

Far be it from me to glory:

Except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 6:14)

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, 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 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. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

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

Almighty God, we thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, and for the gift of our salvation that he won for us through the way of the cross. Make our paths straight and keep our feet upon that way of the cross until you bring us safely into your heavenly kingdom; where you reign with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen

Let us follow the way of the cross:

Until our life's end. Amen

"Stabat Mater" tune

Mainz Gesangbuch, 1661



