

St Paul's, Ashgrove

Stations of the Cross



Praying the Stations of the Cross helps us slow down and reflect on the journey of Jesus from trial to tomb. Most of the stations are events we can find recorded in the Gospels, and some are derived from a Biblically informed imagining of what might have happened.

1. Jesus is Condemned to Death

Jesus gave him no answer.

*¹⁰ Pilate therefore said to him,
“Do you refuse to speak to me?
Do you not know that I have
power to release you and power
to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus
answered him, “You would have
no power over me unless it had
been given you from above”*

John 19:9



In the first station we remember the injustice of Jesus' trial, and so bring to mind all the victims of injustice and overly harsh justice in our world today. Jesus was willing to be falsely condemned, and to stand in solidarity with all who are condemned - with those people most of us distance ourselves from. We pray for strength to be more like him.

So, let's pray:

They call you judge
But here you stand
With the condemned
As the condemned,
And not condemning.
You stand with everyone who stands
In the path of brutal justice;
Not pointing the finger
But taking the hand stretched out
In pleading and in pain.
Give us strength, we pray,
To stand with you
Against our own condemning heart:
With the condemned
As the condemned,
And not condemning. Amen.

2. Jesus is Made to Carry His Cross

Carrying the cross by himself Jesus went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. John 19:17

Jesus was subjected to physical, and psychological torture before he was forced to carry the heavy cross-beam for his execution. We know he was tortured because of the hints given in the Gospels and the detailed historical accounts of similar trials. We also know what happens to people today who find themselves in similar circumstances.

On such bruised and bleeding, exhausted shoulders, the weight of the cross-beam would have been unbearable.

So let's pray:



Heavy, rough and cruel

By design

To maximise the blood,
The humiliation and the pain.

On you

On you

Is laid the weight of all our fear and shame.

All treading down of one life by
another

And another

Finds its centre in

Our pressing down with all our human
might

Our human, yet more than human
Lord.

Beneath this weight

You take one step

And then another;

Compelled

Yet every moment choosing

Every stumbling step

Toward Golgotha. **Amen.**

3. Jesus Falls the First Time

*Jesus, though he existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped,
⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
assuming human likeness.
And being found in appearance
as a human,
⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the
point of death—
even death on a cross.*

Philippians 2:6



The Gospels don't tell us that Jesus fell on the way to the cross, but of course he would have fallen. Any of us would have fallen under those circumstances, and his body was as vulnerable as ours.

So let's pray:

My Lord, you fall.

Of course you fall!

Our brother and our friend;
Your superhuman strength all laid aside,
And our violence and rage
All spent on you.

My Lord, you fall.

And all the falling of my people led to this:
Our God, forsaking glory, loving us so much,
Lets us make you fall. Amen.

4. Jesus Meets His Mother



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 ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

Luke 2:34

The Gospels don't tell us that Jesus met his mother on the way to the cross, but they are clear that she was under the cross during his crucifixion. And of course she was with him on the way as well. Would you let your son take that journey alone if you could possibly be at his side?

At the cross, Jesus brings new creation to birth - giving new life to us all. His mother is there, but he is the one in labour.

So let's pray:

Lord, you meet your mother
When you are bruised and bleeding,
Exhausted and betrayed.
We always meet our mothers in that place-
If only in our memories and dreams.
Life comes through the suffering of mothers;
Who suffered before us,
And for us, when they bore us.
In your man's body, there,
You repay the debt
By labouring and bleeding,
Naked and humiliated,
To give new birth to your mother. **Amen.**

5. Simon of Cyrene is Made to Carry the Cross

Then he said to them all, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

As they led him 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



Simon of Cyrene was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The soldiers thought Jesus, in his weakened condition, was taking too long but they were unwilling to help carry the cross themselves, so they grabbed whoever they could find.

Simon was given no choice, and yet his actions make him exactly the sort of disciple Jesus was looking for - one who would take up a cross and follow him.

So let's pray:

Lord, you told us that a cross
Would be laid upon our shoulders

If we chose to follow you.

Though Simon made no choice,
He became exactly the disciple

We all feel we should be:

The disciple that your close friends failed to be.

How strange, your enemy

Should be finding you disciples.

So strange, but may it always be,

When violence threatens to extinguish hope,

That hope resists destruction

Through people who, compelled to lift a burden

Off the shoulders of another,

Lift up that cross

And follow you. Amen.

6. Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face



'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:40

The Gospels don't mention Veronica. She comes to us from Church tradition. But we can imagine her there, overwhelmed yet offering whatever small comfort she could. Any of us would do the same. Wouldn't we?

Every time we give whatever meagre comfort we can to people who are suffering, we are washing the face of Jesus.

So let's pray:

My Lord, if I had seen you
Bruised and bloody,
Disfigured and shamed,
Would I have dared approach
With whatever meagre comfort I could give?
Or would I have been paralysed
By shock, disgust or fear?
I am answered every time I see
One of the least of those you love
Bruised and bloody,
Disfigured and shamed.
Have mercy, Lord, for I have often
Looked and walked away.
Give me strength, I pray,
And make me ready, next time,
To wash your face
When I find you
Bruised and bloody,
Disfigured and shamed. Amen

7. Jesus Falls a Second Time

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4:15



Jesus falls three times in the Stations of the Cross. It sometimes takes a lot of repetition for us to understand. Jesus knows our weakness. Jesus is with us when we fall. We are not alone.

So let's pray:

My Lord, you fall.
Of course you fall,
Else how would you be with us
When we fall?
My Lord, you fall,
And now when I fall
It is to you I fall,
Not to one who's far above
But to one who took the lowest place
To be exactly where you need to be
To lift up all who fall. Amen

8. The Women of Jerusalem Weep Over Jesus



A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Luke 23:27

“Don’t weep for me”, Jesus says. Weep for yourselves and all your sons and daughters who will share my fate. Jesus may have been thinking, in particular, of the horrific violence that surrounded the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. Babies carried in the arms of women watching Jesus go to the cross would be 37 when Jerusalem fell. Those babies might become the rebels in the final uprising before the end of their city and the scattering of their people. They will not live past 37. Well may Jesus tell the women to weep for them rather than for him.

Since then, too many sons and daughters have been slaughtered in senseless wars. As we weep for Jesus today, we weep for them all. So, let’s pray:

Unmasked in your body
Are all the forces that use fear
And violence to coerce and to control.
In your body every mother sees
The sons and daughters of Gaza,
Of Ukraine, of Sudan, Afghanistan,
And of Australia’s violent past.
In your body, Lord,
We see them and we weep
For you, for every mother,
And for every son and daughter
In whom your blood has
Everywhere been shed. **Amen.**

9. Jesus Falls a Third Time

*The insults of those who insult
you have fallen on me. Psalm
69:9*



Jesus falls. So, none of us will ever fall alone.

So, let's pray:

My Lord, you fall.

Of course you fall:

The torture doing its true work

In your truly human flesh.

With every tortured body

You fall.

With every tortured heart

You fall.

With every tortured mind

You fall.

With every tortured habitat

You fall.

With every tortured nation

You fall.

So that never, in our falling,

Shall any of us ever be alone. **Amen.**

10. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

The Lord God made garments of skins for them and clothed them. Genesis 3:21

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace... and they called together the whole cohort... ²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. Mark 15:16.20

Artists almost always give Jesus a loin cloth: mercifully seeking to give Jesus back a little of the dignity stolen from him. But we know it was not so. Romans crucified people naked. The whole aim was maximum humiliation, maximum dehumanisation, to achieve maximum deterrent.

They allowed Jews to be dressed on the way to Golgotha out of respect for the holy city, but the crucifixion took place outside the city. No respect of any sort was offered there. There is usually a sexual element to torture. Think of the awful stories that came out of Guantanamo Bay, or other such places. Sometimes there is rape. Frequently, there is the exposure of naked bodies to public view.

We don't know if Jesus was raped, but we do know he was stripped and exposed to a whole cohort (500 soldiers) and then to the public. That, in itself, is a form of sexual abuse.

Sisters and brothers, if you have been sexually abused, know that Jesus understands. Jesus was not made unclean by the abuse. He remained pure and innocent. It is the abusers, and the ones who orchestrated and ordered the abuse, that are unclean. Jesus is clean. You are clean. So let's pray:

You who gave us clothing,
As soon as we knew nakedness and shame;
Did you know, even then,
That all our shame and nakedness
Would now return to you?
Did you who breathed humanity
Into our naked bodies know
That now your body would be
dehumanised?
Then, let it be made known
By all who give and take abuse:
That then as now,
And ever more,
All sin is in the hands that strip,
The eyes that leer,
The body that forces its way;
While your clean and perfect Spirit
Is in the body that's abused,
And humanity in the one objectified. **Amen.**



11. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

He went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. John 19:17-18

The author of life is nailed to the instrument of his death.

So let's pray:



Thud!

Thud!

My Lord!

Thud!

My Lord, your blood!

Thud!

My Lord, your freedom!

Thud!

My Lord, your potency!

Thud!

My Lord, your vitality!

Thud!

My Lord, your endurance!

Thud!

My Lord, your spirit!

Thud!

My Lord, your life!

Thud!

My Lord!

Thud!

Amen

12. Jesus Dies on The Cross

John 19:28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Life was not taken from Jesus. He gave it willingly. But we should not assume that it was, therefore, easy for him to take that step into the vacuum of the unknown.

He had faith. Of course he did. But we should not assume that it was, therefore, easy for him to die.

We will die in faith. But we should not assume it will, therefore, be easy for any of us either to die or to watch death come to the ones we love.

So let's pray:



So, my Lord,
The suffering over,
The emptiness begins.

The nothingness.

The silence.

The space between what was

That will never be again,

And what will one day be.

What will Sunday be?

And when?

Like us all, you take nothing to that place

Except the remnants of your faith,

Or is it hope?

Or is it just a fragile wish?

That on the other side of this long darkness

There will be another day.

Amen.

13 Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night. John 3:1-2

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before and who was one of [the Chief Priests and Pharisees], asked, ⁵¹ “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” ⁵² They replied, “Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.” John 7:50-52

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰ They took the body of Jesus. John 19:38

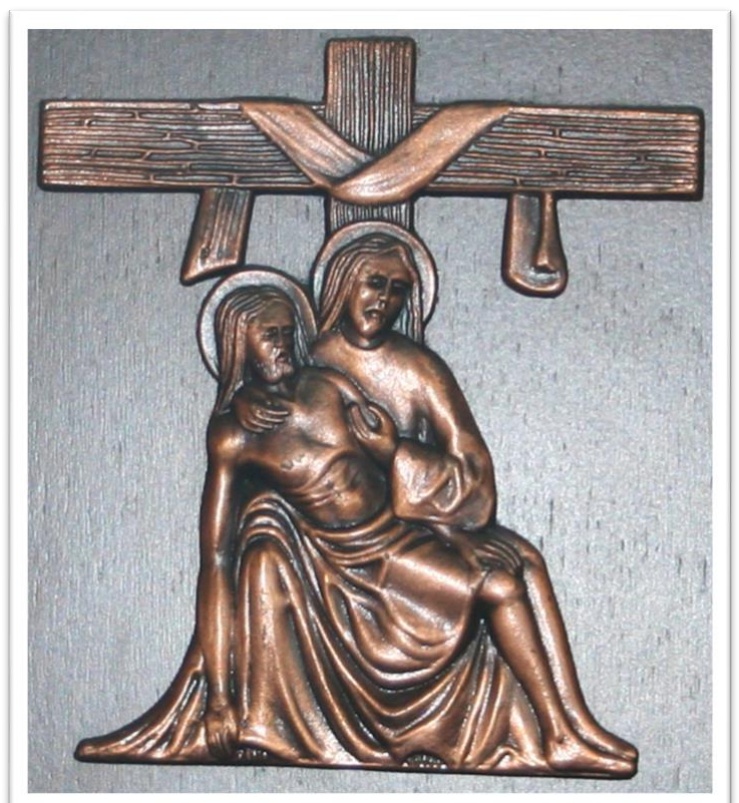
I am very fond of Nic and Jo, but you might be surprised how many Gospel scholars give them a hard time for being secret disciples up to this point. Yes, they had been afraid. They had reputations to protect - positions in society to maintain. But when the time for action comes and those we call disciples scatter, these men are there, doing what needs to be done.

So, let's give thanks for all the secret disciples out there:

Some come to you in darkness:
Fearing for their reputation
And perhaps their very lives.
But they do come.

Some come to you in darkness:
When the light of truth grows dim
And justice finds no other voice.
But they do come.

Some come to you in darkness:
When your life has been
extinguished
And your friends have
disappeared.
And then, when all is darkness
They are light. Amen



14. Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴² And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. John 19:40



So, we leave Jesus to the silence of the tomb.

Until Sunday morning.

So let's pray:

When all is cold and dark

You are there.

When hope has disappeared

You are there.

When we can't see for weeping

You are there.

When fate is sealed and silent

You are there.

Behind rocks and under rubble,

You are there.

For three days,

And whenever one of us is there,

You are there. Amen.

**Love God
Love One Another**



**You are always welcome at St Paul's!
10 Jubilee Terrace, Ashgrove, QLD**

The Stations of the Cross in St Paul's, Ashgrove, were donated by the LLoyd family in memory of John and Kathleen Lloyd and Charles and Ethel Deveny.

Photographs by Lindsay Gardiner

Bible passages are taken from [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

All other words by Rev Dr Margaret Wesley, currently the Parish Priest at St Paul's