

STATIONS OF THE CROSS – DIOCESE OF LIMERICK MARCH 2022

Introduction

Visitors to the holy land walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Special attention is paid to the last journey Jesus made. Because getting to the Holy Land wasn't possible for everyone, Stations of the Cross were placed in churches. These stations allowed people to remember the events of the last hours of Jesus' life and to walk with Jesus on his final journey, stopping where Jesus stopped. At stages in life each of us walk the stations of the cross. We deal with pain, sorrow, and love.

The stations remind us that following Jesus doesn't spare us from experiencing tough times or having to carry our own crosses. But at the same time the stations remind us that we will receive the strength and help we need to make it through those times.

Opening Prayer

Lord, in walking this way of the cross with you,
Help us to draw close and feel your love so true.
As well as your suffering, may the love that we see,
Encourage and inspire us to be the best we can be.
We entrust to you our crosses and the people we know,
Seeking healing and peace, seeking grace as we go.

1. Jesus is sentenced to Death

The very people who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday are now calling for his crucifixion. At this station we remember those who have received bad news, those who have had to deliver bad news, those who are feeling hopeless and stressed. We pray for strength for those people in our world condemned because of the colour of their skin, their gender, their sexuality, where they come from. We remember those condemned to death through violence and sickness, tragedy and cruelty, prejudice and hatred. We pray in sorrow for the times we have condemned others to death with our words and deeds.

Ponder

How must Jesus have felt to hear the crowd calling for him to be crucified? How alone must he have felt? Have you ever experienced the pain of receiving bad news? Who broke the news to you? How did you cope?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have in some ways sentenced others to death by what we have said or done, for the times we have treated others unfairly, for the times we haven't stood up for others who have been treated unfairly.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have stood up for us when we have been treated badly, for those who become angered by injustice, for those who are never indifferent to the suffering of others.

Prayer

At times life is tough and it can be unfair,
At times we may wonder does anyone care?
May we try to be kind and never cause pain,
May God uphold us in our struggle and strain.

2. Jesus is given his Cross

In and through our fragile fractured humanity we all carry crosses, some visible, some known to us alone. Suffering is awful and it can rob us of our hope, our peace and our joy. Lord help us to try to lessen suffering wherever we find it

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and help us to bravely accept the crosses that cannot be changed, trusting that we are more resilient than we think and also trusting that we are never alone in our suffering. We remember all who are suffering and carrying crosses, especially the crosses unseen by others.

Ponder: What must have gone through Jesus' mind when he was first given the cross? What crosses do you carry in your life? What things do you wish you could change? How do you manage to carry your cross, who helps you?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have added to the sufferings of others by being insensitive or unkind, for the times we haven't tried to understand others and the struggles they face, for the times we have been indifferent to the suffering of others.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have showed compassion to us and the crosses we carry, for those who are understanding, particularly of the crosses that are not visible to others, for those who strive to lighten the loads of others.

Our lives are a mix of both sunshine and rain,
We freely share our joy but we often hide our pain.
May we reach out to another as they carry their cross,
And may we let God and others help us in our loss.

3. Jesus falls the first time

The weight of the cross is too much and you fall. We all fall, sometimes because of our mistakes, sometimes we are forced to the ground by the pressures of life, work, college, relationships or because of how others treat us. Either way it is never nice to fall. While falling is part of life, getting up is a bigger part. Lord remember those who fall today and give us the strength to always rise up and to help others to their feet, dust them down and encourage them on their way.

Ponder: Imagine how it must have felt for Jesus to fall under the weight of the cross, to hit the ground so soon on the journey.

Can you remember times you have experienced failure or disappointment, what happened, how did you feel, who or what helped you get through it?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have fallen because of our own mistakes and bad habits, for the times we may have caused others to fall, for the times we give up hope and stop trying.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who help us when we fall, those who don't judge us because of our mistakes, for those who encourage us to be better.

Prayer

None of us are perfect, we make many a mistake,
Falling short of our best, brings its own heartache.
So may we be compassionate to others who fall,
May God help us to rise and strive to stand tall.

4. Jesus meets his Mother

Lord, you are hard on mothers, they suffer in our coming and in our going. We thank God for the gift of mothers and fathers and those who have been like mothers and fathers to us. No words may have been exchanged in this encounter but a parent's love goes deeper than words. Whatever we are going through a parent's touch, a parent's

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look, a parent's presence helps us immeasurably on our journey. We remember all mothers and fathers especially those whose hearts like Mary are breaking at the suffering or death of a child or the turmoil in their world or family. May God bless and strengthen them and give them peace.

Ponder

How must it have been for Jesus's mother Mary? What could she have said or did she say anything?

Think of your mothers and those who have been like mothers to you – think of all they do and how they love you.

(Share a story of a moment your mother went above and beyond their duty of care)

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have disappointed our mothers, the times we have taken them for granted, for the times we have been mean to our mothers, for the times our mothers have failed us

We pray in thanksgiving for the unconditional love of mothers and those who are like mothers to us, for all the sacrifices mothers make for us, for the way in which mothers care for us especially when we are hurting.

Prayer

A mother's love is unwavering, so strong, so true, so deep,

It feels a child's pain, when they struggle, when they weep.

Lord draw close to mothers and those struggling to cope,

Bless and protect them and give them reasons to hope.

5. Simon helps Jesus carry the cross

It may not have been his intention but Simon is forced to help. We all need help to carry our crosses and it's never wise to go it alone when burdened by life. We pray for family and friends and the people, societies and organisations who lighten the burdens in our lives and in the lives of so many others. We pray for the graciousness and generosity of spirit to always be willing to lighten the crosses of others and to do our best to ensure that nobody is left to carry a cross alone.

Ponder : How must it have been for Simon, pulled from the crowd to help this stranger, do you think he sensed the greatness of Jesus?

Who has been a Simon to you in your need? (Share a moment when someone came to your aid)

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have been indifferent to others, the times we have ignored the hurt of others, the times we have not helped others to carry their crosses.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who help us with the crosses we carry. Those people who encourage us and inspire us.

Prayer

Simon was forced to help Jesus in his time of need,

As to carry a cross alone makes one less likely to succeed.

May we be a Simon to others and help them carry their load,

And Lord, give us strength when we're struggling on the road.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

One small deed creates ripples which can go on forever. Let us never doubt the difference a kind deed can make.

Veronica couldn't do much but she did something, she stepped out of the crowd and displayed kindness using what she had to hand. Lord when we encounter suffering, help us to be willing to do something, to step out of the crowd and extend tender kindness using whatever we have to hand, trusting that a little kindness can make a big

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difference.

Ponder

What must have been going through Veronica's head in the run up to this moment? How must she have felt? When she broke from the crowd and did what she did, how do you think she felt? Do you think any words were exchanged? If so what could have been said? How do you think this event impacted on Veronica? Share a time when someone stepped from the crowd to do something for you.

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times Lord we have failed to step out from the crowd to help others, the times we have been held back by our fear or the times we have doubted the difference that a small act of kindness can make.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have stepped out of the crowd for us. Those who knew that they couldn't change what we were going through and yet trusted that a little act of kindness create ripples that go on and on.

Prayer

She stepped out from the crowd using the little that she had,
Trusting an act of love could transform a moment that was sad.

From little acorns, great oaks grow, or so we have been told,

Veronica reminds us that little acts are made of gold.

7. Jesus falls a second time

Sometimes even with help we fall again and it can be even harder to pick ourselves up. Falling down is one thing but staying down is another. Irrespective of how often we fall help us to always rise up and even when we feel that we can't rise give us the desire to rise and help us to trust that with your help and the help of others there is always hope and that the despair, shame and hopelessness that comes with falling can and will pass if we just hold tight.

Ponder: Imagine what it must have felt like for Jesus to fall a second time even though he had help? What might have been going through his mind? What might he have said to Peter?

Share an experience of times when you have felt like giving up but kept going? What made you keep going? How did you feel when you kept going and hadn't given up?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have stayed down and given into despair, the times we have doubted ourselves, the times we have given up

We pray in gratitude for the spirit that keeps us going, for the way in which we have surprised ourselves and realised we are capable of much more than we can ever imagine. May this spirit of perseverance help us always.

To fall down once again can cause us to despair,

Leading us to doubt our value, strength and prayer.

May we reach out to all who have fallen to their knees,

And give us strength to rise up, oh please Lord, please.

8. Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Lord, help us never to be so self-obsessed with our lives and our struggles that we do not see the pain of others. Women suffer throughout the world, they feel the pain of others more readily and are often marginalised and face challenges that seem insurmountable. However, the spirit, the compassion and the perseverance of women knows no limits. We pray for women who suffer and we pray that we will create a society where women are afforded the opportunities and the respect that is their inherent dignity and right. We also pray that we will never be so self absorbed that we fail to see, hear and attend to the hurts of others.

Ponder

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Imagine how it must have been for the women to have Jesus console them in the midst of all he was going through? What must they have been thinking? How might it have felt, what was said?

Have you ever received encouragement and support from someone even though you know they too are going through a hard time?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have been so self-absorbed that we have failed to see the needs of others, the times we think that the world revolves solely around us, the times we feel that we are selfish and feel the world owes us.

We pray in thanksgiving for the selfless and generous people in our lives who even though their lives may be difficult they continue to offer us support and encouragement. We thank them for their inspiration and courage.

Prayer

Being full of ourselves leaves no room for others,
It stops us from being good sisters and brothers.
Heal hearts that are heavy with Your help from above,
And in the midst of our hurts Lord help us to love.

9. Jesus falls a third time

Sometimes despite our best efforts, we fall into the same sins and traps and mistakes. Will we ever be free of our compulsions, our addictions, our bad habits? It can be so demoralising and disillusioning. Lord help us to keep fighting the good fight and to keep picking ourselves up each time we fall. Rather than count the times we fall help us to count the times we rise and may we strive to help others to rise up when they fall.

Ponder

Imagine what it must have felt like for Jesus to fall a third time despite having help? How tired and sore must he have been? What must he have told himself to pick himself up yet again and keep going?

Have you ever become disillusioned by yourself – the times you have made the same mistake again, the times you have hurt the same person again, the times you have failed to keep the various resolutions you have made?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have fallen back into our bad habits, for the times we make the same mistakes and hurt the same people, the times we haven't made the changes we needed to make in how we live.

We pray in thanksgiving for the people who have encouraged and inspired us to keep going, thanks you for the spirit deep within us that forces us to get back to our feet. Thank you for Your spirit that helps us to do more than we can ever imagine.

Prayer

We repeat our mistakes and we can't but wonder,
Will our weaknesses always pull us asunder?
While falling is tragic, it's worse to stay down,
Lord help us to rise up and turn our lives around.

10 Jesus is stripped of his garments

After all the physical suffering you had endured another form of suffering was to come. You were shamed and stripped of your dignity. We are familiar with the phrase 'they tore strips off him'. It calls to mind the times we abuse or harm others and bare their faults for all to see and leave them exposed, naked, vulnerable and shamed. Rather than strip others of their garments, or strip people of their good name and dignity, help us to clothe them with tenderness, love and compassion. We remember those in our world who are shamed and exposed, help them to find healing and strength and peace.

Ponder

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How must it have felt for Jesus to have his clothes torn off him after all he had been through? What must he have been thinking at this point?

Have you ever felt that you were purposely shamed by another? Did someone ever make an example of you and expose your faults to others? Has anyone ever purposely shared something on social media to hurt you? How did you feel? What helped you to recover?

Petition

We pray in sorrow Lord for the times we have purposely shamed others, the times we have made fun of others and took pleasure in making them feel small and worthless, the times we have spoken badly of others and stripped others of their dignity and worth.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have stood by us when we have been ashamed or embarrassed, for the times others have stood up for us, for the times others have chosen to overlook our failings and make us feel better, for those who have clothed us with love and dignity and lifted our spirits.

Prayer

Shaming and condemning seems okay when we're mad,
Spiteful comments or online posts, to make others feel bad.
Bless those hurting in our world, whose dignity has been stripped,
Remind us of our worth when our sense of self has slipped.

11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross

To have your hands and feet held down and nails driven through them must give rise to a pain beyond all telling. We remember those who are sick and suffering, especially the suffering of innocent people in our world, nailed to crosses that are very different to yours and yet in many ways the same. They say it wasn't love but nails that held you to the cross, in that moment we hope there was a love to ease the pain and may that love help all those in pain, those isolated or lonely today.

Ponder

Imagine the pain Jesus must have felt to have been held down and nailed to the cross? What must have he been thinking.

Have you ever felt a pain that you thought you would never recover from? How difficult was it? Does it still hurt you? How did you get through it? Who helped? What advice would you give others in a similar pain?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times our words and actions may have nailed others to crosses, the times we have hurt others and caused them pain and suffering that was

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have cared for us when we were struggling or suffering or in pain. For those who comforted us, stood by us, sent messages of encouragement of love and support.

Sadly sickness and suffering are part and parcel of life
Even Jesus faced difficulties and moments of strife
May we never be indifferent and ignore another's pain,
Walk always with us Lord, both in sunshine and in rain.

12. Jesus dies on the cross

How long did it take Lord? Were you in pain? Did you know it was coming? Were you afraid? That last breath and suddenly it was all over and yet it was really only beginning. We remember those who have died, those who are dying. May their last breath be a letting go of the limitations and struggles of life and an embracing of a life, a love

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and a peace that are beyond all telling.

Ponder

What must it have been like for Jesus to feel his life slowly slip away? How must he have felt? What might he have thought? What might he have whispered to God?

Sadly loss is part of all our lives, we lose people we love, we lose pets, we experience separation. What losses have you had to deal with, how are you doing, how do you cope, who or what is helping you?

Petition

We pray in sorrow Lord for the times a person felt that a little piece of them died because of how we treated them, for the times we have treated others as if they are 'dead' to us, for the times we haven't been sensitive to those trying to cope with loss.

We pray in thanksgiving for the people who have helped us in our grief, the people who are sensitive to how we are and who have encouraged and inspired us while understanding how hard we might be finding it all.

Prayer

Sadly death is so final, it robs us of those we love,
May we trust they're at peace with God up above.
But love is sacred and eternal and friendship is forever,
Lord help us to draw on this love, and never say never.

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

The nails were prised free and your body was taken from the cross. May we treat the body with great reverence and dignity in life and in death. May we always realise how sacred life is and so treat each person with respect from its earliest moment to our final breath. Wherever possible we pray that we help people down from the crosses they are nailed to while there's still time.

Ponder

Who do you think watched on as Jesus was taken from the cross by the Roman soldiers? What must they have felt to see Jesus lifeless body? What might have gone through their minds?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we haven't shown respect for life, for our own life and the lives of others, for the times Lord we haven't treated our bodies and those of other with respect, for the times our actions may somehow take from our self-worth and the worth of others.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who have taught us how to reverence life, for those who have shown us great respect and love and who have encouraged us to be the best that we can be. For those who have helped us and others down from their crosses.

Prayer

We're made in the image and likeness of a God of love,
Our sacredness and dignity comes from within and above.
May we never doubt our worth, we've a dignity that's true,
Lord, your Spirit gives value to all we are and all we do.

14. Jesus is laid in a tomb

The struggles are over and your lifeless body is laid in a tomb. Your followers were disillusioned and broken-hearted.

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All their hopes and dreams are literally put to rest, where to next? Remember Lord those whose hopes and dreams seem shattered, help us to always remain hopeful in the face of trials. Help us to trust that in life there is always more than meets the eye and that in the end it will be okay and if it's not okay well for now it's not the end.

Ponder

What must it have felt like for the followers of Jesus who had left everything to follow him only to be now placing his dead body in a tomb? Their expected success and achievement and their hopes and dreams all shattered, what must they have thought?

Share your memory of a time you experienced disappointment, a time when your hopes and dreams were dashed. How did you feel? How did you recover? What or who helped you?

Petition

We pray in sorrow for the times we have been pessimistic or negative, the times we have criticised or discouraged others, the times we have been judgmental of others, their hopes, their dreams and their passions.

We pray in thanksgiving for those who continue to believe in us even when things don't work out, those who encourage and inspire us, those who stand with us in our disappointments and our joys.

Prayer

They say, "Where there's life, there's hope," but I'm not so sure,
"Where there's hope, there's life," seems more likely to endure.
So may we try to give hope, to the stranger and the friend,
And help them to see that all will be well in the end.

Conclusion: Lord, in all the world religions you are the only God who suffers, a symbol of your loving solidarity with us especially in our struggles and limitations, in our loneliness and isolation. As I have tried to walk with you and to you and others, help me to trust that you always walk with me. Your example challenges me. During your toughest moments you prayed for forgiveness for your enemies, you showed patience and resilience and no sign of bitterness. May this love strengthen me and help me to patiently endure my difficulties while trusting that you will never leave us to face our struggles alone.