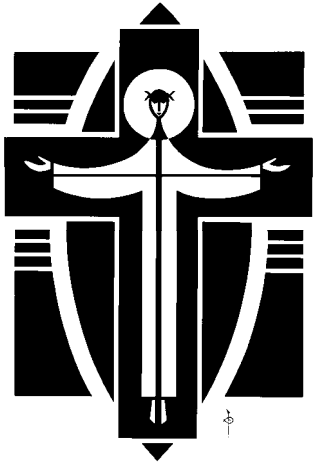


The Stations of the Cross



The Stations of the Cross



Opening Prayer:

My LORD,
help me prepare to take these
fourteen steps
in memory of your Passion.
As each step led you closer to your
death for love of me, so may I,
with each step dies more to myself.

Empty me, Beloved LORD,
of all thoughts
except those that will bring me to a deeper
understanding
of what you endured for my sake.

I offer myself
and my small journey
for all those who today still cause you agony
by perpetuating the rejection you suffered
as God-made-Man.

May we never forget
the depth of your love for us
as you repeatedly forgive our sins
which brought about your death.

LORD, if it is your will
lay my cross on me gently
and grant me the strength to carry it
bravely with you and for love of you

Reader 1:

Lord, by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world.

Reader 2:

Let us be thankful for the gift that God gave
us through the passion, death and resurrection
of his only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus
Christ, to bring us eternal salvation.

As we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

Our Father.....



Closing Prayer

All:

Lord, at times it is hard to keep our faith burning ever brightly.

Sometimes the flame of our belief grows dim, especially, when I am confronted with the enormity of my sinfulness, or by the pains and sorrows of this life.

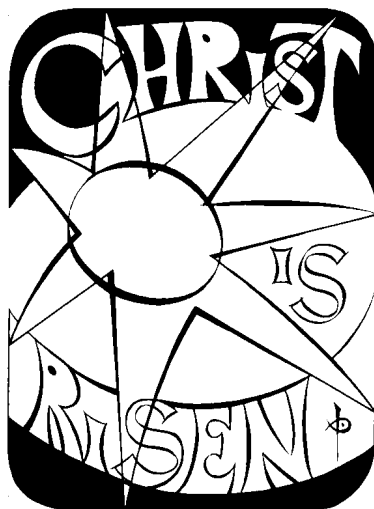
When I struggle with my small crosses, when I am tempted to ask 'Why me?'

Help me to remember that in my suffering I share in yours.

I trust in your promise that I may also share in your resurrection to supreme happiness in your presence for all eternity.

My LORD,

Be always with me in this life,
So that I may be with you in
the next.



First Station

Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"Crucify him! Crucify him!." Why? What harm has this man done? I have found no case against him that deserves death....' But they kept on shouting....demanding he should be crucified....Pilate handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they pleased.'*

Reader 2:

LORD, teach us not to judge nor harbour any unkind thoughts towards others.
We can understand so little and our judgement will always be biased by motives of jealousy, greed or pride.

Help us, instead to recognise our own faults by allowing us to see ourselves as others see us and especially as You see us.

Grant us the strength to replace our shortcomings with humility and generosity of spirit.

Prayer for forgiveness:

ALL: Where we have wrongly judged others unfairly or held prejudices against people, we ask you to help us change and to send us forgiveness.

Second Station The Cross is laid on Jesus

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

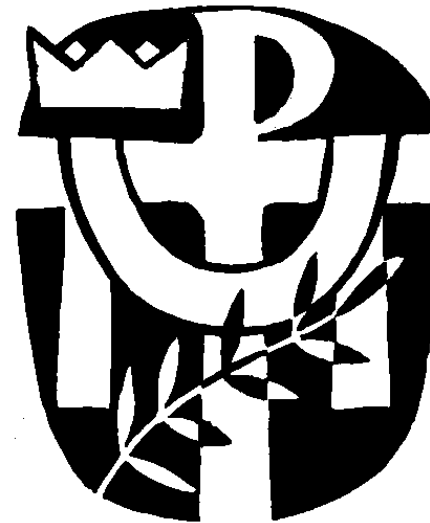
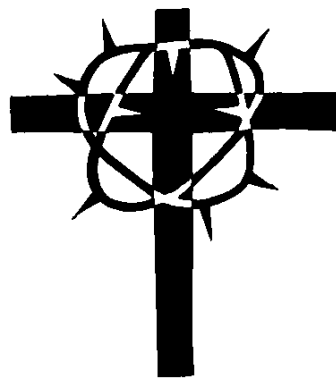
Reader 1: *"whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me".*

Reader 2: To deny ourselves is to disown ourselves as the centre of our existence.

No matter how blessed we are in life, we all have our crosses to bear. Nobody lives a life free from pain, tribulation, sorrow or hardship— in mind or in body. There is no escape from the cross. And Christ—fully human— bore the burden of His cross physically for all to see; to show that there is nothing he asks us to endure which He has not endured before us.

Prayer for forgiveness

All; Give us strength to carry the cross that we have been given, show us how to lighten the load by trusting in Your love. We ask you to help us to change and to send us forgiveness.



Fifteenth Station The Resurrection

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee: that the Son of man was destined to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and rise again on the third day."*

Reader 2: It is clear that Christ is very much alive today. He is present in our everyday lives and it is through our actions towards others that He can be experienced by others. The followers of Christ were afraid when they discovered the empty tomb and they were not sure what was going to be expected of them. They did not comprehend the enormity of what Jesus had taught them until they saw the empty tomb. They remembered and then began to understand.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Help us Lord to follow you even in times of despair. Give us the courage not to be afraid of what you ask us to do, and strength to always do your will. Help us to change and send us forgiveness.

Fourteenth Station Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

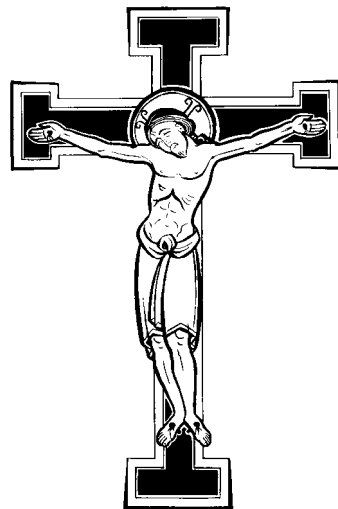
All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away"*

Reader 2: The last station of the cross once again directs our attention to the present and the future. With Jesus Christ at our side, we need not be afraid of the difficult and painful side to life. Suffering and pain will not pass us by. They are however, not the last station of the cross, but lead us to freedom and salvation, to resurrection and life.

Prayer for forgiveness

All: Help us to bear witness to your presence through our actions and thoughts during the difficult times in our lives. May we grow in strength and love and never doubt your presence in our lives even at our darkest times. We ask you to help change us and send us forgiveness.



Third Station Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"I tell you... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance"*

Reader 2: We can submit ourselves or others to unnecessary burdens, or pass off our responsibilities to others. As we repeatedly stumble and fall we learn that God will never abandon us. We have to recognise that in our daily struggles that the LORD is with us even when we choose not to acknowledge His presence.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: LORD when you fell under the weight of your cross which bore our sins, you got up again and carried on, unswerving in your obedience to your Father. Teach us to fix our sights on you, to persevere when we fall away from your grace again and again. Let us draw from the mercy you show us, the strength to defeat our weaknesses. We ask you to help us and to send us forgiveness.

Fourth Station

Jesus meets his blessed mother

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'He is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed—and a sword will pierce your soul too...'"*

Reader 2: Can there be any more agonising pain than seeing the humiliation and indescribable suffering of the one you love most deeply, while being powerless to help?

We learn how difficult it can be to encounter suffering people within our families and circles of friends whom we are unable to help. Mary and Jesus will have felt the same. They lived as a family together with Joseph. As the mother of Jesus, Mary felt helpless when she encountered her son carrying the cross. Yet she still remained true to him.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: In difficult situations, where we have abandoned people close to us out of helplessness or convenience, we ask you to help us change and to send us forgiveness.



Thirteenth Station

Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"When they came to Jesus they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water."*

Reader 2: Jesus says of himself that this is the hour of all hours. To explain his death, he uses an example from nature. The grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. It can only grow if it is put in the earth first. Did Mary consider that her son was the grain that would bring new life? Together we Christians look up to the crucified man who says himself that he wishes to give life to all humans. We stand together with Mary under the cross, as people for whom the cross of Jesus became the tree that is the source of life. This message does not only apply in particularly desperate situations, in times of natural disaster, war, or disease. This message is valid at all times, in all places.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Help us to learn how to accept what we don't understand and to trust, to be still and know that God is always near. Banish the pride which dictates to us that we have the right to know everything. Console us in our grief and save us from despair. We ask you to help us change and send us forgiveness.

Twelfth Station

Jesus dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." "Indeed I promise you Today you will be with me in paradise."*

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

"In truth, this Man was a Son of God"

Reader 2: It is all over. There must be some relief as the agony stops, the taunts do away; the body of Our Lord feels, sees, hears no more as His life drains away with His blood. The Son of God has accomplished His Father's will.

To those at the foot of the cross this must have been the bleakest hour. How would they manage? Why should they even bother? What had it all been for?

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Where we doubt that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all people, we ask you to help us change and forgive us.

Fifth Station

The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country"*

Reader 2: Jesus asks us to help others and encourages us to let others help us. Origin, religious belief, or nationality should not play a role. Of him, who accepted the help of a stranger during his ordeal, we ask:

For strength for all those working for aid organisations, who have committed themselves to justice, peace and preserving creation, who help others to ease and improve their lives.

For ourselves, for the spirit of love so we can help others regardless of their difference.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Where we only love those who love us, or where we make our aid conditional upon the standing of the persons we help, we ask you to help us change and to forgive us.



Sixth Station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

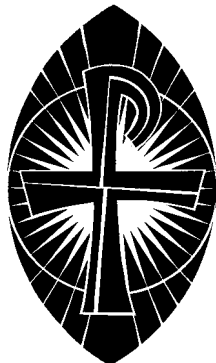
All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"As Jesus prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning.....
'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him!'"*

Reader 2: We can allow ourselves to be touched by the suffering of others, even where we cannot do much to help them. Veronica, too, cannot help. She gives Jesus only a cloth, but in this small act, there is a wealth of compassion and love. The smallest of gestures can be of comfort to those in need.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Where we turn our heads away from suffering and pain and fail to do what we can, we ask you to help us change and to forgive us.



Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: "Father forgive them;
they know not what they do"

Reader 2: For all the pain we have caused Him, still His love makes excuses for us.

The cross on which Christ hung is the most powerful image in the history of humankind. The simplicity of the two pieces of wood belying the complexity of its meaning for us. To gaze on it is to see the pain, the burdens, the rejection, the injustice which Our Lord bore for love of us; it's to see the ultimate sacrifice; it's to see the Way, the Truth- and the hope of glorious, eternal life.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Where we oppress others or fail to fight for the freedom of others, we ask you to help us change and to forgive us.

Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped of His garments

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"...the soldiers...took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless... so they said to one another, 'Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it.'"*

Reader 2: The final indignity—to stand naked before a jeering rabble. Stared at by eyes that were too blind to see the Truth.

The callousness of the soldiers defies belief as they share out Our Lord's clothes; showing more interest in throwing dice for them, than in the man who was about to die the most agonising death—out of love for them.

Killing some time—as they killed their Saviour.

Prayer for forgiveness

All: Where we have exploited or exposed others, we ask you to help us change and to forgive us.



Seventh Station

Jesus falls the second time

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"While he was a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him."*

'This son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found'

Reader 2: Christ the Man, exhausted and aching in every limb and sinew, falls a second time, but again gets up and struggles on.

To fall is human; to get up again we need divine help.

God will always welcome back the sinner who, having fallen, overcomes his pride, recognises his total dependence on his Creator and reaches out for the help and strength of forgiveness.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: LORD, take our hands in yours, help us up. We know that if we manage even one small faltering step towards you, in your great love you will come out to meet us. Help us to come back to you when we fall from your grace we ask you to help us change and forgive us.

Eighth Station

The women of Jerusalem mourn for Jesus

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: *"Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and your children.'"*

Reader 2: How hard it must have been to look on the flogged and bleeding figure of Jesus as He struggled under the weight of his cross, and not weep. Yet Our LORD was not moved by self-pity, but pity for the suffering destined for His people; pity for the sufferings Man would inflict upon Man.

Today it is all too easy to weep for ourselves, blurring our sight of how the wrongs we have done have brought pain and disappointment to our loving Father.

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Where we are unable to see anything but our own worries, cares and problems, we ask you to help us change and to forgive us.

Ninth Station

Jesus falls the third time

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

All: for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

Reader 1: *"Then Peter approaching asked him, 'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?'"*

Jesus answered, 'I say to you not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"

Reader 2: At the third fall surely it is all nearly over. Surely Our Lord cannot drag himself up again. And yet he does. Do we? As we repeatedly fall, aren't we ready to give up? Utterly defeated, dejected and despairing of ourselves and our right to any forgiveness at all. Yet Jesus taught us that there is no end to the Father's mercy as long as we keep on trying, keep on turning to Him for help.

When Christ created His Church, He left us what we need to be saved: "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven"

Prayer for forgiveness:

All: Help us Lord to forgive others when they wrong us as well as forgive ourselves, let us be comforted in the knowledge that through the sacraments of the Church there are continuous opportunities for forgiveness and spiritual nourishment. We ask you to help us change and send us forgiveness.

