

The Way of the Cross

¶ The Gathering

The ministers enter in silence.

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

All 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

Once we were far off, but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood, for he is our peace.

Ephesians 2.13,14

An appropriate greeting may be given.

A minister may introduce the service and then says

Let us pray.

A brief moment of silence follows.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience
and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **First Station:**

Jesus judged by Pilate

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.
Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15.14,15

Reflection / Meditation

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers
Of perception and discrimination, choice,
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,
His consciousness of self, his every sense,
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.
The man who stands there making no defence,
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels
That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.
He gives himself again with all his gifts
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away
A door swings open. This is judgment day.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were condemned to death for political expediency:
be with those who are imprisoned for the convenience of the powerful.
You were the victim of unbridled injustice:
change the minds and motivations of oppressors and exploiters to your way of peace.
To you, Jesus, innocent though condemned,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **Second Station:**

Jesus carries the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

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 15.20

Reflection / Meditation

He gives himself again with all his gifts
And now we give him something in return.
He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,
Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,
And from these elements he forged the iron,
From strands of life he wove the growing wood,
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
He saw it all and saw that it is good.
We took his iron to edge an axe's blade,
We took the axe and laid it to the tree,
We made a cross of all that he has made,
And laid it on the one who made us free.
Now he receives again and lifts on high
The gifts he gave and we have turned away.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you carried the cross through the rough
streets of Jerusalem:
be with those who are loaded with burdens beyond
their strength.
You bore the weight of our sins when you carried
the cross:
help us to realize the extent and the cost of your
love for us.
To you, Jesus, bearing a cross not your own,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Third Station:*

Reflection / Meditation

Jesus Falls the First Time

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

Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet, Isaiah

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

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
And well he knows the path we make him tread
He met the devil as a roaring lion
And still refused to turn these stones to bread,
Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,
This darker path into the heart of pain.
And now he falls upon the stones that bruise
The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.
He and the earth he made were never closer,
Divinity and dust come face to face.
We flinch back from his *via dolorosa*,
He sets his face like flint and takes our place,
Staggers beneath the black weight of us all
And falls with us that he might break our fall.

Prayer

Remind us often Lord,
when we are feeling
proud,
arrogant,
beyond reproach,
pleased with ourselves,
self sufficient in our ways,
that for such as us
and better
and worse
you walked a road
that took you to a cruel cross,
and rose again to show us where
we might look for rescue
as from this lofty perch
we fall.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Fourth Station:*

Jesus meets his mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**All because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke

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

Reflection / Meditation

This darker path into the heart of pain
Was also hers whose love enfolded him
In flesh and wove him in her womb. Again
The sword is piercing. She, who cradled him
And gentled and protected her young son
Must stand and watch the cruelty that mars
Her maiden making. Waves of pain that stun
And sicken pass across his face and hers
As their eyes meet. Now she enfolds the world
He loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared
Who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled
In desperation on this road of tears,
All the grief-stricken in their last despair,
Are folded in the mantle of her prayer.

Inscribed upon our heart,
the maker's mark,
indelible,
the Word of God,
'Love'
beautifully written,

Prayer

heartfelt,
that all God's people
might know
that we are precious,
children
of a heavenly Father
becoming family together,
and may eyes lift upward
as we listen together
to hear angels worship.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **Fifth Station:**

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Mark 15.21

Reflection / Meditation

In desperation on this road of tears
Bystanders and bypassers turn away
In other's pain we face our own worst fears
And turn our backs to keep those fears at bay
Unless we are compelled as this man was
By force of arms or force of circumstance
To face and feel and carry someone's cross
In Love's full glare and not his backward glance.
So Simon, no disciple, still fulfilled
The calling: 'take the cross and follow me'.
By accident his life was stalled and stilled
Becoming all he was compelled to be.
Make me, like him, your pressed man and your priest,
Your *alter Christus*, burdened and released.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were worn down by fatigue:
be with those from whom life drains all energy.
You needed the help of a passing stranger:
give us the humility to receive aid from others.
To you, Jesus, weighed down with exhaustion and in
need of help,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Veronica offers her veil to Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**All because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

He had no form or majesty that we should look at
him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire
him.
He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Isaiah 53:2-3

Reflection / Meditation

Bystanders and bypassers turn away
And wipe his image from their memory
She keeps her station. She is here to stay
And stem the flow. She is the reliquary
Of his last look on her. The bloody sweat
And salt tears of his love are soaking through
The folds of her devotion and the wet
folds of her handkerchief, like the dew
Of morning, like a softening rain of grace.
Because she wiped the grime from off his skin,
And glimpsed the godhead in his human face
Whose hidden image we all bear within,
Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain
The face of god is shining once again.

Prayer

Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord,
come, all who are weak,
taste the living water
that I shall give.
Dip your hands in the stream,
refresh body and soul,
drink from it,
depend on it,
for this water
will never run dry.
Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Seventh Station:*

Jesus falls a second time

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

Reading

A reading from the book of Lamentations

I am one who has seen affliction
under the rod of God's wrath;
he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;
against me alone he turns his hand,
again and again, all day long.

Lamentations 3:1-3

Reflection / Meditation

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain,
Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,
He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
When we are hurt again. With us he bears
The cruel repetitions of our cruelty;
The beatings of already beaten men,
The second rounds of torture, the futility
Of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.
And by this fall he finds the fallen souls
Who passed a first, but failed a second trial,
The souls who thought their faith would hold them
whole
And found it only held them for a while.
Be with us when the road is twice as long
As we can bear. By weakness make us strong.

Prayer

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

This is love.

Not that you spoke words of comfort,
walked with the unclean and unloved,
shared wisdom, bread and fish,
brought healing into lives
and challenged the status quo.

This is love.

That you spoke the word of God,
walked a painful road to the Cross,
shared living water, bread of life,
brought Salvation to the world
and died for the sake of all.

This is love.

It is a seed
sown in the ground,
which germinates,
blossoms,
and spreads its sweet perfume.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

All Amen.

¶ Eighth Station:

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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. For 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." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

Luke 23.27-31

Reflection / Meditation

He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
But still he holds the road and looks in love
On all of us who look on him. Our pain
As close to him as his. These women move
Compassion in him as he does in them.
He asks us both to weep and not to weep.
Women of Gaza and Jerusalem,
Women of every nation where the deep
Wounds of memory divide the land
And lives of all your children, where the mines
Of all our wars are sown: Afghanistan ,
Iraq, the Cote d'Ivoire... he reads the signs
And weeps with you and with you he will stay
Until the day he wipes your tears away.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, the women of Jerusalem wept for you:
move us to tears at the plight of the broken in our
world.

You embraced the pain of Jerusalem, the 'city of
peace':

bless Jerusalem this day and lead it to the path of
profound peace.

To you, Jesus, the King of peace who wept for the
city of peace,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Ninth Station:*

Jesus falls the third time

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

**All because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Reading

A reading from the book of Lamentations

It is good for one to bear

the yoke in youth,

to sit alone in silence

when the Lord has imposed it,

to put one's mouth to the dust

(there may yet be hope),

to give one's cheek to the smiter,

and be filled with insults.

For the Lord will not

reject for ever;

Although he causes grief, he will have compassion

according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

Lamentations 3:27-32

Reflection / Meditation

He weeps with you and with you he will stay
When all your staying power has run out
You can't go on, you go on anyway.
He stumbles just beside you when the doubt
That always haunts you, cuts you down at last
And takes away the hope that drove you on.
This is the third fall and it hurts the worst
This long descent through darkness to depression
From which there seems no rising and no will
To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.
Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,
And you could almost wish for that defeat
Except that in the cold hell where you freeze
You find your God beside you on his knees.

Prayer

Forgive those things we have done
which have caused you sadness,
and those things we should have done
that would have brought you joy.
In both we have failed
ourselves,
and you.
Bring us back to that place
where our journey began,
when we said that we would follow
the way that you first trod.
Lead us to the Cross
and meet
us there.

[https://
www.faithandworship.com/prayers/Lent.htm](https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers/Lent.htm)

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ Tenth Station:

Jesus is stripped of his garments

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him.

Matthew 27:33-36

Reflection / Meditation

You can't go on, you go on anyway
He goes with you, his cradle to your grave.
Now is the time to loosen, cast away
The useless weight of everything but love
For he began his letting go before,
Before the worlds for which he dies were made,
Emptied himself, became one of the poor,
To make you rich in him and unafraid.
See as they strip the robe from off his back
They strip away your own defences too
Now you could lose it all and never lack
Now you can see what naked Love can do
Let go these bonds beneath whose weight you bow
His stripping strips you both for action now

Prayer

Jesus, Lamb of God,
when you walked this earth
you did not consider
heavenly equality,
though that was yours to choose,
but took the role of servant,
and in humility
and obedience
allowed the rough nails of our sin
to be hammered into your flesh
for the sake of our salvation.
And so it is
that we acknowledge you
as Lord of all,
to the glory of God the Father,
Son and Spirit, Three.

https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **Eleventh Station:**

Jesus is nailed to the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Mark 15.24

Reflection / Meditation

See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light
We see what love can bear and be and do,
And here our saviour calls us to his side
His love is free, his arms are open wide.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you bled in pain as the nails were driven into your flesh:
transform through the mystery of your love the pain of those who suffer.
To you, Jesus, our crucified Lord,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ **Twelfth Station:**

Jesus dies on the cross

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

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mark 15.34-37

Reflection / Meditation

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black
We watch him as he labours to draw breath
He takes our breath away to give it back,
Return it to it's birth through his slow death.
We hear him struggle breathing through the pain
Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,
Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain
And drew us into consciousness from sleep.
His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Mantles his world in his one atmosphere
And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
To cleanse it and renew. His final breath
Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you died on the cross
and entered the bleakest of all circumstances:
give courage to those who die at the hands of
others.
In death you entered into the darkest place of all:
illumine our darkness with your glorious presence.
To you, Jesus, your lifeless body hanging on the tree
of shame,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Thirteenth Station:*

*Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to his
mother*

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**All because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him.

Matthew 27:54-55

Reflection / Meditation

His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Now on this cross his body breathes no more
Here at the centre everything is still
Spent, and emptied, opened to the core.
A quiet taking down, a prising loose
A cross-beam lowered like a weighing scale
Unmaking of each thing that had its use
A long withdrawing of each bloodied nail,
This is ground zero, emptiness and space
With nothing left to say or think or do
But look unflinching on the sacred face
That cannot move or change or look at you.
Yet in that prising loose and letting be
He has unfastened you and set you free.

Prayer

You were a man of suffering
acquainted with grief,
loved and despised in equal measure.
You understand humanity,
know our failings,
love us despite the people that we are.
When we, like Peter, deny you
by word or action,
forgive us.
When we, like Judas, are tempted
to follow a different path,
forgive us.
When we, like those in the crowd
allow you to be crucified,
forgive us.
Bring us to the foot of the Cross
to stand next to the one who,
looking into your eyes declared
'Surely this is the Son of God'

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**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

All Amen.

¶ **Fourteenth Station:
Jesus laid in the tomb**

Reflection / Meditation

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
**All because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Mark 15.46

Here at the centre everything is still
Before the stir and movement of our grief
Which bears it's pain with rhythm, ritual,
Beautiful useless gestures of relief.
So they anoint the skin that cannot feel
Soothing his ruined flesh with tender care,
Kissing the wounds they know they cannot heal,
With incense scenting only empty air.
He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.
The love that's poured in silence at old graves
Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,
Is never lost. In him all love is found
And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground.

Prayer

¶ *The Conclusion*

Lord Jesus, Lord of life, you became as nothing for us:
be with those who feel worthless and as nothing in
the world's eyes.

You were laid in a cold, dark tomb and hidden from
sight:

be with all who suffer and die in secret,
hidden from the eyes of the world.

To you, Jesus, your rigid body imprisoned in a tomb,
be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy
Spirit,
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom
in the words our Saviour taught us.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against
us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus
Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

**All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless
you,
because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

Christ was manifested in the body,
vindicated in the spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed in throughout the world,
glorified in high heaven.

**All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless
you,
because by your holy cross you have
redeemed the world.**

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

May God bless us,
that in us may be found love and humility,
obedience and thanksgiving,
discipline, gentleness and peace.

All Amen.

The ministers depart in silence.