

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS
FOR FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION



DAYLESFORD ABBEY

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross, the Way of the Cross, the Way of Sorrows, or the *Via Crucis*, all refer to the journey Jesus Christ travelled from the time he was condemned to death until his Body was placed in a burial tomb. Followers of Jesus have told the story of his Passion, Death and Resurrection while pilgrims who travelled to Jerusalem visited the sites where it is believed that Jesus was tried and executed. Journals have been discovered, dated as early as the fourth century, describing these pilgrims chanting psalms as they processed the *Via Dolorosa* (the Way of Sorrows) in Jerusalem. Liturgists view these processions as an embryonic form of the Stations of the Cross.

Many churches typically contain fourteen Stations but as an outgrowth of the Second Vatican Council, a fifteenth Station was added reflecting our Lord's victory over suffering and death and the Good News of Easter – the Resurrection. As we are a post Vatican Council II church, all of our Stations of the Cross, both inside the church and outside, reflect this more complete narrative. Today, Christians everywhere follow Jesus' final journey to unite their suffering with his in the hope of sharing in his Resurrection. In the words of St. Paul: "*I wish to know Christ and to be conformed into the pattern of his death, so that somehow I may come to know the power of his Resurrection.*" Phil 3:1

DISPOSITION FOR PRAYING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Suffering – in one of its many forms - invades all of our lives; no one needs to search for it. We may attempt to deny or run from suffering but it cannot be avoided. What is demanded is the need to come to terms with suffering. It is in this context that we provide the Stations of the Cross for Various Circumstances. We invite you to pray these Stations as a means of uniting your personal trials with our Lord's, so that you too might share in his Passion so as to rejoice in his Resurrection.

We believe in a God who became incarnate through his Son, Jesus Christ, who chose to suffer for the sake of our redemption. This Passion is made visible in the physical Way of the Cross and metaphysically in the psychological, emotional and spiritual suffering that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane – which one might call the overture to the *Via Crucis*.

The radical symbol of the Cross - ubiquitous throughout the world - has lost much of its shocking, paradoxical impact. We see the Cross hanging on walls, towering above churches and suspended from one another's necks in precious gold. The Cross has become a thing of beauty - and it should - for without the sacrifice made on the Cross, there would be no hope of eternal happiness with God.

When we pray the Stations, it is not for the purpose of undertaking an historical remembering of what occurred, but to show us what is happening now - what is happening within each of us. The reason for praying the Stations of the Cross is to enter into the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself for us – to experience his means of transforming suffering through love. We do this “through, with, and in him”, step by step, learning how this plan of love can be carried out by us today. In one form or another, his trials are revealed in ours and our trials in his. This frames the spiritual pilgrimage which you are invited to undertake through your particular circumstances, in contemplation of the Passion of Jesus Christ inspired by our faith in the Resurrection.

Allow One Hour

“Could you not watch and pray with me for one hour?” MT 26:40

For the Cross of our Lord's Passion becomes our Tree of Eternal Life

ABOUT DAYLESFORD ABBEY'S STATIONS OF THE CROSS

THE ARBOR GATEWAY

Thresholds are primarily spiritual in nature, not simply physical. Thus, crossing a threshold confirms one's willingness to move from the natural world to the supernatural. Our gateway entrance marks passage through a holy doorway designed to symbolize one's decision to enter into the life of Jesus.

SAINT RAPHAEL

Raphael, which translates as "It is God who heals", is the archangel known for facilitating all manners of healing. He is one of only three of the seven archangels named in the Bible. Raphael is credited with driving an evil spirit from Sarah and restoring Tobit's vision through the use of a fish. Tobit 6:7 Raphael is the patron saint of pilgrims and the appropriate guide for all who travel the Stations - particularly those seeking physical, emotional or spiritual healing. Pilgrimages in early times were a dangerous consideration. Pilgrims made wills before their journey as there was no certainty of a safe return. Unlike tourists, pilgrims travel toward their center; while tourists travel away. As a guardian to pilgrims, Raphael is often depicted holding a staff as well as a fish. The mission of Daylesford Abbey is healing and reconciliation, thus providing a suitable home for St. Raphael.

THE TRAIL

Most Stations of the Cross are typically laid out so that one follows a trail where station posts are staked and one pauses to pray. The Abbey's Stations are designed with alcoves where one must physically exit the trail - a place of certainty - so as to enter the spirituality of each Station's mystery. Physically, one interrupts their journey to undergo an experience of potentially unitive and transformative change.

THE STATION FRAME

Wood is a powerful, consistent symbol throughout Scripture: the tree in the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, the altar in Exodus, the kindling Isaac carries. It is not by happenstance that both Jesus and Joseph were carpenters. For Christians, all wood signifies and leads us to the one salvific wood of the Cross. Jesus' sacrifice, which redeemed us on Calvary, is re-membered today in the Eucharistic sacrifice that takes place on the altar. All grace flows from the Cross, from our Abbey's altar, which is why our Station's frames are designed to replicate the Abbey church. They are crafted from Brazilian hardwood of substantial weight and density but are ecologically respectful of the Amazon forest, reminding us of God's original commission to humankind in Eden - to be stewards of creation.

THE STATION IMAGES

The Station scenes are bas-relief replicas from the bronze doors located at the Basilica of San Zeno in Verona, Italy. According to tradition, the crypt inside the Basilica was the marriage site of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The church is Romanesque in design typical of 12th century architecture. Our holy father, St. Norbert, lived during that time and established the Order of Prémontré in 1120, thus connecting the Stations to the founding of our Order.

THE TREE TRUNK BENCHES

Daylesford Abbey took root and evolved from our original home at the site of the former Cassatt Estate. As Providence would arrange it, an oak tree was being removed from that property while our Stations were under construction. Our plans called for some seating to be formed from large tree trunks. This coincidence provided the symbolic means to represent our historical roots.

WE BEGIN: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then Jesus said to them ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.’” Luke 9:23

A Station is a place to stand. It means stopping to look at and reflect on those very things that evildoers do not want their victims to notice: their loss of dignity, their loss of autonomy. The Stations of the Cross thus become sites of resistance that open up a new social space - a place where our humanity can be restored and where we can imagine a new social order. By simply choosing to stand, the healing process begins. We regain our autonomy; we become subjects rather than objects of someone else's actions.



I JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

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

Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

The narrative of the lie begins to spin the story of Jesus by those who wish to be rid of him. The lie sounds plausible; but it only seems to be the Truth. Jesus came to proclaim life but his story is twisted into a tale of death. They make him the condemned man, the enemy of the people, the deceiver of multitudes. When we fall into the hands of evildoers, our story is deformed. At this Station, we experience our life being taken away. We lose dignity and esteem in the eyes of others.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



II JESUS ACCEPTS HIS CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

The Cross, the instrument of execution, is thrust upon Jesus. He must carry it to where it will be used to kill him. He is made complicit in his own death. Victims ask themselves: Am I responsible for what is happening to me? Did I provoke these events? Did I, at some unknown level, even desire it? The weight of the cross, the humiliation, provokes self-doubt. At this Station, the brutal confrontation of what is unfolding takes our breath away. The future we thought we saw is replaced with horror.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



III

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus stumbles and falls under the weight of what surrounds him. Falling is a public loss of control. Despite his wishes, Jesus is drawn into the story of the lie as he is shown to be incapable of moving under his own volition. It is a humiliation which makes the lie look more powerful than the Truth. How do we feel when we stumble before others, when we most need to appear to be in control? How do we feel when our actions make us look incompetent? How do we recover some shred of dignity as we rise to our feet? Torture victims and those who have suffered from prolonged sexual abuse speak of a kind of separation. They see themselves from the outside, which makes their challenge for wholeness even more harrowing.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Usually we comprehend Mary's relation to Jesus in light of her consent at the Annunciation but biblical texts also tell of Mary's incomprehension of Jesus' work. Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her heart. She does not understand why Jesus stays behind in the Temple. She is left standing outside when Jesus is preaching. Jesus sees all that pain and confusion as their eyes meet. How do we feel when those who should understand us most do not? In this form of suffering the bonds of love become reproach. Our shortcomings, our missed opportunities now separate us from those closest to us. Yet Jesus, seeing his mother, is also reconnecting with humanity. In this Station and the three that follow, Jesus experiences oscillation between being alone and being connected; being abandoned and being cared for.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



V SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

A stranger, Simon from Cyrene, is pressed into service to help carry Jesus' Cross. Is Simon's act a gesture of shared humanity or forced labor? Is this the way the story of the lie swings back and forth emotionally between being embraced and being abandoned? Is this a gesture of solidarity, or a perverse means of prolonging the pain? By surrendering his Cross, Jesus loses control over the lie again but he also re-establishes contact with humanity through a stranger. Connection, disconnection, care, abandonment. The painful experience of having to live inside the lie makes us uncertain of who to trust.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father . . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VI VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Veronica steps forward from the crowd and wipes away the grime, the sweat, the blood and the tears from Jesus' face. It is an act of kindness and intimacy which seems so out of place in the story. What does such kindness, such sensuality, mean in the midst of such brutality? How does goodness manage to insinuate itself even in the story of the lie? How do the good deeds of our past, now half-forgotten, come to assist us in the midst of our need? In many cultures, the face is the seat of identity; one's very essence. Veronica's actions point to how women are often able to break through and intervene in the cruelty often perpetrated by men. For someone to touch our face in the midst of suffering moves us more than we might bear.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VII JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

The second fall for Jesus is different from the first. After the first fall, some human relations were re-established for Jesus: the gaze of his mother, the shoulder of Simon, the gentle touch of Veronica. They are now lost in another tumble to the ground. A second fall opens new regions of pain. Relations we thought would see us through are shattered. What is difficult about this suffering is we discover new regions of pain. We lose our bearings. We thought we knew who we were and where we were. Now, we are not certain.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



VIII JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus comes upon a group of women who recognize him. There is no ambiguity in their response which is similar to the uncertain gaze of his mother, the ambivalence of Simon, or the meaning of Veronica's kindness. These women weep for him. The weeping women interrupt the story of the lie in an unequivocal way. The falsehoods which condemn Jesus to death are mitigated. Jesus breaks through the silence which has enshrouded him and speaks to the women. For a moment the Truth breaks through the stifling silence of the lie, and robs it of its ambiguous meaning. That Truth can break through the lie shows us that the flame of hope still flickers amid the howling gales of despair. For a moment it finds its voice again.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father . . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



IX JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

The brief moment of compassion is eclipsed as Jesus falls again. As he looks up from his fall, he realizes he is at the threshold of the site of his execution - the Place of the Skull. A fall after a moment of respite has its own pain. One wonders if there is no end to this back-and-forth between suffering and relief, between loss and hope. Is this what finally brings us to the edge, when small victories are nothing more than a zigzag leading to the abyss? Our energy is depleted and the exhaustion accumulated in our bodies breaks forth. We are delivered to a place where we can go no further.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Whatever autonomy Jesus exhibited on the way to Calvary is now gone. He is now the object of his enemies' ministrations. In place of the tender gaze of his mother and the gentle touch of Veronica, his Body is now handled as an object to be disgraced. He is stripped of his clothing becoming the object of public ridicule. To be shamed before strangers is to be stripped of any remaining dignity. It is hard for those who have never experienced this to know how deeply this cuts into one's being. Shame is social murder. Naked, Jesus has lost relationship with the public. Being stripped is an act of separation, a perverse intimacy with a public who insult him. It is being diminished as less than human; only animals are naked.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father . . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XI JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

In the previous Station, Jesus was stripped of his relations to humanity. Now he is attached to the Cross, splayed with arms outstretched. He is deprived of communicating by gestures as to who he really is. The perverse irony forms a new indignity. Stripped and hung on a cross to die, he becomes an insidious parody of a king upon his throne. What happens to us when we are drawn into the spiral of degradation and pulled further away from who we know ourselves to be? All that we thought would hold our lives together is taken from us. "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Psalm 22:1) comes echoing forth from a ravished soul.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Death, at last. It is the end. It is not what we imagined. It is not how we rehearsed. This is a moment we cannot prepare for. This is because the moment is not our own. We are called and the silence which follows is like no other. The rest of the world goes on. In death, our lives, our story is set aside. Those who survive us cling to it for a while, but it slips away as others come along who never knew us.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XIII JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

His Body is detached from the Cross. There is no need to continue the story of the lie. It has done its work. The story continues without Jesus. Those left behind now become the story. Those who clean up the mess, those who pick up the pieces of this brutal act. The bystanders are now ashamed of their curiosity. A few survivors do not want to leave what remains of Jesus, alone. All that remains are his remains.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XIV JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Jesus is given another man's tomb. Not all victims receive this honor. Some are disappeared. Some of Jesus' followers now bravely ask for his Body. At this Station, a place of potential reconnection is established. For the followers of Jesus, the story did not end with the tomb. What happened afterward was never anticipated. The sufferings which we experience do not always carry us across the abyss to an idyllic shore. But hope, which seeps out from the tomb, keeps alive the possibility of the Resurrection.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father . . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



XV THE RESURRECTION

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

There is triumph over evil; triumph over sin. The lie is crushed. It will show its ugly face again but it has been defeated – defeated by love. Jesus lives. He lives in us as Christians. Our mission as co-redeemers is to stamp out evil wherever we encounter it.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory be to the Father. . .

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen