

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR SENIORS



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.

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. LK 9:23

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, I never planned on growing old. I looked at the elderly with curiosity and detachment, denying my inevitable fate. Now I understand that aging is my reality. I am humbled and challenged by its crosses. Every stage of life is a journey towards Calvary. I begin this Way of the Cross praying that you will strengthen and comfort me.



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.

JESUS SPEAKS: A pagan judge, Pontius Pilate, saw through the deceits of my accusers, my own countrymen, over whom I had wept. In an effort to save me, he had me scourged. The Roman soldiers added to this by mocking me and crowning me with thorns. But Pilate's words: "*Behold the man.*" JN 19:5 aimed at stirring up pity, only stirred renewed cries of "*Crucify him. Crucify him.*" JN 19:6 So, weakly, fearing for his own political skin, he condemned me to death by crucifixion.

I RESPOND: How empty and lonely you must feel as you stand before the authorities, yet you maintain a dignity that speaks of a deep grounding. I too, must acknowledge dreams unrealized, mounting losses, ailing health, financial uncertainty and disdain from a youth-oriented culture. You and I must come to terms with our approaching death. Sometimes when I hope for pity I am passed by in silence that tells me the other person is not interested. Sometimes I am reproved, even mocked for clumsiness or lack of comprehension. Words float back to me; snatches of conversation I'm not supposed to hear. They cut like scourges. My head throbs in frustration, recalling your crown of thorns. Sometimes my own exaggerated feelings invite such humbling hurt. Help me to remember you, condemned to death, yet most innocent of all wrong.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: I had been looking forward to my final hours. Yes, I looked with both longing and dread. In the prime of my manhood, the Father was calling for me to give up life. My human nature, complete like yours, could feel the sadness of approaching death. I knew ahead of time the sufferings and the manner of death. It had to be the complete sacrifice so all could understand my complete love for them. The thought of it in the garden made me sweat blood. The final hours are here.

I RESPOND: There is no turning back. Your fate is upon you, crudely fashioned from the wood of a tree. You summon your strength and reach out to embrace your Cross. Now, I too, face the latest version of the cross in my life. I stand before its demands and experience only dread. Steady my gaze as I reach out to accept it in faith. Fortify me as I struggle to accept it. Lord Jesus, in my later years the thought of approaching death comes more often. For me, too, it brings a combination of longing with sadness and dread. I long to see you face to face.

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 SPEAKS: In the garden of my agony, when the soldiers seized me, I said, "*This is your hour and the power of darkness.*" LK 22:53 I reminded Peter, who drew his sword, that I could ask the Father and he could send me legions of angels to defend me. But for now, the plan of the Father called on me to rely only on my ordinary human abilities. So it was that soon after taking up the Cross, I fell, much to the merriment of some bystanders. Laughter and uproarious shouts of amusement rang in my ears. I lay in the dust, as the words of the psalm described me: "*I am a worm and no man.*" PS 22:6

I RESPOND: I remember when my strength and energy seemed boundless. Lately I stumble and pretend to be self-assured. I understand, dear Jesus, how you felt, for it happens more often now that I am old, that some bodily or mental weakness makes me do or say things that cause embarrassment. It is not simply a fall to the ground but a fall from my image of strength and sureness. Let me learn to have the simplicity that befits a humble soul. Help me from putting on a false front. Assist me, Lord, as I stumble and struggle with the diminishment of aging. Help me to surrender to your open arms to receive me.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: Five days ago this woman watched people wave palm branches, singing out their "*Hosanna*" welcome while spreading garments before me. She stood along the way, hoping, praying that somehow, as in the case of Abraham and Isaac; the Father would not demand the sacrifice of her Son's life. Now she stands and watches how the waving palms of yesterday are replaced by menacing fists today. We don't need to speak to each other. She looks at me. I look at her. The story is complete. She knows this has to be the last chapter.

I RESPOND: You continue to strain under the weight of the Cross amidst the shouts of hatred and ridicule. In a singular moment you become aware of your mother, and gazing into her eyes, you know your connectedness to all of humankind. Self-pity blinds me to the fact that I am not alone on this road. My failure to recognize my brother and sister magnify the loneliness and weight of my burden. Help me to acknowledge my shared destiny with my fellow travelers. Help me to know that one touch on the shoulder, one compassionate glance or written note from a relative or friend often tells me more than a torrent of words.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: Simon of Cyrene came to Jerusalem for the great holy days of the Passover. He was one of millions gathered in the holy city. To the soldiers who grabbed him he looked strong. To my Father, he was a man chosen to be at that spot at that time. To the eyes of the crowd and in the laughter of some, he was the unlucky one. But you know he was the chosen one. That is why you know his name today.

I RESPOND: Clearly you cannot bear this burden by yourself. Without help you will die but your disciples have scattered. A stranger is forced to lend a hand. Those who laughed at Simon or counted themselves happy not to be in his place were the less favored. I'm sure that people notice my halting words as I struggle to remember. They see my stiff way of walking. May my every moment be a Simon-moment, helping you to carry the Cross of salvation.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: Veronica represents many good women who did acts of kindness for me. Her name means true image. She also represents many good women who do acts of kindness to others for love of me. As long as you do something for the least of my brothers in my name, you do it for me. In each case my image is impressed on the heart of the one who helps the cause of justice or does the work of charity.

I RESPOND: Veronica steps forward to wipe your brow. In this simple act of courage, you feel the promise of victory over darkness. Today, I find myself on the receiver's end of kindness. Lord, it is not easy for me to receive. I am afraid of dependence. Teach me to accept this help when I need it. The help given us in your name can also impress your image on the hearts of our helpers. Whether we help or are helped, our hearts grow lighter as we comprehend this truth.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: There is a sharper interior pain when one falls after being helped. My mother Mary, Simon and Veronica had just assisted me. Now my mother's face has faded into the nameless and blurred faces of the crowd. Simon helped carry the patibulum (crossbar), but my feet still refuse to carry me. Now I stumble again and my face lies in the dust of Jerusalem. This brings renewed pain from the crown of thorns.

I RESPOND: Whatever strength you have left is draining out of your Body. You can no longer summon the effort to stay on your feet. Soldiers drag you up and push you forward. At times the burdens that come with aging seem absolutely overwhelming and I have wondered where I would find the resources to continue. Sometimes I have entertained the idea of giving up. Help me to break the illusion that this journey is meant to be easy. I know that kind relatives and friends come to comfort me - to try to raise my spirits. Then some new demand intrudes. After being helped, I'm helpless again. Show me how to get up again and go on. You promised that your yoke would be easy and your burden light.

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 SPEAKS: "Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days will surely come when people will say, 'Happy are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne, the breasts that have never suckled.'" LK 23:28

These are the words I spoke to the weeping women who stood along the way, their frightened children clinging to their garments. I was not refusing their tears, but remembering the tears I shed over Jerusalem. How often my heart has yearned for that city, so rich in the history of my people, made holy by its temple, enshrining the memories of so many of my Father's great servants.

I RESPOND: Lord, you pass a group of women who are crying for you. You tell them to weep rather for themselves and their children. How are you able to look beyond your own pain to see theirs? Lately, I find it hard to think of other people's pains. Personal concerns and anxieties multiply. Losses of various kinds have deprived me from seeing the hurts and needs of others. Broaden my vision, Lord. Help me see the mystery of my oneness with all who suffer. Help me, Lord, as I grow older, not to grow in hardness of heart, refusing to drop that ancient grudge. Help me to join the holy women who wept over you.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: There is a strong contrast between a person standing and a person fallen or lying on the ground. There is also a big difference between one who walks with confidence and ease and one who stumbles and sways. As I lie in the dust of the city street, no one rushes to help. Rather, the soldiers prod me. Do you notice the contrast between the man in the dust and the man who walked on the water of the Sea of Galilee? My helplessness is measured against the former show of strength and power.

I RESPOND: Yes, Lord, we know you took on the fullness of our weak human nature. You experienced everything except sin. We want to join you in accepting the weakness more often feel with advancing age, the greater dependence on others' help. Our gait now is uncertain, sometimes stumbling. Some of us fall and break bones. Help us to offer our dependence on others, our helplessness joined to yours, as the force behind our hope and longing to help others reach heaven.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: At the beginning of my life, my mother wrapped me in swaddling clothes. Her hands had the careful, gentle touch of all young mothers. Now the soldiers pull away my garments. They cast lots for my cloak. The scourging has left my body a mass of wounds. Now the rivulets of blood flow again. There is a new pain as well – of embarrassment. I offer everything to my Father. I recall the words of Job: "*I came naked out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return.*" Job 1:21

I RESPOND: We are stripped of many things as we age. Our eyesight is compromised. Our hearing is diminished. Food does not taste like it used to. I know Lord, that you are stripping me of my senses so that my faith, hope and love of you may expand in trust. In old age I go back to the dependency of infancy. I need help in getting dressed and undressed. Lord, you are stripped of your blood-soaked clothes. You relinquish the last shred of dignity as you stand naked before an unsympathetic world. There is nowhere to hide. Aging reminds me that I must be stripped of my pride and self-reliance until I am able to stand naked before you.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: People have walked with me on this Way of the Cross and counted three falls. Now there can be no more, for my feet are nailed to the cross. A long spike has torn through my flesh. My earthly journey has ended. My feet can no longer bear me. My hands, pierced at the wrists; prevent me from communicating my love for my people.

I RESPOND: My physical movement is limited. I'm afraid to go out. It is easier to stay at home. Outings are a challenge for me. I feel glued to my confined space. Aging involves more and more pain – the kind of pain that causes me to question my ability to endure. I wonder about the purpose of suffering and why I must endure so much. Help me to go beyond the desire to understand suffering and to choose to enter into it as yet another space where I will meet you.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: My words to John and my mother bespoke the fullness of poverty. My heart was breaking the bond of filial possession giving my own mother to the beloved disciple. After doing so, there remained only the separation from my Father in heaven. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* My will to live had run its course, and at last, I can cry from the Cross: *"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. It is consummated."* LK 23:46

I RESPOND: Your death is slow and agonizing. Your self-emptying is complete. There is nothing left to give. In faith and trust you hand your spirit over to your Father and die. Your death reminds me that death awaits us all. Lord, I cannot see the circumstances that lie ahead. I cannot predict my response. Help me to face the losses of daily life and to surrender as you did. Yes, Lord, to surrender to you even those people that I cling to and love. Help me to join with you, and say *"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"*. LK 23:46 I long to hear you say, *"Here is my beloved child with whom I am well pleased."* MT 3:17

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: My mother was not able to comfort me as all good mothers would do, by soothing my brow, or by clasping my hands. They were nailed above her, out of reach. My head was covered by the crown of thorns. Once, she held me as an infant and kissed away the pains of boyhood's scratches and bruises. Now she holds my body - a mass of bruises, cuts and wounds.

I RESPOND: I understand pain only when I understand it as redemptive suffering – as union with you on the Cross. Help me to move beyond self-pity to fruitful imitation of your mother's suffering. This assurance that pain is not wasted fulfills the plan of the Father for love always includes suffering. May Mary teach me her way.

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 SPEAKS: Once my voice called out, "*Lazarus, come forth*" JN 11:43 and my friend, four days in his tomb, rose from the dead. You can see now the completeness of the gift my Father asked of me. The voice that calmed wind and sea, called the dead back to life, rebuked demons, is stilled in death. The hour of cruelty came, the forces of evil triumphed, the earth trembled and the midafternoon wore the black garment of night in mourning. Joseph of Arimathea arranged with Pontius Pilate for the burial. He gave his own tomb, hewn in the rock nearby.

I RESPOND: You once said the foxes have lairs and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Your final poverty is death. Its exterior wrapping and evidence is the tomb – a borrowed tomb. We join in the sorrow of your mother, of Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene and John and the women who laid your body to hasty rest.

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.

JESUS SPEAKS: “*Be not afraid.*” ISA 41:10 As the prophets before me have spoken “*I place before you life and death. Choose life.*” DT 30:19

I RESPOND: This journey with you renews my faith. With the time I have remaining help me to model your example on the Way of your Sorrows. Grant that my remaining time will be an opportunity for acceptance and surrender as yours was. Help me to live life to the fullest as you command.

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

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