

Stations of the Cross

*St. Apollinaris Catholic
Church*

How to Make the Stations of the Cross

The first point to note is that this is prayer. It isn't an intellectual exercise. It is in the context of my relationship with God. I could read through the text of each of the stations, but that wouldn't necessarily be prayer. This is an invitation to enter into a gifted faith experience of who Jesus is for me. It becomes prayer when I open my heart to be touched, and it leads me to express my response in prayer.

The second thing to remember is that this is an imaginative exercise. Its purpose is not a historical examination of "what really happened" on that day in history. It's about something far more profound. This is an opportunity to use this long standing Christian prayer to let Jesus touch my heart deeply by showing me the depth of his love for me.

The context is the historical fact that he was made to carry the instrument of his death, from the place where he was condemned to die, to Calvary where he died, and that he was taken down and laid in a tomb. The religious context is that today Jesus wants to use any means available to move my heart to know his love for me.

These exercises can allow me to imaginatively visualize the "meaning" of his passion and death. The point of this exercise is to lead us to gratitude. It will also lead us into a sense of solidarity with all our brothers and sisters. In our busy, high tech lives we can easily get out of touch with the terrible suffering of real people in our world. Journeying with Jesus in the Stations, allows us to imagine his entry into the experience of those who are tortured, unjustly accused or victimized, sitting on death row, carrying impossible burdens, facing terminal illnesses, or simply fatigued with life.

It is wonderful to pray the stations in a church, where the stations are arranged around the walls. It is traditional to genuflect when we say the words, "We adore you, O Christ ..." However, we can pray the stations alone in our room, using our imaginations.

Go from one station to another. When "arriving" at a station, begin by looking carefully at the image itself or imagine it in detail. Contemplate the scene as long as you find fruit there. Let the words of this text open your heart to personal prayer and gratitude.

Reflection

All: I pause to contemplate this act of closure on his life. In solidarity with all humanity, as his body is taken to its grave I stand for a moment outside the tomb. This final journey of his life has shown me the meaning of gift. This tomb represents every tomb I stand before with fear, in defeat, struggling to believe it could ever be empty. In the fullness of faith in the Risen One, given by his own Holy Spirit, I express my gratitude for this way of the cross. I ask Jesus, whose hands, feet and side still bear the signs of this journey, to grant me the graces I need to take up my cross to be a servant of his own mission.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa VI4: By the cross with thee to stay/ There with thee to weep and pray/ All I ask of thee to give.

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mystical Rose,
make intercession for holy Church,
protect the sovereign Pontiff,
help all those who invoke you in their necessities,
and since you are the ever Virgin Mary
and Mother of the true God,
obtain for us from you most holy Son
the grace of a firm faith,
sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life
burning charity, and the precious gift
of final perseverance.
Amen

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS



The Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross

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

Leader: What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lays in his mother's arms. He has truly died. A profound sacrifice, complete.

Reflection

All: I behold this scene at the foot of the cross. I contemplate touching, caressing his body. I remember all his hands have touched, all who have been blessed by his warm embrace. I pause to let it soak in. He knows the mystery of death. He has fallen into God's hands. For me. That I might love as I have been loved. I pour out my heart to the God of all mercies.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa VI3: Let me mingle tears with thee/ mourning him who mourned for me/ All the days that I may live.



The Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb

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

Leader: They take the body of Jesus to its resting place. The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into His glory, so that we may do the same.



The First Station: Jesus is condemned to die

ALL: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

LEADER: Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth, by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

Reflection

ALL: As I view the scene, I become moved by both sorrow and gratitude. I look at Jesus. His face. The crown of thorns. The blood. His clothes stuck to the wounds on his back. Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair. Jesus' hands are tied behind his back. He is here because I have sinned, Jesus has come that I might be free. That I might have eternal life. As the journey begins I ask to be with Jesus. To follow his journey. I express my love and thanks.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa: VI: At the cross her station keeping/ Stood the mournful Mother weeping/ Close to Jesus to the last.



The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

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

LEADER: Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. It represents the weight of all our crosses. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.

Reflection

All: I contemplate the wood of that cross. I imagine how heavy it is. I reflect upon all it means that Jesus is carrying it. I look into his eyes. It's all there. This is for me. So I place myself with him in this journey. In its anguish. In his freedom and surrender. In the love that must fill his heart. With sorrow and gratitude, I continue the journey. Moved by the power of his love, I am drawn to him and express my love in the words that come to me.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa: V2: Through her heart, his sorrow sharing/ all his bitter anguish bearing/ now at length the sword has passed.



The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

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

Leader: The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life of so many on this earth! He lays on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering whether he will ever be able to continue. He is pulled up and made to continue.

Reflection

All: I stare at the weakness in his eyes. I can look at his whole body and see the exhaustion. As I behold him there on the ground, being roughly pulled up, I know forever how profoundly he understands my fatigue and my defeats. This is for me. In grief and gratitude I want to let him remain there. As I watch him stand again and gain inner strength, I accept his love and express my thanks.

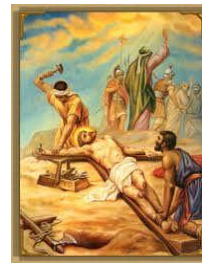
Stabat Mater Dolorosa: V3: O how sad and sore distressèd/ was that Mother highly blessed/ of the sole begotten one!



The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

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

Leader: Jesus' path takes him to a powerful source of his strength. All his life, his mother had taught him



The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

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

Leader: Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

Reflection

All: I make myself watch the nails being driven through his flesh. And I watch his face. I contemplate the completeness of his entry into our lives. Can there be any pain or agony he would not understand? This is for me. Nailed to a cross to forever proclaim liberty to captives. What sorrow and gratitude fill my heart!

Stabat Mater Dolorosa VII: Holy Mother, pierce me through/ in my heart each wound renew/ of my Savior crucified.



The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies On The Cross

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

Leader: Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

Reflection

All: I stand there, at the foot of the cross, side by side with all of humanity, and behold our salvation. I wish to enter his passion carefully watching and listening to all that is said. And then, I experience the one who gives life pass from life to death, I embrace Mary and John and Mary, and let them console me. This is the hour to pray for Jesus to live in me.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa VI2: Let me share with thee His pain/ who for all my sins was slain/ Who for me in torment died.

Leader: This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. Summoning all this remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic yet paying a price he deserves. They help him up so he can make it up the hill of crucifixion.

Reflection

All: I pause to contemplate him there on the ground. The brokenness that makes me whole. The surrender that gives me life. I pause to experience and receive how completely he loves me. He is indeed completely poured out for me. As I treasure this gifted experience, I express what is in my heart.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa V9: O thou Mother! Font of love/ touch my spirit from above/ make my heart with thine accord.



The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped

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

Leader: Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the ultimate vulnerability of the defenseless. No shield or security protects him. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.

Reflection

All: I pause to watch the stripping. I contemplate all that is taken from him. And, how he faces death with such nakedness. I reflect upon how much of himself he has revealed to me. Holding nothing back. As I look at him in his humility, I know that this is for me, and I share my feelings of gratitude.

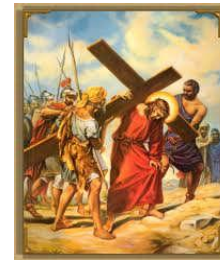
Stabat Mater Dolorosa V10: Make me feel as thou hast felt/ make my soul to glow and melt/ with the love of Christ, my Lord.

the meaning of the words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Now they look into each other's eyes. How pierced-through, her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her tears! Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God bind them together.

Reflection

All: As I watch them in this place along the way, I contemplate the mystery of love's power to give strength. She knows the sorrow in every mother's heart, who has lost a child to tragedy or violence. I look at the two of them very carefully, and long for such love and such peace. This is for me. Such incredible freedom. The availability of a servant. I find the words to express what is in my heart.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa: V4: Christ above in torment hangs/ she beneath beholds the pangs/ of her dying, glorious Son.



The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

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

Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying this burden on his own.

Reflection

All: I look into his face & contemplate his struggle. His weariness & fragility. His weakness. I see how he looks at Simon, with utmost humility and gratitude. This is for me. So I feel anguish and gratitude. I express my thanks that he can continue this journey. That he has help. That he knows my inability to carry my burden alone. I say what is in my heart, with deep feeling.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa:V5: Is there one who would not weep/ whelmed in miseries so deep/ Christ's dear Mother to behold?



The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

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

Leader: Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. His face shows the signs of his solidarity with all who have ever suffered injustice and vile, abusive treatment. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face - his gift to her. And, for us to contemplate forever.

Reflection

All: What does the face of Jesus hold for me? What do I see, as I look deeply into his face? Can I try to comfort the agony and pain? Can I embrace him, with his face so covered with his passion? The veil I behold is a true icon of his gift of himself. This is for me. In wonder and awe, I behold his face now wiped clean, and see the depth of his suffering in solidarity with all flesh.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa: V6: Can the human heart refrain/ from partaking in her pain/ in that Mother's pain untold.



The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

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

Leader: Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him. "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." He has seen death before. Now he can feel the profound weakness of disability & disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

Reflection

All: I contemplate Jesus brought very low. As I behold him there on the ground, with all the agony taking its toll on him, I let my heart go out to him. I store up this image in my heart, knowing that I will never feel alone in my suffering or in any diminishment, with this image of Jesus on the ground before me. This is for me, so I express the feelings in my heart.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa V7: Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled/ she beheld her tender Child/ all with bloody scourges rent.



The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

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

Leader: The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He had broken all kinds of social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing the mystery of facing the separation of death.

Reflection

All: I look at their faces. So full of love and gratitude, loss and fear. I contemplate what words might have passed between them. I remember all his tender, compassionate, merciful love for me. I place myself with these women and children to support him. This is for me. So, I let this scene stir up deep gratitude.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa V8: For the sins of his own nation/ saw him hang in desolation/ till his spirit forth he sent.



The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

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

