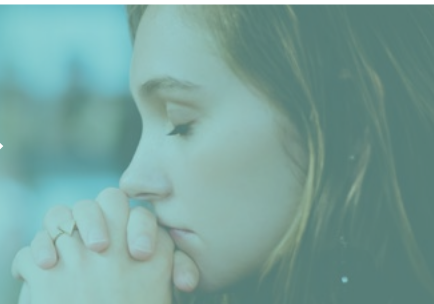


The Way of the Cross



The Stations of the Cross is a traditional devotional exercise used mainly in the Roman Catholic tradition. Fourteen pieces of art work are placed around the church building. The paintings or small sculptures depict events in Jesus' journey to the cross beginning with his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. During Lent, but particularly during Holy Week people are invited to enter each event in the story by walking around each station in turn.

At this time when people are prevented by a pandemic from gathering in churches, the Rev Rod Horsfield from the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches has developed this 'Stations of the Cross' as an electronic resource to enable people to make this devotional journey in their own home.

How to use this resource

1. Download the resource to your device.
2. Print a copy of the daily guide for Holy Week which tells you the Station for that day. There are usually two stations per day.
3. Open the Station for that day and allow sufficient time to read, contemplate the image and pray. Allow the words and images to speak to your own heart and mind.
4. You can be flexible in how you use the resource. You may like to use it over the seven days of Holy Week or in one sitting on a particular day, eg Good Friday.
5. You may like to choose a different place in your home for each station.

We offer this opportunity for the private contemplation of the significance of Jesus' passion and cross in the hope that people may be blessed by it at a time when the usual opportunities for communal Lent and Easter worship have been denied us by the coronavirus pandemic.

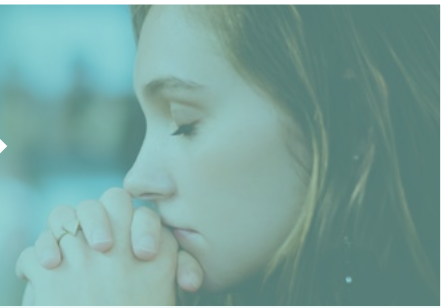


Devised and written by Rev Rod Horsfield, 26 March 2020



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA





Holy Week Meditation

Day	Day & Date	Meditation
1	Sun 5 th April	No. 1. In the Garden of Gethsemane No 2. Judas betrays Jesus
2	Mon 6 th April	No 3. Jesus before the Sanhedrin No 4. Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate
3	Tues 7 th April	No 5. Peter denies Jesus three times No 6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns
4	Wed 8 th April	No 7. Jesus is forced to carry his cross No 8. Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrene No 9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
5	Thur 9 th April	No 10. Jesus is crucified No 11. Jesus speaks to his mother and the beloved disciple
6	Good Friday 10 th April	No 12. Jesus makes a promise to a thief No 13. Jesus dies on the cross No 14. Jesus is taken down from the cross
7	Holy Saturday 11 th April	No 15. Jesus is laid in the tomb on the day between cross and resurrection



1st Station

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, *"Sit here while I go over there and pray."* He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, *"My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me."* He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."* When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, *"So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Matthew 26:36-41



The Witness

The inevitable confrontation with the religious and political powers was coming. Jesus agonised over what lay ahead and felt the need to pray for deliverance. When he needed their company most, his closest friends failed him.

All go to God when they are sorely placed:
they plead to him for help, for peace, for bread,
for mercy, for them sinning, sick or dead.
We all do so in faith or unbelief.

We go to God when he is sorely placed,
find him poor, scorned, unsheltered, without bread,
whelmed under weight of evil, weak or dead:
We stand by God then, in his hour of grief.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 1906-194 Together in Song: #240

Prayer: Jesus, pray for me in the time of trial when I too feel threatened and alone.

2nd Station

Jesus is betrayed by Judas

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, *“the man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely.”* He came and immediately went over to him and said, *“Rabbi.”* And he kissed him. At this they laid hands on him and arrested him

Mark 14: 43-46



The Witness

The terrible story now unfolds with haste. A mob comes for Jesus in the garden at night.

Jesus's disciple Judas, is with them, and gives them a sign to identify the victim. The cowardly kiss is now embedded in literature and culture. But the notable thing is that Jesus is not a victim. He remains steadfast, firmly committed to God's way of dealing with human evil, violence and faithlessness. The strange way of suffering love.

How deep the wisdom of our God,
how weak but truly wise,
to risk, to sacrifice, to die,
and from the grave arise,
to shed the shroud of death and fate,
freeing our hearts for good.

We breathe the ample air of hope
and take our chance with God.

Brian Arthur Wren: Together in Song # 262

Prayer: Jesus Redeemer, stand with me when I am called to challenge the powers that would deny truth and justice to your vulnerable ones.

3rd Station

Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, *"If you are the Messiah, tell us,"* but he replied to them, *"If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."* They all asked, *"Are you then the Son of God?"* He replied to them, *"You say that I am."* Then they said, *"What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth."*

Luke 22: 66-71



The Witness

After his arrest, the religious authorities, eager to be rid of Jesus, brought him before their religious council, the Sanhedrin, on a trumped-up charge. Here we see the power of religion protecting their privilege, using self-serving injustice against the Son of God.

The city of God is built like other cities:
Judas negotiates the loans you float;
You will meet Caiaphas upon committees
You will be glad of Pilate's casting vote...

Easter Hymn (verse 3) A. D. Hope

Prayer: Jesus, those who should have been your allies in God's cause were blind to your truth. Save us and your church from like-minded blindness to your ways.

4th Station

Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate

The chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pontius Pilate. Pilate questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He said to him in reply, “You say so.” The chief priests accused him of many things. Again, Pilate questioned him, “Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of.” Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.... Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified.



Mark 15: 1-5, 15

The Witness

The religious and political authorities continue their charade of trying to find legal and political justification for the execution of this man. Pilate is the Roman Governor who says he finds no reason for capital punishment in this instance.

He is harangued by the religious leaders and threatened by the mob. But throughout the interrogation Jesus says nothing, in effect, directing the course of action by his silence.

O Mighty Nothing! Unto thee,
Nothing, we owe all things that be.

God spoke once when he all things made,
He saved all when he Nothing said.

The world was made of Nothing then;
'Tis made by Nothing now again.

Richard Crawshaw 1612 – 1649

Prayer: God of grace, give me the grace to witness to your love by my willingness, not to fight, but to bear the suffering that comes to those committed to your way of suffering love.

5th Station



Peter denies Jesus three times

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, “*You too were with Jesus the Galilean.*” But Peter denied in front of everyone, saying, “*I do not know what you are talking about!*” As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “*This man was with Jesus the Nazorean.*” Again he denied it with an oath, “*I do not know the man!*” A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, “*Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away.*” At that he began to curse and to swear, “*I do not know the man.*” And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: “*Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.*” He went out and began to weep bitterly.

Matthew 26: 69-75



The Witness

Earlier in the week Peter had brashly responded to Jesus claim that his disciples would abandon him and Peter would deny him three times by refusing to accept that he would fail. Before three different people Peter now denies, with an oath, that he knows the man.

This massive failure it is also a sign of encouragement. If Peter can be forgiven, it shows there is always the possibility of confession and forgiveness for any poor sinner. It is probably included by Matthew as a warning to his own church which was under intense persecution

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Before the cock crew twice dread hour of trial – the Apostle uttered thrice his dark denial. | 3. Swiftly to Peter's face the shame came leaping; he had denied such grace and went out weeping. | 5. The way is long, I find my weak steps falling; O turn, to my dark mind your grace recalling.
Oft, oft with weeping eyes I gaze to heaven; then, at your look, arise restored, forgiven. |
| 2. And then the Saviour turned on Peter gazing – a look divine, that yearned with love amazing. | 4. Lord Jesus look on me, your kind face turning; my soul with agony of sin is burning. | |

Hymn by Hallgrim Pjeturrsson 1614 -74 (tr Charles Venn Pilcher 1879- 1961)
Together in Song # 340

Prayer: God of mercy, teach us through Peter's denial that your forgiveness is always possible.

6th Station

Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns

Pilate then handed Jesus over to be scourged. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him.

Matthew 27: 27 -31



The Witness

When Pilate saw that he was losing his fight with the crowd to acquit Jesus, he washed his hands of the matter and handed Jesus over to the soldiers.

They scourged him, mocked his claim to be a king by dressing him in scarlet and putting a crown of thorns on his head. Then they presented him to the crowd who by this time had seized responsibility for this execution from the authorities.

O sacred head sore wounded,
with grief and pain weighed
down;
O kingly head surrounded
with thorns your only crown;
death's shadows rise before
you,
the glow of life decays;
yet hosts of heaven adore you
and tremble as they gaze.

What language shall I borrow
to praise you heavenly friend,
for this your dying sorrow,
your mercy without end?

Such agony and dying!
Such love to sinners free!
O Christ, all grace supplying
turn now your face on me.

Paul Gerhardt 1607-76 attrib. Bernard of Clairvaux TiS 339

Prayer: In Jesus' name O God, we pray for all your broken, bashed, tortured and suffering people and those who have the power to inflict such punishment. Save us all.

7th Station

Jesus carries the Cross

When the chief priests and the guards saw [Jesus] they cried out, “*Crucify him, crucify him!*” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him.” ... They cried out, “*Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!*” Pilate said to them, “*Shall I crucify your king?*” The chief priests answered, “*We have no king but Caesar.*” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

John 19: 6, 15-17



The Witness

Jesus is taken away to be executed because of the collusion of the political and religious powers and the will of the people. Down through history Anti-Semitism has blamed ‘the Jews’ for the death of Jesus.

This mistaken interpretation of the texts led to persecution and shameful atrocities against the Jews. The truth is that “the people” responsible is us. It is the human reaction to God throughout history. We look God in the face in Jesus, and not liking what we see, we reject God.

Here hangs a man discarded,
a scarecrow hoisted high,
a nonsense pointing nowhere
to all who hurry by.

Can such a clown of sorrows
still bring a useful word
where faith and love seem
phantoms
and every hope absurd?

Can he give help and comfort
to lives by comfort bound,

where drums of dazzling progress
give strangely hollow sound?

Life emptied of all meaning,
drained out in deep distress,
can share in broken silence
my deepest emptiness;

and love that freely entered
the pit of life's despair
can name our hidden darkness
and suffer with us there

Brian Wren 1936- Together in Song # 356

Prayer: Suffering Lord, when I bear the burdens of life, keep me mindful, that you have shared my agony and the pain of the world in your bearing of the cross.

8th Station

Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrene

They pressed into service 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



The Witness

A passer-by is conscripted by the soldiers to carry the transverse bar of Jesus' cross; the vertical pole would have remained in the ground at Golgotha. Simon was from Cyrene, a provincial city in North Africa.

Matthew's gospel mentions him only in passing, but Simon's sons are obviously known to the readers of Mark's gospel. Because of the North African connection, tradition has regarded Simon as a black African man. But whatever the race of this man from Africa, he gave Jesus the help he needed at that time.

Simon the Cyrenian speaks

1. He never spoke a word to me,
And yet He called my name;
He never gave a sign to me,
And yet I knew he came.
2. At first I said, "I will not bear
His cross upon my back;
He only seeks to place it there
Because my skin is black."
3. But he was dying for a dream,
And he was very meek.
4. And in his eyes there shone
a gleam
Men journey far to seek.
It was Himself my pity bought,
I did for Christ alone
What all of Rome could not
have wrought
With bruise of lash or stone.

Countee Cullen 1903 - 1946

Prayer: Lord, in your extremity, you needed the help of a passer-by. May I be such a one to carry the burden of another in your name.

9th Station

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, for indeed the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' At that time people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' for if these things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*

Luke 23: 27-31



The Witness

The following crowd could well be those people who had listened to Jesus teaching in the Temple. But it is the women, especially in Luke's gospel, who are unmatched in their devotion. Jesus' word to them is one of warning. A greater cause for tears is unbelieving Jerusalem. So terrible will be its fate that those most fortunate will be those without children.

If such a tragedy as his death can occur when times are relatively benign, what will happen when Jerusalem becomes ripe for the revolution that will destroy the city.

Women wept to see him; he said, 'Don't weep for me.'
Many laughed and mocked him: 'Forgive them, they don't see.'
Jesus, please forgive me, you know what I am;
I was one who nailed your hands
When our life began again.

Robin Mann 1949 - TIS 357

Prayer: Loving Lord, teach me the compassion, insight and devotion of your women disciples who followed you through the worst of times - to the very end.

10th Station



Jesus is crucified

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, “*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*”

Luke 23: 33-34



The Witness

He was a gambler too...

And sitting down, they watched him there, the soldiers did;
There while they played with dice,
He made his sacrifice,
And died upon the cross to rid
God's world of sin.

He was a gambler too, my Christ,
He took his life and threw
It for a world redeemed.

And ere His agony was done,
before the westering sun went down,
Crowning that day with its crimson crown
He knew that he had won.

Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy (WW I Padre - Woodbine Willie)

Prayer: When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died

My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride

Tenth Station is continued on the next page



The Killing by Edwin Muir

That was the day they killed the Son of God
On a squat hill-top by Jerusalem...
After the ceremonial preparation,
The scourging, nailing, nailing against the wood,
Erection of the main-trees with their burden,
While from the hill rose an orchestral wailing,
They were there at last, high up in the soft spring day.

We watched the writhings, heard the moanings, saw
The three heads turning on their separate axles
Like broken wheels left spinning. Round his head
Was loosely bound a crown of plaited thorn
That hurt at random, stinging temple and brow
As the pain swung into its envious circle.

In front the wreath was gathered in a knot
That as he gazed looked like the last stump left
Of a death-wounded deer's great antlers. Some
Who came to stare grew silent as they looked,
Indignant or sorry. But the hardened old
And the hard-hearted young, although at odds

From the first morning, cursed him with one curse,
Having prayed for a Rabbi or an armed Messiah
And found the Son of God. What use to them
Was a God or a Son of God? Of what avail
For purposes such as theirs? Beside the cross-foot,
Alone, four women stood and did not move
All day. The sun revolved, the shadows wheeled,
The evening fell. His head lay on his breast,
But in his breast they watched his heart move on
By itself alone, accomplishing its journey.

Their taunts grew louder, sharpened by the knowledge
That he was walking in the park of death,
Far from their rage. Yet all grew stale at last,
Spite, curiosity, envy, hate itself.

They waited only for death and death was slow
And came so quietly they scarce could mark it.
They were angry then with death and death's deceit.

I was a stranger, could not read these people
Or this outlandish deity. Did a God
Indeed in dying cross my life that day
By chance, he on his road and I on mine?

11th Station

Jesus speaks to his mother and the beloved disciple

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother Mary, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the Beloved Disciple, he said to his mother, "*Woman, behold, your son.*" Then he said to the disciple, "*Behold, your mother.*" And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

John 19: 25-27



The Witness

Though the disciples "*forsook him and fled*" when Jesus was arrested, there were four women standing by Jesus at the foot of his cross, and "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*". When Jesus saw them he gives the future care of his mother to that disciple, who receives her as "*a mother*" from the Son, to begin a community of believers in the One who speaks from the cross.

The Beloved Disciple speaks

And so we came to this, the place of death;
the end of all our dreams of a new kingdom.

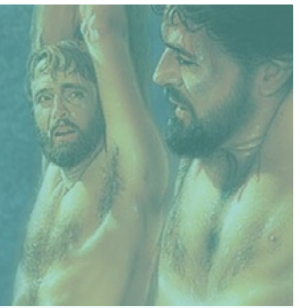
Then he spoke, as he often had before
of love that would transcend this gore
and stark brutality.

"*Son, behold your mother*", he said to me,
and to his mother, "*Behold your son.*"
In that transaction did the future dawn;
We would be a family of the crucified One.

Rod Horsfield

Prayer: Jesus, son of Mary, you promised that in your kingdom, your followers would have mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers without number. May it be so for me.

12th Station



Jesus makes a promise to a thief

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, *“He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”* The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, *“If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”* There was also an inscription over him, *“This is the King of the Jews.”* One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, *“Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”* But the other rebuked him, saying, *“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”* Then he said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* He replied, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”*



Luke 23: 35 - 43

The Witness

One of the criminals joins in the taunts of the crowd saying in effect, if you are the Messiah get us down from here. The other thief recognises their guilt and Jesus innocence and asks to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingly power. Jesus assures him of a place in Paradise, (in Scripture the abode of the righteous dead). Only Luke's gospel records this exchange to record an act of salvation in a situation where the word “save” has been used in taunts and ridicule. That Jesus does save someone, and that he is a dying criminal, is entirely consistent with Jesus ministry during his life. Did he not say, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)

There was one who asked you, ‘Remember me this day,’
Jesus, when I’m dying, remember me that way;
when my life is over, be with me, my friend,
like the thief upon the cross,
when our life began again.

Robin Mann TiS 357

Prayer: Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

13th Station

Jesus dies on the cross

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"*; and when he had said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, *"Certainly this man was innocent."*

Luke 23: 44-47



The Witness

Luke's account of Jesus' death differs from that of Matthew who records Jesus cry of dereliction: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* In Luke's account there is no anger and doubt or thrashing around in the throes of death. Rather he writes of serenity, acceptance and trust. Jesus' last words were from Psalm 31:5 – *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."*

Golgotha

Finally, one arrives at the place
Of the skull because there is nowhere
Else to go. And there before the face
Of bone one pauses to despair.

The culmination of all evil
Is displayed before one's eyes:
Man's heart conspired with the devil
And cared little for disguise.

Andrew Lansdown

Prayer: Jesus Christ, strange Son of God you are, willing to give your own life, to die to break the power of evil. Before this mystery, grant me the gift of faith.

14th Station



Jesus is taken down from the cross

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.



Matthew 27: 57-60

The Witness

When Jesus was dead the women took his body down from the cross and placed it in a borrowed tomb. Because the next day was the Sabbath they could not prepare the body for burial. A stone was rolled across the entrance.... And they waited.

Dead and burned

And so we took him down
(Or thought we did),
Wiped the sweat and spittle
From his face,
Washed the dried blood,
Threw out the crown of thorns,
And wrapped him once again
In swaddling clothes.

A tomb can be a cramped,
Confining place,
Far smaller than a stable.

We laid him there
(Or thought we did).
We were not able
To comprehend
The infinite contained.
For us it was the end.
Only the harsh realities
Of death and stone
Remained.

And cared little for disguise.

Elizabeth Rooney

Prayer: Be with me suffering One, when in the face of what seems like defeat and hopelessness, I wait to see what your grace and power will unfold.

15th Station



Holy Saturday

(the day between cross and resurrection)

Easter Saturday

A curiously empty day,
As if the world's life
Had gone underground.

The April sun
Warming the dry grass
Makes pale spring promises
But nothing comes to pass.

Anger
Relaxes into despair
As we remember our helplessness,
Remember him hanging there.
We have purchased the spices
But they must wait for tomorrow.

We shall keep today
For emptiness and sorrow.
Of death and stone
Remained.

And cared little for disguise.

Elizabeth Rooney

Tomorrow will be a wholly new day – the eighth day of creation.

Devised and written by Rev Rod Horsfield, 26 March 2020



Uniting Church in Australia
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