

Stations of the Cross
Composed by John Bolland



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

Opening Prayer

God, our Father, you are the source of grace and mercy. Your Spirit drives us into the desert where, we too, like your Son, make our own Lenten journey. Your presence makes the parched land springs of water and the wilderness a garden of life. As we follow in the steps of your Son's Passion, may we grow more merciful. As we carry the Cross with him, may we become more aware of our own need of mercy. As we look upon the Pierced One, may we be refreshed and washed clean in his love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before each Station:

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

1. Jesus is condemned to death

Fear is the enemy

It was in Pilate's power to be merciful. We know that he was moved to release Jesus but his instinct for mercy was held in check by fear: the fear of being thought weak. So, he called for water to wash his hands of Jesus and of blame.

Lord Jesus, how many have been like Pilate – afraid to show mercy because mercy is confused with weakness? Teach us that mercy is strength.

After each Station:

I love you, Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

2. Jesus takes up the Cross

The Cross

This is why Jesus accepts the Cross, embraces it: he

knows that through it, God will give new life to his people. Lord Jesus, as you bow down to take the Cross upon your shoulders, you carry us and the burden of our brokenness. Help us to see our Cross as a promise of love and life.

3. Jesus falls the first time

For a stronger faith

Perhaps those who watched Jesus stumble saw this as a vindication of their own faith? Here God was humiliating a man who had tried to humble them, to undermine their authority. Lord Jesus, we see you through the eyes of faith: through this fall we ask you to strengthen our faith and make us compassionate towards others. May we live mercy and not merely talk about it.

4. Jesus meets his mother

Mother of Mercy

The Mother of Mercy – who had indeed given flesh to the Word – saw that flesh torn by the rage of hatred and sin. Yet she too enters into this mystery of Divine Mercy, even though it means suffering with her Son. Blessed Mother, by sharing in your Son's Passion you become for us a sign of life and hope – especially in our darkest moments. Come to meet us on our own way of the Cross.

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus

God makes haste to help us

When Simon takes up the Cross he becomes the channel of God's presence and closeness to his Son. The rough hand of a guard pulling Simon from the crowd becomes the compassionate touch of the Father. Lord Jesus, it can be hard for us to admit when we need help; even harder to accept help when it is offered. Give us the grace to recognise our 'Simons' and, in turn, to help those who need it most.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus The Face of Mercy In return for her act of compassion, Veronica is left with an imprint of Jesus, the face of the Father's mercy, on her cloth. That likeness was also imprinted upon her soul – she too becomes an image of God's tender mercy. Lord Jesus, help us to rediscover that face of mercy within each of us: that we might restore the dignity of those who are exploited, excluded and ignored.

7. Jesus falls the second time

A renewed hope

Hope is precious. In this second fall we see those who had placed their hopes in Jesus begin to feel the crushing weight of hopelessness as their Saviour stumbles in the dust. Lord Jesus, we ask that you renew our hope. Despite our own repeated falls, open our hearts to that hope that we too might be loved forever.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

The little ones

As he nears the end, Jesus encounters the women of Jerusalem. Though they mourn for him, his thoughts are with them and their children. He shows the Father's love for the 'little ones', those on the margins of society. Lord Jesus, you show us the true power of compassion. Even in the midst of your suffering, your concern is for others. Help us to break free from self-pity and make our own times of suffering occasions of grace and mercy.

9. Jesus falls the third time

Redeeming love

We speak of 'falling in love' with another person. This fall of Jesus is an act of love for humanity – and not for some faceless 'mass', but for each one of us. His Passion is the overflowing of God's redeeming love for his wounded creation. Lord Jesus, only love can redeem us because only love is the deepest expression of the eternal life you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit. That is why it is the greatest of all gift and the one which endures: may we open our hearts to this healing love.

10. Jesus is stripped of his clothing

Restoring Eden

The men who stripped Jesus were completing a plan set in motion at the original sin. In the moment that nakedness became a source of shame, God had already fixed upon a remedy of Christ. To save us, Jesus must strip himself of his equality with God and become the servant of his Father's love. Lord Jesus, you have shown us how to strip ourselves of our obsession with power and status: help us not be ashamed to make our life a gift for others.

11. Jesus is crucified

Nails, words and other weapons

Jesus was crucified, not just by nails which bound him to the wood of the Cross, but by the mocking words flung at him from the crowd. Cruel speech is an instrument of torture, a way of crucifying others. Lord Jesus, remind us of the power of words to heal, or to wound. When we surrender to jealousy or envy, we

allow these poisons to paralyse our hearts and barb our tongues. Help us remember that, even on the Cross, you spoke only of forgiveness and compassion.

12. Jesus dies on the Cross

It is accomplished

Jesus died as he lived: a sign of the Father's merciful love. Even in death he is filled with compassion. From his pierced side blood and water flow – a gift of new life through the saving sacraments. Lord Jesus, for us death means going away, for you it is about finding new ways of touching our lives with your power. Give us signs of your life-giving presence in our families and communities – especially where there is a need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross and placed in the arms of his Mother

The Passion of Mary

Having met her son on his final journey, Mary walked with him. Her own cross, the vision of her child whose suffering not even a mother's love could lighten. Now, at the end, she must contemplate that face which first looked up at her with new-born eyes. She must close those eyes in the sleep of death. Sorrowful mother, whose heart lies broken at the foot of the Cross, be close to all mothers who stand by the crosses of their children, unable to lift them down or take their pain away. Show them the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.

14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

The door from death to life

Not even the tomb can contain the power of God's mercy. The great stone which seals the entrance will become the first Holy Door of Mercy through which the light of the risen sun will pour. But, for now, the Church must observe this Sabbath of uncertainty and sadness, and wait. Lord Jesus, make of every heart a holy door. As we make our own journeys of forgiveness in this season of grace, fill us with your healing power: that we may, in turn, share your loving mercy with others. Concluding Prayer God, our Father, you watch the road for our coming back to you: you run to meet us on our way rejoicing that we have come back to life. We can do this only because you have sent Jesus, your first-born and our brother, to show us the path of mercy which is the Way of the Cross. He has paid the price of our ransom, he has freed us from death. Make us joyful witnesses of his risen love and help us, in our own lives, to show that face of mercy to all we meet. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...