



***301 Faith Partners, Self-guided Stations of the Cross
Good Friday in Holy Week, April 2, 2021***

Opening Prayer:

Minister:

God of power and mercy, in love you sent your Son. He goes before us into all our darkest places, that we might turn away from the seductions of the world to live in you forever. Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death – so like our own – that we may learn from his example the way we should go. We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

***Response:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Reader:

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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

This year we have known isolation. We have known wrestling alone in the garden of despair and fear, when night is close around us and all our friends are asleep. We hold in our hearts all those who died alone this year in hospital beds, in nursing homes or other care facilities, or alone in their own beds in cities far from friends and relatives. We hold in our hearts their families, who couldn't be with them -- who longed to stay awake at their sides, but couldn't.

We hold in our hearts all who are even still wrestling with mental health issues or with addictions, or who struggle with impulse control. Help all who suffer alone in the night to find the comfort of your presence.

We did not want to fall asleep, Beloved. We wanted to be with those for whom we care. We did not want to leave them alone -- distant from us -- cut off. But we had to.

It eases our hearts to know that you have walked this way before us. You know the pain of isolation. You know the grinding burden both of wrestling alone and of having to let go of dear ones who are suffering. You know how sleep, so necessary, can feel like a betrayal.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Second Station: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

Then, 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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

How bitter it is to be betrayed. How alone and helpless we feel when friends turn against us or when workplaces become hostile. And how bitter it is when life itself betrays us.

In this Pandemic many of us have lost loved ones, jobs, our sense of well being, our health, our personal space, our sense of safety – so much! It was wrong of us to think that these things were always going to be ours. It was misguided to believe that if we worked hard enough and saved prudently enough we would be guaranteed lives of security. And yet, that is what we were taught. We didn't know -- couldn't have imagined -- that we have almost no control over our lives, our happiness.

We are grieving, as you must have grieved when Judas betrayed you. Even though you knew it had to happen, even though you knew his heart, it must still have been devastating to stand there and receive his kiss.

You have been here where life betrays us. You can show us how to put our trust not in things and in circumstances but in God. There is no firm ground except our relationship with God. Everything else passes away.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

In this volatile year, we have been deeply divided from our neighbors by misunderstandings, willful miscommunication, and lies. The divisiveness was intentional. Rhetoric has been used to inflame hearts to violence.

We have seen the words of those we look up to twisted and used to condemn. Even our own words have been used that way. We have seen our neighbors dehumanized and stereotyped. Manipulation has been used to malign and injure.

It is painful and frightening when our neighbors act violently, hurting and killing in the name of an idea that they attribute to you.

We see how you bring to these situations not further conflict but truth and then silence. We see how you remain unswerving in following the Way of Love. Again and again you reach out in compassion and in truth, even when people are hurting you.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by Peter

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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 he denied it 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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

We sure do know what it's like to be like Peter. We betray that which we love most. Sometimes it's because we are afraid of very real consequences. That's bad enough, because, really, what is more important than being true to who and what we love? But at other times we don't even have the excuse of needing to save our own skins. We just don't think.

We cause such harm with our betrayals! But you are ever forgiving. You and Peter have gone here before us. You will be with us as we acknowledge our failure, ask for forgiveness, and go on.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pilate

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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 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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

How can those in authority make such blatant, horrible mistakes? How can they put power and money ahead of justice for all people? How can they sacrifice the earth's ecosystems for their own short-sighted gains? Oh, beloved, it hurts us so deeply to see how truth is sacrificed for expediency and the moral fiber of our country is compromised again and again.

But wait. I, myself, often put expediency over justice. I use more than my fair share of resources and generate a lot of waste. I go for the quick and inexpensive rather than the ecologically sound and small-farmer-friendly foods. I don't pay enough attention to the poor and the marginalized.

You have gone here before us. You will be with us as we discern how we are called to act ethically in following your Way of Love.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Sixth Station: Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly.

(John 19: 1-3)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

We are being flayed again and again by news of violence. It feels like no one is safe, and no one is to be trusted. And each time the wounds begin to close, they are opened again by new reports. It's all too much. It's hard to keep looking. We're getting numb, closing down. We need to be angry and we need to weep, but how can we do that as new assaults keep happening?

You have gone here before us. And you will be with us as we walk through this very difficult time.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

***Response:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Reader:

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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

Systemic racism erupts into a killing hatred far too often. And we are helpless to stop it. Innocent children are housed in cages. Families are divided by draconian travel regulations. The police kneel on a man's neck. A perpetrator seeks to excuse his killing violence by characterizing Asians as sex workers. Rioters storm the Capital and walk away unpunished.

Human decency seems often to take a back seat to a kind of mob mentality, a blood lust that wants nothing more than to destroy. Our hearts are heavy with unshed tears. We wanted so much for our nation to be better than this!

Help us to cry, dear brother. Help us mourn your horrible death and the deaths of so many, many others. I don't know where we will go from here. But you have been here before us, and we can trust you to show us a way.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

(Mark 15: 21)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ, there have been little bright banners of hope throughout this year, and we need some help to notice. They are all the people on the front lines just doing their jobs. They are nurses who have worked with COVID patients, bringing them cell phones or laptops on which to carry on conversations with loved ones who cannot visit. They are chaplains who have helped grieving families process not only the deaths of those they love but the fact that they won't even be able to have a funeral. They are firefighters and food bank workers, teachers and school nurses. They are grocery store clerks who go to work thinking that perhaps this will be the day when a shooter comes to their store.

All these hundreds -- thousands -- of good-hearted, caring people, these are the true face of this country, indeed of the world. Help us to allow these valiant people who are just doing their jobs to

touch and open our hearts, just as you allowed Simon of Cyrene to carry your cross for you. Help our tears to flow as we remember their simple valor in our time of profound need.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

It is easy to imagine that this is the time when the dry wood of self interest, greed, clan identification, and ego concerns will incinerate the earth. We mark with dread how climate change is bringing about floods, hurricanes, fires and drought across the globe. And it is frustrating that

though we know the causes of disaster, we cannot seem to do even the simplest things to turn the trend around. We mourn the loss of species, of the biomass worldwide, of environments we have cherished. Of clean air and water. Of balance.

Oh, beloved, in this time of isolation we see so much we are helpless to change. Help us to start where we can to do what we are able to do. You have loved this planet and all its creatures before us, and you love it still.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

How can you say, "They know not what they do?" Isn't it time that we took some responsibility for our actions? Isn't it time we looked out a little further than the end of our noses -- our self-interest and clan-identification? There is so much at stake! We inhabit a beautiful planet, and we are slowly reducing it to dust and ash. People are starving. They are being driven from their homes by war or

poverty. They are making do with almost nothing while we live in huge houses with every convenience at our fingertips. We have powerful teachings in the world's religions -- and we merely tip our hats to them once in a while when we're in the mood.

O, beloved brother, teach us what you know of being in this place. Teach us to forgive, to work for justice ceaselessly, to try to be a help to our neighbors in all the ways we can. You have been here before us, and you stand with us in our despair and helplessness.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

(Luke 23: 39-43)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

When breathing comes hard, we don't speak except to say what is most important to us. Suffering with blood loss and hypothermia and having to struggle for every breath, what was most important to you was to tell the thief hanging next to you that he could look forward to being in paradise at the end of the day.

You meant something like a Persian walled garden: cool and filled with leafy plants. Enough water, food near to hand, that would have been paradise to the two of you hanging on your crosses.

For us, paradise would be the freedom to hug our friends, to worship together in person, to have tea at our favorite restaurant, to visit our families. It is love that keeps us from doing these things. We know how COVID spreads, and we are trying to keep ourselves and others from passing along the virus. But we yearn for touch, for connection.

In our pain, help us to remember to reassure one another. At the end of the day, all this will be over. We will be reunited. Our debilitating isolation will be at an end.

Help us to act in love to those around us, for your kingdom, not of this world, is always near at hand.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, 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

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

Your words to your family from the cross are remembered by all of us standing here these many centuries later. Were you speaking to them out of loving concern, trying to tie up loose ends before you died? Were you uniting two lost souls whose worlds had been centered in you?

We are grieving. The lament wells up in us from our depths and pours out whenever we allow it to flow. We often cannot put words to what is painning us so deeply. And so it's hard to keep faith with it, to just let it express itself in all the channels in which grief moves -- in prayer, in tears, in singing and in making art.

When we do we see that our pain is our witness to all the horrible things that have happened this year. It is our witness to half a million deaths in this country alone. It is our cry added to the cries of all the bereaved everywhere.

How can we help but feel it? Our souls are connected. The grief of each is the sorrow of all.

But you are right here in the midst of our sorrow with us. Your compassionate heart moves you to speak even from the cross. How can we doubt, then, that, with us, you are grieving deeply today?

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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.

(Luke 23: 44-46)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

You have gone before us through the portal of death. You have prepared us a way.

Each generation must learn for ourselves the profound change of consciousness you introduce us to through your birth, life, death and resurrection. You are God, and you have dwelt among us. Our suffering is not foreign to you.

Help us now, in this time of numbing isolation as we respond to a Pandemic that leaves no corner of the world untouched,

In this time when our profound racism is again being acknowledged and hopefully addressed,

In this time when species are dying out and natural disasters are becoming increasingly common,

In this time of divisiveness, rage and fear,

To see what you want to show us, to turn around in the ways you want us to turn, to die to our ego desires and live instead in you.

For you have been here before us, and you are with us now.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader:

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 departed.

(Matthew 27: 57-60)

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

Your disciple, Joseph, put himself at risk by identifying himself as a disciple of yours. May we engage in the risky behavior of identifying ourselves as allies to those being discriminated against. May we be willing to confront the bullies wherever we find them.

You only used the tomb that Joseph had given you for a very short time. Joseph's understanding of what you and your followers needed was limited because he didn't know that you would be resurrected. May we be willing to bend and flex, knowing that our best gifts often fall short of what's really needed.

May we listen deeply in the profound silence of the tomb.

May we wait patiently.

May we know that you are present even when you seem most absent.

Amen.

Response: Lord Jesus, help us take comfort in the knowledge that you have gone before us. In our darkest times, in aloneness and pain, you are here.

Station Fifteen: Jesus is Raised from the Dead

Minister: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Response: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Minister:

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Jesus. And very early on the first day of the week, when the

sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

We know the end of the story. In this Good Friday moment, when we are remembering your suffering and death, we know that your resurrection is right around the corner. But even now, so many centuries later, do we really know what it means?

Beloved, we need the time to grieve and to honor the darkness and silence of the empty tomb. But we look out on the very beginnings of hope. Bear with us, we beg of you, as we learn and grow into a deeper understanding of you. Help us to push our way into the light of your love.

Closing Prayer:

Beloved Christ,

your passion and death is the sacrifice that unites earth and heaven and reconciles all people to you. May we who have faithfully reflected on these mysteries follow in your steps and so come to share your glory.

The Creator, The Christ, and the Holy Spirit bless us and keep us, this day and always. Amen.