

Q

Who invented the Stations of the Cross?

A

The first Stations of the Cross were walked by Jesus himself on the way to Calvary. Known as the *Via Dolorosa* (“The Way of Suffering”) or the *Via Crucis* (“The Way of the Cross”), it was marked out from the earliest times and was a traditional walk for pilgrims who came to Jerusalem. The early Christians in Jerusalem would walk the same pathway that Jesus walked, pausing for reflection and prayer. Later, when Christians could not travel to the Holy Land, artistic depictions of “The Way of the Cross” were set up in churches, or outside and Christians would walk from station to station, reading the Gospel account of the Passion, or simply praying and reflecting on each event. While the content or place of each station had changed, the intention was to make a mini-pilgrimage and follow—literally—in the footsteps of Jesus.

This devotion became better known in the Middle Ages, and the Franciscans are credited with its spread. Lent is a time when many people make the Stations and some churches present Passion plays or Living Stations. But anyone can pray the Stations at any time. It is a simple and personal reflection on the passion of Jesus and what it means to us.

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 148 Hamilton Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 949-0439 www.sjeolmc.org (914) 948-5909

The Way of the Cross

Introduction:

Christ speaks: These fourteen steps that you are now about to walk you do not take alone. I walk with you. Though you are you, and I am I, yet we are truly one - one Christ. And therefore my way of the cross two thousand years ago and your "way" now are also one. But note this difference. My life was incomplete until I crowned it by my death. Your fourteen steps will only be complete when you have crowned them by your life.

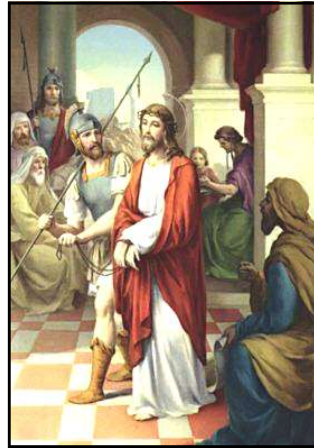
All: Jesus my God and Savior, I am deeply sorry for the sins I have committed, because through your sufferings you have revealed how much God loves us. As I follow the path of your sufferings I trust that in your goodness you will pardon my sins, and I firmly resolve to sin no more. Amen.

♪ *At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping
Close to Jesus to the last.*



1

FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" 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.

Christ speaks: In Pilate's hands, my other self, I see my Father's will. Though Pilate is unjust, he is the lawful Governor and he has power over me. And so the son of God obeys. If I can bow to Pilate's rule because this is my Father's will, can you refuse obedience to those whom I place over you?

All: My Jesus, Lord, obedience cost you your life. For me it costs an act of will – no more – and yet how hard it is for me to bend. Remove the blinders from my eyes that I may see that it is you whom I obey in all who govern me. Lord, it is you.

P. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

♪ *Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword has passed.*

2

SECOND STATION: JESUS TAKES HIS CROSS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. So they took Jesus and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

Christ speaks: This Cross, this chunk of tree, is what my Father chose for me. The crosses you must bear are largely products of your daily life. And yet my Father chose them, too, for you. Receive them from his hands. Take heart, my other self, I will not let your burdens grow one ounce too heavy for your strength.

All: My Jesus, Lord, I take my daily Cross. I welcome the monotony that often marks my day, discomforts of all kinds, the summer's heat, the winter's cold, my disappointments, tensions, setbacks, cares. Remind me often that in carrying my cross, I carry yours with you. And though I bear a sliver only of your cross, you carry all of mine, except a sliver, in return.

P. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

*♪ O, how sad and sore distressed,
Was that Mother highly blest
Of the sole begotten One!*

3

THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.

Christ speaks: The God who made the universe, and holds it in existence by his will alone, becomes a man, too weak to bear a piece of timber's weight. How human in his weakness is the Son of God. My Father willed it thus. I could not be your model otherwise.

If you would be my other self, you also must accept without complaint your human frailties.

All: Lord Jesus, how can I refuse? I willingly accept my weaknesses, my irritations and my moods, my headaches and fatigue, all my defects of body, mind, and soul. Because they are your will for me, these "handicaps" of my humanity, I gladly suffer them. Make me content with all my discontents, but give me strength to struggle after you.

P. Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

♪ *Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying, glorious Son.*

4

FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. And you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Christ speaks: My Mother sees me whipped. She sees me kicked and driven like a beast. She counts my every wound. But though her soul cries out in agony, no protest or complaint escapes her lips or even enters her thoughts. She shares my martyrdom - and I share hers. We hide no pain, no sorrow, from

each other's eyes. This is my Father's will.

All: My Jesus, Lord, I know what you are telling me. To watch the pain of those we love is harder than to bear our own. To carry my cross - after you, I, too, must stand and watch the sufferings of my dear ones: the heartaches, sicknesses, and grief of those I love. And I must let them watch mine, too. I do believe - for those who love you all things work together unto good.

P. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

*♪ Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold?*

5

FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus.

Christ speaks: My strength is gone; I can no longer bear the cross alone. And so the legionnaires make Simon give me aid. This Simon is like you, my other self. Give me your strength. Each time you lift some burden from

another's back, you lift as with your very hand the cross's awful weight that crushes me.

All: Lord, make me realize that every time I wipe a dish, pick up an object off from the floor, assist a child in some small task, or give another preference in traffic or the store; each time I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, teach the ignorant or lend my hand in any way – it matters not to whom – my name is Simon. And the kindness I extend to them I really give to you.

P. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen.

♪ *Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?*

6

SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. Even as many were amazed at him - so marred was his look beyond that of mortals—

Christ speaks: Can you be brave enough, my other self, to wipe my bloody face? Where is my face, you ask? At home whenever eyes fill up with tears, at work when tensions rise, on playgrounds, in the slums, the courts, the hospitals, the jails – wherever suffering exists – my face is there. And there I look for you to

wipe away my blood and tears.

All: Lord, what you ask is hard. It calls for courage and self-sacrifice, and I am weak. Please, give me strength. Don't let me run away because of fear. Lord, live in me and act in me and love in me. And not in me alone – in all of us – so that we may reveal no more your bloody but your glorious face on earth.

P. Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

♪ *Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent.*

7

SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted.

Christ speaks: This seventh step, my other self, is one that tests your will. From this fall learn to persevere in doing good. The time will come when all your efforts seem to fail and you will think: "I can't go on." Then turn to me,

my heavy-laden one, and I will give you rest. Trust me and carry on.

All: Give me your courage, Lord. When failure presses heavily on me and I am desolate, stretch out your hand to lift me up. I know I must not cease, but persevere in doing good. But help me, Lord. Alone there is nothing I can do. With you, I can do anything you ask. I will.

P. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

♪ *For the sins of his own nation
Saw him hang in desolation
Till his spirit forth He sent.*

8

EIGHTH STATION: JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. 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."

Christ speaks: How often had I longed to take the children of Jerusalem and gather them to me. But they refused. But now these

women weep for me and my heart mourns for them – mourns for their sorrows that will come. I comfort those who seek to solace me. How gentle can you be, my other self? How kind?

All: My Jesus, your compassion in your passion is beyond compare. Lord, teach me, help me learn. When I would snap at those who hurt me with their ridicule, those who misunderstand, or hinder me with some misguided helpfulness, those who intrude upon my privacy - then help me curb my tongue. May gentleness become my cloak. Lord, make me kind like you.

P. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen.

♪ *O thou Mother! Font of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord.*

9

NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.

Christ speaks: Completely drained of strength I lie, collapsed, upon the cobblestones. My body cannot move.

No blows, no kicks, can rouse it up. And yet my will is mine. And so is yours. Know this, my other self, your body may be broken, but no force on earth and none in hell can take away your will. Your will is yours.

All: My Lord, I see you take a moment's rest then rise and stagger on. So I can do because my will is mine. When all my strength is gone and guilt and self-reproach press me to earth and seem to hold me fast, protect me from the sin of Judas - save me from despair! Lord, never let me feel that any sin of mine is greater than your love. No matter what my past has been I can begin anew.

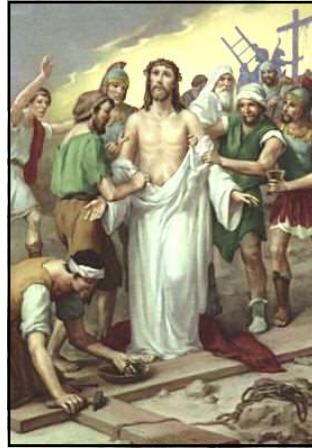
P. Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

♪ *Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.*

10

TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull) they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink. After they crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots.

Christ speaks: Behold, my other self, the poorest king who ever lived. Before my creatures I stand stripped. The cross – my deathbed – even this is not my own. Yet who has ever been so rich? Possessing nothing, I own all – my Father's Love. If you, too, would own everything, be not solicitous about your food, your clothes, your life.

All: My Lord, I offer you all – whatever I possess, and more, my self. Detach me from the craving for prestige, position, wealth. Root out of me all trace of envy of my neighbor who has more than I. Release me from the vice of pride, my longing to exalt myself, and lead me to the lowest place. May I be poor in spirit, Lord, so that I can be rich in you.

P. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

♪ *Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.*

11

ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. 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.

Christ speaks: Can you imagine what a crucifixion is? My executioners stretch my arms; they hold my hand and wrist against the wood and press the nail until it stabs my flesh. Then, with one heavy hammer smash, they drive it through – and pain bursts like a bomb

of fire in my brain. They seize the other arm; and agony again explodes. Then raising up my knees so that my feet are flat against the wood, they hammer them fast, too.

All: My God, I look at you and think: Is my soul worth this much? What can I give you in return? I here and now accept for all my life whatever sickness, torment, agony may come. To every cross I touch my lips. O blessed cross that lets me be - with you - a co-redeemer of humanity.

P. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen.

♪ *Let me share with thee his pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torment died.*

12

TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. 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.

Christ speaks: The cross becomes a pulpit now - "Forgive them, Father. . . . You will be with me in Paradise. . . . There is your mother. . . . There. . . . your son. . . . I thirst. . . . It is complete." To speak I have to raise myself by pressing on my wrists and feet, and every move engulfs me in new waves of agony. And then, when I have borne enough, have emptied my humanity, I let my mortal life depart.

All: My Jesus, God, what can I say or do? I offer you my death with all its pains, accepting now the time and kind of death in store for me. Not by a single instant would I lengthen my life's span. I offer you my death for my own sins and for those of all humanity. My God! My God! Forsake us not. We know not what we do.

P. Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

♪ *Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.*

13

THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. Now there was a virtuous and righteous man named Joseph who, though he was a member of the council, had not consented to their plan of action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea and was awaiting the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. After he had taken the body down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth.

Christ speaks: The sacrifice is done. Yes, my Mass is complete; but not my mother's and not yours, my other self. My Mother still must cradle in her arms the lifeless body of the son she bore. You, too, must part from those you love, and grief will come to you. In your bereavements, think of this: A multitude of souls were saved by Mary's sharing in my Calvary. Your grief can also be the price of souls.

All: I beg you, Lord, help me accept the partings that must come - from friends who go away, my children leaving home, and most of all, my dear ones when you shall call them to yourself. Then, give me the grace to say: "As it has pleased you, Lord, to take them home, I bow to your most holy will. And if by just one word I might restore their lives against your will, I would not speak." Grant them eternal joy.

P. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

♪ *By the Cross with thee to stay;
There with thee to weep and pray,
All I ask of thee to give.*

14

FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



P. We adore you, O Christ and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the World.

P. 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.

Christ speaks: So ends my mortal life. But now another life begins for Mary, and for Magdalen, for Peter and for John, and you. My life's work is done. My work within and

through my church must now commence. I look to you, my other self. Day in, day out, from this time forth, be my apostle – victim – saint.

All: My Jesus, Lord, you know my spirit is as willing as my flesh is weak. The teaching you could not impart, the sufferings you could not bear, the works of love you could not do in your short life on earth, let me impart, and bear, and do through you. But I am nothing, Lord. Help me!

P. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen.

♪ *Virgin of all Virgins best!*
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine.

Final Prayer:

P. Lord, we have come to the end of this sorrowful path which you trod for us. You know us, our weaknesses and the paths which we have taken. Give us the strength to pick up our cross daily and to follow faithfully, for you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.

Conclusion

Christ speaks: I told you at the start, my other self, my life was not complete until I crowned it by my death. Your “way” is not complete unless you crown it by your life. Accept each moment as it comes to you, with faith and trust that all that happens has my mark on it. A simple fiat, this is all it takes; a breathing in your heart, “I will it, Lord.” So seek me not in far-off places. I am close at hand. Your workbench, office, kitchen, these are altars where you offer love. And I am with you there. Go now! Take up your cross and with your life complete your way.

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

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