

Stations of the Cross



*Join us online throughout Holy Week for
The Stations of the Cross*

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Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney Images from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

During Holy Week 2018, we journey through the Stations of the Cross, with regular posts on the Diocesan Facebook and Twitter Feeds as follows:

- Stations 1-10: Daily posts from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday at 10am and 4pm
- Stations 11-14: Good Friday at 10am, 12 Noon, 2pm and 4pm.

The images we have used hang in St Clement's Church, Aberdeen, and the accompanying words have been prepared by Richard Murray.

This document has been created for those who wish to journey through the stations in their own time and can be printed for those with no internet access.



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Station 1

Jesus is condemned to die

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' [Matthew 27.11; Mark 15.2; Luke 23.3; Jn 18.33-34]

The disciples have scattered and Jesus is made to face Pontius Pilate alone, accused of the politically trumped up charge of 'sedition' by his persecutors, who want to manipulate the Roman procurator into condemning Jesus to death. A deal is struck to release a notorious political activist named Jesus Barabbas in order to appease the crowd, in exchange for Jesus of Nazareth "King of the Jews" since Pilate views a Jewish "king" as a greater threat to the empire.

Prayer:

Lord God, I confess how quickly my cry of "Hosanna" can turn into "Crucify". For proclaiming the truth, your Son is condemned to be crucified. How often do I turn my back on others; turn a blind eye to the sinful ways of the world; neglect the cries of the needy? Let me express my unfailing love for you now, because by your death you have redeemed the world.



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Station 2

Jesus takes up his Cross

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. [Matthew 27.31; Mark 15.20]

The guards clothe Jesus in a cloak representing imperial power, and place a crown of thorns on his head. Then they mock him.

“All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads.”
[Psalm 22.7]

Then Jesus is led out carrying the cross on which he will die.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, how often do I burden others unnecessarily, rather than bear the adversities of this life? How often do I fail to share the burdens of others? As I journey with you now, I look into your eyes and ask your forgiveness. I pray for all who are persecuted, throughout the world.

Stations of the Cross



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Station 3

*Jesus
falls for the
first time*

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

*But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed. [Isaiah 55.3]*

Jesus has been beaten and tortured, forced to carry his heavy cross. The weight is unbearable; exhausted and weakened through loss of blood, he falls to the ground. The soldiers roughly pull him up.

Prayer:

My soul is distracted and troubled, Lord Jesus. I did not rush forward to help you. Why did I ignore you? Was I too full of my own pain and hurt? As you turn to look at me, I see how you sense my own weakness, my tiredness and my defeat. I gladly accept your healing love and give thanks for your strength to help me carry on.



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Station 4

Jesus meets his mother

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” [Luke 2.33-35]

Mary, the mother of Jesus, watches Jesus fall and runs forward to help her beloved son. The words of Simeon pierce her heart. Her tears burn her cheeks. Jesus sees his mother's distress and tries to comfort her.

“The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.” [Psalm 34.18]

Prayer:

I weep with you Mary. Am I the cause of your suffering? Have I betrayed your son? Your tears melt the indifference of my heart, when I witness the broken relationships of others, who are not close to me. I pray for love and peace between all mothers and their children. I pray for relief for mothers who struggle to bring up their children, especially those who do so in poverty. Lord, do not let me stand idly by.



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Station 5

Simon helps Jesus

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

They compelled 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. [Matthew 27.32; Mark 15.21; Luke 23.26]

This Simon originates from modern-day Libya, and like Simon Peter he was just passing by [Mark 1.16, 2.14], when he was 'conscripted', though by a Roman enlisting officer rather than Jesus. His sons' names suggest he may have been a gentile. As Christians, we are all called to - "Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer." [2 Timothy 2.3-4]

Prayer:

Lord God, help me to take up your Cross and follow you; to accept situations that I must endure, knowing that you will be with me as I emerge liberated into a new life; and give me wisdom to understand situations where others may be enlisted to help me, and to give you thanks.



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Station 6

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." [Matthew 25.33-36]

There is no Gospel story referring to this episode, but Church tradition tells of Veronica, who wiped away the spit, sweat and blood on the face of Jesus with her veil, which thereafter bore the image of Christ. It would have been a bold thing to do, but scripture tells of several women, outside of his family, who defied accepted custom in approaching Jesus. Veronica is a Latin form of the Greek Berenikē, meaning "bearer of victory", since her veil bore the image of Christ.

Prayer:

Give me the courage Lord, to step outside of the crowd and to face the strangeness of situations that call me to serve you, by helping others who are in need.

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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Station 7

Jesus falls for the second time

*He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account. [Isaiah 53.3]*

Even with the help of Simon carrying his Cross, Jesus stumbles and falls, tasting again the dirt of the road, humiliated by the pressure of the crowd and his Roman tormentors.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to overcome my human weaknesses of pride, my contempt for others, my haughty indignation. When I stumble and am brought low, raise my vision to see things as they are, so that I can walk with you in humility, as you lead me on a new path.



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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Station 8

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” [Luke 23.27-31]

Jesus may be predicting the later fall of Jerusalem, but the comment about the tree is more enigmatic. In Ezekiel 17.24, God says, “I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish”. This could mean that if the green tree tries to exalt itself it will lose its life, but God can make the dead tree alive again; for the opportunity to repent and seek forgiveness always remains a possibility. Will the present, triumphant, jeering crowd understand this when disaster befalls them?

Prayer:

There is much in this world Lord, that I weep over, when I feel powerless and can do nothing else. Lord Jesus, give me true strength, to live a life dedicated to you; that I may be more active in my discipleship, to your glory.



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Station 9

Jesus falls for the third time

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light..
[Matthew 11.29-30]

As the site of the crucifixion of Jesus draws near, Jesus has one more devastating fall, the yoke of his cross is becoming almost too much to bear. His enemies do not want him to die here for he has to be lifted on to his cross. In scripture, a yoke is more often a reference to the wooden frame joining oxen but also, metaphorically, something that is oppressive or restrictive, like yokes placed on prisoners of war and slaves. Jesus rejects this as contrary to God's will. To take up Jesus's yoke upon oneself is to be yoked to a kingdom of justice, mercy, and compassion.

Prayer:

Give me grace Lord, to live a life of discipline and obedience through charity, and care for others, thereby transforming my life, so that I do not become dominated by the way of this world, a dominion that has brought wealth to the few and poverty to the many.



Station 10

*Jesus is
stripped of
his clothing*

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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

... they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.'
And that is what the soldiers did... [John 19.23-25a; Matthew 26.35b; Mark 15.24b; Luke 23.34b;]

Jesus's last vestige of dignity is taken from him and he is stripped of his clothes, which are shared out among the soldiers. This is the ultimate vulnerability of the defenceless. We live in a world where there is pressure to conform to an image, as for example, being 'beach body ready', or to portray oneself in photographs and words how we feel we have to be, not the way we are. Corporations are keen to commercialise these feelings. Our bodies are part of the gift God gave us; we are made in God's image. How we mirror back that image to God is the work of Christ within us.

Prayer:

God of all grace, may Jesus be visible in the nakedness of my body for others to read.



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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Station 11

Jesus is nailed to the cross

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [Luke 23.33] [John 19.18] It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. [Mark 15.25]

The crucifixion is of Persian origin and the victim would have been tied, sometimes nailed, to a cross beam that was then raised onto an upright stake, fixed by a wooden pin. In the Old English poem, 'The Dream of the Rood' the tree from which the cross was made remembers, "I was reared a cross. I raised a powerful King. The Lord of Heaven; I did not dare to bend. They pierced me with dark nails;" [translation by Elaine Treherne, 'Old and Middle English Anthology'] This contradictory concept of Christ as a self-sacrificing victim, yet fearless warrior king, has something to teach us about the church today, about standing up courageously with Christ against evil. When we become like the Old English word 'thane' or servant of Jesus, according to God's commission, then we will see our own suffering as a voluntary participation in the suffering of Christ.

Prayer:

Saviour Lord, in the quiet of this moment, as I come to this place, where you welcome me with outstretched arms, greet me in love, help me to understand the reality of this Good Friday and how I can make You visible in me.

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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Station 12

Jesus dies on the cross

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

[Matthew 27.45-46, 50] [Mark 15.33-4, 37]

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.

[Luke 23.44-46]

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. [John 19.25-30]

As you stand at the foot of the Cross, with Jesus's family and the beloved disciple, carefully listening to, and watching all that is being said and done, witness the completion of all things in God's own Son.

Prayer:

I adore you, O Christ, because by your death you have redeemed the world.



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Station 13

Jesus is taken down from the cross

Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with himBut when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came outAfter these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. [John 19.33-34, 38] [Luke19.50-52]

There is no scriptural reference to the body of Jesus being placed in his mother's arms, although we know from the Gospels that she and other women were nearby. It would have been the task of the women at that time to arrange for the burial of a body. Imagine you are at this place, helping to take down the lifeless and mutilated body of Jesus, tenderly placing it in Mary's arms and comforting her. Recall how the touch of Jesus healed so many and contemplate this tender moment.

Prayer:

Lord, I pray for all who are persecuted for their faith, all who have suffered for others and for truth, and those whose spirits are broken. Comfort the broken-hearted especially mothers who have lost a child, and empower me to be a comfort to others.



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Image from St Clement's Church, Aberdeen

Station 14

Jesus is laid in the tomb

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. [Matthew 27.59-60] [Mark 15.46]

Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. [John 19.39-42]

As you watch with the women, in the world's quiet of this moment as Jesus's body is being placed in the tomb, contemplate the fragility and mortality of our own bodies that only God can redeem to perfection.

Prayer:

As I pause and rest at the end of these reflections of the stations of the cross, I ask for forgiveness Lord, for the times when I have not paused and rested, and made time to hear your voice. Amen.