

THIRTEENTH STATION *Jesus dies on the cross**Luke 23.44-49*

Darkness is closing in - confusion, chaos, despair. The background is a bombed-out city. On the left are the figures of the women, heads bowed in sorrow; on the right are the soldiers and the people who watched the execution. They turn and walk away - satisfied, indifferent, or 'beating their breasts' in grief and despair, as Luke suggests? 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit': in the face of the mystery of the death of our Lord, we fall silent. We know that, whatever suffering we have to undergo in this world, we are held in the hands of God. His cross is ours. *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you: for by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

FOURTEENTH STATION *Jesus is taken down from the cross**Luke 23.50-52*

It is over. Silence and darkness envelop Calvary. Joseph of Arimathea showed courage in asking for Jesus' body: he risked being identified as one of his friends, an accusation that had caused Peter's denial and fall. In Mark and Matthew the centurion says, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' May this profession of faith be on all our lips and in our hearts. Other followers of Jesus, such as the women, must have been there. We reflect on all who hold close to themselves a loved one who has died - particularly during this pandemic. *Lord, take all whom you have called from this world into your eternal light, your life and your peace.*

FIFTEENTH STATION *Jesus is buried**Isaiah 53.9; Luke 23.53-56; John 12.24*

Deeper darkness still. Amidst the grief and sorrow etched on the faces here, we can see Jesus is at peace as his body is laid to rest, the agony of the crucifixion now past. Those present are unaware of what is to come - yet the seedling at Jesus' head, inspired by John 12.24, provides a glimmer of hope. *Father, we pray that we may face death with the 'sure and certain hope' of the resurrection; that we shall live forever with you in Christ, our crucified and risen Lord.*

Final prayer:

Lord Jesus, by your wounded hands: teach us diligence and generosity.

By your wounded feet: teach us steadfastness and perseverance.

By your wounded and insulted head: teach us patience, clarity and self-mastery.

By your wounded heart: teach us love, teach us love, teach us love,

O Master and Saviour. **Amen.**

Lord, by your love, revealed in the cross: set our love free. **Amen.**

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The United Benefice of Kelvedon and Feering

All Saints' Church, Feering

GOOD FRIDAY, 2nd April 2021: STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations are oil paintings by the Benedictine Sisters of Turvey Abbey, near Bedford. The texts below are adapted from a booklet of meditations on these stations by Maureen Pamphilon, Oblate with the Sisters.

Opening prayer: Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of sin and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

You may find the following response helpful to say at each station:

We/I adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:
for by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

FIRST STATION *Jesus is condemned to death**Luke 23.13-25*

The eve of the passion: Jesus' hour of darkness has come, when 'you will be scattered, each one to his own home, and you will leave me alone' (John 16.32). The colours suggest the glow of a fire somewhere, in the high priest's courtyard, where Peter sits warming himself. The cock is crowing, large, red, fierce and raucous. All Jesus' friends have deserted him. Threatening fists, accusing fingers, are his only reward for his life of healing and teaching. 'Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me' (John 16.32). *Lord, let us remember the innocent ones condemned today, and all who are treated unjustly.*

SECOND STATION *Jesus takes up his cross**Luke 9.18-25*

He seems to welcome it; yet all the horrors of the passion come swooping down on him at this moment. He stands, straight and ready. 'It is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name' (John 12.27-28). Jesus lays down his life for the glory of the Father's name, that we might live and give glory to God. In the stream of suffering engulfing him is also the strength and love of God. Jesus embraces the cross; the Father embraces him. *Lord, we pray for strength to bear our cross.*

THIRD STATION *Jesus falls for the first time**Isaiah 53.3-6*

He was not carrying that one and only cross, but was weighed down, crushed by the crosses of all the world. Whatever we suffer, Jesus is carrying the weight of it; he suffers with us. There is no human suffering in which he is not present to redeem it and turn it into a seed of resurrection. The thorns

at the base of the picture allude to Genesis 3.17-18; *'cursed is the ground because of you... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you'*. Jesus comes face to face with the curse of Adam and Eve and of paradise. *Lord, when we fall, help us to rise and walk once more with you.*

FOURTH STATION *Jesus meets his Mother* Luke 2.34-35

Mary's nearness breaks through the darkness with light and love; the colours reflect this. Although the 'sword pierced her own soul', in this image she is able to help and strengthen her son; only when we know suffering ourselves can we comfort others. *Lord, we pray that, just as the cross brought Mary and her son together, all families may be united by a bond of love.*

FIFTH STATION *Simon of Cyrene* Luke 2.34-35

Was Simon of Cyrene given a glimpse of the kingdom, piercing through his annoyance at having to carry a criminal's cross by the very act of doing so? Jesus' head is inclined towards Simon, who seems to be listening; is there communication? The background figures illustrate the call to 'carry each other's burdens'. *Lord, help us to extend help willingly to our brothers and sisters when their burdens are too heavy to carry.*

SIXTH STATION *Veronica* Galatians 6.2

Veronica is a medieval creation not found in the gospels, but it is possible that Jesus' women followers did what they could to ease his suffering. Her name means 'true image'; the face she wipes is the face we seek (cf. Psalm 27.8), the image that must be impressed on our souls so we may reflect his glory (2 Corinthians 3.17-18, 4.6). *'We shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is'* (1 John 3.2). *Lord, we pray to love others as you love us.*

SEVENTH STATION *Jesus falls the second time* Isaiah 53.7-8

Jesus falls because we fall: *He became one of us, so that we may become like him* (St Gregory of Nazianus). The crosses of the world take on a more tragic dimension; they seem to batter him down, concentrating on his faltering figure to crush him totally and for good: crosses above, thorns below. *Lord, be with all who stumble and fall, as you did on the road to Calvary, and prompt us to help others to rise and serve you.*

EIGHTH STATION *The Women of Jerusalem* Luke 23.27-31

Jesus is the green wood, his cross the Tree of Life, from which we all draw fruitfulness: *'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit'* (John 15.5). The women are life-bearers, though suffering. *Lord, even in dark times help us to bear fruit for you and for others.*

NINTH STATION *Jesus falls the third time* Isaiah 53.10-12

The crosses are larger and heavier still, to the point of overwhelming Jesus. He is crushed to the ground. We can link this to Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, where Jesus, weighed down by what he is about to face falls to the ground and cries out to his heavenly Father for strength to carry on: *'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done'* (Luke 22.42). *Lord, as we remember so many in our world searching for help in their distress, hear our pleading, and give us strength to overcome all evil.*

TENTH STATION *Jesus is stripped* Philippians 2.5-8 & Luke 23.32-34

Grabbing hands, stripping him of everything. Jesus let them: he emptied himself. Hands seem to grab at the radiance round his head: they could strip him of his human dignity, but not his divinity. *Lord, we pray that we may empty ourselves of all that separates us from you, so your love may be revealed in us.*

ELEVENTH STATION *Jesus is nailed to the cross* Luke 23.35-38

Jesus, Son of God, is now secured to an instrument of torture and death, and people's inhumanity to another and each other is revealed. In the background is the Temple, which also stands for a city on the point of being bombed, as Jesus' body is on the point of being destroyed. It is a sign, as so much in the world is today, of our failure to follow the second of Jesus' great commandments: love your neighbour as yourself. *Lord, we pray for all those in our world today whose intention is the destruction of another.*

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

All **for by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

All **We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.**

We preach Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God:

All **for by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All **We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:
for by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

TWELFTH STATION *Jesus speaks to his Mother* John 19.25b-27

A moment of warmth and peace, of love in communication. The focus here is not on pierced hands and feet (deliberately omitted) nor the destroyed city, but on the loving concern of three people. Jesus' thoughts on the cross are not for himself but for the two broken-hearted people who stand below. *Lord, we pray for greater concern and care for the vulnerable in our society, especially those with no home or family, or no one to care for them.*