

Stations of the Cross

In the Christian tradition, Lent is a time for reflection, for renewal of covenant, and restoration of spirit.



You may travel the Way of the Cross here in the hospital during this Holy Week. We encourage you to do this for yourself and in your own way.

In the pages following you will find the 14 Stations, a short story associated with each, along with prayers and meditation.

From the earliest days, followers of Jesus told the story of his passion, death and resurrection. Pilgrims to Jerusalem were anxious to see the sites where Jesus was. After years, it was more difficult to move about the city and identify the holy sites, and difficult for some people to travel to Jerusalem at all. By the 1500s people all over the world began creating "replicas" of the places along the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. Eventually, these became the 14 Stations of the Cross. The word station comes from the Latin "to stand". As one walks along the Way from Jesus' trial to his crucifixion and burial one stops to commemorate various events. One stands, meditating on Jesus' experience, saying a prayer, contemplating how this man's passion is also a part of one's own life is important. As well, the walking itself becomes a devotion, as one walks "with" Jesus on His way to Calvary.

We have made some suggestions of places around the hospital where you might walk and meditate. But you are certainly free to choose your own locations around your workplace, your neighborhood, your home.

Station 1 and 2: outside room 4115, Main Hospital, Chaplain's Office



STATION ONE JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Jesus is condemned by Pilate. Here he stands, wrongfully accused and sentenced to die. So many on earth have experienced this hatred and fear, been beaten and tortured for no good reason. Jesus stands in solidarity with all who have known this tearing away of life because they did not fit the perceptions or expectations of others. Now, His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this holy surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: As I view the scene, I become moved by both outrage and gratitude. I look at Jesus. He has been beaten and mocked; he is bloody. Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair. Jesus is led away – bound.

*This is for me, for love of me. It is for the promise of eternal life. "Lord, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."
The journey begins - Jesus, let me walk with you.*

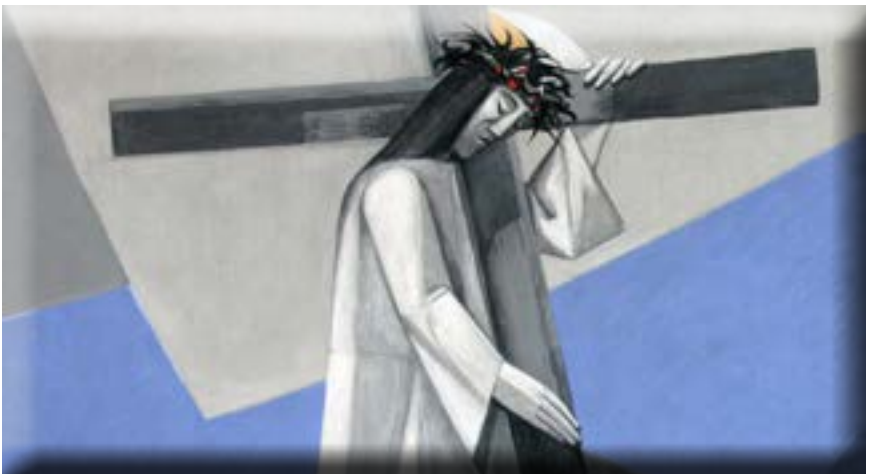
STATION TWO JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

Jesus, like all condemned criminals of the day, is made to carry the cross upon which he will die. It represents the weight of ages, the burdens we have all carried, the condemnation we have felt because of who we are, the struggles which seem to have no cause, the misery which feels unjustified. Yet he took this cross up on his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into the human experience. He walks in the way of human despair and anguish, and experiences its crushing weight.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: I feel the roughness of the wood, I smell the sap from it being newly cut, I feel how heavy it is, how it presses into my neck and shoulder. Let me become aware of others, today, in this place, who are carrying heavy burdens, whose crosses may not be visible, but the weight terrible. I lift up my burdens and place myself with Jesus on this journey.

This is for me. With sorrow – yet with gratitude – moved by the power of Jesus' love, I pray: (add your own prayer)



Proceed to 7E, to the waiting room.

STATION THREE JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

This weight is too much! Jesus falls under it. He knows his own weakness and feels the effort it requires to bear unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue. But he is pulled to his feet – and made to walk. He has entered our lives so fully; he takes upon himself the weight of living, he bears our pain, he carries our sorrows.



PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: I see the weakness in his eyes and can feel his exhaustion. I sense the rough hands pulling him up. Surely, he knows all my griefs, all my defeats, all my unfulfilled hopes. He is in my life each day holding me up with his gentle love. He surrounds those I will meet today and brings them ease.

This is for me. I imagine him once again on his feet, moving forward, strength beyond my comprehension – all in love. My gratitude is extraordinary. My heart is willing to journey with you, Jesus.

STATION FOUR JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



Jesus meets Mary. All their lives together they have allowed God, they have praised and learned and struggled. As his mother she wants to protect him from this anguish; as her son he wants to relieve her of this loss. In this moment, a love both heavenly and earthly, binds them. She will accept this need; he will complete this journey.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: I watch this mother and son, contemplating the mystery of love's power to give strength and hope. I may encounter families today who are on their own perilous journey, who continue because love is their strength. I want to see them with new eyes, and a heart of tenderness.

This is for me. A love so profound that no distress, no parting, will diminish it. I will continue to grow in love. (Add your own prayer)

Proceed to 3E, to the chapel – room 3033, near the PICU

STATION FIVE SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY
HIS CROSS

Jesus faces the human struggle of needing help. He cannot bear this cross alone. There is a feeling of poverty in not being able to manage one's own burdens, in having to depend on others. Jesus shows us that we can share in another's suffering and neither the sufferer nor the one giving aid become any less. Carrying our own crosses provides a certain satisfaction, yet allowing another to add their shoulder to the weight not only shares the weight, but increases compassion and love.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: I notice that Jesus does not stop carrying his cross just because Simon is helping; he does not relinquish his burden or his responsibility for it. It is still his cross. What a great heart! He is grateful for Simon's aid, and humble enough to be grateful.



This is for me. A reminder that I am not in this world alone; when my burdens become heavy I may need the loving help of another, their strength added to my own, to continue. I will walk beside you, Lord. Let me hold for you what I can.

STATION SIX VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Along the Way of the Cross, Jesus is reviled by those who only a few days before had welcomed him and rejoiced in his teaching. They hurl angry words and hard stones, they turn their back. Jesus bears this for the sake of all who face injustice and persecution. But one loving disciple, Veronica, sees his dignity and responds to it: she wipes his face with her veil.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: The face of Jesus left an image on Veronica's veil, just a pale symbol of the grace and power of God's son. Where is that face in my life? Do I see it in the people around me? Do I have the compassion to reach out and offer comfort from the agony and pain? Can I respond to the face of such Passion? Do I prefer a folded cloth, tucked away, a keepsake instead of love?

This is for me. I want to hold aside any veil that separates me from others; I want to know all the faces of Jesus; I hope to live a life of true discipleship, with the courage and care of Veronica. Here I am, Lord. (Your own prayer)



Proceed to 2E, The Hallway outside the OR Waiting Room

STATION SEVEN JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

His eyes are focused on the dust of the earth beneath his feet. How can he even feel what is happening? – One foot in front of the other, one foot in front of the other. A round stone, a stumble, a jagged stone cutting his knee. He has seen death and known disease, loved children and comforted the aging. What more should he need to undergo to understand the fullness of human life?

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



MEDITATION: I contemplate all you have known, all you have done. I remember the sadness and the joy, your losses and your hopes. I see you brought low to the ground, crushing your heart with humanity's despair. The dust of Creation stains your face and your soul. I know that you know more than I can ever imagine. I will never feel alone again.

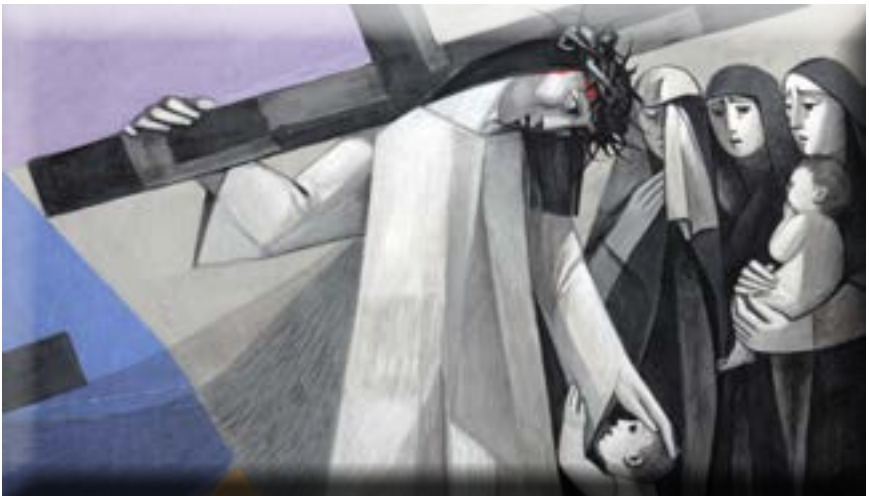
*This is for me. (Add your own prayer)
Let me rise and go.*

STATION EIGHT JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Sometimes women will risk so much for their hopes, for their faith, for their children. They come to Jesus on his way to Golgotha to thank him, to offer what comfort they can. He reached out to receive their children, to hold them and bless them. Each one must be wondering how she could communicate such love and power to him.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: These faces carry such a mixture of love and fear, loss and hope. I can see the passion of desire to DO something, yet knowing there is nothing at all to do. I feel how many times good women, and good men, have wanted to find a way to change the impossible, to unknot injustices, to bring peace for all. I feel the despair of hopelessness and helplessness. But like these women, I want to appear. I want to be tender. I want to support Jesus and my brothers and sisters.



This is for me. I remember that hope is never powerless. I join so many others who will not leave Jesus' side.

Proceed to the Michigan Avenue, first floor entrance hallway
STATION NINE JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME



Jesus nears the hill of crucifixion, the last long climb. His human body is almost beyond its capacity for suffering. As a man he appears broken. His executioners see him as a criminal, a political danger to the status quo, deserving of this death. They cannot permit him to lie here in the dust – he must die according to the custom. They will assure that he completes the last steps.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: If this were me, I would want to be left alone. Let me die here, perhaps to feel for some seconds the heat of the sun easing pain, to feel my breath coming softly. Somehow he knows that he cannot end here, for this is not just about his death – but about my life. How can he accept that so lovingly in the midst of such agony. His surrender to this humbles me.

This is for me. (add your own prayer) Love and hope will not leave us in the dust. I climb.

STATION TEN JESUS IS STRIPPED

The cross is placed on the ground and Jesus stands over it. Soon he will be fixed to it, to die a slow and torturous death (primarily by suffocation). Part of the contempt for these who are crucified is to strip them of all dignity, by stripping them of their clothing and displaying them naked before the gathered crowds. Jesus cloak is taken, the stripes from his whipping are torn open on his back. He is completely vulnerable. His eyes turn toward heaven.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: So much has been taken from him, and now even this last defense and barrier, his cloak. We wrap our infants from the moment of birth – as Mary wrapped Jesus – to give them a sense of security, warmth, and trust. It is an inhumane act to strip away the comfort of clothing. Yet, looking at him, I can see that he is indeed clothed with a holiness – and a peace – that passes my human understanding. Vulnerability? Openness? Nakedness or sovereignty? I meet so many people who feel stripped of their dignity, of choices, sometimes of trust. How shall I look at them? What can I offer?

This is for me. Give me a greater heart, clearer eyes, a compassionate soul. I will not walk away. (add your own prayer)



Proceed to the hallway on the west side of the Cafeteria, 2
Main/West

STATION ELEVEN JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



These nails are so large! His body so frail now. But they must penetrate tissue, sinew, perhaps even bone. They must hold his body to this dead tree while, breath by breath, his life is spent. There is no foundation beneath him – but faith.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: Could I tolerate the pain of those nails pushing through my flesh? But even more, I wonder, how could I tolerate hanging my own weight from them? Here, Jesus' hands are open; is he too weak to clench them against this wounding or is he showing me his openness to God's will? Still!

*This is for me. (add your own prayer)
I open my hands, willing to learn what God will offer me.*

STATION TWELVE JESUS DIES

At the third hour, a darkness came over the land. Jesus lifted his head: 'Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit.' He died as those in power would have expected: physically anguished. Yet, his strength was ever evident: 'Surely, this was the Son of God.'

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: I look up into the face of Jesus and see that death has softened the look of pain; I wait, wanting to notice a breath, holding on to the hope of knowing him for one more moment in this life. I feel that others near me are also waiting – Mary, John, and Mary. We are each so alone in our grief, and yet it is our grief that will hold us together for centuries. And our hope. Who do I know today whose grief and hope are so inextricably mixed? What consolation might they need?

This is for me. My deepest longings are known by God. My journey continues in waiting. (add your own prayer)



Proceed to the third floor of the Main Hospital – the Main Chapel

STATION THIRTEEN JESUS' BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS



Joseph of Arimathea gains the Romans' permission to bring Jesus' body down from the cross and bury him.

PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: Did Joseph have help? How difficult to remove nails, to support the lifeless body, to climb down? What heart-searing sorrow? One last time his mother gets to hold him. Does she think about the swaddling cloths and the rough wooden manger, the rough wooden cross and the shroud? Did they have enough time?

*This is for me, that I might love as I have been loved.
One more short walk at his side.*

STATION FOURTEEN JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

According to custom, Jesus is wrapped in a clean cloth and laid inside the tomb Joseph had prepared. The entry is sealed by a huge boulder.



PRAYER: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

MEDITATION: Standing back seeing the rock separate me from the sight of Jesus' body is such an aching hurt. I do not want to leave. I do not want to wait for what is to come – I want to go back to other times, when this reality could not be imagined. And yet, because of all he has endured this day, because I have seen his love triumph again and again in the midst of anguish I know that not all is done and dead. Hope is ever present. I trust that the tomb will be empty, and that what is freed from this stone will fill the world with love.

*This is for me. (add your own prayer)
Jesus, you are the first, and the last, and the living one.
Behold, you died, yet you are alive forevermore.*

These Station of Cross hang in The Church of the Holy Trinity in Germunden am Main, Germany

In this remaining space you may want to add your own reflections. Perhaps you will walk these stations in different environments: how do your thoughts and feelings change?

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