



The See of Fulham



**CHRIST'S LAST JOURNEY**

Walking and Praying the  
**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

**PLEASE TAKE THIS BOOKLET  
TO USE IN YOUR OWN DEVOTIONS**

## WHAT ARE THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS?

In the 14th century the Franciscans were officially recognised as the Guardians of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and over time established the route of the Via Dolorosa, Christ's journey to the Cross, which was walked by pilgrims to the Holy City with a number of 'stations', places to pause and reflect on that journey. The biblical accounts of Jesus' walk to the Cross are embellished with episodes which pick up themes in Jesus' life, and reflect aspects of our own life and that of the world around us.

Desiring to enable the Way of the Cross to be walked by worshippers elsewhere, the Franciscans created a walk past the 'Stations of the Cross' inside and outside their churches. Then, in the 18th century, that right was granted to all churches. The number of 'stations' initially varied, but eventually the fourteen you see here became established.

The images of the Stations of the Cross around the walls of this church are not 14 individual works of art or devotion, but part of one creation, a walk, in which the images are signs along the way – the kind you might see in a country walk on a stile or a gate, showing you where to go next.

## A REFLECTIVE WALK FOR TODAY

So this walk is to be done slowly – let it take half an hour at least, 45 minutes better. Although public worship is restricted at this time this is a walk you can do alone, or with a companion. This card is to give you some initial topics for meditation and prayer to use as you pause at each image. But the important thing is that it is your walk and your reflection; the card is to help, not to be a syllabus you have to complete.



## SETTING OFF ON YOUR WALK

The first station will be found towards the top of the left hand aisle as you face the altar. They run down the left hand aisle, then cross to continue up the right hand aisle.

As you walk, have in mind that you are walking slowly to remind you that it was slow because it was arduous; Christ is carrying a heavy load, past crowds of traders and bystanders, some jeering and some sobbing.

When you pause by each image, say slowly

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you,  
because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Then keep a generous silence as you look at the image, before praying for those mentioned on this card or others who come to mind.

Before you walk on, say slowly either the Our Father, or the Collect printed below, or the Agnus Dei, or the Hail Mary:

Almighty God,  
whose most dear Son went not up to joy  
but first he suffered pain,  
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:  
Mercifully grant that we,  
walking in the way of the cross,  
may find it none other  
than the way of life and peace;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Then walk slowly on, hearing in your mind the noise, the sobbing and the jeers, and seeing the One who is walking for you and with you, with the Cross and the world on his shoulders, from his condemnation to his death and burial. And may your walk put you in touch with the challenge of Christ's last journey, and the wisdom and grace he has brought us.

## 1. JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

They band together against the life of the righteous. *Ps 95.21*

Christ looks out at us as he is condemned to death. Notice Pilate; he has power – or has he? Christ is bound – but is he the one who is truly free?

*Pray for the condemned in our time: those unjustly condemned, and others whose sentence we may think deserved – but would we if we knew their whole story? Pray too for those who administer justice, that they may have the wisdom for their task.*

## 2. JESUS RECEIVES HIS CROSS

All day long I have been plagued and am punished every morning.

*Ps 73.14*

Look at the soldiers as they carry out the sentence; sentences these days are not as barbaric, but they still have to be enforced. Theirs is a burden too.

*Pray for all who enforce the law and carry out sentences, that they may have wisdom and compassion, and that bitterness may not possess them.*

## 3. JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

As for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.

*Ps 73.2*

Christ the sentenced prisoner, like so many others, has an intolerable burden to carry. See who will help him or care for him? Do those who help do so with grace?

*Pray for all who stumble under burdens, whether we think the burden ‘deserved’ or not. Pray for all who come to their aid, especially those who help the unpopular and the despised.*

## 4. JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

You knit me together in my mother’s womb. *Ps 139.13b*

Was this a chance meeting or Mary’s choice? What would this encounter have felt like to them both?

*Remember your mother; remember all for whom childbearing is dangerous; all who have to care for their children, whether as children or as adults, when they are in trouble.*

## **5. SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS**

I relieved your shoulder of the burden. *Ps 81.6*

We hear about Simon's being compelled to help, probably because he – and his sons, Alexander and Rufus joined the Christian movement. Was it as a result of having borne Christ's cross?

*Remember all who have helped you to bear burdens, and pray for all those whose work brings them alongside people who are carrying a heavy load.*

## **6. VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. *Rev 7.17*

She is not one of those named in the Gospel accounts; tradition has allowed this otherwise unknown women in the crowd to emerge to meet Christ in his need, a courageous as well as a loving act; as a result, her veil is imprinted with Christ's face. Along with Simon she gave help, and receives a lasting impression of the one whom she had helped.

*Pray for all who act out of love and courage to emerge from the passing crowd to help the needy.*

## **7. JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME**

For Jerusalem has stumbled .... *Isa 3.8a*

As though to emphasise the arduousness of this walk to Calvary Jesus is described as falling not once or twice but three times, and the images show each time as worse than the previous one. Did his falling arouse sympathy; or did onlookers simply jeer louder?

*Pray for all whose life feels like a succession of burdens, each one worse than the last; and that they may receive the sympathy and support that they need.*

## **8. JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM**

Do not weep for me but weep for yourselves. *Luke 23.28*

The Passion of Christ is marked by men fleeing and women standing by him, and weeping at what they see; Jesus speaks to them about where the

real pain and loss of this situation lie, and what disaster lies ahead for the Holy City.

*Remember those who do not notice how much their failure to love or acts of unkindness actually cost them more than those whom they offend.*

## 9. JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

... and Judah has fallen. *Is 3.8b*

This is the hardest fall, the harder for Christ's having got near to his destination and to his death. Again look at the soldiers, their faces and their attitudes. Will they help? Or just believe they have a job to do?

*Pray for those who have to deal with the most vulnerable, those who have failed most repeatedly, that they may discover the hope and the opportunity to help in the most desperate situations.*

## 10. JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. *Matt 27.28*

One of the most poignant actions of Maundy Thursday is the stripping of the altars, the removal of all that decorates the church, to recall this stripping of Jesus' garments, to die without a shred of dignity. The attack on his dignity is intentional, a repeat of the mockery of him by the soldiers before Pilate.

*Pray for all who find themselves stripped of their human dignity as part of their position in life.*

## 11. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Unless I see the mark of the nails ... *Jn. 20.25*

Christ is held on the cross by nails, an added, gratuitous cruelty, but which become, in Thomas' question as on the Paschal Candle, an important sign of the physical reality, as well as brutality, of Jesus' dying.

*Pray for all victims of mental and physical torture, and all who seek to assist in the demanding process of healing those who survive that experience and seek refuge.*

## 12. JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

My God, why have you forsaken me? *Mark 15.34*

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. *Luke 24.46*

It is finished. *John 19.30*

Three different 'last words' from three gospel traditions. What does each say to you?

*Pray for those approaching death, especially those approaching it with fear. Pray that your own approach to dying may be nourished and informed by Christ's having died for us.*

### 13. JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

You are dust and to dust you shall return. *Gen 3.19*

Among those who could do nothing to prevent this unfolding tragedy were some, including the women who had kept watch while it was going on, and Joseph of Arimathea, a council member who had dissented from their verdict, did the only thing left that we can do for those who have died.

*Pray for the bereaved and all who minister to them, that they may be brought comfort and find peace even as they commend their dead to God's keeping.*

### 14. JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Is your steadfast love declared in the grave? *Ps 88.11*

Really dead, really buried, really human. The gospel writers are clear that Jesus' death was real; if that were not so what we shall celebrate at Easter would not be real either.

*Remember your departed loved ones and all whom you grieve for; pray that the reality of their death unites them to the Christ who really died.*

There are in some sets of Stations of the Cross a fifteenth, the Resurrection. But our walk finishes here, and we are to wait, for our 'fifteenth station' when we shall go with the women to this same tomb wondering what we shall find.

© This text by Bishop Peter Selby was originally prepared for St John the Divine, Kennington and is used here with permission.