

*"Today's seeds are
tomorrow's bread"*



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Stations of the Cross and prayers for Lent 2017

Written by Fr John Bollan



To those leading the Stations

The Stations of the Cross have long been a feature of the Church's devotional life, especially during the season of Lent. When used in a Parish setting, these stations may be a preparation for daily Mass or may follow immediately afterwards. As always, they may also be used for private prayer.

This year's Stations are framed by a meditation on this year's SCIAF Lenten theme 'Today's seeds are tomorrow's bread'. The reflections for each station are composed in such a way that they can stand alone from this theme or be read in light of it.



All photos were taken by Thomas Omondi and SCIAF staff.
They feature SCIAF's work with small scale farmers in Zambia

Opening Reflection and Prayer

Pope Francis sets the scene: As Jesus made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things: 'Lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest' (John 4:35). 'The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but once it has grown, it is the greatest of plants' (Matthew 13:31-32). [Laudato Si' 97]

*Jesus himself would have prayed these words many times:
You care for the earth, give it water;
you fill it with riches.
Your river in heaven brims over
to provide its grain.
And thus you provide for the earth;
you drench its furrows;
you level it, soften it with showers;
you bless its growth.
You crown the year with your goodness.
Abundance flows in your steps;
in the pastures of the wilderness it flows.
The hills are girded with joy,
the meadows covered with flocks,
the valleys are decked with wheat.
They shout for joy, yes they sing. (Psalm 65)*

Opening Prayer

God our Father,
abundance flows in your steps.
Give us an abundance of grace
as we follow now in the steps of your Son.
May his words fall like seeds into our hearts,
may his Passion yield a rich harvest in us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. Jesus is condemned to death

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Let this be written for ages to come
that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord;
for the Lord leaned down from his sanctuary
on high.
He looked down from heaven to the earth
that he might hear the groans of the prisoners
and free those condemned to die.
(Psalm 102)*

In signing Jesus' death warrant - 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews' - Pilate is actually writing the first words of the Gospel. Here, for the first time, a Roman official becomes an unwitting Evangelist, committing to writing a statement which will change the course of history.

Lord Jesus, help us to see how, even in unpromising and unlikely circumstances, the Gospel is being written anew in our lives. May we read your Passion as the story of our liberation.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

2. Jesus accepts his cross

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*They plowed my back like plowmen,
drawing long furrows.
But the Lord who is just, has destroyed
the yoke of the wicked.
(Psalm 129)*

Rather than take up his cross, the cross would have been placed upon Jesus: a bar across his shoulders. The 'fixing' of the crucifixion began long before Jesus reached the Place of the Skull. Jesus shows us how to accept our own crosses.

Lord Jesus, you had harsh words for those who place heavy burdens upon the shoulders of others, without lifting a finger to help them. But you meekly accept this yoke for our sake. You make your cross a plough to turn over the hard soil of our hearts, opening them to new life.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

3. Jesus falls the first time

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*When I think: "I have lost my foothold";
your mercy, Lord, holds me up.
When cares increase in my heart
your consolation calms my soul.
(Psalm 94)*

This first fall was perhaps the most painful. Bound to the cross, Jesus would not have been able to break his own fall. The ground we walk over without a second thought becomes a hard, wounding thing to those who stumble.

Lord Jesus, falling is always painful. It is painful enough for us, but how much more for you, already weakened by your ordeal. How alone you must have felt, crushed by a weight not of your making – but ours.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

4. Jesus meets his mother

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

O give your strength to your servant and save your handmaid's child. Show me the sign of your favour that my foes may see to their shame that you console me and give me your help. (Psalm 86)

The first 'meeting' we have in this life is with our mothers. On entering this world we are placed in the arms of the one who has carried us and nourished us in the womb, unseen. Here is another meeting, full of sorrow.

Blessed Mother, here you meet Jesus for the last time. Were you allowed to touch him? Or did the soldiers hold you back? Even if you could not reach him, no power could restrain your love or your prayer. Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

All:

I love you Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

He is happy who is helped by Jacob's God, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who alone made heaven and earth, the seas and all they contain. (Psalm 146)

We usually experience help as a form of kindness. But here it was different. In this moment of the journey it was Simon who experienced a different kindness. Dragged from the crowd, he experienced what it was to be 'of a kind' with Jesus: a carrier of the wood of the cross.

Lord Jesus, help us to see that any act of kindness, however small, makes us more like you. You changed Simon for ever and your story became entwined with his – and that of his family. A seed of faith fell into his heart that Good Friday.

All:

I love you Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

All day long my disgrace is before me; my face is covered with shame at the voice of the taunter, the scoffer, at the sight of the foe and avenger. (Psalm 44)

When we see this scene depicted by artists, we often see Veronica holding up her cloth and upon it we find the perfect image of the Lord's face. What if it was not like that? What if this image only appeared on this cloth gradually, like a photograph developing?

Lord Jesus, often it is only after the fact that we recognise that you have passed our way and that you have left a sign of your presence imprinted in the fabric of our lives. But once we have seen it, let us be like Veronica, and treasure this image as something living in us.

All:

I love you Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

7. Jesus falls the second time

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

I have sunk into the mud of the deep and there is no foothold. I have entered the waters of the deep and the waves overwhelm me. (Psalm 69)

Even when you can see the road and choose your steps it is hard enough to make your way on an uneven path. How much harder for Jesus, his eyes filled with blood and sweat, his steps faltering even with the help of Simon.

Lord Jesus, sometimes we fall because we do not see the way or because our eyes are so focused on some distant thing that we fail to notice what lies before us. Help us to see more clearly: help us to choose our steps with care. Forgive us – and lift us – when we stumble.

All:

I love you Jesus, my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*My tears have become my bread,
by night, by day,
as I hear it said all the day long:
'Where is your God?'
(Psalm 42)*

These women were mothers, used to drying the tears of their children, responding instinctively to the need for comfort and love. Here their compassion could only show itself in tears of their own.

Lord Jesus, you looked into the faces of these women and you saw not just their sorrow, but the tears of every mother who witnesses the suffering of a child, of little ones whose hunger cannot be satisfied, of families uprooted by war. But you, their God, did not abandon them. You will not abandon us.

All:

*I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.*

9. Jesus falls the third time

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*How long will you all attack one man
to break him down,
as though he were a tottering wall,
or a tumbling fence?
(Psalm 62)*

The third fall of Jesus would have been a cause for concern. Not so much concern for Jesus himself but a fear that he would not make it to the end of the road. For him to die in the street would deprive the mob of a spectacle and the soldiers their victim. Thankfully, the end is in sight.

Lord Jesus, you are the seed falling upon the ground. You make your Passion a parable: the stony ground reflects the hardness of our hearts to accept your love and friendship. But you rise up and make your way to Golgotha, where the cross itself will become the Tree of Life.

All:

*I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.*

10. Jesus is stripped of his clothing

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*My body is thin and gaunt.
I have become an object of scorn,
all who see me toss their heads.
Help me, Lord my God;
save me because of your love.
Let them know that is your work,
That this is your doing, O Lord.
(Psalm 109)*

This too was part of the humiliation of death by crucifixion. Yet it had to be this way. Jesus had to surrender everything, including the clothes he stood up in. His seamless robe became part of the spoils – but not, as they thought, for the soldiers: this too was part of the Father's design.

Lord Jesus, your seamless robe reminds us of the perfect union between God and humanity which was brought about when you, the Eternal Word, became flesh. You did all this for us, to bring healing and wholeness to our race. You became humbler yet to accepting death, even this death on a cross.

All:

*I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.*

11. Jesus is crucified

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Many dogs have surrounded me,
a band of the wicked beset me.
They tear holes in my hands and my feet
and lay me in the dust of death.
(Psalm 22)*

The Romans were deadly in their efficiency. Their executioners were almost artisans in suffering and humiliation. They would have known just where to fix the nails and ropes to kill Jesus with the desired amount of pain and at the minimum cost. Even the crosses could be recycled, along with the other instruments of death.

Lord Jesus, it is hard for us to see you as the Romans did that day: as another job, a scratch in a tally of executions, a troublemaker brought to justice. Yet even in your agony, you forgave them because they did not know what they were doing. May we, who look upon you with eyes of faith, never take your sacrifice for granted.

All:

*I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.*

12. Jesus dies on the cross

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Deep is calling on deep,
in the roar of waters;
your torrents and all your waves
swept over me.
(Psalm 42)*

'Jesus dies on the cross'. Those five small words encompass the greatest mystery of all: the death of the Lord of life. The veil of the Temple is torn asunder, as the sanctuary that was Christ's body is laid bare and his Spirit, the breath of God, leaves him.

Lord Jesus, your last thoughts were for your Mother and your beloved disciple. In them you saw not just the remnants of your family but the true beginnings of your Church. Through them your death brings new life to us in all sorts of ways. In the new family of your Church we can look upon the face of the stranger and see a mother, a brother, a sister.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross and placed in the arms of his mother

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words: forget your own people and your father's house...

Sons shall be yours in place of your fathers: you will make them rulers over all the earth. May this song make your name for ever remembered.

May the peoples praise you from age to age. (Psalm 45)

Now, at last, Jesus is reunited with his mother. There is no more harm they can do to her son. She sits in the dust, cradling her dead child, fussing over him like her new-born. But now he is a weight in her arms almost as great as the burden in her heart.

Sorrowful mother, as you look at the bruised and bloodied face of your son, you can still see the beauty of your child. A life which quickened in you as the Holy Spirit enfolded you with its shadow now lies in the grip of death. A different shadow has fallen upon you. This new shadow is cold and loveless, but you are still full of grace, the handmaid of the Spirit.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader:

We adore you O Christ and we bless you.

All: (genuflecting)

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Your love is for justice; your hatred for evil.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness above other kings:
your robes are fragrant with aloes and myrrh.
(Psalm 45)*

Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one. Yet the approach of the Sabbath meant that his body had to forego the anointing that was customary before burial. This was a makeshift affair: the washing away of the blood and the final unction would have to wait until the day of rest was over.

Lord Jesus, the Father had already anointed you in Spirit and in Truth. In the dark void of death, this Spirit was hovering once more, waiting to breathe life into a new order of creation. Give us the grace to wait fruitfully, trusting in your saving help.

All:

***I love you Jesus, my love above all things;
I repent with my whole heart for having
offended you. Never permit me to
separate myself from you again.
Grant that I may love you always,
and then do with me what you will.***

Concluding Prayer

We bless you, Father,
God of Heaven and Earth:
You sent your Son to carry the burden of our
sins
and to give us new life.
Through the mystery of his
Passion, Death and Resurrection
you have also made us your children.
Fill us with his Spirit,
nourish us with the Bread of Heaven,
send forth streams of grace
to turn parched Lenten lands
into a Paradise regained.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Father Hail Mary Glory Be

Prayers for Lent

Seeds of Faith

Loving God,

Jesus taught us that faith is like a seed
and that your Kingdom grows
from small beginnings.
He also showed us how your word
is also a seed
falling into whatever type of soil we offer it.
May we not be a people of stony hearts,
of shallow souls,
or choked by the thorny cares of life.
May we rather have a depth in us
which allows your word to take root
and flourish.
Grant that we may bear an abundant harvest
of compassion, mercy and love.
May the power of your Risen Son
transform us:
as mere bread becomes his Body
so too may his Church become
bread for this world
so hungry for a truth which dispels
falsehood,
a love which conquers hate,
a peace that knows no end.
Nourish us with Christ's goodness.
Nurture us with Christ's words.
Satisfy us with Christ's abundance.

Amen.

[Fr John Bolland]

Lenten Grace before Meals

Father,

As we bless you for this food,
Help us to feast on all that brings us life:
truth, love and peace,
and to fast from all that brings sadness.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lenten Grace after Meals

Father,

We thank you for the strength
which comes from this food
and from the grace
you pour into our hearts.
May the sign of the cross (+)
remind us always of your love
and help us to share it with others.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Opening Prayer

My brothers and sisters,
Now that we have listened to God's word,
let us ask the Father to listen to our prayers
for his children throughout the world.

*We pray for Pope Francis and all who
shepherd us:
May they always lead us along the right path.*

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

*We pray for the ongoing work of SCIAF
with Zambian farmers:
that today's seeds may indeed
become tomorrow's bread.*

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

*We pray for all Christians:
may we live as children of the light.*

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

*We pray for children and young people:
that the Gospel will inspire them
to ever greater acts of love and service.*

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

(Other local intentions may be included
here)

Concluding Prayer

*God our Father,
you sent your Son
to restore our spiritual sight
and open our eyes to the needs
of our brothers and sisters.
Pour out upon us this day
the anointing of your Spirit
that we may do your will.
Hear these, and all our prayers,
which we make through Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

Hope



Please feel free to copy these prayers
or call us on **0141 354 5555** for extra prayer books.

You can download a PowerPoint presentation
to accompany these Stations at **www.sciaf.org.uk**