

WALKING WITH JESUS

A HOLY WEEK STUDY

prepared for the
Family and Friends of the
West Virginia Conference
by Bishop Sandra L. Steiner Ball



Bishop Sandra leading worship at the "Teaching Steps" the East Gate of Jerusalem's Old City

On our trip to the Holy Lands this past October, we had the experience of walking the Via Dolorosa, the route believed to have been taken by Jesus through Jerusalem to Calvary. This was the path that Jesus walked in agony to the place of crucifixion.

As we were walking the path, in narrow and crowded streets, I felt grief, I felt thankfulness. I also had a profound sense of hope. I also felt frustrated as we had little time to tarry and, in many places, due to the movement in the street, it was hard to process and reflect. It was only after I returned from the trip that I truly got to fully reflect on the walk Jesus took so that we sinners might have access to eternal life.

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17) This biblical question burns somewhere within the innermost core of our being. What must we do? Walk with Jesus. Walk the way of the cross and contemplate, meditate on our Lord, who was the first to walk the path that built the bridge from death to life. Your call to us is to follow you – to hold the tension of working together in this world when people try to divide.

Sin used to be the dividing line between those who were in and those who were beyond God’s love and Grace. You conquered that division. You hold the tension with your transforming power. In holding the tension, you gave hope to sinners that they might be transformed and given new life – sin was not the end and deciding point of our lives.

You gave yourself to be the sign and teacher of hope and invite us to walk with you to be builders of peace in the midst of all those you have created – people who are differently abled, created, and gifted.

In this Holy Week, we place ourselves again before you, dear Lord. We present our sufferings, our anxiety, our doubt, our disbelief before you and turn our gaze and our heart to the fuller meaning and gift you gave to us in your walk with the cross and to your crucifixion for our sakes. You gave your life for us and call us to walk with you and give our lives for others so that they too might come to know you and unwrap your gift of eternal life.

As we walk with you, the way of the cross in this Holy Week, O Lord, be our Redeemer and realize in us the mystery of your redemption as we walk with you through your passion, death, and resurrection. Amen.

In this Holy week study – to be used individually or in small groups – I will be referring to the 14 stations as we walked them in Jerusalem on the Via Dolorosa. Some meditations for “the stations of the cross” use events in the life of Jesus that are different than those along the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. I am pulling on my experiences and thoughts from my walk with Jesus along the stations of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, addressing two stations daily.

Grace and Peace,
Sandra Steiner Ball
Area Bishop West Virginia Conference
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Passion/Palm Sunday

First Station: Pilate condemns Jesus to die

Come, let us consider again our walk with Jesus.

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

(The traditional words used as pilgrims approach each station along the way.)

While often congregations focus on the procession and the shouts of Hosanna on Palm/Passion Sunday, this Sunday is not only about the celebratory experience of Jesus entering Jerusalem. This is the first day of the beginning of the Passion, the beginning of the journey to Golgotha, the beginning of what would end in a crucifixion. The first station along the Via Dolorosa is located at the traditional site of the praetorium of Pilate and the place where Jesus was scourged and condemned, and where Jesus received his crown of thorns.

THE SCRIPTURE: Mark 15: 12 – 15 (NRSV)

Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

REFLECTION: Pilate knew that Jesus was an innocent man. (Luke 23:14 records Pilate as saying, I have found no fault in this Man.)

Pilate tries to avoid making a decision about Jesus. He tries to compromise, and then when that doesn't work, he suggests a substitution. Since the custom of the feast day was to release one prisoner, he could release Jesus... but the crowd calls for the release of Barabbas. Pilate knows that Jesus has done no evil, yet he has a politically explosive situation on his hands. He had a decision to make about Jesus, a decision between doing what was right (free an innocent man) or what was politically expedient.

Ultimately, Pilate violates his own conscience and sentences Jesus to death. Pilate was the one with the power. Jesus should have obtained justice, but instead, Pilate chose to protect himself and yield to political and social pressures.

It was his career or Jesus. It was his power and position or Jesus. Pilate chose to please the crowd instead of standing up for truth.

He sent Jesus to the torture and the way of the cross, knowing full well that Jesus was innocent. And, after doing so – because he was greatly troubled – he washed his hands to refuse responsibility, as if he really could, for sending this man to great suffering and, ultimately, his death.

In fact, down through the centuries, Pilate's responsibility resounds: “He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death, and was buried.” Today, there are many like Pilate who have positions of power and have to decide how to use it. There are many who, in the face of power, decide to be quiet or allow fear to make decisions, thereby forfeiting the authority and service that just might interrupt and give life.

Pilate had to decide one way or another about Jesus. We, too, must decide. You and I, we must decide – for or against Jesus? Today, Jesus stands before us. Calls us to walk with him. He waits on our decisions. What is your answer?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, influence us so that we may walk with you, instead of being found with those who act unjustly. Keep us from evil, keep us from taking pleasure in evil. Do not allow injustice to condemn the innocent to suffering and death. Grant us strength and wisdom to follow your will and walk in your way in all things. Amen

Additional Questions for Reflection:

There are times in almost every person's life where one has been wrongly accused or of behaving unjustly. What happens when the unjustly accused are sent to prison or sentenced to death?

This is what happened to Jesus. What are the ways we are called to keep this from happening to people today?



Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Second Station: Jesus accepts his Cross

The second station is along the road between the Omariya Moslem College and the Franciscan museum and library.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Mark 15: 20 (NRSV)

“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.”

REFLECTION: Tender, Wise, and Strong –
by Bernard of Clairvaux

“It is the cup that Thou didst drink, Lord Jesus,
more than ought else that renders Thee love-worthy;
it is the work of our redemption
that supremely claims our love.

He put up with people who tried to catch Him in His talk,
carped at His actions,
mocked His suffering and even upbraided Him in death.

This love of His is tender, wise and strong.

Tender in that He took on Him our flesh;
careful and wise in that He guarded against sin;
and strong in that He suffered death.

I trust myself entirely to Him who willed to save me,
knew the way to do it,

and had the power to carry out the work.

He has sought me out and called me by His grace.”

Jesus stands before soldiers who believe they have total and complete power and control over Jesus. The soldiers demonstrate a total lack of care and concern for Jesus. The abuse is evident as Jesus is mocked and repeatedly struck.

In every age, people have tried to be God – to have or take complete power over another or to determine for themselves and others what is good or evil, who is strong or right and who is weak or wrong. In doing this, the vulnerable, the weak, and the poor are also, like Jesus, abused due to a total lack of care and concern for them as children of God.

Where in our lives do we think we have complete power and control? Where have we turned a deaf ear to how Jesus is calling us to walk and with whom? With whom is Jesus calling us to share the tender, wise, and strong love of Christ?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, who accepted humiliation and stood alongside the weak. Help us to be your presence and hope to all who are humiliated, suffering, and lost.

Help us to more closely walk with you that through us your hope might shine in ways that all your children, especially the most vulnerable, might find through us, your truth and love. Amen.



Pilgrims carry a cross along the Via Dolorosa

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Holy Monday

Third Station: Jesus falls the First Time

The third station is located a short distance from the Ecce Homo Church at the corner of the Via Dolorosa and El Wad Street. Although not recorded in the Gospels, it is believed that Jesus fell near the Fish Gate.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 53:5 (NRSV)

(The key pilgrim verse for this station is Isaiah 53:5, but I have included the whole of Isaiah 53 for reflection, thought, and prayer.)

Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
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.
Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
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.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.
They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the Lord shall prosper.
Out of his anguish he shall see light;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

REFLECTION: Chapter 53 of Isaiah turns our attention to the One who bore upon his shoulders the price of the redemption of Israel and of humankind. The one who brought hope, peace, joy, and love to this world is wounded by our sins and falls under the burden of our guilt. Jesus is crushed under the weight of this cross.

Read Isaiah 53 again, slowly. Note the words or phrases that capture your attention. What images capture your heart? Let the words and phrases bring you face-to-face with Jesus – where do you need healing? Where do you need to be lifted up? Where do you need peace?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we bow our heads in the recognition that you gave yourself for us, were wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. You sacrificed yourself for us. Suffered for us. And yet we still do not get all that you have offered us. Sometimes we still turn away and our love fails, but you never turn away and your love never fails.

Raise us from our falls. Lead our wandering spirits back to your truth. Open us up to the ongoing action of your Holy Spirit that we might not only recover from our falls but be transformed by your love and grace. Amen.



Groups often pause to sing in chapels along the Via Dolorosa, Rev. David Donothan conducts the singing of: "Dona Nobis Pacem," Grant us Peace.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his Afflicted Mother

An image of Jesus meeting his mother with the cross appears on the doorway of a small chapel to mark this station. This event is also not mentioned in the Gospels.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Luke 2: 34 – 35, 51b (NRSV)

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.”...
“His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”

REFLECTION: Mary reacts to crises by pondering or treasuring things in her heart. God’s word – it turns things upside down. Every time Mary encountered the incarnate Word, her life was turned upside down.

- She found herself pondering when she faced the shame of becoming an unwed mother.
- She found herself pondering when the shepherds visit in a stable.
- She found herself pondering when she was dealing with a 12-year-old son who was becoming increasingly independent.

Mary would have been one of Jesus’ first disciples. She thought she was seeking him, but in reality, it was he who was seeking her. On the street, wounded and suffering, carrying the cross of humanity, Jesus meets his mother, and really, all of humankind.

Jesus suffers as he encounters his mother suffering, as does Mary as she sees the suffering of her son. This encounter is not something that Mary can fix nor can she withdraw from it. She can ponder.

How might you more prayerfully and with more contemplation respond to the events in your life? Often, do we jump into suffering, trying to fix it or trying to stop the pain – when there is no fix – when there is no stopping the pain – instead we must just work through it remembering that God has provided sufficient grace for our every need.

Sufficient grace helps us through – it does not help us escape. How might Mary’s response help you to do things differently? How might pondering help you to work through difficult times with hope?

Prayer: Oh God, suffering is part of life. How you must have suffered as you sent your Son into this world. How you must have suffered as he was tortured, abused, mocked, beaten, killed.

How you must have suffered ... and yet you endured that suffering out of love for us. Jesus had that love too, your love, for he did not step aside, but took upon himself our cross of sin so that we might have life.

Lord, we do experience suffering in our families and with our children. In difficult times, O Lord, help our families to be places of your presence so that we might work through our sufferings to receive healing, forgiveness, resurrection, new life, and restored joy.

Be present with our families and help us make them oases of love, peace, hope, and joy. Amen.



Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Holy Tuesday

Fifth Station: Simon helps Carry the Cross

A small Chapel was built in 1895 and dedicated to Simon of Cyrene to mark the fifth station.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Luke 23: 26 (NRSV)

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

REFLECTION: These two individuals on different journeys met at a critical point when Jesus, in his human nature, could not carry the cross any farther. Jesus was already tired and weak. But he was still far from the place of crucifixion. Who would carry it for him? Just in time, Simon of Cyrene was there. Then the unexpected happened. Simon was seized by the Roman soldiers and was made to carry the cross behind Jesus.

There are two crosses that we can choose from. Our cross and that of Jesus. We are meant to carry only one cross. What cross will we choose? Our worldly cross of problems, needs, dreams, and plans for the future, or the cross of Jesus that brings hope, life, blessings, peace, and salvation? Simon carried the cross of Jesus.

As Christians, we must let go of our worldly cross — ourselves — and focus on the cross of Jesus. That is the one we must take up. It is our duty, among others, to share his word, to show compassion to others, to bear the fruits of the spirit and to bring others to the feet of Jesus for their salvation. That is what Jesus' cross is all about. This cross Jesus bears is the cross of humanity — but he takes it and transforms it from an instrument of certain death into a pathway for life.

We are not meant to carry Jesus' cross alone. In his human nature, Jesus needed help carrying the cross. Physically, the wooden cross was heavy, and he had been badly beaten. Human as we are, there will be times that we will feel tired and discouraged in carrying the cross or being in the service of God for many valid reasons.

We have asked “Why Lord? Why am I treated this way?” The solution is not to give up. When Simon carried the cross, it did not mean that Jesus gave up on his purpose and mission to forgive us of our sins. He did not quit. He continued to walk towards Calvary.

Like Jesus, we need other Christians to refresh our tired souls. When we are beaten and wounded, others can pray and help us. Call for them. We are a family of God. We are to bear one another's burdens. There is no place for pride or conceit in carrying the cross of Jesus.

Do not quit. Keep moving on. Suffering, accepted in faith, is transformed into a path of salvation.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you have invited us to share your sufferings. Simon is like us, and we too are being compelled/seized by the movement of God's Spirit to help carry your cross. We accept this cross because you are with us.

Lord, we want to be your disciples. Help us to carry your cross every day, knowing that you continue to carry it with us and that through it you transform our sufferings into hope and joy, and our sin into forgiveness, redemption, and new life. Amen.



Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Holy Tuesday

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

About 40 yards from the fifth station a small etching is carved into a wall and marks the home of Veronica and the sixth station. Evidence of Veronica cleaning Jesus' face does not appear in the Gospels, but tradition holds that his image remained on her cloth.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Psalm 27: 8 – 9 (NRSV)

“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, do I seek.
Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!

REFLECTION: An expression of Love. A small gesture. These make a difference in people's lives. Someone sought you out in the crowd on your journey to Golgotha – not to mock you, or beat you, or spit on you, but to share care and compassion. At the height of your anguish, in the midst of the crowd, in spite of the soldiers, someone risked an action to ease your suffering by wiping your face with a towel.

An expression of love and faith that has remain impressed on the memory of Christian tradition. How many of your children do we pass on our streets every day? How many do we pass each day who think they must hide from you because their sin is just too great?

How many do we pass each day who are so full of anger that they are blind to your presence and your love for them? How many people do we pass each day who feel forsaken, outcast, worthless? What expressions, what gestures done in Christ's name could put them on the path to healing, hope, salvation, and new life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Veronica reminds us that you are present in every person who suffers. Help us to see you in the poor, in the forgotten, in the homeless, in the least, the last, and the lost – that we might help to bear their burdens, ease their pain, and give them hope and support for a better tomorrow.

Teach us that the wounded and forgotten have worth and dignity and that you call us to go to them, to ease their suffering. Help us to wipe away the marks of poverty and injustice from their faces so that your love and grace might be revealed in them and in us. We pray for those who are seeking your face. Help us to seek your face and your presence in all who walk this earth. Amen.



We paused to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion at the Garden Tomb site. Rev. Lisa Fox serves communion.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Holy Wednesday

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

The seventh station, though not referred to in Scripture, holds that at the time of crucifixion, a copy of the death sentence for Jesus was posted on an old gate that later has become known as the Judgement Gate.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Psalm 22: 7 – 8 (NRSV)

All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
“Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Reflection: This mocking could not have done anything else but grieved Jesus. It must have been like an iron piercing his soul. This mocking, endured by our Lord, were of the cruelest kind. Scornful ridicule with all sorts of people unanimous in derisive laughter and competing with each other in insulting him. Priests and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in mob mentality, all united in the general scoffing, and all this at the very time when Jesus was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which was stronger: the cruelty of humanity or the love of the bleeding Savior?

They give lip, they shake their heads. These were gestures of contempt. Pouting, grinning, shaking of the head, running off at the mouth and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord. Human beings made faces at Jesus, the one before whom angels veil their faces and of whom they sing songs of adoration. In this fall, the weight of evil becomes great. Is there no longer any limit to injustice and violence that can be visited upon a person or group?

Do we allow the louder, more violent voices to carry the action and the day unopposed? Let us hold up a mirror. Where are we when mob mentality or fear move to carry the day? Where are we when the scornful ridicule today gets aimed at another person or group? Jesus rises in the infinite trust he places in God.

The power of God’s Spirit raises him up – even in the midst of humanity who abandon him to death. Jesus is united fully to God’s will, and that power of love can pick one up and do all things even in the midst of great adversity.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as you fall, we recognize we encounter so many situations in our own lives from which we feel there is no escape. So many things, like prejudice and hate that harden our hearts and the hearts of others, lead us to conflict. Enlighten our hearts and minds and help us to recognize that even in the midst of our differences, your light shines and you call us to walk together in your love and truth.

Empower us to service for the common good of all people and help us to positively develop people and build society. Come Holy Spirit and unite us in Christ that we may be witnesses of your love in areas and among people that are torn apart by conflict and injustice. Amen.



Walking the Via Dolorosa through the streets of Old Jerusalem.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks to Women of Jerusalem

The eighth station is located to the right of the seventh station and up some stairs which turns onto a street called Aqabat el Kanqa where a Latin cross and the letters “NIKA,” which means “Jesus Christ conquers,” is carved into the wall of a Greek Orthodox Convent of St. Charalambos.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Luke 23: 27 – 28 (NRSV)

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.

Reflection: Jesus showed compassion even as he was walking to his death. As Jesus put painful foot in front of painful foot along that road, he knew what lay just ahead. The beam carried by Simon would be joined to the larger vertical beam. He would be nailed to the wood. It would be raised and dropped into a hole in the ground. And he would continue to suffer. He would suffer unimaginable agony, and he would die. Jesus knew each footstep took him to his death.

If ever there was a moment for someone to be preoccupied with their own needs and welfare, this was the time. But this wasn't just any someone, this was Jesus. Yes, there were mockers in the crowd that day, but there were also people who had heard God's voice through Jesus' teaching or who had been healed or delivered by his touch. The women in the crowd let their feelings show with deep wailing for the death that lay ahead for Jesus. Jesus turned to them, to the women – who were thought of in this culture and time as less than – and he spoke to them.

We should not miss the remarkable fact that he spoke and that he spoke directly to the women. In the midst of his own deep agony on many levels, he spoke to them, showing concern and compassion for them. Jesus was more concerned for what lay ahead for them, than what lay ahead for him. Jesus models a level of care for others – for loving his neighbor – far beyond anything most of us know or do.

Jesus was about to give his life on a cross he did not deserve, and on his way, he stopped to show compassion to the women of Jerusalem, concerned for the suffering that would lie ahead for them. This is a model of supreme care for others. Who is our neighbor? How and to what extent do we show care to others even when we are in the midst of our own “stuff?”

Prayer: Dear Lord, may an encounter with you be the desire of our hearts. As our lives and pathways are filled with both joys and sufferings, may we walk with you in such a way that our journeys are pathways of hope, refuge, and salvation, not only for us, but for others you will bring to us to make known your compassion, care, concern, grace, and love. Amen.



Just outside the city is what is commonly called The Wailing Wall, a place for prayer and contemplation where people of all faiths are invited to bring their prayers.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Maundy Thursday

Ninth Station: Jesus falls a Third Time

The Ninth station is located through a wide stairway and a dark passage where tradition records that Jesus fell a third time before his final climb to Mount Calvary.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 15 (NRSV)

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

Reflection: This ninth station pays tribute to tradition, which says that Christ fell a third time prior to making it to the site of crucifixion on Mount Calvary. Well, if you are honest, Jesus had been under a great burden prior to falling under the weight of this path of agony and the cross. Jesus had been burdened with the sin of humanity for some time – 3 years of his ministry, but he knew of his call and destiny at least by the age of 12, if not longer.

On his way to Calvary, Jesus, burdened with our sins and under the shadow of the cross, falls a third time and seeks to get up yet again. He summons great strength to continue his journey. He refuses to be crushed. Refuses to give into temptation. From the moment of his incarnation, Jesus carried the cross of human suffering and sin. He took on our human nature to show us that victory over death, both physical and spiritual, is a path that is open to human beings. We are sinners saved by grace! Are we keeping this good news to ourselves? Who else needs to hear and receive?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, the cross bears down with all its weight. We are sinners and we need your grace. Grant us the wisdom and the humility to rise once more and to move forward on your path of love and light.

Help us to live in truth and love without giving into temptation and division. Help us to be united in you and united as the body of Christ, so that all the world might come to know of your healing, saving power. Amen.

Tenth Station:

Jesus is Stripped of his Garments

The Tenth station in the main square of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. On the right, there are steps leading to the small Franciscan chapel where Jesus was stripped of his clothes.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Psalm 22: 18 – 19 (NRSV)

They divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!

John 19: 23 – 25 (NRSV)

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, 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 fulfill what the scripture says,
“They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.”
And that is what the soldiers did.

Reflection: We, too, find ourselves stripped by various difficulties, sometimes to the point of persecution. When we think we can find fulfillment by ourselves, independent of, without you, we find ourselves naked. However, in these times and in and by your infinite love, you re-clothe us with the dignity of being sons and daughters of God and encourage us along the stream of sanctifying grace.

Prayer: O Jesus, you were stripped so that you could reveal to us a new creation, a creation that comes through suffering, pain, and grief and is even raised from death. Remove from us the veil that separates us from God. Weave into us your divine presence. Conquer within us the fear, doubt, and anxiety that seek to rob us of our identity as children of God.

Help us to have ears that are attuned to your word and help us to live into our baptism that we may announce the Good News of transforming grace and New life to all the world. Amen.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Good Friday

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

The Eleventh station is located within the Latin Chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At the 11th station are modern mosaics that illustrate Jesus being nailed to the cross.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: John 19:16 – 19 (NRSV)

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

There they crucified him, and with him two others— one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Pilate had notice prepared and fastened to the cross.

It read: Jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews.

Reflection: For a reflection I share the words of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts.

O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done

1. O Love divine, what hast thou done!
The immortal God hath died for me!
The Father's co-eternal Son bore
all my sins upon the tree.
Th'immortal God for me hath died:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified!
2. Is crucified for me and you,
to bring us rebels back to God.
Believe, believe the record true,
ye all are bought with Jesus' blood.
Pardon for all flows from his side:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified.
3. Behold him, all ye that pass by,
the bleeding Prince of life and peace!
Come sinners,
see your Savior die, and say,
“Was ever grief like his?”
Come, feel with me his blood applied:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified!”

Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

1. Alas! and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head for sinners such as I?
2. Was it for crimes that I have done,
he groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!
3. Well might the sun in darkness hide,
and shut its glories in, when God, the mighty maker,
died for his own creature's sin.
4. Thus might I hide my blushing face
while his dear cross appears; dissolve my heart in
thankfulness, and melt mine eyes to tears.
5. But drops of tears can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe.
Here, Lord, I give myself away; 'tis all that I can do.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for all people who are overcome with hopelessness, who feel they are bearing a cross alone. Lift up their gaze and help them to accept the love you have for all.

Help us to be your conduits of grace so that the hopeless can hear through us your story of suffering and hope, your story of death and resurrection, your story of transformation and new life. Help us to express our thankfulness and praise in all place and with all people for your love that will not let us go! Amen.



Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, this mosaic shows Jesus being nailed to the cross.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

The twelfth station is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre within the Greek Orthodox Chapel, which is the place of Christ's death on Calvary. A fissure in the rock displays the damage from the earthquake that followed Christ's death.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:46 (NRSV)

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,
"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."
Having said this, he breathed his last.

Reflection: Jesus knew, and we should know, that for God's people, death is not the end nor even a sleep for our conscious personalities. God's arms are open, and God's hands are extended to us. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Not: into the grave. Not: into the void. Not: into the dark unknown. But: into the hands of God.

One of the great temptations is to believe that our death is the end. Let us learn here from Jesus. Yes, Jesus suffering and dying for our sake was horrible, something worse than many of us can even image. However, Jesus, even in the worst of circumstances, did not abandon faith in God's love for him. Jesus trusted God. We can too – in life and all its struggles, in the midst of the process of death, and even into life eternal!

Prayer for Good Friday: Almighty God, Graciously behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen
(UMH #284)



Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, this is the place tradition says Jesus was crucified

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Holy Saturday

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

The thirteenth station is an altar between the 11th and 12th stations. This was where Jesus was taken down from the cross following his death.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: John 19: 25 – 37 (NRSV)

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 fulfill 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.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.

But 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 out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.” And again another passage of scripture says,

“They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”



The place where Jesus' body was laid, Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Reflection: Something like what happened to Jesus before, during, and the moments after his death can suck the air right out of your lungs. It can make you want to run away. It can cause you to become paralyzed with fear and dread.

However, those who love Jesus remain at his side and keep faith. When the world swirls with things that are not of God, things that are the principalities and powers, things that are evil, and when the sound of truth, love, justice, and peace is silent, those who remain with Jesus do not fail in faith. The church is the church only when it exists for others. Jesus gave himself for others, for us. We are called to do the same.

To walk with Jesus, to remain at his side, is to have faith in Christ’s power to transform and to trust God’s love. We must help and serve the people of this world as Christ did. We must share the story of what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others. And in so doing, we must not underestimate the importance of human example. After all, Christ left his heavenly home and took on human flesh so that we could have an example, a tangible example that God’s word would walk among us and with us, so we could experience the life-giving power of God’s word.

For us, the body of Christ in the world today, it is not finished, for every day God gives us is a new beginning to live with Christ in ways of faith, hope, and love so that others will come to live with Christ too!

Prayer: The Prayer of Saint Francis
Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

(UMH #481)

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

The Fourteenth station is found in the rotunda of the basilica.

This spot is accepted as the genuine place of Christ's burial by most Eastern and Western churches.

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

THE SCRIPTURE: John 19: 39 – 42 (NRSV)

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.

Reflection: Silence

Prayer for Holy Saturday

*Merciful and everliving God,
Creator of heaven and earth, the crucified body of your Son
was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy day.
Grant that we may await with him the dawning of the third day
and rise in newness of life, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen*

(UMBOW #367)



Angie Mattes, Northern District, pauses to light a candle and pray at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.

The Resurrection of Jesus:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Celebration: The Lord is Risen! He is risen, Indeed! Alleluia!



The Garden Tomb - Alleluia! He is Risen!

A note from Bishop Sandra:

While I formulated this study around the Via Dolorosa, many persons are more familiar with The Way of the Cross, which is also sometimes referred to as the Stations of the Cross. While the Via Dolorosa is the path Jesus actually walked to Calvary, the Way of the Cross refers to scriptural moments of Christ's passion journey.

I include here "The Way of the Cross" without written reflections or prayers for additional study and contemplation.

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
Matthew 26:36-41 or Luke 22:39 – 44

Second Station: Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is Arrested
Mark 14:43-46 or Matthew 26:47 - 56

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin
Luke 22:66-71 or Mark 14:61 - 64

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by Peter/ Pilate tries Jesus
Matthew 26:69-75 or John 18:33 - 37

Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pilate
Mark 15: 6 - 15

Sixth Station: Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns
John 19:5

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross
John 19:6, 15-17 and John 10:17-18

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross
Mark 15:21 or Luke 23:26

Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem
Luke 23:27-31

Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified
Luke 23:33-34

Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief
Luke 23:39-43

Twelfth Station: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple
John 19:25-27

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross
Luke 23:44-46 or John 19:28-34

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb
Matthew 27:57-60 or John 19:38-42



Walking the Via Dolorosa we found ourselves winding through the city center, up and down stairs and through narrow streets. We could feel the presence of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, Help us Walk in Your Steps.