

Stations of the Cross Lent 2017

"An ever more effective world solidarity should allow all people
to become the artisans of their destiny."
Blessed Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* #65

Instructions

These Stations of the Cross allow us to meditate on Jesus's journey to the cross whilst reflecting on the reality of the lives of our sisters and brothers in Zambia, for whom life is a daily struggle.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI's ground-breaking encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, his letter on the development of peoples. Some of it is quoted in the Stations of the Cross to challenge us anew by its teaching which is as pertinent today as it was in 1967.

An accompanying PowerPoint is available to use alongside the text below, although not essential. Each Station has two slides: the first is the Scripture text and the prayer, "We adore you O Christ..." Once this is said, click to the next slide, which shows an image to help reflect on what the leader reads out.

Whether walking around the Stations of the Cross in a church, or sat as a group, you may wish to have different people read the various texts. For example, someone could provide the voice of the people from Zambia or the quotations from Church teaching. This is marked in the text below.

Each Station may begin by reading the title and Scripture quotation, before the leader begins "We adore you O Christ...".

Between each Station, you may wish to sing a chant, such as *Jesus remember me* or *Bless the Lord my soul* from Taizé.

You can download a simple service sheet for you to adapt and print for each person taking part from cafod.org.uk/prayers

Introduction

Leader As we reflect on the final journey of Jesus, leading to his death on the cross, we also contemplate the lives of our sisters and brothers living in Zambia. We will reflect particularly on how our dignity is respected through being able to work, and so support ourselves and our families to live life to the full.

We will hear about Florence, a 41 year old mum with two children. After her husband died she struggled to feed and clothe them. But thanks to support from a CAFOD partner, she now has a small fish farm and is able to provide for her family. We will also hear about Patrick, a 23 year old whose father died when he was a small child. His mum found it hard to grow enough food for the family. Patrick was educated by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He has become a tailor and now passes on those skills in his spare time to people living with disabilities in Zambia.

We will also hear inspiration from Blessed Pope Paul VI's letter on the development of peoples called *Populorum Progressio*, as we pray for the work of CAFOD done in our name which seeks to bring about "An ever more effective world solidarity [which] should allow all people to become the artisans of their destiny."

Let us pray together for God to transform our lives and the lives of others:
[words in brackets may be omitted if not being used during Lent]

All God of Love,
Maker of all,
transform my heart
[through my Lenten journey
of prayer, fasting and almsgiving].

Help me to see the dignity
in all my sisters and brothers,
made in your image and likeness.

Inspire me to share the fruits of your creation
so that all your people can become
artisans of their own destiny.

We ask this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

The First Station, Jesus is condemned to death

Reader "The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!...' Pilate released Barabbas for the crowd; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified."
Matthew 27:21-26

Leader We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,
All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader Pilate asks the crowds what he should do with Jesus. They shout, "Crucify him". Washing his hands he announces, "I am innocent of this man's blood."

Life can suddenly change. It may be the death of a loved one. Someone we used to rely on is no longer there. For Florence, it was her husband. For Patrick, his father. Even families, especially when struggling themselves, can turn their backs on their relatives in their time of need. It happened to Florence and to Patrick.

By turning my back, or a blind eye, when do I condemn others? When do I ignore "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #49), listening instead to the cry of the crowds?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Second Station, Jesus carries his cross

Reader "After mocking Jesus, the soldiers stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him."
Matthew 27:28-31

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All* *because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader The guards dressed Jesus up as a king, with a crown made of thorns, and mocked him. The wood on which he would be hung is placed upon Jesus's shoulders before he is led out to be crucified.

When he was a small child, after his father died, Patrick and his family were seen by their extended family as a burden to carry.

Reader "Grandpa would lock the family home when they went out each day and we would have to wait outside the home all day. Because we couldn't get enough food my mother asked my older brother and sisters to stop going to school, so they could earn money to buy food. But the situation at the home became unbearable. Our family members would prepare food, but they wouldn't let us have any. It was really something for me that they didn't want to share food with us."

Leader We all have burdens to carry. We also place burdens on other people. In what ways do I place unnecessary burdens on other people?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Third Station, Jesus falls the first time

Reader "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."
Isaiah 53:5

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All* *because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader Whilst carrying his cross, Jesus falls down. The weight of the cross, the pressures, the burdens of the world, are all piled on his shoulders. Work, or the lack of opportunity to work, cause many people to stumble. As Pope Francis has said,

Reader "In many ways, the present-day economic situation is keeping people from participating in society. Families, in particular, suffer from problems related to work... Workdays are long and oftentimes made more burdensome by extended periods away from home. This situation does not help... parents to be with their children in such a way as to nurture their relationships each day." *Amoris Laetitia* #44

Leader The choices we make have an impact on other people both near and far, as well as what work opportunities they have. It includes what we choose to buy; where we invest our money. In what ways do my choices result in causing others to stumble?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Fourth Station, Jesus meets his mother

Reader "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.'" *Luke 2:33-35*

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
***All* because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader Whilst Jesus is walking to his death, his mother comes up to him in the crowd. When Jesus was still a baby and presented to God in the Temple, Simeon prophesied to Mary that "a sword will pierce your own soul, too".

What sadness must have filled Mary's heart when she saw her son, knowing he was going to die.

After Florence's husband died in a mining accident, despite living with her parents, she struggled to feed her children.

Reader "My children weren't getting a fair share of the food that I helped to grow. At my parents' I would cultivate and farm the crop like everyone else, but I wouldn't have a say in what would happen to the food. While there was enough land, I struggled a lot of the time because the food didn't come to me."

Leader For all mothers who struggle to support their children. For all mothers who see their children suffering and feel powerless to help. For all mothers, we pause and pray.

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Fifth Station, Simon of Cyrene carries the cross of Jesus

Reader "The soldiers compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus."
Mark 15:21

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All* *because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader Simon is compelled to help Jesus. Despite not knowing who Jesus is, he is taken from the crowd to walk with him and carry his cross.

When Patrick and his family had nothing, he was supported by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Not only did he have somewhere to go to school and was given some food, he was also taught how to be a tailor. When he was asked, he returned to the school as a volunteer to teach the current students – many of whom have disabilities – the skills of being a tailor. He says,

Reader "People are very important. It doesn't matter if they have disabilities or not. They are people. Disabilities aren't their fault. I teach people because I was taught these skills by someone and I want to pass them on. I want to help others."

Leader Helping others brings us together and is an act of solidarity. In *Populorum Progressio* we are reminded that,

"When work is done in common – when hope, hardship, ambition and joy are shared – it brings together and firmly unites the wills, minds and hearts of [people]. In its accomplishment, [we] find ourselves to be brothers [and sisters]." *Populorum Progressio* #27

When a moment arises for us to help others, do we help without complaint? Do we look at our working together as a way of uniting with our sisters and brothers, or as a mere task to be completed?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Sixth Station, Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Reader "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"
Matthew 25:37-40

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All* *because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader Veronica was able to reach out and touch Christ's face.

The gentle, generous, humble action of wiping Jesus's face, a face covered in blood and sweat, was one of love and humanity. It recognised the dignity of Jesus, not just seeing him as a spectacle walking by.

Pope Francis tells us that:

Reader "Work, to use an image, 'anoints' us with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God, who has worked and still works, who always acts..." *Feast of St Joseph the Worker and World Labour Day 2013*

Leader The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary look for Christ in each person and each family they meet. They anoint them with dignity, by enabling them to earn a living and so support themselves and their family, whether it's teaching them how to farm fish, or providing tools to grow crops.

Do we look for Christ in our sisters and brothers? Do we anoint them through our respect for their human dignity?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Seventh Station, Jesus falls the second time

Reader "You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance." *James 5:5-6*

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Leader Continuing his journey towards the place where he will die, Jesus becomes increasingly weak. He falls again. The journey must seem never ending. And each step is made more difficult with the weight of the cross and the pain.

For so many people, the conditions in which they work are a daily, never-ending burden. In the letter of St James, we are starkly told that:

Reader "The wages you withhold from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts." *James 5:4*

Leader If the cries have reached the Lord of hosts, they must also reach our ears. Sadly, the need to be reminded to treat people fairly for their labour remains. When have we chosen not to be just and fair to our sisters and brothers whose labour benefits us? Will we recommit ourselves to help prevent others from stumbling under the weight of unfair wages?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Eighth Station, Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Reader "A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him"
Luke 23:27-28

Reader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Leader Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem and tells them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children.

Struggling to feed her children, Florence turned to a support group in her village.

Reader "I couldn't get enough money to buy farming equipment. I wanted to grow maize but struggled and I grew just enough to survive. I joined the Village Orphans Support Group. They helped me a lot. They taught me how to make manure and fertiliser. The group helped me to work on my own and to support myself."

Leader In the world there is so much to weep over. Sometimes there is little we can do but cry. But following our tears, we commit ourselves to action to support all our sisters and brothers to flourish.

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Ninth Station, Jesus falls the third time

Reader "Come to me, all you who labour, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." *Matthew 11:28-30*

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Leader As the journey to his crucifixion comes to an end, Jesus falls one more time. Jesus, who died for our sake, falls under the burden.

For people living in poverty, there is so much to cause them to fall. For those who are also living with a disability it can make life even harder, especially when members of the community do not treat them with respect.

Patrick voluntarily teaches people the skills needed to earn a living.

Reader "Even if a person is disabled, if they have a skill, they can earn money. I help them to make and sell things. Once they get some cotton, the class can make items to sell on the market. What they earn they use to buy things they need like food, or lotion and soap for themselves."

Leader Faced with many challenges do we give up, or do we look to God for strength and hope?

We pray for ourselves, and for all those who need strength and courage, that in the face of so many struggles the love of Christ will urge us on.

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Tenth Station, Jesus is stripped of his garments

Reader "The soldiers took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic..."
John 19:23-24

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All ***because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Leader Arriving at his place of execution, even the clothes he is wearing are stripped from him. He is left with nothing. In *Populorum Progressio*, Blessed Pope Paul VI starkly challenges us that,

Reader "No one may appropriate surplus goods solely for his own private use when others lack the bare necessities of life." #23

Leader Hearing those words, how am I challenged? Do I have surplus goods which I am hoarding? What am I challenged to do for those who "lack the bare necessities of life"?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Eleventh Station, Jesus is nailed to the cross

Reader "When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left."
Luke 23:33-34

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
***All* because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader Jesus is nailed to the wood of the cross. In agony, his body is lifted high, in this most violent of acts. Work can help us flourish, but it can also cause us pain. Blessed Pope Paul VI reminds us,

Reader "Work, too, has a double edge. Since it promises money, pleasure and power, it stirs up selfishness in some and incites others to revolt. On the other hand, it also fosters a professional outlook, a sense of duty, and love of neighbour."
Populorum Progressio #28

Leader Whether voluntary or paid, is work something which enables us to flourish? Or is it something which nails us to our own cross and prevents us from flourishing? Is it something which makes us selfish? Or does it help us to love our neighbour?

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Twelfth Station, Jesus dies on the cross

Reader "At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'... Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last."
Mark 15:34, 37

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
***All* because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader In agony, Jesus breathes his last and dies on the cross.

We pause. We remember all those who have died due to the lack of food or water; or due to the lack of opportunity to work to support themselves and their families.

[Pause in silence]

Leader Eternal rest, grant unto them, O Lord,
All **and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen.**

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Thirteenth Station, Jesus's body is taken down from the cross

Reader "Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body."
John 19:38

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader Lifeless, Jesus is taken down from the cross. Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus's body, to bury him with dignity. In the midst of chaos, sadness, and anxiety, we are called into action, to do what we can.

The state of the world can sometimes feel so bad that there is nothing we can do. Pope Francis encourages us today not to lose hope:

Reader "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning... I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us." *Laudato Si'* #205

Leader We pray that at times of despair we will not lose hope. That we will remain open to the reality of the world. That we will recommit ourselves to taking positive action.

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Fourteenth Station, Jesus's body is laid in the tomb

Reader "Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid."
Mark 15:45-47

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Leader Jesus is laid in the tomb. The world is silent. A time of waiting.

As we pause, we rest. Amidst the busy-ness of work, we also need to take time to rest. And in this resting to listen to God.

It's something Patrick understands. He says,

Reader "One of the things I feel is important is to reserve time to be with God in prayer. I don't work on a Sunday. I go to church and then in the afternoon I share the Bible with children. Sometimes work is quite strenuous and you should take time to rest otherwise you can fall ill."

Leader How often does our work – whether paid or voluntary – take over and we feel so busy that we do not have time to rest, and time to listen to God in prayer? Even our work for justice in the world can feel so urgent that we do not take the time to pray.

For the times we have failed to pause, to rest, to make time to hear God's voice, we ask forgiveness.

[Pause for silent reflection]

The Fifteenth Station, Jesus is raised from the dead

Reader "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."
Luke 24:5

Leader *We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,*
All* *because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader He is not here; he is risen!

Jesus's death on the cross was not the end. Through Christ's passion, his death and resurrection, we have the strength to continue our daily journey. We are inspired to continue to work for true justice, so that all people may flourish.

As we reflect on Jesus's final journey, we pray for the strength to live each day as people transformed through God's love, and that we will radiate God's love to all of creation.

[Pause for silent reflection]

Conclusion

Leader As our journey with the cross draws to a close, we listen to the words of Blessed Pope Paul VI reflecting on the idea of solidarity:

Reader "An ever more effective world solidarity should allow all people to become the artisans of their destiny." *Populorum Progressio* #65

Having walked with Florence and Patrick from Zambia, both people who have struggled, but also people who have been empowered "to become the artisans of their destiny", let us recommit ourselves to be transformed by God so that in our turn we can help others "to become the artisans of their destiny".

We pray together:

God of Love,
Maker of all,
transform my heart

[through my Lenten journey
of prayer, fasting and almsgiving].

Help me to see the dignity
in all my sisters and brothers,
made in your image and likeness.

Inspire me to share the fruits of your creation
so that all your people can become
artisans of their own destiny.

We ask this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.