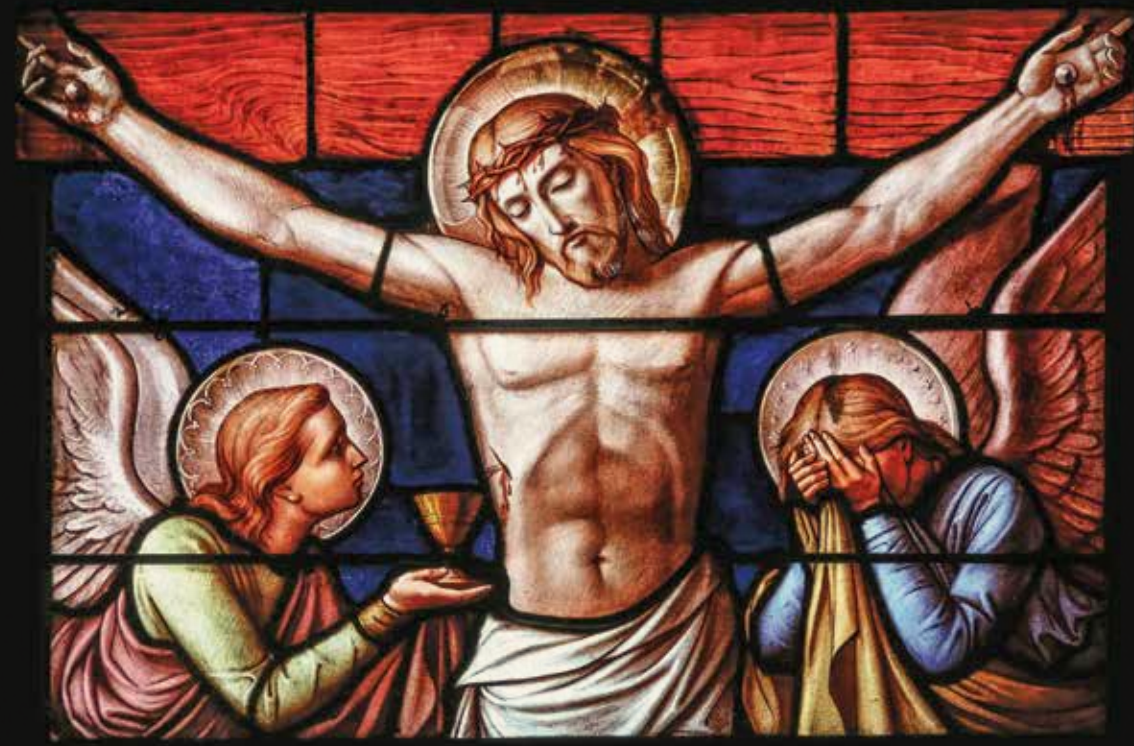


Reflections on the Way to the Cross

By Father Pat Fitzpatrick C.S.Sp.



Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Introduction

Following the Mass of the Lord's Supper the Catholic Church will not celebrate Mass again until the Easter Vigil. On Good Friday we are called to gather as faithful followers of Christ and remember his passion and death in preparation for the celebration of his resurrection.

This booklet provides reflections on each of the Stations of the Cross. These meditations were created by Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick C.S.Sp.

This guide can be used alongside the traditional Stations of the Cross. You can also follow along when you watch it on TV, our website or our YouTube channel.

How to use this Guide

Jesus' journey from Pilate's palace to the cross and then to the tomb is a concrete illustration of God's love for humankind. God's son came to earth for us. Out of love for every single person, Jesus left God the Father and emptied himself by coming to live among us. Each of us is the beloved child of God and nowhere is that more evident than the painfully brutal journey that Jesus took to the cross.

Take some time to reflect on Jesus' love for you and to ponder whether you have experienced that love in your heart. Are you grateful or do you take it for granted?

Then go to each Station of the Cross and meditate. Imagine yourself in each scene. How did it feel for the people who were present with Jesus? He was surrounded by a ring of soldiers. How did they feel? How do you feel when you put yourself into that scene? Are you one of the soldiers? Or are you an onlooker from a distance?

Think about Mary. Try to put yourself in Mary's position. What pain did she endure? How did she carry her own cross while she watched her son buckling under the weight of his heavy cross as he stumbled along to Golgotha? How did Mary feel when she heard the people taunting her son?

How did she feel when Simon was forced to help? How did she feel when Veronica wiped her son's tears? How did Mary feel when they cast lots for his clothes? Did she not want to take something of her son's home with her? Did she not feel that his life was being depersonalized? How did Mary endure seeing her son nailed to the cross between two criminals? What did she think when Jesus asked God the Father to forgive the people?

How did Simon feel? What was he doing there? Did he know Jesus? Had he heard Jesus preach? What was Simon thinking as he struggled with the cross? Was he wondering how he had been chosen? Or was he grateful that he could help?

Why was Veronica there? How did she feel about Jesus' suffering? Did she suffer as she watched him struggle? Would you have wiped Jesus' face?

Why were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus secret disciples? How did they feel when Jesus was crucified? Why did Joseph offer the garden tomb for Jesus? Was he suffering as well? Was he divided between his loyalty to the Jews and his loyalty to Jesus? Was he afraid of the Jewish authorities?

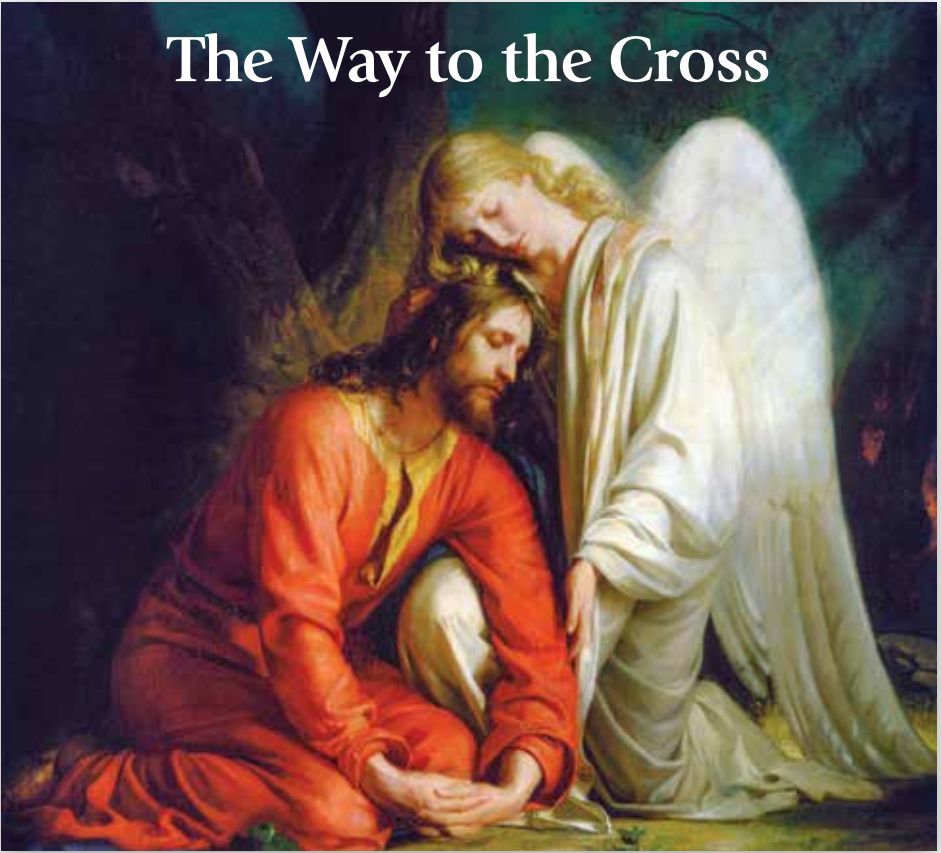
There are so many people involved and so many different emotions. Try to stay in the scene and see what God is telling you.

Finally, remember that Christians are an Easter people. None of Christ's suffering makes any sense until the Resurrection. The Resurrection puts everything into the proper perspective. All the evil in the world was no match for God's intended purpose. When we think of our own suffering, how do we accept our cross and live in trust? With God's help we can carry our own cross by keeping our eyes on Jesus and the Resurrection. God always is with us – always!

"The Gospel is very clear: we need to go back there, to see Jesus risen, and to become witnesses of his resurrection. This is not to go back in time; it is not a kind of nostalgia. It is returning to our first love, in order to receive the fire which Jesus has kindled in the world and to bring that fire to all people, to the very ends of the earth..."

Easter Vigil Homily of Pope Francis
Vatican Basilica Holy Saturday,
19 April 2014

The Way to the Cross



Jesus, God with us, was once a condemned criminal who stumbled, fell, got up again, and kept going to the bitter end. Jesus knew what it was to suffer. "This is the cup the father has given me," he had said. "Shall I not drink it?" God suffered in Jesus. God continues to suffer in millions of people.

We come face to face with Christ in those who suffer. Through these Stations of the Cross, we follow in Jesus' footsteps from Pilate's palace, to Calvary. We mark ourselves with the sign of the cross and walk with Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick on the way to the cross.

THE FIRST STATION

Jesus is sentenced to death.



Jesus came out wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe. Pilate said to the crowd, "Here is the man." They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Then Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Matthew 27:22-23,26 NRSV

REFLECTION

The religious leaders sought the death penalty for Jesus. He was more than they could take. But the death penalty was not theirs to carry out. So they brought him to Pilate.

“I will have him flogged and let him go,” said that crowd pleaser. “You are no friend of Caesar if you let him go,” they replied. “Crucify him! Crucify him!” said the crowd. They had their way. Pilate released Barabbas and sentenced Jesus to death. Mob justice, the guilty are let off, the innocent are convicted.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE SECOND STATION

Jesus carries his cross.



Carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went out to what is called the place of the skull.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:27-31 NRSV

REFLECTION

The soldier at the head of the procession. A ring of Roman legionaries around the prisoner. A two-meter cross beam, to which he would be nailed, was placed on his shoulder.

His final walk of about 600 meters had begun. Crosses come in different shapes and sizes. How well do I carry my cross? My health, my moods, my tensions, my handicaps, my job, my family, the way I am treated.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE THIRD STATION

Jesus falls the first time.



The Prophet Isaiah tells us that “borne our infirmities and carried our diseases... he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole....”

(Isaiah 53:4-5 NRSV)

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.

Isaiah 53:4-6 NRSV

REFLECTION

The cross beam began to sway and Jesus staggered. In a moment, he pitched forward. The beam hit the ground, hung standing for a second, then dragged him down to the cobblestones.

Crosses never fit snugly onto shoulders, they get heavier with each succeeding step. We struggle to stay on our feet. We collapse under the weight of our particular cross. We fall flat on our face.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his mother, Mary.



Simeon had said to Jesus' mother, Mary,
"...a sword will pierce your own soul, too."

(Luke 2:34 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."

Luke 2:34-35 NRSV

REFLECTION

Stations four, five, and six remind us that Jesus found encouragement and assistance along the way. Mary was there, as always, wanting to do something, anything, forced to look on helplessly. He almost hoped she wouldn't have to see him like this. Yet, her presence renewed his strength.

How many mothers suffer with their children and for their children as they watch them struggle, see them fall, and have to let them go?

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE FIFTH STATION

Simon helps Jesus carry the cross.



The soldiers seized a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. They made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Matthew 27:32, 16:24 NRSV

REFLECTION

All his friends had taken off. He carried his cross unaided. A stranger from North Africa was in Jerusalem that fateful Friday. The Roman soldiers ordered him to get in line behind the criminal. Step by step, Simon, the North African, matched his stride to Jesus' painful progress.

From here to Calvary, Jesus had a partner. Did Simon know whose cross he carried? We thank the Simons in our lives, those who walk with us and enable us to keep going. We are grateful for their helping hands, and listening ears, for shoulders to lean on.

This is the cup the father has given me, shall I not drink it?



THE SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



Tradition holds that Veronica, one of the holy women who accompanied our Lord to Calvary, was moved by his suffering and offered him a towel, to wipe the sweat and blood from his face. When Jesus handed the cloth back to her, the image of his face remained imprinted on it.

*"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!*

Psalms 27:8-9 NRSV

REFLECTION

A woman in the crowd saw him coming down the road. As he drew near, she noticed how weary, marred, and disfigured he was. Undaunted by what others thought, she removed her veil, approached him, and gently wiped his grimy face. The legend says, her veil retained the image of the face it touched.

Did his mind go back to Simon the Pharisee's house? And to the woman who very publicly stood behind him, weeping? And bathed his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, continued kissing his feet and anointing them? At critical moments, is it always women who show the most courage?

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls the second time.



Struggling, Jesus stumbles again and we recall the prophet Isaiah telling us that the Lord will be "...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."

(Isaiah 53:3 NRSV)

I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; he has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked. He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes...

Lamentations 3:1-2,9,16 NRSV

REFLECTION

Too heavy a load, too long a journey. With each succeeding step, the wooden beam got heavier and heavier. Legs and arms ached, once more, the beam began to sway. And once again, he pitched forward and downward. The Roman whips, the rough commands, the heavy effort to get up.

So many people have difficulty putting one foot in front of the other. How much farther, oh Lord? How much farther? One step at a time. More than halfway there, now.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus meets the daughters of Jerusalem.



Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

(Luke 23:28 NRSV)

But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Luke. 23:28-31 NRSV

REFLECTION

The women had compassion for the condemned man. Their hearts went out to him, knowing what awaited him at the end of the road. Was he warning them not to be part of this Jerusalem way of doing things?

How many women stand outside lonely prison walls in solidarity with the condemned? Denied a say in the public life of their country. Victims of injustice, sidelined by the system.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE NINTH STATION

Jesus falls the third time.



As Jesus lies on the ground for a third time, we again remember the words of the prophet Isaiah who foretold that the one to come would be wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth, to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope), to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. For the Lord will not reject forever. Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Lamentations. 3:27-32 NRSV

REFLECTION

Another fall. Tempted to remain down and out. Why not give up right here, right now? Another painful effort to get back up, has Simon lifting the cross beam for him. This reluctant recruit had become his silent partner uphill, the rest of the way to Calvary.

Jesus got up again and kept going. So can we, with his help. We marvel at his stubborn refusal to stay down. Down to earth, yes. But never down and out.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments.



They divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him.

Matthew 27:33-36 NRSV

REFLECTION

Calvary, at last. Outside the crowded self-absorbed city preparing for the Sabbath. Stripped naked, all dignity peeled off, a public spectacle. For many years, no place to lay his head. Now, no clothes to wear. Nothing left to call his own.

One of his own, an informer. Another, a denier. The rest, nowhere near.

We think about victims of war, victims of torture, victims of the system. Raped and violated, demeaned and publicly derided.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the cross.



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.

Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.

Matthew 27:37-42 NRSV

REFLECTION

Crucifixion, gruesome, gory, capital punishment. Nails driven through wrists and feet. Death through loss of blood and breath. Death through suffocation. No morphine to deaden the pain.

Elie Wiesel recalls the concentration camp, the day a child was hanged. His body did not weigh enough to tighten the noose around his neck. So he hung there swaying in the desolate air.

I heard a man behind me asking, "Where is God now?" I heard a voice within me answering, "Where is He? Here he is, hanging here on these gallows."

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the cross.



When Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said, "I am thirsty." So they put a sponge of sour wine on a branch and held it to his mouth. When He had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land[a] until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save

him." Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!".

Matthew 27:45-50,54 NRSV

REFLECTION

Sentenced Friday morning. Executed Friday afternoon. Only Mary, along with the disciple he loved, and some brave women kept him company. Ridicule and searing pain, a victim of the system, he forgave his executioners.

The innocent are still put to death with bullets, bombs, and bulldozers under the name of collateral damage. He drank the cup to the bitter end because he loved us to the end. Can you and I drink our cup?

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken off the cross.



Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, came and removed his body. He and Nicodemus who had at first come to Jesus by night, wrapped the body in linen cloths.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

Matthew 27:57-60 NRSV

REFLECTION

After 30 years, Mary had him in her arms again. All she could offer now, was her presence, and her lap, and her embrace. She held him once at Christmas, she held him now at the crucifixion. Silent, faithful, Mother Mary.

A wake, a funeral home moment. Keeping vigil near a casket. Thoughts of times gone by, of how it used to be. Letting loved ones go to God.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?



THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is buried in the tomb of a friend.



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 yet been buried. So, they laid Jesus there.

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Matthew 27:59-61 NRSV

REFLECTION

Born in another's barn, buried in another's tomb. An unexpected offer of the tomb from Joseph of Arimathea, a tomb hewn out of rock. A stone rolled in place, a hurried burial before Sabbath.

That Friday afternoon, the women took note of the tomb and how his body had been laid. They would return before dawn on Sunday. They buried him quickly but not for long. He would burst the bonds of burial. By Sunday, the first born from the dead, would leave behind an empty tomb.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen.

This is the cup the father has given me; shall I not drink it?





REFLECTION

Mary, you were there, as always. There, when he was taking shape within your womb. When you gave birth to him in distant Bethlehem. When he asserted teenage independence in the temple.

Through all the years at Nazareth, when he was away from home and Joseph was no longer there. There, along the final journey, standing there at the foot of the cross. There, now as you cradle him once more.

Mary, survivor of Calvary, give us strength. Be there for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to:

Father Pat Fitzpatrick C.S.Sp. for allowing us to use these meaningful reflections.

Lynda Clayton, for your expert editing, suggestions, and knowledge.

St. Paul's Basilica, Toronto and Father Edward Smith for allowing us to photograph your beautiful Stations of the Cross.

Karl Vaartjes and Joel Sjaarda et al. for the photography and Liam Bishop who assisted on the photo shoot.

Len Churchill, LenArt Design Markham ON, for the design and production of this book.
www.lenartdesign.com

Restored Traditions – all images are licensed through Restored Traditions
www.restoredtraditions.com

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
www.nrsvbibles.org



National Catholic Broadcasting Council

PO Box 54035
5762 Hwy 7 East
Markham, ON L3P 7Y4
1 888 383-6277

www.dailytvmass.com
www.youtube.com/dailytvmass

**DAILY
TV MASS**
WARMING FAITHFUL HEARTS