

Scriptural Stations of the Cross

The traditional stations of the cross are a beautiful way of meditating on the Good Friday narrative but suffer from the major flaw of being – how shall I put this? – *not true*. I mean it. Of the traditional stations, almost half are wrong:

- There is no record of Jesus falling, let alone falling three times
- Jesus did talk with his mother but it was from the cross, not on the way there;
- Jesus' body was not laid in the arms of Mary;
- Veronica is not a real person.

Only 8 out of 14 are right. This has always bothered me. Christianity is not a fictitious faith; it is based on real events that happened to real people in real places. So why are we teaching medieval fiction as if it's fact? It's not as if Good Friday is boring. There's plenty going on. Why make up events and characters? Veronica even got made into a saint, can you believe? That's like having Saint Scooby Doo!

Thankfully, Pope John Paul II also spotted this anomaly and introduced a version actually based on the Bible. (Imagine!) The stations are listed below, along with a New Testament text, a linked Old Testament, a short prayer and a suggested activity for a prayer station.

Ways to use the Scriptural Stations of the Cross

- Put the stations around your church for folks to use in Holy Week (the classic)
- Use some of the stations in the craft time in Messy Church and walk around them in the worship
- Have Sunday school or youth club set up the stations and guide adults around
- Use them at home, one each day, for two weeks leading up to Easter
- Place them around the school hall before the Easter break and have children show the parents around
- Put them in a trail in the church grounds leading to a resurrection garden
- if you can, have station 15 in a different room, perhaps with tea and cakes 😊

You will need:

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Station 1 | Pens/pencils, slips of paper |
| Station 2 | Small basket of twigs |
| Station 3 | Red ink pad or plate with dab of red paint, wipes |
| Station 4 | Ash |
| Station 5 | Bowl of water and towel |
| Station 6 | A thorny stick, such as a rose stem |
| Station 8 | Large stone, cross |
| Station 9 | Bowl of water, flower petals or small flowers |
| Station 10 | Paper hearts, drawing pins |

- Station 11 Pens/pencils, cork board
- Station 12 Pens/pencils, long strips of paper, glue or tape
- Station 13 Candle and matches/lighter, or electric candle
- Station 14 Box with lid
- Station 15 Branch and ribbons, or cross wrapped with wire and flowers

Scriptural Stations of the Cross

1. Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36-41

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

A Prayer

You prayed in the garden, Lord,
even in fear and sorrow.
Thank you for your strength.
Thank you for your courage.
Help me trust you in my darkest moments
and surrender my worries to your care.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Write a prayer on a slip of paper and take the paper with you.

2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested.

Mark 14:43-46

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

Psalm 41:9

Even my close friend,
 someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread,
 has turned against me.

A Prayer

Lord, you faced betrayal with courage and dignity,
trusting your Father's plan.
Keep my heart faithful when others disappoint me.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Snap a small twig as a symbol of broken trust

3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

Luke 22:66–71

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You say that I am."

Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

Isaiah 53:7–8

He was oppressed and afflicted,
 yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
 and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
 so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living;

for the transgression of my people he was punished.

A Prayer

Jesus, falsely judged, yet remaining true,
strengthen me to stand for what is right
and to defend the persecuted.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Add a red fingerprint to your prayer paper.

4. Peter denies Jesus

Matthew 26:69–75

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Zechariah 13:7

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

A Prayer

Lord, you saw Peter’s weakness
and still you loved him.
When I let you down,
help me return to you with a humble heart.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Dip your finger in ash and draw a cross on your
prayer paper or on the back of your hand.

5. Pilate condemns Jesus

Matthew 27:11–26

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the
governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’

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'You have said so,' Jesus replied.

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, 'Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?' But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor.

Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, 'Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.'

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?' asked the governor.

'Barabbas,' they answered.

'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' Pilate asked.

They all answered, 'Crucify him!'

'Why? What crime has he committed?' asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said. 'It is your responsibility!'

All the people answered, 'His blood is on us and on our children!'

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Psalm 2:1–2

Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord and against his anointed.

A Prayer

Jesus, you maintained dignity when wrongly
condemned.
May I never wash my hands of responsibility.
Give me courage to choose truth over approval.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Wash your hands in water and dry them on a towel



6. Jesus is crowned with thorns

Mark 15:15–17

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

Isaiah 50:6

I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

A Prayer

You endured pain and humiliation out of love, Lord.

Thank you.

Help me face my own suffering
with patience, trust, and courage,
leaning on your strength.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Roll a thorny stick between your palms.

7. Jesus carries his cross

John 19:17

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

Genesis 22:6-8

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

A Prayer

You carried the cross for us, Lord.

I praise you for your love.

Teach me to bear my own burdens faithfully,
resting in your grace and strength.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Walk slowly to the next station, imagining a heavy beam on your shoulder.

8. Simon carries Jesus' cross

Luke 23:26

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Isaiah 58:6-9

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice

and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free

and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe them,

and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness will go before you,

and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

A Prayer

Simon carried your cross, Lord.

May I be willing to bear the burdens of those around me
as you bore the weight of my sin.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Move a large stone from one side of a cross to the other

9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Luke 23:27–31

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then

“they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!”

and to the hills, “Cover us!””

For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Lamentations 1:12

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?

Look around and see.

Is any suffering like my suffering

that was inflicted on me,

that the Lord brought on me

in the day of his fierce anger?

A Prayer

You mourned the suffering of the people, Lord.

Thank you for your compassion.

Give me eyes to see pain around me

and grace to respond with mercy.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Put a flower petal in water



10. Jesus is crucified

Luke 23:33–34

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Psalms 22:16–18

Dogs surround me,

a pack of villains encircles me;

they pierce my hands and my feet.

All my bones are on display;

people stare and gloat over me.

They divide my clothes among them

and cast lots for my garment.

A Prayer

Lord, nailed to the cross,

you forgave your enemies.

Fill my heart with the grace to forgive

as you forgive me.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Push a drawing pin through a paper heart

11. Jesus promises paradise to the repentant thief

Luke 23:39–43

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'

But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.'

Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

Psalm 103:8–12

The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbour his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

A Prayer

Jesus, you opened heaven to a repentant sinner.
Teach me to turn to you honestly
and give me trust in your mercy
until my final breath.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Write 'mercy', 'forgiveness', 'compassion' or some other word on the paper heart and pin it to cork board.

12. Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other

John 19:25–27

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Psalm 68:5-6

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families.

A Prayer

Lord, you formed a family of love at the cross.
May I care faithfully for those entrusted to me.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Write on strips of paper the names of people you want to entrust to God's care, then link the strips into a paper chain.



13. Jesus dies

Luke 23:44–46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

A Prayer

Jesus, in your final breath
you surrendered everything to the Father.
Teach me to place my life completely in God's hands.

Amen.

Prayer Station Activity

Light a candle, pause, then blow it out

14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Matthew 27:57–60

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Job 19:25-27

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

A Prayer

Lord, laid in silence and darkness,
you sanctified waiting.
Strengthen my faith
when hope seems hidden.

Amen.

An Activity

Fold your prayer paper and place it in a box, then close the lid and leave.

~~~ Wait in silence before moving to Station 15 ~~~

## 15. Risen Jesus greets Mary Magdalene

### John 20:1–16

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

### Isaiah 25:8-9

He will swallow up death for ever.  
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people’s disgrace  
from all the earth.  
The Lord has spoken.

In that day they will say,

‘Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’

### A Prayer

You rose from the dead, Lord,  
conquering sin and death.  
May I recognise your voice when you call me  
and share the hope of resurrection.

Amen.

### Prayer Station Activity

Add a flower to a cross or a bright ribbon to a branch.



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