

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 mostly – how shall I put this? – *not true*.

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 teaching medieval fiction as if it's fact risks making Christianity look like a lie. And it's not as if Good Friday is a boring story. 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 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
- 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:

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| 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 |

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 showing courage. Help me trust you in my darkest moments and surrender my worries to your care.

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.

Psalms 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 peace. Keep my heart faithful when others disappoint me.

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 silent in truth, strengthen me to stand for what is right. Guard me from judging others unjustly.

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 loved him. When I let you down, help me face my failures honestly and return to you with a humble heart.

Prayer Station Activity

Dip your finger in ash and draw a cross on your prayer paper

5. Pilate condemns Jesus

John 18:33-19:16

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

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, mocked by power yet King of truth, rule my heart above every worldly voice. Give me courage to choose truth over approval.

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.

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 your love. Teach me to bear my own burdens faithfully, without bitterness, trusting in you.

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

You let Simon carry your cross, Lord. Thank you for showing us how to share burdens. May I support others, and be willing to receive help.

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 courage to respond with mercy.

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.

Psalm 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 deeply.

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.

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. Help me care faithfully for those entrusted to me.

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.

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.

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. Let me recognise your voice and share the hope of resurrection.

### Prayer Station Activity

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

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