

Stations of the Cross

Sensory Walk

A Lockdown Edition¹



¹ Adapted from <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/1350301424.pdf> featured on Strandz.org.nz.

Introduction

Today we remember Jesus as he walked His journey to the Cross alone, in silence.

This contemplative walk is intended to last for about 20-30 minutes and can be done in any neighbourhood. You can take longer if you like, but remember to keep to your local area. There are 9 prayer stops to pause and reflect on Jesus' journey to the Cross. Each stop has a short gospel reading, and a few questions. Some ask you to use your other senses to put yourself in the story.

At the moment our streets and neighbours are already eerily quiet, people need to keep their distance from those not in their bubble. This walk could be done alone, or you could do it with your bubble asking them to take turns with the readings and perhaps spending some time in discussion with one another. You may need to adapt the language of the questions to the age and stage of any children. Walk slowly and quietly for 2-3 minutes between each prayer stop.

Preparation: what you will need

Download this PDF onto your smartphone or tablet, or print it out, so you can hold it while you are walking.

There are a few **optional** materials you could gather together into a small bag or your pockets. These are to help you enter into a place of prayer and are just for you to use. If you don't have anything on hand, **you can just use your imagination.**

- Cut out a heart shape or bring a small piece of paper (only you will see it)
- A pen
- A coin (or coins)
- Some blank paper you can write on
- A splash of vinegar or lemon or something acidic to taste/smell (you could dab it onto a paper towel, or take a small container).
- A nail or screw (or similar)
- A box of matches or lighter
- A strip of linen, a towel, or a scarf

Music

Think about whether listening to something will be helpful or not. You might choose to do the walk in complete silence, noticing the sounds around you. If you would like to listen to music, choose some reflective music that's meaningful to you.

Or, if you're stuck for ideas, some of these tracks might be good to download:

† Allegri, Miserere (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36Y_ztEW1NE)

† Some Arvo Pärt Fratres (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcMFQ8-r_cU)

† Da Pacem Domine (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA79jl9cCBE>)

† Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp2oxWdRMuk>)

† John Tavener, The Lament of the Mother of God at the Cross
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSe35HZpZls>)

† Tomas Luis de Victoria, Good Friday Reproaches (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-i1VMXEMPzM>)

Before you walk

Once you are ready to leave, put your phone on flightmode. Take a moment in silence.

Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you as you prepare to walk symbolically with Jesus along his journey to the Cross.

You might like to use this prayer to centre yourself:

lead us Lord as we walk with you.

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you,

for by your Cross you have redeemed the world.

If you find your mind wandering during your walk, that's ok. You might pick a word or a phrase to repeat to yourself., or return to this prayer to centre yourself.

If you are walking with a child/children, encourage them to hold this as a solemn and meditative time (which might take practice!) If chatter happens, you can regroup by saying the prayer above.



Prayer Stop 1: Jesus is Tested

Read Mark 14: 32-36:

They went to the place called Gethsemane and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." He took Peter, James, and John with him and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My heart is crushed with so much grief, I feel like I'm dying. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the suffering that was awaiting him might pass him by. "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

Reflect:

Sometimes, it all gets too much. We all need someone to lean on.

1. Take time to think and pray about the things that worry you, and the situations in this lockdown time that make you fear about what will happen next in your life.
2. **Write your worries or fears on the paper heart**, or simply hold a paper heart in your hand as you think and pray. As Jesus' heart was 'crushed' with grief, crush up the paper heart, and hold it in your hand a while.



Prayer Stop 2: Jesus is Betrayed

Read Mark 14: 43-46:

Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, the teachers of religious law and the elders. The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss. Then you can take him away under guard." As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. "Teacher!" he exclaimed and gave him the kiss. Then the others grabbed Jesus, and arrested him.

Reflect:

Judas put his own frustrations, greed and selfishness before his friendships.

1. **Hold your coins.** As you do, think about your own relationships with family and friends. Are you loyal? Are you the trustworthy type? Or are you easily frustrated by people, just like Judas?
2. Lift up to God those times when you have been anything other than a friend. Maybe being kind with people in this lockdown time is hard. In a short prayer, ask for forgiveness for any times that you have let people down, or betrayed their trust and friendship.
3. Take time to think about the people who have betrayed you. ask God for the strength to forgive them. When you have finished reflecting and praying, return the coin to your bag.



Prayer Stop 3: Jesus is Accused

Read Mark 14: 53-56, 61-64:

They took Jesus to the high priest's home where the leading priests, the elders and the teachers of religious law had gathered. Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could have the excuse to put him to death. But they couldn't find any evidence. Instead, many witnesses told lies against him, but their stories did not agree with each other. Jesus stayed silent and made no effort to interrupt. The high priest then asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his own clothing in horror and said, "We don't need any other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" "Guilty!" they all shouted. "He deserves to die!"

Reflect:

Sometimes, those who doubt can influence us all. But the truth is always there to be found.

1. Take a piece of paper and **write some words of accusation** you may have said, or heard said about you. On the back, **write the word Messiah**.
2. Think about lies and doubts that might have been said about you. Think about lies and doubts you might have said about others. Look at the words of accusation you have written on your paper. Which words do you need to repent of?
3. When you are ready, turn it over and reflect on the truth on the back: We walk with the Messiah. As you repeat this truth that Jesus is the Messiah, ask for God's forgiveness for the times when you have been less than truthful about others.



Prayer Stop 4: Jesus is Denied

Read Mark 14: 66-72:

Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by and saw Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were with Jesus of Nazareth." But Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, as he went out into the courtyard entrance. Just then, a rooster crowed. When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them!" But Peter denied it again. Moments later, some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You're a Galilean. You must be one of them." Then Peter began to shout, curse and swear, "I'm telling you, I don't know this man you're talking about!" Straight away the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." Realising what he had done, he broke down and wept.

Reflect:

Sometimes our friends know us better than we think. For Peter, it was the sound of the cockerel crowing that reminded him of the words that Jesus had predicted.

1. **Listen to the sounds of birds in your neighbourhood. See if you can see any around you.**
2. Look at the conversation happening in the reading. If you were Peter, what would you have done? How often do you claim to know Jesus?
3. Think about how often you deny knowing Jesus. Is it amongst your friends, your family, or both?



Prayer Stop 5: Jesus is Condemned

Read Mark 15: 6-15:

During Passover, Pilate always freed one prisoner chosen by the people and at that time there was a prisoner named Barabbas. He and some others had been arrested for murder during a riot. The crowd now came and asked Pilate to set a prisoner free, just as he usually did. Pilate asked them, "Do you want me to free the king of the Jews?" Pilate knew that the chief priests had brought Jesus to him because they were jealous. But the chief priests told the crowd to ask Pilate to free Barabbas. Then Pilate asked the crowd, "What do you want me to do with this man you say is the king of the Jews?" They yelled, "Nail him to a cross!" Pilate asked, "But what crime has he done?" "Nail him to a cross!" they yelled even louder. Now Pilate wanted to please the crowd and keep them on side, so he set Barabbas free. Then he ordered his soldiers to beat Jesus with a whip and nail him to a cross.

Reflect:

It is still so easy to be influenced by the 'crowd'. Even today, we follow the headlines and the media in 'crucifying' people; gossiping about them, condemning them and writing them off.

- 1. Remember stories of people in New Zealand in the media or groups society condemned and written off.** Ask God to bring people to mind.
2. Think and reflect about your attitude towards them. Who influences your thinking? The media, or your faith?
3. As you reflect, ask God to show you the times where you have been a judgemental voice in the hostile crowd pointing the finger at others and falsely condemning them.
4. Is there anything you need to change? Ask God for forgiveness for those times when you have mistakenly just followed the crowd in condemning and crucifying others. Invite God to give you a heart of compassion and to reveal the image of God in others.



Prayer Stop 6: Jesus is Mocked

Read Mark 15: 16-20:

The soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters and called out the rest of the troops. They dressed him in a purple robe and they put a crown they had made out of thorn branches on his head. Then they saluted him and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" and they struck him on the head with a stick, spat on him and dropped to their knees pretending to worship him. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him off to be nailed to a cross.

Reflect:

We have all been guilty of saying things that we later regret: the unkind word, a hurtful comment, an insensitive remark... trying to make ourselves look big, at another person's expense.

- 1. See if you can find any plants with sharp thorns, barbs or sharp branches on trees. Notice what is sharp and painful.** These thorns represent the thorns on the crown, of hurt and mockery- small, prickly, and painful. Think about the deliberate things you have said that have hurt others.
- 2. Now look for any flowers you can see. Notice the petals, the softness of them.** They represent the real beauty and dignity of each person we may have hurt. As you look at flowers, pray for anyone you have hurt through your words and actions.
- 3. As you notice a flower, pray also for those who have hurt and caused you pain with their words.** Ask God to bring you to a place where you can forgive those who mock you and let your dignity be restored.



Prayer Stop 7: Jesus is Crucified

Read Mark 15: 22-32:

The soldiers brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull"). They offered him wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain, but he refused it. Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross and gambled with a dice to decide who would get each piece of his clothes. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign was fastened to the cross, announcing the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews." They also crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left. The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Let's see you save yourself and come down from the cross!" The chief priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! If he is the Messiah, let this King of Israel come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus said cruel things about him.

Reflect:

Crucifixion was a most agonising death. Slow, painful, and suffocating.

1. Dip your finger in and **taste the vinegar or lemon** – as you do, notice how bitter and sharp it is.
2. As you taste the vinegar, take a moment to pray for those in your street and neighbourhood who are struggling, unwell, or fearful of death in this time we find ourselves in. Ask God to be close to them.
3. **Take your nails and hold them in your hand.** As you hold the nails think about the situations, memories, guilty feelings, failure and brokenness that you would like nailed to the cross with Jesus. Give thanks to God for the way God took away our guilt and shame when Jesus died on the cross and opened the way for us to receive forgiveness.



Prayer Stop 8: Jesus is Abandoned

Read Mark 15: 33-37:

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!" Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last.

Reflect:

Jesus came as the light of the world.

1. **Light your match or hold a flame on your lighter.** Hold the flame in the breeze for as long as you can and let it go out.

2. Pray:

Jesus, light of the world have mercy on us.

Jesus light of the world, you let your light shine before all people and the darkness of the world and it did not understand you.

3. Reflect on the times when you have felt abandoned or alone. In your prayer, leave what troubles you with Jesus in the tomb, resting, waiting for the dawn Easter Sunday.



Prayer Station 9: Jesus is Buried

Read Mark 15: 42-46:

This all happened on Friday - the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if was true. The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance.

Reflect:

As our journey with Jesus arrives at the tomb where he was buried, we finish our walk with the expectant hope of his resurrection.

- 1. Hold your strip of linen, piece of cloth or scarf in your hand as you walk home.** Keep silence with Jesus meditating on the journey you have done and the place of waiting.
2. When you get home, fold it carefully and place it somewhere you will see it each day until Sunday as a way of being part of the vigil at the tomb.



Closing your prayer

Reflect:

When you get home, take some time by yourself. Don't rush to leave the contemplative space, or feel pressured to start talking again straight away.

Think about where God caught your attention, and why that might be. What might God be saying to you?

You might like to journal, reflect creatively, or share with another what this was.

When you have an idea of what God might be saying, think about the symbolic actions you took on your walk.

Perhaps there's someone you need to forgive, or something you need to follow through on to be obedient to what God is saying to you.

Think about what you might need to start, stop or keep doing to live into greater freedom.

Prayer:

You might like to end by repeating the prayer we started with, thinking now about the daily walk we do with Jesus:

Lead us Lord as we walk with you.

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you,

for by your Cross you have redeemed the world.

Amen.

