



Were You There?

A Communal
Stations OF THE *Cross*
Service

Deacon Paul Crafts

Were You There?

The Way of the Cross is, in essence, a pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem that are believed to be the path Jesus walked with his cross to his death. Even though St. Jerome speaks of crowds of pilgrims from all countries who used to visit the holy places in his day, the devotions as we more-or-less pray them today do not appear to have become widespread before the seventeenth century.

In this booklet, we are drawn to meditate not only on our Lord's suffering, but what part we might play in them. At each Station we are presented with another participant in the drama of our salvation and through that person are called to ask of ourselves, "Was I there? Am I still? What part did I play...am I still playing?" The Scripture passages and meditations are intended to help us experience anew that Jesus walked "the way" not only for me but because of me, out of his infinite love for me. These meditations are written to be used in a communal celebration but can also be used by individuals. In any event, I urge you to not rush through them. Allow the events, the people involved and the moments of silence to draw you ever deeper into the mystery of our salvation in Jesus.

These Stations have their origin in a form of the devotion written for use at St. Paul Parish in Fenton, MO. I am most grateful to the parishioners there for allowing me to pray newly composed Stations with them over the years. May God, in his mercy, bless us as we seek our answer to the question, "Were you there?"

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Prologue (Please stand.)

Reader: A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah
Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:3-6

See, my servant shall prosper;
the shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.

Just as there were many who were astonished at him—
so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals—

so he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

[My servant] was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one of those from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

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 had gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

FIRST STATION
Jesus Is Condemned

Leader: We adore you, O Christ,
and we praise you.

**ALL: Because by your holy
cross you have redeemed
the world.**

Leader: Pilate asked him, “So
you are a king?” Jesus
answered, “You say that I
am a king. For this I was
born, and for this I came
into the world, to testify to
the truth. Everyone who
belongs to the truth listens
to my voice.” —John 18:37



Leader: **PILATE WAS THERE...**

Who is this man? he thought to himself. *Why have they brought him to me? My wife told me to have nothing to do with him! But the crowd is shouting "Crucify him?" Why?*

"Well, they say he is their king, so I'll dress him like one, present him with a few stripes and robe and crown. I'll give them a king."

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is your king!"

ALL: We have no king but Caesar!

Leader: A weak and unscrupulous judge sentences an innocent man to die. Jesus' only "crime" was his love for us. The Father gave Jesus to us so that the injustice that still happens far too often in our world may be overcome.

Let us consider those times when we have condemned someone and looked down on them as if we were their king, as if we couldn't possibly have anything to do with them. Where have we set ourselves up to be the lord of life?

(Pause for silent reflection)

**ALL: Lord Jesus,
who are you?
What shall I do with you?
How could you love me this way?
I, the one who too often says,
"Have nothing to do with him!"
Help me to accept you as the king of my heart
and the Lord of my life.
Amen.**

SECOND STATION
Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ,
and we praise you.

**ALL: Because by your holy
cross you have redeemed
the world.**

Leader: Come to me, all you that
are weary and are carrying
heavy burdens, and I will
give you rest. Take my yoke
upon you, and learn from
me; for I am gentle and
humble 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: **A CARPENTER WAS THERE...**

In a Roman workshop a carpenter is finishing the work on Jesus' cross. He is thinking, *I could be making fine, sturdy furniture for a royal family or a beautiful altar for a holy priest. Instead, I'm forced to make this post and beam for an ugly purpose.*

Why me? I'm better than this!

The guard and the accused are waiting, and everyone's in a hurry, but I'm not done yet. This work is not quite right. I don't deserve this! But I'm sure he does!

**ALL: Dump the cross on him and get home to your family.
It is good enough.**

Leader: After being beaten and mocked, Jesus is presented with the instrument of his own destruction. He freely embraces it and in so doing takes ownership of what is happening.

Let us consider a time when we have received some sort of cross and whether we have embraced it in hope or cursed it.

(Pause for silent reflection)

**ALL: Lord Jesus,
all too often I feel trapped,
sentenced to a life I never anticipated.
Things seldom seem to work out
the way I hoped or planned.
Help me to do things I don't want to do.
Help me to embrace my cross with hope,
knowing that you hold me as firmly
as you held the cross you carried.
Amen.**

Conclusion

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And with your Spirit.

Leader: Father,
bless us who have meditated upon
the passion and death of your Son,
our Lord, Jesus Christ. Have mercy
on us, Lord, and console us in our
sorrows; graciously hear and answer
our pleas for your divine assistance;
strengthen in us the hope of rising
with him to newness of life.

ALL: Amen.

(If a priest or deacon is presiding:)

Leader: May almighty God bless us, the
Father, and the Son and the Holy
Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

(If prayed individually or when a priest or
deacon is not presiding:)

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect
us from all evil and bring us to
everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.

Leader: Go in peace.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

