

This is a service intended for Good Friday. It is based on an idea given to me by the brilliant Rev Deborah Murray of Kemble-Sarawak Pastoral Charge (Toronto Conference)

The idea is to take the “stations of the cross” and put a modern, everyday image in our mind. I have provided an idea for each station, but the beauty of the concept is that you can use anything that you would associate with that station.

This can be done by multiple leaders or one. It can be done in a format where people visit each station, or each station can be put at the front of the church and pointed to at the appropriate times. It is very effective. The descriptions of the “stations of the cross” come from

<http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/child/stations/index.html>.

The other reflection on each image is my words. This is meant to be used, re-imagined, copied and shared as you will.

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The 14 Stations of the Cross

Stations are places where people wait while they are going from one place to another. This is our purpose today to transport – transform ourselves in faith through each story. The earliest followers walked the way of Jesus – told the stories to help one another endure. We get so lost in trying to understand the details of the story – so foreign to us – that we miss the meaning. ..

Today as we visit each station of the cross. May we find a meaning for each of us. May we leave each one of these burdens here at the cross, that we may walk away as people free in faith.

First Station: Trial (object: gavel, judges seat)

Mark 14: 55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him."

In our country we assume the right to a Fair trial... a chance to disprove charges. We associate trials with judgment, but also with the fairness we have come to expect in Canada. To us it represents order and process.

Jesus is standing before angry people who are yelling and saying mean, hurtful things to him. They scream at him. Some of them tell lies about him, saying that he did bad things.

Think for a moment about things that people have said about you. Times you have been accused of something you haven't done. This station represents the lies that have been told about us. Lies that we have had no chance to fairly defend ourselves against. Think of them and leave them here.

Second Station: Bearing the Cross (object: big box- heavy)

When the soldiers put a big, heavy cross on Jesus' shoulders, Prisoners condemned to death were required to carry the horizontal bar of the cross to the place of execution, where the vertical bar was a post permanently positioned on the ground. It was a huge, heavy piece of wood. It was a struggle to carry. Think about the burdens we bearthe loads we carry. About the things that happen that are hard. Circumstances, or events beyond our control. Things that are hard for us to handle, that weigh us down with the burden of them. Leave the load of carrying them here at the cross.

Third Station: The first fall (object: The ladder)

Jesus is so tired as he walks along the road with the heavy cross on his shoulders. Then Jesus falls, and the soldiers yell at him more. Jesus prays "God, help me remember that you are here."

Have you ever had a hard time with something? A ladder represents fear. To go up a ladder is a scary thing, you are off the ground, in a perilous place going to somewhere higher.

The first fall represents the things that we fear that come true. We almost expect to fall off a ladder, and when we do we really get hurt.

The first fall invites us to leave the things that we feared the most, the ones that came true. Think on them and leave them here.

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother (object: baby and Mom hospital bracelet)

As Jesus walks slowly with the cross on his shoulders, a woman comes up to him. It's Jesus' mother, Mary. How sad for them to see each other now. Mary feels so sad because she sees how much he is suffering, and Jesus sees the sadness Mary feels. Even though they both know that God is with them, they can't even say anything to each other, because they are so sad.

We don't know the habits of the ancient world with babies and Mothers. In our modern world you have a baby and they place a bracelet on your wrist with your name, and on the wrist of the child as well. At this point the child's identity is tied to the mother. Baby boy or girl and mother's name... no identity of their own. Almost instantly that changes, the child is named and they go off from there to find their own way. Our ability to protect them and shelter them is gone. This station represents for us the times our children, or parents, or siblings, or friends, or anyone we call family, go off on a path that we can't change, one of heart ache, even death. This station reminds us that even though we can not change the path someone chooses, we watch and suffer, and they know somehow that we love them. That's all we can do. We stand with Mary at this station, wishing things were different...leaving the rest in God's hands.

Fifth and Sixth Station: Simon and Veronica (object: a circle of friends)

Jesus is so tired that the soldiers know he cannot carry the heavy cross by himself. So they look around and see someone who looks strong enough to

help Jesus carry this cross. This person's name is Simon. Tradition (though not scripture) tells us that, a woman pushes her way out of the crowd and stands in front of Jesus. She takes a clean cloth and gently wipes Jesus' face. Jesus is so thankful that he leaves a picture of his face on her cloth. Veronica's Veil was a venerated artifact for 100's of years –said to have had the power to heal.

Think about the times that you have helped someone else. Sometimes helping someone can be difficult, for so many different reasons. We all have things that we need to do. When we put them aside and help others - we are walking the walk. Sometimes, like Veronica we may have done something that we thought was very small or unimportant , but that God transformed to something great. At this station we place our circle of friendship and the willingness and opportunity we have to befriend others. May we remember that no act of friendship is every too small to make a difference

Seventh Station: A second Fall (object: physically walk a few steps and stumble)

How very tired, weak, and sad Jesus is now. Even though he keeps trying to walk with the heavy cross, he just can't keep going. The noise from the crowd and from the soldiers makes him feel even worse. Then Jesus falls, because he just can't take another step.

Did you ever fall when you were walking , tripped over something you didn't expect to be there – or tripped over something that wasn't even there just tripped – unexpectedly. This fall represents the things that have happened to us – that we didn't expect, that we didn't see coming, mistakes we couldn't have avoided, situations we walked blindly into. The stuff that tripped us up that we didn't have warning about. The times we just found ourselves on the ground trying to figure out what on earth just happened, checking for broken bones and scrapped knees. We leave those moments of heartache and bruised pride here.

Eighth Station: Meeting the Women (a candle)

After Jesus gets up, he continues on the road carrying his heavy cross. He passes some women who are crying because they are so sad to see Jesus suffer. But instead of thinking only of himself and how bad he feels, Jesus tells the women not to keep crying because of him. He tells them, instead, to take care of others. This station represents the times we have held the light out for someone else. No matter how we ourselves have felt, we have thought about their feelings first and have been the light in the darkness.

Ninth Station: A third Fall (object: a stool)

Jesus is so tired now that he can hardly take another step. It is hard for him to breathe. He has been walking a long time along the dusty road, and he has no energy left. He just can't go on anymore. This stool represents bad decisions that we have made in haste, in stubbornness, the things that "seemed like a good idea at the time" but lead to a fall. Like standing on a stool or other improper climbing equipment and reaching to far up or out – and tumbling down. Predictable mistakes that we went head first into anyway. The times we tried but did not succeed. We leave those moments here.

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped naked (object: clothing)

Finally Jesus reaches the hill that is the end of the road he has to walk. Jesus knows that he will die here. But before he dies, the soldiers will do more to him. They pull off his long robe, and almost all his clothes are taken from him. Jesus stands in front of the crowd with only a small piece of cloth covering part of his body.

Have you ever felt like you were standing naked. That someone had stripped you of your dignity, your covering. A time when you had no protection, all your flaws revealed. This station of the cross is for those times. We've all been there and Jesus was to.

Eleventh Station: He is nailed to the cross (object: hammer some nails into a board)

The soldiers nail Jesus to the cross. The nails on the cross have come to mean many things to people in our tradition. Today as we hear these nails being pounded into the wood, we hear every word any one has every spoken in hurt to us. Every mean word, criticism, undeserved insult, angry, hurtful words that people have said to us. These words get nailed to the cross. Let them stay there and never hear them again.

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies (object: blow out the candle)

Finally, after the long walk, after falling three times, after having the men beat him, after being nailed to the cross and suffering on the cross, Jesus bows his head and dies. Death is final, there's no change to it. WE represent the death of Jesus with the darkness, the absence of light. The darkness that the Bible speaks of... was not literal but a figurative understanding of the belief that God was not happy with this moment in time, with this injustice.

May we understand that that same darkness comes into the world whenever injustice is done, when violence is enacted, when children are abused, when bombs are dropped, when people are executed and murdered. The light goes out because God notices these events and is not pleased.

Thirteenth Station: His body is taken down (Object: tissue box)

Now Jesus' lifeless body is taken down from the cross. No more pain or suffering for Jesus; all the pain is over. How sad Jesus' friends are. They are crying as they hold his body.

This station represents all the tears we have cried over someone we love, When we have lost those we love to death. The tears we cry and cry and cry, the tears we have kept inside...

This station allows our tears to flow in sadness, in grief.

Fourteenth Station: He is laid in the tomb (Object: blanket)

Jesus' friends wash his body and wrap it in a clean sheet. They touch his body gently, and then they put his body into a tomb. When they are finished, they push a very large stone over the entrance, so that no one can go inside. Now there is darkness in the tomb where Jesus' body lies, and all of his friends go home because they are very sad and tired.

This is one of those moments when we can not pretend that something else is happening. There is nothing worse than standing at the grave or coffin of someone we love and having to leave. I often use the words... the walk away from here... are the hardest steps you will ever take at the graveside because we know how that feels. It is final. Their life with us on this physical earth is no more. Think of every time you have had to feel that way and leave those feelings here at the tomb of Jesus.