



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death.

Jesus is captured, taken away, stripped of his garments, interrogated, tortured, and crowned with sharp thorns. He is then handed over to be condemned to death, by Pontius Pilate.

As Pilate passes judgment on Jesus, he reminds Jesus that he has the power to give Him life or death.

How easy is it to play the part of Pilate? Can we sometimes make a judgement on people based on the way society might judge them? Who do we condemn? Who are the people our society looks down on? Have we ever felt judged unfairly?

*We adore you O Christ, and we praise you,
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Station 2: Jesus receives his cross

Jesus was led away by soldiers and made to carry the cross by himself. A cross is not just a piece of wood, it is everything that makes life difficult. Jesus carried the crosses of his life without complaint.

Many people in our world, our towns, our schools, our parishes are carrying heavy burdens. There are burdens that we all carry, some are obvious, but some are hidden. There are the burdens of illness, pain and disability, of old age, dependence, and caring for someone who no longer knows who we are. There are the burdens of constant fear, of loneliness and of isolation.

What is weighing people down in our communities? What are they worried about? What small actions could we take to offer support?

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Station 3: Jesus falls

Under the weight of the cross, Jesus falls for the first time. Surrounded by so many people, yet so alone, he is coldly dragged to his feet by the Roman soldiers.

Here, we see in Jesus, that we all need help getting back up sometimes. The pain was already unimaginable, but there was no-one to help him. Instead, the soldiers and crowd heckling him. Somehow, he finds the strength to pick himself up and continue his journey.

Nobody should have to feel that sense of struggle we see with Jesus. Who has fallen, or is falling and needs our help?

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In these first three stations we see how authority can impact and literally change the course of history. Some people have authority simply because of their role whilst others have earned a level of trust and influence over people. It is the influence and power of a few that brought Jesus in front of Pilate. It is the influence of many that mean as he walks this journey feeling alone and abandoned.

This could be a good moment to pause and reflect through discussion on the questions below.

Who are some people you think have authority in your community, based on their knowledge? Who are some people who have authority, due to their commanding manner or confidence? Who has the power to influence you?

Somebody in authority is someone who leads with confidence, someone who has power to influence others. We need to think about the positive authority figures.

For just a few moments, with those around you, write a list of 5 people in our local community, who we could ask to help us make poverty a priority this Lent? Could the local supermarket manager help us or MP/Councillor? Could we reach out to local footballer or an online influencer?

Station 4: Jesus meets his mother

When Jesus and his mother meet, they just look at each other. Words cannot express how they feel. What he saw in her eyes must have hurt him more than the pain of his wounds. This, for Jesus, must have been the most painful time of all.

There are so many parents out there, who are hurting because their children are in difficult situations, beyond their control. We see Mary's pain in the mothers and fathers who watch their children making dangerous and difficult choices. We hear her pain in the stories of those who have had to flee their own country and find their families now making dangerous journeys or residing in a hotel and living in a state of unknown. We feel Mary's pain through the parents who, no matter how hard they work, can't make the money stretch to feed the family the whole month. How do we show value to those who love and care for us?

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Station 5: Simon helps Jesus

A man called Simon, a stranger to the town, a reluctant helper, is pulled from the crowd and as he pleads with the soldiers to pick someone else, he is forced to help Jesus bear the weight of the cross.

How often do I pass up an opportunity to help someone in need?
Do I let what others may think of me, stop me from reaching out to those who are struggling?
Who are the people we know in the local area, that are supporting different groups?
What ideas do we have for ways to support them?

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Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

The crowd are hateful. Even the man helping Jesus to bear the weight of the cross, wishes he wasn't there. Veronica steps out. Her sense of compassion stronger than the fear she feels. She reaches out and wipes his face.

Veronica refuses to treat Jesus differently, despite the danger of persecution from the soldiers and the crowd. She steps out bravely, driven by kindness.

Kindness is often an overlooked word, sometimes believed to be linked with weakness. Yet, kindness is sometimes a hard decision and when offered, always significant. Do we aspire to be thought of as kind in our community?
Where have we experienced kindness recently?

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In these stations we see Jesus in a number of encounters with different people.

Pope Francis has asked all of us to help create a culture of encounter.

'A culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, a culture where we can also speak with those who think differently'.

This could be a good moment to pause and reflect through discussion on the questions below.

Who are the people we encounter in our community who might need help?

Who, like Veronica, could we reach out in kindness too?

Which groups and individuals might need our help and might feel on the margins of society?

Frederic Ozanam is the founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society. He said there is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. He said 'our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these two camps in order to accomplish by love, what justice alone cannot do'. What do you think he is asking us to do in this statement?



Station 7: Jesus falls again

Even with the help of a stranger, the weight of the cross is unbearable and Jesus once again stumbles and falls. The soldiers enraged by the slow pace, force him to his feet and push him onwards.

How bored the soldiers have become. Their patience has run out and they just want the task done. There is no care – this is a prisoner and a criminal.

How many chances do we give people?

Do we grow tired if the same problems reoccur?

Do we always give our best when we meet people who need our help, or can we become driven by the task in hand and getting the job done?

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Station 8: Jesus meets the women

The women of Jerusalem wept when they saw how Jesus suffered. Jesus recognised their distress; he broke his silence for the first time, spoke to them and said 'Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children'

Does the suffering of others affect us? How does it make us feel?

Members of the SVP believe strongly that they are called to act on that feeling of discomfort or distress.

It is often women that we see being key instigators of positive change in our communities.

Yet every day, in every country in the world, women are confronted by discrimination and inequality. They face violence, abuse and unequal treatment at home, at work and in their wider communities – and are denied opportunities to learn, to earn and to lead. Women form the majority of those living in poverty.

Who are the important women in our lives?

How have they helped shape us?

What women in our lives could we say thank you to, today?

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Station 9: Jesus falls again and is taken to the place where he is stripped.

The soldiers have had enough. As Jesus falls again their impatience takes over.

He is dragged to his feet, forced forward and as the final destination is reached, they strip Jesus of his clothes and of his dignity.

As the clothes were ripped from Jesus, he is stripped in front of a hostile mob.

He holds nothing back of himself and sacrifices it all for us.

As his robes are stripped, so his dignity is stripped from him.

What does the word dignity mean to you?

How important is our dignity?

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In these reflections we are challenged to explore the word dignity more deeply.

In the stations we have journeyed through, we see how Jesus is treated as a prisoner; we are challenged to consider how women are treated in our world and we see the moment when all of Jesus' dignity is physically stripped in front of the mob.

This could be a good moment to pause and reflect through discussion on the questions below.

Why is giving a person their dignity important? Which people in our community might sometimes have their dignity threatened?

Louise de Marillac, one of the women of the SVP, said 'Hunt down poverty in order to give humanity its dignity'. What do you think she was saying to us in this statement?

Station 10: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Huge nails of iron are hammered through his wrists and feet. Pinned down, pain coursing through his entire body – he cannot move.

Hands that wiped away blindness, cured lepers, blessed the vulnerable and challenged unjust systems in the temple, are now restricted, held in place. In this moment, Jesus, in his suffering, offers everything for our salvation.

What are the things restricting us from helping those we see in need?

Following Jesus' example what could we offer?

What gifts, skills and ideas do we have to help those most in need?

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Station 11: Jesus dies on a cross

It takes 3 hours. In his final hours, despite his own indescribable pain, he comforts the prisoner beside him and begs his Father to forgive those who are putting him to death. **(A moment of silence)**

The moment he dies, the veil of the temple is torn in two. Even the centurion's heart, in that moment, like the world, is changed forever.

The moment that Jesus died, the Gospels recount that the veil of the Temple was torn in two, the earth shook, rocks split, and tombs were opened. It was customary in Jewish tradition that when someone heard of the death of a loved one, they tore their shirt over their heart as a sign of sorrow. Thus, symbolically we can see the tearing of the veil of the Temple as an act of the Father in Heaven at the death of His divine Son.

In our world today, so much forgiveness is needed; hunger, poverty, violence, war, corruption – the list can seem endless. As Jesus dies on Calvary, he challenges us to love our enemies, to let go of hurt, to ask for forgiveness and when we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive, to ask God to do it for us. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Take a few moments to think of, and pray in your own heart, for the many situations in our world where justice and mercy are needed.

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Station 12: Jesus is taken down and laid in the tomb

Now Mary holds her son once more before his body is taken and laid in the tomb of a friend. For those who have followed him, loved him and believed in him, this ending seems impossible.

And yet we know that the tomb is not a place where he will lay for long. For this is not the end of the story, but a place where even death will be conquered and transformed by love.

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In 3 days, when Jesus rises from the dead, he will open wide the gates of hope. Through his death and rising injustice, pain and death will be conquered. This Lent we have an opportunity to help transform situations in our world and communities and the tomb reminds us of this. Jesus has shown us on the cross that love can transform all.

This could be a good moment to pause and reflect through discussion on the questions below.

Together we have travelled the stations of the cross. We have walked with Jesus and reflected. We have seen that love has the ability to transform. We have considered who has authority and the ability to influence people in a positive way. We have thought about who we encounter in our own community who might need help and we have considered what dignity is and how to show it in all we do.

What action of love could your group take to transform the lives of an individual or group?

Which influential people are you going to need help from and how are you going to reach out to them?

Which group in your community do you want to offer support to? Who is struggling?

How will you ensure that dignity is at the forefront of the plan you put together?