

STATIONS OF THE CROSS, FIRST MARTYRS CHURCH
GOOD FRIDAY 1996

1st Station: Pilate condemns Jesus to death

CHRIST In Pilate's hands, my friends,
I see my Father's will.
Though Pilate is unjust
he is the lawful Governor
and he has power over me.

And so the Son of Man obeys a son of man.

If I can bow to Pilate's rule
because this is my Father's will,
can you refuse obedience to those
I place over you?

MAN My Jesus, my Lord,
Obedience cost you your life.
For me it costs so little
and yet it seems like everything:
it is the surrender of my will - no more -
and yet how hard it is
for me to 'give in'.

Remove the blinds from my eyes
that I may see that it is you whom I obey
in all who control me.

Lord, it is you.

V We adore you O Christ, and we bless you;
R Because by your Holy Cross you have
redeemed the world.

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2nd station: Jesus is given the Cross

CHRIST The pain, the pain.
How every part of me aches

as the lash tears into me.
Their whip covers every part of my back.
I cannot think of anything
except the pain.

Yet as the 39 strokes are done,
I see their pain:
the soldier's agony.
They are lost; they break my body
because they are without hope, without faith.
The cruelty is only a sign of their insecurity.
Pity them, my friend,
as they laugh, the band of thorns in their hands,
preparing to crown me,
the Lord they do not know.

Yet strangely they hand me the Cross in
silence.

Only this Cross, with all its in-built torture and
terror, seems to break through their hysteria.
Do they know, do they sense
that all that they work for has failed?
That in my death is the birth of new life?

MAN Lord, how can I pity them?

They had power to be fair to you
yet they humiliated you.
But I do understand.
They acted out of cowardice
taking it out on the weaker man.
You would not fight back
because you knew that violence only breeds violence.

Lord, you are the King of peace.
Bring peace into my own heart
even when I have been wronged.

Take away my pride. Let me simply love too - like you
did.

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3rd station: Jesus falls under the weight of the cross

CHRIST Completely drained of strength
I lie, collapsed, on the cobblestones.
My body cannot move.
No blows, no kicks, can rouse it up.

Yet my will they cannot touch.
My will is mine -
And so is yours...

Know this, my friend
your body may be broken,
but no force on earth
and none in hell
can take away your will.

Your will is yours.

MAN My Lord,

I see you take a moments rest
then rise and stagger on.
I see your resolve to do your Father's will.

Lord, when all my strength is gone
and guilt and self-reproach
press me to earth and seem to hold me fast,
protect me from the sin of Judas -
save me from despair.

Never let me feel that any sin of mine
is greater than your love.
No matter what my past has been,
show me how to begin anew.

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4th station: Jesus meets his mother Mary

CHRIST How can I console my own mother?
 She has seen me whipped, kicked,
 driven like a beast.
 She suffers every wound.
 But though her soul cries out in agony
 she does not complain.
 She shares in the most profound way
 my martyrs death,
 just as I share in her deepest sorrow.
 We hide nothing from one another.
 That too is my Father's will.

MAN She who gave everything,
 can we not be like her?
 As she gave without counting the cost,
 as she stood and gave everything back to God,
 remind us that we have to help each other
 to find our true vocation.

 Help us to give sympathy and affection,
 time and patience to all who need us.
 Like Mary did.

 And you do.

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5th station: Simon of Cyrene is forced to help carry the Cross

CHRIST My strength is gone;
I can no longer bear the weight of the cross alone.

And so the soldiers
make Simon pick up the cross
and walk with me.

This Simon is like you, my friend.
Give me your strength.

Each time you lift some burden from another's back,
you lift as with your very hand
the cross's awful weight
that crushes me.

MAN Lord, make me realise
that every time I wipe a dish,
pick up an object off the floor,
assist a child on some small task;
each time I feed the hungry,

clothe the naked, teach the ignorant,
or lend my hand in any way -
it matters not to whom -
my name is Simon.
And the kindness that I extend to them
I really give to you.

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6th station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

CHRIST Even with the help of Simon, I walk so slowly.
The way seems so steep, the noise so intense;
my every sense is so torn by what is happening
that sweat pours from me, my eyes blurred
by it all.
The roughness of the soldiers intensifies -
"Move on, move on" they shout
and strong hands grip my arm
and boots kick against my protesting legs.

And then suddenly and unannounced
there is warmth, sympathy and care.
A cloth wipes my face, caressing me gently.
In the middle of the harshness
something soft, something loving,
something truly human and full of compassion.
I want to say thank you but no words will come.

MAN This is one of the good bits of the story:
how one of us took the risk and befriended you,
took a cloth and wiped your face.
I am proud of Veronica,
one of the few who would stand up and be counted
as one of your friends.

Yet like every meeting with you
she came away with more than she gave.
You always had that power - to give and to transform.
And so when she got home she found your face
imprinted on her cloth:
your face, your way of sharing yourself
in a way she would never forget.
Lord, even in the moment of your Passion
you gave yourself to Veronica.
As I search for you in the face of the stranger
will you imprint yourself in my life
and stay with me always?

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7th station: Jesus falls for a second time

CHRIST It is not just weakness that makes me fall again

though I am very tired.
It is not just the thought of all that is to come
on Calvary though I know my own fear.

No, my mind is just so alive with the memories of those
whom I have met over the years -
those who have not followed me,
those for whom money and power were so important,
those whose religion led them to despise me,
to fear me, to hate me.

I see too, my own friends -
how they hoped for the Kingdom
but feared the price of commitment
when others asked 'You are one of his friends, aren't you?'
Oh Peter, where were you?
Oh James, what did you really want of me?
Oh Judas, what did I do wrong?

Is it any wonder that I fall?

MAN In the face of your own sorrow
what is the use of my sorrow?
If ever I did not understand
the price you paid for my sin
I understand it now.
But I know, Lord, that you share with us
the sorrow that heals and the joy that praises
so that, forgiven, we may take our place
among your people.
So, Lord, take away the sin that corrupts us
and restore by your grace our friendship once more.

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8th station: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

CHRIST How often have I longed to take
 the children of Jerusalem
 and show them the way.
 But they refused.

But as these women weep for me
my heart mourns for them -
this city where not one stone will be left upon another,
this nation that will be flung
to the farthest corners of the world
this people who will still be reviled
until the end of the age -
I am one with them:
I seek to comfort those who comfort me.

MAN My Jesus,
 your compassion for your people
 will last from age to age.

Lord teach me, help me to learn.
When I would snap back at those who would hurt me
and lash out in temper at those who misunderstand me
or hinder me with some misguided helpfulness,
teach me to see their need,
to look at what the future holds for them.

May gentleness become a part of me.

Lord, make me kind like you.

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9th station: Jesus falls for the third time

CHRIST We have almost reached the top,
the place of the skull,
the place of common execution.
It is too much, I cannot go on.
I must rest awhile.

Yet I know there is no stopping,
no turning back, no second chance.
All that I have done has led to this moment,
and I must drink this cup of suffering.

There have been times when I could rest -
when to relax with the disciples
was my Father's own way to hasten
the coming of the Kingdom.
But now is the time to wage war with Satan:
the time to endure that evil might be overcome,
the time to die to bring new life.

My time has come, and I must rise and face it.

MAN Lord, how often I waste my time,
sitting and allowing the opportunities to pass me by,
failing to grasp the moment when it comes.
For fear of the consequences I do nothing
and for lack of faith I do too little, too late.

By the strength of your most holy passion
restore my resolve
never to waste the time you have given me
nor to fail the Kingdom for which you died.

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10th station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

CHRIST When I was a child I was dressed by my mother with such care.
Now, in her presence, my clothes are pulled from my body
- here, this seamless robe which she gave me many years
ago is thrown on the ground for the soldiers to gamble over.

And I stand naked.

Not since the first few minutes of my life
have I stood unclothed and bare.
We Jews retain our dignity by always being covered.

Yet it is the outrage meted out to the powerless;
nothing screens me from the gaze of the crowds.
All defences have gone.
The Son of Man is exhibited for all to see.
And yet my life has been one of total surrender
to the will of my Father;
of what do I need to be ashamed?

But here, on Calvary:
once more they do not see.
They neither see nor understand what I am doing for them.
It is as if I am completely covered, not completely
stripped.
They do not know who stands before them

and they cannot recognise the reality before their eyes.
That is the true shame.

MAN I cannot look up, for here I am embarrassed.

Yet, Jesus, you invite me to see you as you truly are:
without reserve, without barriers, without falsehood.

And in your openness I am exposed for what I am,
full of darkness, pride and double-standards.
I like to think that I am pure
but I need to hide so much from others
so that if I were to be exposed to the scrutiny of others
as you were
I would die in my shame.
Jesus, my Lord, pardon me all my offenses, now and

always.

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS, FIRST MARTYRS CHURCH GOOD FRIDAY 1996

11th station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

CHRIST Can you imagine what a crucifixion is like?

My executioners stretch out my arms;
they hold my hand and my wrist against the wood
and press the nail until it stabs my flesh.
Then with one heavy hammer smash
they drive it through -
and pain bursts like a bomb through my every sense.

But more
for then they seize the other arm
and again the agony explodes within me.
I long for it all to go away
as they raise up my knees

so that my feet are flat against the wood
and they hammer them fast too.

MAN My God,

I look up at you and think:
is my soul worth this much?

What can I give you in return?

I here and now accept
for all my life
whatever sickness, torment or agony may come.

O blessed cross
you bore our Saviour in his agony.
May my every action be marked with your sign,
that I may give myself as a living sacrifice
for the sake of all mankind.

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12th station: Jesus dies

CHRIST To speak, I have to raise myself
by pressing on my wrists and feet
and every move engulfs me with new waves of agony.

Yet still my mother stands below,
her heart broken, her pain so terrible.
So too John, the loving friend

who means - who meant - so much to me.

"Mother, your Son. Son, your mother".

And I, still Son too, have one more cry:
"Into your hands I commend my Spirit"

And then, when I have borne enough,
have emptied my humanity,
I let my earthly life depart.

MAN My Jesus, what can I say or do?
I deserve only to die.

Yet you desire mercy not sacrifice,
the knowledge of you not burnt offerings.

Rule and direct my heart
in the way of truth
that on the day of your appearing
I may only be counted as dead before you,
the giver of life, and love and of heavenly wisdom.

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13th station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

CHRIST It is enough.

It is enough that my poor body should be crucified
in the heat of the day
amid the insults and scorn of the soldiers,
the venom and derision of the people.
It is enough that my family and friends
should have to watch, and wait, and pray.

Now it is good enough that Pilate should let this body
be taken from the cross by those who love me;
it is good enough
that Joseph should lend his tomb, his family tomb,
that I might be taken safely away at night lest we offend
those who celebrate together the Passover.

It is enough. I accept it all.

MAN How can it be that the King of Glory
is enthroned at his birth in a manger stall
and at his death on the tree of Calvary?

How can we be so sanguine
about the way you were treated?

Unless it is to remember that is how we continue to treat
you.

A borrowed tomb, a place to 'make-do';
a half attempt at discipleship
and the desire not to offend others
in the way we practice our faith.

You know it is not enough, and so do I.

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14th station: Jesus is buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb

CHRIST So ends my life on earth.

But now another life begins
for Mary
and for Mary Magdalene,
for Peter and for John,
and for you.

My work as man is done.
My work within and through my Church
must now begin.
I look to you, my friend.

Day in, day out, from this time forward,
be my apostle,
the suffering servant,
a saint of God.

MAN My Jesus, my Lord,
you know the Spirit is as willing
as the flesh is weak.

The teachings that you did not give,
the sufferings you did not bear,
the works of love you did not do
in your short time on earth:
let me give,
and bear,
and do
through you.

But as I am so weak
help me, Lord.

V We adore you O Christ, and we bless you;
R Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the
world.

