



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

The Gathering

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All **Amen.**

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Matthew 16.24,25

The Collect

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Hymn

Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
if thou wouldst my disciple be;
deny thyself, the world forsake,
and humbly follow after me.

Take up thy cross, let not its weight
fill thy weak spirit with alarm;
his strength shall bear thy spirit up,
and brace thy heart and nerve thine arm.

Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,
nor let thy foolish pride rebel;
thy Lord for thee the cross endured,
to save thy soul from death and hell.

Take up thy cross then in his strength,
and calmly sin's wild deluge brave,
'twill guide thee to a better home,
it points to glory o'er the grave.

Take up thy cross and follow Christ,
nor think til death to lay it down;
for only those who bear the cross
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

To thee, great Lord, the One in Three,
all praise forevermore ascend:
O grant us in our home to see
the heavenly life that knows no end.

*Words: C.W.Everest (1814-77)
Tune: Breslau (German Traditional Melody)*

First Station - Jesus is condemned to death

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15.14-15

We pause to reflect.

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers
Of perception and discrimination, choice,
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,
His consciousness of self, his every sense,
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.
The man who stands there making no defence,
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels
That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.
He gives himself again with all his gifts
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away
A door swings open. This is judgment day.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Second Station - Jesus takes up his cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

And carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

John 19.17

We pause to reflect.

He gives himself again with all his gifts
And now we give him something in return.
He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,
Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,
And from these elements he forged the iron,
From strands of life he wove the growing wood,
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
He saw it all and saw that it is good.
We took his iron to edge an axe's blade,
We took the axe and laid it to the tree,
We made a cross of all that he has made,
And laid it on the one who made us free.
Now he receives again and lifts on high
The gifts he gave and we have turned awry.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Third Station - Jesus falls the first time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12.23-24

We pause to reflect.

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
And well he knows the path we make him tread
He met the devil as a roaring lion
And still refused to turn these stones to bread,
Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,
This darker path into the heart of pain.
And now he falls upon the stones that bruise
The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.
He and the earth he made were never closer,
Divinity and dust come face to face.
We flinch back from his *via dolorosa*,
He sets his face like flint and takes our place,
Staggered beneath the black weight of us all
And falls with us that he might break our fall.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Fourth Station - Jesus meets his mother

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Luke 2.33-35

We pause to reflect.

This darker path into the heart of pain
Was also hers whose love enfolded him
In flesh and wove him in her womb. Again
The sword is piercing. She, who cradled him
And gentled and protected her young son
Must stand and watch the cruelty that mars
Her maiden making. Waves of pain that stun
And sicken pass across his face and hers
As their eyes meet. Now she enfolds the world
He loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared
Who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled
In desperation on this road of tears,
All the grief-stricken in their last despair,
Are folded in the mantle of her prayer.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Fifth Station - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Luke 23.26

We pause to reflect.

In desperation on this road of tears
Bystanders and bypassers turn away
In other's pain we face our own worst fears
And turn our backs to keep those fears at bay
Unless we are compelled as this man was
By force of arms or force of circumstance
To face and feel and carry someone's cross
In Love's full glare and not his backward glance.
So Simon, no disciple, still fulfilled
The calling: 'take the cross and follow me'.
By accident his life was stalled and stilled
Becoming all he was compelled to be.
Make me, like him, your pressed man and your priest,
Your *alter Christus*, burdened and released.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Sixth Station - Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one 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.

Isaiah 53.2-5

We pause to reflect.

Bystanders and bypassers turn away
And wipe his image from their memory
She keeps her station. She is here to stay
And stem the flow. She is the reliquary
Of his last look on her. The bloody sweat
And salt tears of his love are soaking through
The folds of her devotion and the wet
folds of her handkerchief, like the dew
Of morning, like a softening rain of grace.
Because she wiped the grime from off his skin,
And glimpsed the godhead in his human face
Whose hidden image we all bear within,
Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain
The face of god is shining once again.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Seventh Station - Jesus falls a second time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the Lord.

Psalm 40.1-3

We pause to reflect.

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain,
Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,
He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
When we are hurt again. With us he bears
The cruel repetitions of our cruelty;
The beatings of already beaten men,
The second rounds of torture, the futility
Of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.
And by this fall he finds the fallen souls
Who passed a first, but failed a second trial,
The souls who thought their faith would hold them whole
And found it only held them for a while.
Be with us when the road is twice as long
As we can bear. By weakness make us strong.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Eighth Station - The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

Luke 23.27-31

We pause to reflect.

He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
But still he holds the road and looks in love
On all of us who look on him. Our pain
As close to him as his. These women move
Compassion in him as he does in them.
He asks us both to weep and not to weep.
Women of Gaza and Jerusalem,
Women of every nation where the deep
Wounds of memory divide the land
And lives of all your children, where the mines
Of all our wars are sown: Afghanistan ,
Iraq, the Cote d'Ivoire... he reads the signs
And weeps with you and with you he will stay
Until the day he wipes your tears away.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Ninth Station - Jesus falls a third time

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 2.22-24

We pause to reflect.

He weeps with you and with you he will stay
When all your staying power has run out
You can't go on, you go on anyway.
He stumbles just beside you when the doubt
That always haunts you, cuts you down at last
And takes away the hope that drove you on.
This is the third fall and it hurts the worst
This long descent through darkness to depression
From which there seems no rising and no will
To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.
Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,
And you could almost wish for that defeat
Except that in the cold hell where you freeze
You find your God beside you on his knees.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Tenth Station - Jesus is stripped of his garments

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.'

This was to fulfil what the scripture says,
'They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.'

And that is what the soldiers did.

John 19.23-25

We pause to reflect.

You can't go on, you go on anyway
He goes with you, his cradle to your grave.
Now is the time to loosen, cast away
The useless weight of everything but love
For he began his letting go before,
Before the worlds for which he dies were made,
Emptied himself, became one of the poor,
To make you rich in him and unafraid.
See as they strip the robe from off his back
They strip away your own defences too
Now you could lose it all and never lack
Now you can see what naked Love can do
Let go these bonds beneath whose weight you bow
His stripping strips you both for action now

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Eleventh Station - Jesus is nailed to the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

John 15.12-17

We pause to reflect.

See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light
We see what love can bear and be and do,
And here our saviour calls us to his side
His love is free, his arms are open wide.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Twelfth Station - Jesus dies on the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split... Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Matthew 27.45-56

We pause to reflect.

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black
We watch him as he labours to draw breath
He takes our breath away to give it back,
Return it to it's birth through his slow death.
We hear him struggle breathing through the pain
Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,
Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain
And drew us into consciousness from sleep.
His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Mantles his world in his one atmosphere
And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
To cleanse it and renew. His final breath
Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Thirteenth Station - Jesus is taken down from the cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

John 19.31-37

We pause to reflect.

His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Now on this cross his body breathes no more
Here at the centre everything is still
Spent, and emptied, opened to the core.
A quiet taking down, a prising loose
A cross-beam lowered like a weighing scale
Unmaking of each thing that had its use
A long withdrawing of each bloodied nail,
This is ground zero, emptiness and space
With nothing left to say or think or do
But look unflinching on the sacred face
That cannot move or change or look at you.
Yet in that prising loose and letting be
He has unfastened you and set you free

**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Fourteenth Station - The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you

All **because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 19.38-42

We pause to reflect.

Here at the centre everything is still
Before the stir and movement of our grief
Which bears it's pain with rhythm, ritual,
Beautiful useless gestures of relief.
So they anoint the skin that cannot feel
Soothing his ruined flesh with tender care,
Kissing the wounds they know they cannot heal,
With incense scenting only empty air.
He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.
The love that's poured in silence at old graves
Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,
Is never lost. In him all love is found
And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Hymn

**When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748) - Galatians 6.14

Tune: Rockingham (ad. E. Miller, 1735-1807)

The Conclusion

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of our sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear
may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

All **Lord Jesus Christ,**
we thank you for all the benefits you have won for us,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for us.
Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Standing at the foot of the cross,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

All **Our Father who art in heaven,**
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Dismissal

All **We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Christ was manifested in the body,
vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations, believed in throughout the world,
glorified in high heaven.

All **We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world**

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

May God bless us,
that in us may be found love and humility,
obedience and thanksgiving,
discipline, gentleness and peace.

All **Amen.**

Acknowledgements

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