

Stations of the Cross

**'Ours were the wounds he was carrying,
ours the sorrows he was bearing
...and we have been healed by his bruises'**

Isaiah 53:4

These stations have been prepared by Pact, the Prison Advice and Care Trust. Pact is the major Catholic prisons charity.

Each station includes a few words from those who have lived experience of the criminal justice system. For example, former prisoners reflect on moments from their time in prison and their life afterward. People who have walked alongside family members in prison speak about how that felt.

Making the Stations of the Cross

After making the Sign of the Cross together, you may like to begin each station with this prayer:

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

As well as taking time for quiet reflection at each station, you may like to sing the verse of an appropriate hymn or add some further prayers which are meaningful to those present.



First Station Jesus is Condemned to Death

And Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him.' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Mark 15:14-15

How does it feel to be condemned or convicted of a crime?

'You feel detached from everything. You're in shock. It doesn't feel real

'I was thinking to myself, one minute you can have everything and then within seconds, it's just gone

'You've got so many emotions going through your mind. Even when they're talking, you're not taking in what they're saying.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Second Station Jesus Carries His Cross

So, they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol'gotha.

John 19:17

What burdens do we carry through our lives?

'The first time I went to prison I was 15 years old. I fell into a cycle of committing crime, misusing substances, finding myself in prison. Wanting to sort myself out but just falling back into my old ways when I was released.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Third Station Jesus Falls the First Time

Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying, while we thought of him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt; the punishment reconciling us fell on him, and we have been healed by his bruises.

Isaiah 53:4

What does falling, or failing, feel like?

'The first time I went to prison I was 24. It was quite a frightening place. I remember being stripped down, shouted at, given a number. It was quite dehumanizing. I did two years there. It took me 2 years to recover from that experience plus the shame of the fact that I'd been to prison in the first place.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Fourth Station Jesus Meets His Mother

'...and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'

Luke 2:35

We reflect on the difficulties that sometimes affect family relationships especially when they are lived out within the criminal justice system.

'I was trying to hold all the family together and not deal with how I felt because if I wobbled, everyone else would fall apart.'

'...not being able to go into the prison, not being able to visit my dad, knowing how ill he was and that he wasn't going to get better, for me it was like I was serving a prison sentence with him.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Fifth Station Simon of Cyrene Carries Jesus' Cross

They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene... who was coming in from the country, to carry His cross.

Mark 15:21

On this terrible journey, Jesus accepted help - and it came from someone he didn't know.

'I became institutionalized when it came time to be released. I was petrified of the world. I was used to a set routine and the world was a very scary place.'

'...they made a very, very difficult time a lot easier, just by having someone to talk to, or feeling you were supported.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Sixth Station Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you? And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to the least of one of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

Matthew 16:39-40

How does it feel when you are treated with care or when you receive a simple act of kindness?

'I had been arrested. I had been charged. I found myself in prison. The Catholic chaplain walked in. He said, 'my name is Michael. I'm a retired nurse and I volunteer in the chaplaincy.' He was the first person over those four or five days who never judged me, who spoke to me like a normal person, even though I'd committed this atrocious crime. That was the first time I met God'.

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Seventh Station Jesus Falls the Second Time

In all their troubles, it was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them. In his love and pity, he himself redeemed them, lifted them up, and carried them.

Isaiah 63:9

We can feel overwhelmed and lose heart at times, and even lose our hope in Jesus.

'Prison is a really difficult place to live...the emotional and psychological pain that people go through. Prison is stripping you of your identity, making you know that you are a worthless individual...it's a very lonely place, a frightening place, a violent place of power and control... and solitude.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Eighth Station Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

'Large numbers of people followed him, and women too who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep rather for yourselves and for your children...'

Luke 23:27-28

Even in the midst of His suffering, Jesus spoke to the women about their own struggles.

'I just want to try and do my best because I don't want my son to hate me and think that I never tried my best to get him back.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Ninth Station Jesus Falls the Third Time

'for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Hebrews 4:14-16

We can take courage from the way Jesus kept going on this last journey, leading to his death.

'A great deal of liberation is in knowing that God is in your heart, he's part of your life, watching over you. Whatever happens, is for a reason, that God has a plan, whether it was a good day or a bad day.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Tenth Station Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.'

Luke 23: 34-37

The scriptures tell us about the scorn and the disrespect that Jesus endured in his last hours.

'I could have a thousand pounds in my pocket, I'd steal a ten pound shirt. What's mine is mine and what's yours I'd be taking.

'I was the sort of person that would mock people if they went to church. I now understand that was based on fear of ridicule.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Eleventh Station Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

When they reached the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the two criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.'

Luke 23:33-34

Even from the cross, Jesus speaks to His Father about us.

'All my life I'd been in this defeated place. I thought I was just a bad person; a bad apple and I was just going to be like that for the rest of my life. Then I came into contact with an addiction program and I had already been praying...For the first time in my life, I was not just wanting to be a good person but trying to be a good person on a daily basis and having the tools to do it through prayer.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Twelfth Station Jesus Dies on the Cross

One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did but, in our case, we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong'. Then he said, 'Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'In truth, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise'.

Luke 23:39-43

Jesus made this promise to the convicted criminal who had spoken from his heart.

'Sometimes in your darkest hour, just knowing that God is watching over you.'

'Once I saw that God was working in my life, it changed my experience in prison. I got to the point where I felt like it melted the bars.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Thirteenth Station

The Body of Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, ...asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they came and took his body away.

John 19:38 -39

Let us reflect for a moment on the death of Jesus, the Son of God. How final it must have seemed.

'It took years to try and understand that Christ died on the cross to forgive my sins... I was sitting in a room with seven other men, and I began to cry. I said, 'How can I possibly live with myself, with what I have done?'. Then began the journey of building myself up.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

So, Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud, and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb.

Matthew 27:59-60

We know that although this seemed like the sorrowful and horrible end of the story - it was not.

'My hopes and dreams are to get out of here.'

'To stay healthy and not to be a let down anymore. To be someone for my kids to be proud of and my family.'

'Thank you, God, for releasing me from that hopeless way of life. I say that a lot.'

We pray together

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom

Closing Prayers

You may like to conclude by saying together these prayers

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory be

Finally, make the Sign of the Cross together.

Pact's vision is of a society in which justice is understood as a process of restoration and healing, in which prisons are used sparingly and as places of learning and rehabilitation, and in which the innate dignity and worth of every human being is valued.

We would like to express our appreciation to those who have shared their experiences of the criminal justice system with us and whose words we have respectfully used in the preparation of this liturgy.



Prisoners · Families · Communities
A Fresh Start Together

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