

The Way of the Cross



Guided Reflections for Good Friday

The prayers, hymns and Bible readings included in this booklet are aimed at helping us to focus our minds on the last hours before Jesus' death.

This year we must find a new way of being together and so the materials are printed here in full for you to use in whatever way is most helpful to you.

You may find that physically moving helps you. You could read each section at a different place in your garden, or a different room in your house. You may prefer to sit still but journey in your mind with Jesus on the way to the cross.

Traditionally Christians have set aside either "the last three hours" or "the last hour" to spend time at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. The suggested times in this booklet allow you to follow either pattern. You may wish to just be quiet in the gaps between the sections, or you may find it helpful to do something creative – or mundane – before returning for the next bit.

You may like to use the cross you made on Ash Wednesday or Psalm Sunday. You may find it helpful to light a candle in your home as a point of focus. Or you could include tea light candles, lighting six with the opening prayer and then extinguishing one at the end of each section, with the final one snuffed at the very end of the conclusion.

The Opening

12.00pm or 2.00pm

We meet on this Holy Day
to honour the events
of the first Good Friday.
We come from scattered lives
to offer our time and our will
to what God will teach us
through the cross of Christ.
We bring ourselves in openness
to being changed by our experiences
and pray that we may be drawn deeper
into the mysteries of Jesus' death,
that we may glory in his resurrection
and take the light of its hope to the whole world.



We Pray

God of our journeying,
you have given us a desire to follow you
and to set out in faith.
Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,
that whatever we encounter as we travel,
we may seek to glorify you by the way we live.
Amen.

Section One

12.15pm or 2.05pm

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

Hymn

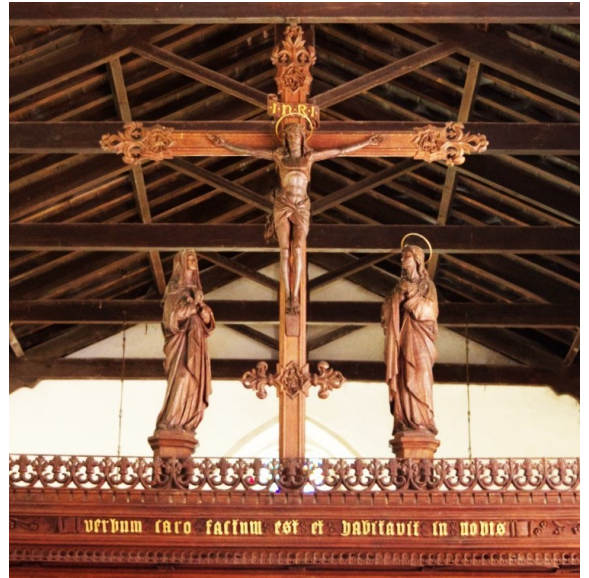
My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake my
Lord should take frail flesh, and die?

A time of quiet



Jesus is sentenced to death

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. He asked them, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' 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 15:1-15



It is all too easy to condemn, being negative.

We see in this reading what human judgement can lead to and how wrong it can be. Here is God's own son judged, condemned. See how faulty and misguided our judgement on people can be.

Jesus help us to be less judgemental in our attitudes to others. Remind us often of your saying "Judge not, that you be not judged."

A time of quiet

Prayer

Lord Jesus you were condemned to death for political expediency;
be with those who are imprisoned for the convenience of the powerful.
You were the victim of unbridled injustice;
change the minds and motives of those who oppress others.
To you, Jesus, innocent though condemned be honour and glory.
Amen

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Dedication

Christ became obedient unto death for us,
even death upon a cross.
His punishment has brought us peace.
By his wounds we are healed.
Let us walk the way of the cross
In the name of Christ.
Amen.



Section 2

12.45pm or 2.15pm

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

Hymn

He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange,
and none the longed-for Christ would know.
But O, my Friend, my Friend indeed,
who at my need his life did spend.

A time of quiet



Jesus takes up his cross

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

Mark 15:16-20, John 19:16b-17

Most of us don't want to make people suffer. We would not willingly set out to hurt another human being. But we do so – by our insensitivity, irritability, careless words, thoughtlessness. We cause others to suffer just as surely as if we placed a heavy wooden cross on their shoulders and goaded them on. Jesus help us to realise the suffering that each of us can impose on others in small ways.

A time of quiet

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you carried your cross through
the streets of Jerusalem:
be with those who are loaded with burdens
beyond their strength.
You bore the weight of our sins
when you carried the cross:
help us to realise the cost of your love for us.
To you, Jesus, bearing a cross on your own, be honour
and glory.
Amen.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.



Dedication

Christ became obedient unto death for us,
even death upon a cross.
His punishment has brought us peace.
By his wounds we are healed.
Let us walk the way of the cross
In the name of Christ.
Amen.



Section 3

1.15pm or 2.25pm

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

Hymn

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify" is all their breath,
and for his death they thirst and cry.

A time of quiet

Jesus falls under the weight of the cross

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

Physical suffering is always appalling to watch. Sometimes it can be even worse for the watcher than for the one undergoing pain. What do we do when people are suffering pain? Do we run away, scared for ourselves, unable to cope? Or do we stay, identifying ourselves with the person in pain, showing by our presence that we care and that we want to help? Jesus, help us never to run away from what is unpleasant in this life. Give us the courage to stay and to do what we can.

A time of quiet



Lord Jesus, you were worn down by fatigue;
be with those from whom life drains all energy.
You needed the help of a passing stranger:
give us the humility to receive aid from others.
To you, Jesus, weighed down with exhaustion and in need of help
be honour and glory.
Amen.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Dedication

Christ became obedient unto death for us,
even death upon a cross.
His punishment has brought us peace.
By his wounds we are healed.
Let us walk the way of the cross
In the name of Christ.
Amen.



Section Four

1.45pm or 12.35pm

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

Hymn

They rise and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
he Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.

A time of quiet

Someone helps Jesus carry the cross

Simone of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. Matthew 27:32-33



Simon was a black man. He stuck out in the crowd of Jews because of his features and colour. That is why the guards pounced on him and made him carry the Cross – an outsider. It seems unjust that he should have been pressed into a shameful job. It offends our sense of natural justice. And yet – aren't we all prejudiced against people of different religion, colour, education, background? Jesus, help me to see your face shining out of every human being without exception.

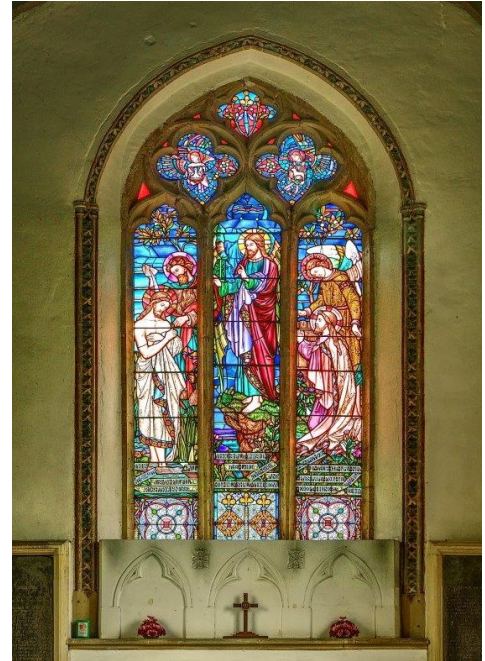
A time of quiet

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were worn down by fatigue;
be with those from whom life drains all energy.
You needed the help of a passing stranger;
give us the humility to receive aid from others.
To you Jesus, weighed down with exhaustion and in need
of help
be honour and glory.
Amen.

Dedication

Christ became obedient unto death for us,
even death upon a cross.
His punishment has brought us peace.
By his wounds we are healed.
Let us walk the way of the cross
In the name of Christ
Amen.



Section Five

2.15pm or 2.45pm

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

Hymn

Here might I stay and sing
no story so divine,
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine
This is my Friend,
in whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

A time of quiet



Jesus is nailed to the cross

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' 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!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

Luke 23:33-38

Has our faith ever really been tested? How would we stand up to great physical pain? Would we cry out to God against the unfairness? Would we ask "Why do you let this happen to me?" Or would we, like Christ, be able to accept the suffering? Able even when in great pain of mind and body to reach out to others and realise their needs? Christ forgives his torturers – would we be able to do the same? His thoughts are for others. Ours would be for ourselves. Jesus take from us all bitterness and hardness of heart. Help us to live generously and without selfishness.



A time of quiet

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you bled in pain as the nails were driven through your flesh;
transform through the mystery of your love the pain of those who suffer.
You spoke words of love in your hour of death;
Help us to speak words of life to a dying world.
To you, Jesus who offer hope to the hopeless, be honour and glory.
Amen.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Dedication

Christ became obedient unto death for us,
even death upon a cross.
His punishment has brought us peace.
By his wounds we are healed.
Let us walk the way of the cross
In the name of Christ.
Amen.



Conclusion

2.45pm or 2.55pm

Hymn

O sacred head, sore wounded,
Defiled and put to scorn;
O kingly head, surrounded
With mocking crown of thorn:
What sorrow mars thy grandeur?
Can death thy bloom deflow'r?
O countenance whose splendor
The hosts of heav'n adore!

In thy most bitter passion
My heart to share doth cry,
With thee for my salvation
Upon the cross to die.
Ah, keep my heart thus moved
To stand thy cross beneath,
To mourn thee, well-beloved,
Yet thank thee for thy death.

My days are few, O fail not,
With thine immortal pow'r,
To hold me that I quail not
In death's most fearful hour:
That I may fight befriended,
And see in my last strife
To me thine arms extended
Upon the cross of life.



Reading

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.

Luke 23:44-46



With thanks to David Ferré for photography