



A welcoming, inclusive, Christian community



THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Welcome to Lancaster Priory

The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion at Passion-tide for many centuries, because they enable us to engage actively with the path of suffering walked by Jesus. They originated when early Christians visited Jerusalem and wanted literally to follow the steps of Jesus, tracing the path from Pilate's house to Calvary. They would pause for prayer and devotion at various points. Eventually those pilgrims brought the practice back to their home countries and ever since then Christians of differing Traditions have used this form of devotion.

In the late 14th Century, the Franciscans were given the responsibility for the holy places of Jerusalem and they erected tableaux to aid the devotion of the visitors. These kinds of images are now commonplace inside church buildings, and occasionally outside them.

The Stations of the Cross in Lancaster Priory were designed and executed in 2012 by members of the Priory Sanctuary Guild. The scenes from the Way of the Cross are placed in the shadow of some of the distinctive landmarks of Lancaster. This is a deliberate anachronism - which is designed to show that the events of Christ's Passion in Jerusalem some two thousand years ago, still impact on the lives of Christians throughout the world, in every time and context. So, for the people of Lancaster this is a set of Stations of the Cross for our own time and place. Many hands have been involved in the design and creation of this set of Stations, which will be dedicated at the beginning of our service today. They will, in future years, be on display throughout the season of Lent to assist Christians in their preparation to walk with Christ the Way of His Cross. They can be used as a focus of personal prayer and meditation, and as a liturgical commemoration of Christ's path to Calvary.

1: Jesus in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane

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

Reading Mark 14.32-36

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus shared our terror of abandonment when he said, "Remove this cup from me." The Love of God bears the pain.

Lord Jesus, you entered the garden of fear and faced the agony of your impending death: be with those who share that agony and face death unwillingly this day. You shared our fear and knew the weakness of our humanity: give strength and hope to the dispirited and despairing. To you, Jesus, who sweated blood, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.
Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Second Station.

2: Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested

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

Reading Mark 14.43-46

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus knew the agony of betrayal. The Love of God heals the wounds caused by the actions of others.

Lord Jesus, you were betrayed by the kiss of a friend: be with those who are betrayed and slandered and falsely accused. You knew the experience of having your love thrown back in your face for mere silver: be with families which are torn apart by mistrust or temptation. To you, Jesus, who offered your face to your betrayer, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Third Station.

3: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

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

Reading Mark 14.55-64

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, ‘We heard him say, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.” ’ But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, ‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus said, ‘I am; and

“you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power”,
and “coming with the clouds of heaven.” ’

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?’ All of them condemned him as deserving death.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus is rejected by powerful men. The Love of God is in the midst of those who are powerless and vulnerable.

Lord Jesus, you were the victim of religious bigotry: be with those who are persecuted by small-minded authority. You faced the condemnation of fearful hearts: deepen the understanding of those who shut themselves off from the experience and wisdom of others. To you, Jesus, unjustly judged victim, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Fourth Station.

4: Peter denies Jesus

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

Reading Mark 14.72

At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus sees his trusted friend deny him three times. The Love of God sees beyond denial and washes away all fear and guilt.

Lord Jesus, as Peter betrayed you, you experienced the double agony of love rejected and friendship denied: be with those who know no friends and are rejected by society. You understood fear within Peter: help us to understand the anxieties of those who fear for their future. To you, Jesus, who gazed with sadness at your lost friend, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Fifth Station.

5: Jesus is judged by Pilate

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

Reading Mark 15.14,15

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.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus was killed to satisfy a bloodthirsty crowd. The Love of God weeps when the innocent suffer at the hands of evil men.

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 motivations of oppressors and exploiters to your way of peace. To you, Jesus, innocent, though condemned, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Sixth Station.

6: Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns

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

Reading Mark 15.17-19

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.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus was spitefully humiliated. The Love of God transforms victims of human cruelty into heirs of the victory of Christ.

Lord Jesus, you faced the moment of barbaric punishment and mocking tongue: be with those who cry out in physical agony and emotional distress. You endured unbearable abuse: be with those who face torture and mockery in our world today. To you, Jesus, the King crowned with thorns, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Seventh Station.

7: Jesus carries the cross

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

Reading Mark 15.20

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.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus was stripped of his clothers and crucified bleeding and naked. The Love of God brings dignity to human suffering.

Lord Jesus, you carried the cross through the rough 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 realize the extent and cost of your love for us. To you, Jesus, bearing a cross not your own, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Eighth Station.

8: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross

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

Reading Mark 15.21

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus needed others to share his heavy burden. The Love of God brings release from burdens too heavy for human hands.

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 with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Ninth Station.

9: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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

Reading Luke 23.27-31

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?'

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus shared our terror of abandonment when he cried out with the question, Why have you forsaken me? The Love of God bears the pain.

Lord Jesus, the women of Jerusalem wept for you: move us to tears at the plight of the broken in our world. You embraced the pain of Jerusalem, the 'city of peace': bless Jerusalem this day and lead it to the path of profound peace. To you, Jesus, the King of Peace, who wept for the city of peace, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Tenth Station.

10: Jesus is crucified

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

Reading Mark 15.24

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus prayed for the soldiers who crucified him, that they might be forgiven. The Love of God always sees far with compassion.

Lord Jesus, you bled in pain as the nails were driven into your flesh: transform through the mystery of your love the pain of those who suffer. To you, Jesus, our crucified Lord, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Eleventh Station.

11: Jesus promised the kingdom to the penitent thief

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

Reading Luke 23.39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus welcomed the penitent thief with the promise of Paradise with him. The Love of God embraces all whose pride is punctured by the truth.

Lord Jesus, even in your deepest agony you listened to the crucified thief: hear us as we unburden to you our deepest fears. 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 with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Twelfth Station.

12: Jesus on the cross; his mother and his friend

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

Reading John 19.26,27

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus entrusted the beloved disciple to his mother, and her to him. The Love of God protects intimacy.

Lord Jesus, your mother and your dearest friend stayed with you to the bitter end, yet even while racked with pain you ministered to them: be with all broken families today and care for those who long for companionship. You cared for your loved ones even in your death-throes: give us a love for one another that is stronger even than the fear of death. To you, Jesus, loving in the face of death, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.
Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Thirteenth Station.

13: Jesus dies on the cross

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

Reading Mark 15.34-37

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus completes his task crying, it is finished, it is fulfilled, it is done. The Love of God endures faithfully to the end.

Lord Jesus, you died on the cross and entered the bleakest of all circumstances: give courage to those who die at the hands of others. In death you entered into the darkest place of all: illumine our darkness with your glorious presence. To you, Jesus, your lifeless body hanging on the tree of shame, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.
Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

We move to the Fourteenth Station.

14: Jesus is laid in the tomb

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

Reading Mark 15.46

Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Reflection: In the story of the crucifixion, Jesus commended his whole being to the God from whom he came. The Love of God trusts that all shall be well.

Lord Jesus, Lord of life, you became as nothing for us: be with those who feel worthless and as nothing in this world's eyes. You were laid in a cold, dark tomb and hidden from sight: be with all who suffer and die in secret, hidden from the eyes of the world. To you, Jesus, your rigid body imprisoned in a tomb, be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

The Conclusion

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom in the words our Saviour taught us.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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. **Amen.**