

PARISH LENTEN RESOURCE

Walking with Jesus along the Via Dolorosa

Walk in the footsteps of Jesus
as he carries the Cross towards Calvary

Leader's Guide



Walking with Jesus along the Via Dolorosa

The actual word, 'Via Dolorosa' is Latin for 'Sorrowful Way'. It is commonly translated as 'Way of Suffering'. It is traditionally believed to be the route taken by Jesus as he carried the Cross towards Calvary.

The Diocese of Down and Connor, Living Church and the Diocese of Derry, mission team have prepared this prayer resource for use in our parishes during Lent. It has been designed to be used in a variety of ways:

- You can record and broadcast over your Parish Webcam or Social Media Platform during the Lenten Season. If you broadcast this liturgy, the collaboration of clergy, lay readers and music ministry will add to the richness of the experience and allow those viewing at home to connect with the wider Parish Community;
- You can distribute the accompanying participants' leaflets for parishioners to use in their own homes. This will allow people to read the Gospel at home and engage with the Lenten Mission during the course of the week in a time of private prayer. Indeed, posting this resource to those who are housebound will be a good outreach; and
- You can use the content of this resource for your social media. People are more adept in accessing social media, and as an evangelising people we ought to ensure that the message of Christ is proclaimed in all the spheres in which we are active.

This resource contains the following:

- Opening Words of Welcome & Opening Prayer;
- Gospel reference;
- Time of Silence/Reflective Music;
- A Reflection;
- A decade of a scriptural rosary (A line of scripture is read aloud before each of the ten Hail Mary's. This can be very effective when one reader proclaims the scripture and another leads the Hail Mary);
- Weekly Lenten Mission suggestion; and
- Closing Prayer.

Each weekly resource as an accompanying participants leaflet.

Please adapt this resource to suit your own parish setting. You may consider supplementing the resource with hymns, a time of Eucharistic Adoration and using other devotional prayers according to the feast day on which you broadcast the liturgy.

We hope that you find this resource useful and supportive to you in your ministry. We welcome your feedback, please email feedback to mission@derrydiocese.org

Online streaming on social media and via webcam enables us to take Church to our people wherever they are, and it can help us build a relationship with those we may otherwise have never met. Good broadcasts might be key to reaching new people and initiating their discovery of Jesus and the Church.

Tips for a good broadcast

- Adapt the resource to suit your style of delivery. Make the words your own.
- Have a rehearsal close to the time you intend to run the programme. This allows you to consider the lighting in your Church accordingly.
- Check camera angles and the frame so that the viewer can see the readers and feel connected.
- Check that your sound is being picked up well and microphone levels have been adjusted to suit the acoustics of the empty Church.
- Involve young people in the delivery, especially those who are working towards achieving their Pope John Paul II Award.
- Select music that compliments the liturgy and ensure that you have appropriate license in place to allow you to play that music.
- Promote your broadcast and times. You could consider making a short promotional video to invite people to come along.
- Always extend a smile and warm words of welcome and thanks to those who join you online.

Tips for sharing participants' Lenten prayer pack

Many parishioners are unable to connect with ease to online services, and providing hard copies of prayer resources is an act that shows that we want them to be connected with the parish community.

- Prepare the packs in advance so that they can be picked up/delivered upto 72 hours before the recipient uses them.
- Include a short note with the packs sharing a word of encouragement.
- Supplement the packs with items that can help create a prayerful atmosphere in the home; such as a candle, holy water, image of Christ, prayer Cards.
- Consider following up with a phone call for feedback.

Week 1: The agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Opening Words of Welcome



We welcome all who are joining us from their homes to our Lenten Prayer.

Walking with Jesus along the Via Dolorosa can provide us with insights into our lives and how Jesus is asking each of us to respond to Him.

- He may be asking us to wake up to an aspect of our life that needs changing,
- He may be drawing our attention to the crosses that he shoulders with us,
- He may be asking us to be fully present to him like Mary and John his beloved disciple.

Jesus is extending an invitation to us and we have an opportunity to respond. Over these five weeks, we will journey together listening to the Spirit moving within each one of us as we hear Jesus's challenge, invitation, encouragement, forgiveness and love.

Let us contemplate Jesus' journey together as He willingly takes up the Cross for us; there is No Greater love than this!

Let us focus our minds and hearts as we gather together in prayer.

† In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Lighting of Candle

Jesus is our Light and our Way. As we light this candle, let it be a visible sign of God's presence among us. *(pause)*

May this light mark the beginning of our journey with Jesus this Lent from Gethsemane to Calvary. *(pause)*

May this light illuminate for us a path to bring ourselves to God this Lent and offer Him the gift of ourselves. *(pause)*

Lord Jesus, as we begin our journey with you on the way of the Cross, open our hearts to the loving plan that you have for each one of us. As we walk with you, help us to recognise that you are also walking with each one of us. This present time has been one of trial, challenge, and isolation for many people. Help us to experience the consolation of your ever-present love and to remember that you make all things new.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Time of Silence/Reflective Music

Reflection

We listen now to a poem by **Ann Weems** reflecting on the time of Lent.

A Lenten Poem

Lent is a time to
take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to let the events get up
and walk around in us,
a time to intensify our living unto Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of
Jerusalem or to walk along the sea and
listen to his Word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder....

Lent is a time to allow
a fresh new taste of God!
Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think,
or thoughts come unbidden.
Perhaps we're afraid to face our future
knowing our past.

Give us courage, O God,
to hear your Word
and to read our living into it.
Give us the trust to know we're forgiven
and give us the faith
to take up our lives and walk.

The First Sorrowful Mystery: *The Agony in the Garden*

Our Father..

1. "Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray". (Mt. 26:36-37)

Hail Mary....

2. "He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated." Mt. 26:37

Hail Mary....

3. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." Mt. 26:38

Hail Mary....

4. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." Mt. 26:39

Hail Mary....

5. "yet not what I want but what you want." Mt. 26:39

Hail Mary....

6. "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?" Mt. 26:40-41

Hail Mary....

7. Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mt. 26:41

Hail Mary....

8. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him."Mt. 26:48-49

Hail Mary....

9. Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. Lk. 22:54-55

Hail Mary....

10. Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. Mt. 26:56

Hail Mary....

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. **Amen**

Let us pray:

Response: *Lord, in your compassion, hear our prayer.*

We pray that during times of anxiety and worry, we have the courage to call upon you as you called upon your Father during your moment of agony in the garden of Gethsemane. **R**

We pray that our hearts are open to your love so that we can be truly transformed in faith, hope, and charity. **R**

We pray that all of us may have hearts like your Son's, open and compassionate to the needs of those around us. **R**

We pray that this Lent be a time of renewal. **R**

Lenten Mission

Each week we will encourage you to undertake a Lenten Mission. This week we invite you to create a sacred space at home as we begin our journey along the Via Dolorosa with Jesus this Lent. This week reflect on the Agony of Jesus in the Garden and how his disciples could not watch one hour with Jesus. For each of the next six days, set aside 10 minutes each day to keep watch with the Lord.

Light a candle

Use this time to just sit quietly and be aware of God's presence in your life.

Watch. Listen. By the end of the week, you will have kept watch for one hour, just as Jesus asked.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, as our candle stands burning in the sanctuary,
let it be a reminder that no matter how difficult life can be, Jesus is with us always.

He is our light, our hope, and our way.

Let us open our hearts and minds to the light of God within us.

In our homes and community may we be a light to others,
bringing hope, reassurance, and joy to those around us.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

May Almighty God bless you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Closing Hymn

Week 2: Jesus' arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin and the denial of Peter

Opening Words of Welcome



We welcome all who are joining us from their homes to our Lenten Prayer, reflecting on Jesus' arrest, trial and the denial of Peter.

A picture paints a thousand words. A well painted portrait gives us a glimpse into the emotions of the subject, their life and being. There is a painting of St Peter in the National Gallery in London. It is a portrait, depicting Peter's head and shoulders against a dark background. Peter's expression is both intense and agonised. Peter strains upwards, looking at something beyond and his eyes are glistening with tears. It is an image of Peter as he wept when he realised what he had done – his denial of Jesus. In our own lives we know moments of weeping because of our own actions. And tonight we focus

not just on Peter's weeping, but the compassionate and merciful gaze of Jesus upon Peter and each one of us.

*Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter, and after the Lord's Resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him. When St Ambrose speaks of conversion in the Church he reminds us that 'there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance.'*¹

Let us begin our prayer with the sign of the Cross reminding us of our Baptism.

† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord Jesus, as we continue to journey with you on your way to the Cross, we ask that you strengthen our faith in you. You experienced rejection, denial, and abandonment even from your closest friends. There are times in our lives when we too can face these things. Let us remember the promise that you made to us – that you will be with us always. We ask that you keep our hearts and minds open to your will so that even in our most challenging moments we remember that you are by our side. We know that through your love and grace we can rise above the most trying moments by uniting ourselves to you. During your trial before the Sanhedrin, when you faced mockery, rejection, and violence, you continued to be at one with your Father in heaven. Help us to be an example to others of what it is to live out our faith with hope and joy, even during times of struggle.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

¹ Text adapted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1429

Time of Silence/Reflective Music

Reflection

Peter wept bitterly when he realised his sin. He denied Jesus. We can only imagine the pain felt by Jesus at having been rejected by Peter, but also the pain felt by Peter having realised that he rejected his friend and Lord. *(pause)*

Let us take a moment to think about how Jesus may have gazed at Peter in this moment. What kind of look do you think Jesus gave Peter? *(pause)*

Has there been a time when you lost your focus on God and placed other things before him? *(pause)*

Have you spoken about others in an unloving way or criticised others in front of your friends or family? *(pause)*

Has there been a time when you failed to stand up for a friend or acquaintance who was wronged? *(pause)*

Let us pray together words selected from Psalm 51 acknowledging our desire for God's mercy.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your merciful
love;
according to your great
compassion,
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me completely from
my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my
sins.

My transgressions, truly I
know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone,
have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I
have done.
So you are just in your
sentence,
without reproach in your
judgment.

Create a pure heart for me,
O God;
renew a steadfast spirit
within me.
Do not cast me away from
your presence;
take not your holy spirit
from me.

Peter was later reconciled to Jesus; let each one of us be reminded us that we too can be reconciled to Jesus. *(pause)*

Peter's denial was threefold, but so also was his declaration of love. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" three times, Peter's final answer was, " Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (John 21:16) *(pause)*

Let us entrust to Jesus anything that is holding us back from accepting His mercy and forgiveness. *(pause)*

As we gaze on the face of Jesus He also gazes on us; it is not a look of anger or condemnation, but one full of love, mercy, and healing. Let us, like Peter, declare our love for Jesus. *(pause)*

The Second Sorrowful Mystery: Scourging at the pillar

Our Father..

1. "...one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, saying, "Is that the way you answer the high priest?" Jn. 18:22-23

Hail Mary....

2. "Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest." Jn. 18:24

Hail Mary....

3. "The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might have him executed." Mt. 26:59-60

Hail Mary....

4. "As Simon Peter stood there warming himself, someone said to him, "Aren't you another of his disciples?" He denied it saying, "I am not". Jn. 18:25-26

Hail Mary....

5. "Pilate said, "Take him yourselves, and try him by your own law." Jn. 18:31

Hail Mary....

6. "Truth, said Pilate. "What is that?" And so saying he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no case against him." Jn. 18:38-39

Hail Mary....

7. "Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged." Jn. 19:1

Hail Mary....

8. "Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying...." Is. 53:4

Hail Mary....

9. "... he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt." Is. 53:5

Hail Mary....

10. "...we have been healed by his bruises." Is. 53:5

Hail Mary....

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. **Amen**

Lenten Mission

At home this week we invite you to take an image of Christ and add it to your sacred space. During this coming week, set aside some time each day to light your candle and gaze into the eyes of Jesus.

Talk to him from your heart.

Unburden yourself.

See no anger or reprimand, just compassion and tender loving mercy. See Him look at you with great love.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, today we gazed upon your face. Let us leave this evening full of hope and joy that we are a new creation; and that your love and mercy knows no bounds. May we bring the love and joy that we experience in our relationship with you to others so that they too are drawn to you.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Closing Hymn

Week 3: The trial before Pilate

Opening Words of Welcome



We welcome all who are joining us from their homes to our Lenten Prayer. Last week we reflected on Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin and now we recall his trial before Pilate that would result not just in a cruel scourging but in his condemnation to death on a cross.

In the Gospel we will hear Pilate's famous words, "What is truth?"

And we know the answer.

"Jesus Christ is the Personified Truth who attracts the world to himself. The light that shines out from Jesus is the splendour of the truth. Every other truth is a fragment of the Truth that he is, and refers to him."²

So let us gather and reflect on the truth of Jesus' suffering and death with the expectant hope of his Resurrection.

† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord Jesus, when you were brought before Pilate, he asked you a question, "What is truth?". Pilate denied the truth and failed to recognise you. In today's world, it is sometimes difficult for us to recognise the truth. But, You have said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the life". As we reflect on your word today, help us to always be open to the truth. Give us the courage and strength to stand up for the truth, for what is morally right, even in the face of criticism and rejection. Help us to know the fullness of your truth and to be witnesses of that truth, guiding others in a gentle and loving way.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Gospel Reading John 18:33-19:3

Jesus before Pilate

Time of Silence/Reflective Music

² Address of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. 10th Feb 2006

Reflection

Pilate tries to ease his conscience by “washing his hands” and attempting to put the responsibility for Christ’s death on the Jewish crowds. *(pause)*

He says, “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” (Matthew 27:24)
(pause)

Let us take a moment to think about a time when we may have made a wrong choice or decision and tried to rationalise it by blaming someone else. *(pause)*

Perhaps it was something from a long time ago. Or maybe it is something that you are struggling with at this moment. *(pause)*

Ask Jesus to enlighten your heart and mind to this particular failing that is occupying your thoughts. *(pause)*

Let us in humility and trust prayerfully bring our faults and failings before Jesus. *(pause)*

We can now make in private an Act of Perfect Contrition. This is a prayer from our whole heart, expressing sorrow for sin for the simple reason that God is so good. This Act of Perfect Contrition helps us to take full responsibility for our sins, expressing sorrow for how we have offended God and hurt others. We now ask God for his forgiveness and for his grace to help us avoid sin in the future.

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love.

I firmly resolve with the help of your grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
Amen.

As we seek to find our purpose and respond to the vocation given to us in Baptism - Jesus you are the Way

As we seek to make decisions that show our love of God and love of our neighbour - Jesus you are the Truth

As we seek to draw closer to God and live life to the full - Jesus you are the Life.

The Third Sorrowful Mystery: The Crowning of Thorns

Take time to pray with the Sorrowful Mysteries reflecting on the scripture verses with each recitation of the Hail Mary.

Our Father...

1. " Pilate.... called Jesus to him and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"... "Jesus replied, "Mine is not a kingdom of this world..". Jn. 18:33/34/36
Hail Mary....
2. "...and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head..." Mt. 27:29
Hail Mary....
3. " [they] placed a reed in his right hand." Mt. 27:29
Hail Mary....
4. "To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" Mt. 27:29-30
Hail Mary....
5. "And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it." Mt. 27:30-31
Hail Mary....
6. "Pilate said, 'Here is the man.'" Jn. 19:6
Hail Mary....
7. "When they saw him the chief priests and the guards shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Jn. 19:6
Hail Mary....
8. "Pilate said, 'Shall I crucify your King?'" Jn. 19:15
Hail Mary....
9. "The chief priests answered, 'We have no king except Caesar.'" Jn. 19:15-16
Hail Mary....
10. "Ill treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth." Is. 53:7
Hail Mary....

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. **Amen**

Lenten Mission

For many of us, Lent is a time to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We encourage you to do this. If it's not possible for you, continue using the Perfect Act of Contrition in your prayer time and reflection over Lent.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and merciful God, you have given us mouths, to speak your praise. You have given us feet, to walk the path of your salvation. You have given us knees, to bend reverently before you in prayer. You have given us hands, to raise in prayer before you, in thanksgiving and petition, and through them to bring blessings to our neighbours. You have given us ears, to listen for your voice. You have given us a heart, that it may burn for you in love and direct all our limbs in your service. Help us to serve you and those around us, joyfully, and with all your gifts. Amen³

Closing Hymn

³ Prayer selected from the YOUCAT youth prayer book.

Week 4: Jesus carries his Cross

Opening Words of Welcome



Over these weeks we have been reflecting on the final path of Jesus to the Cross – the Via Dolorosa. This was not just a difficult walk on a path; this was a mission. Like Jesus, we too should be on mission acting with purpose and seeking to fulfil God’s plan for our lives.

‘A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification”’ (Gaudete et Exultate).

We will reflect on Simon of Cyrene and how he stepped away from the crowd to participate in Christ’s mission. He was witnessed by his own children undertaking an act of compassion and mercy that transformed his life.

Let us imagine now the cross that Simon was invited to carry as we begin our prayer with the sign of the Cross.

† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord Jesus, as you carried the Cross you were mocked, spat on, rebuked, and humiliated. You were exhausted in every possible way. You met Simon of Cyrene along the way. The gospels tell us that the soldiers made him carry the Cross with you as you neared Calvary. Simon of Cyrene’s encounter with you, although reluctant at first, brought about his conversion. Let us pray, that when we experience our own personal crosses that you are there with us carrying us through each day. May we also have the confidence and care to reach out to those in need within our families, parishes, and communities. Like Simon of Cyrene, let us see the opportunities to do good and to help where we can. Let us open our hearts to your saving love so that we can experience a true conversion in our own lives. By being conformed to you, let us bring your love to others who may need support and help at this time. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen

Gospel Reading - Luke 23:26-32 *The way to Calvary*

Time of Silence/Reflective Music

Reflection

As Christ's body weakens on the journey to the cross, Simon of Cyrene is brought in to support Jesus in the final stages of his journey to Golgotha. Simon's sharing of the weight of the cross is a witness of his holiness.

During the pandemic, there have been many witnesses to holiness through countless acts of generosity, kindness, and selflessness. These acts are a beacon of hope across all nations and those who carry them out "share also in Christ's prophetic office, spreading abroad a living witness to him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity". (12, Lumen Gentium)

Like Simon of Cyrene we are invited to shoulder the weight of the crosses carried by our brothers and sisters. When we do this we too become witnesses of holiness on life's journey.

Lord Jesus, we pray that we can see the value in our own cross. *(pause)*

Remember, where there is the cross there is also the promise of the resurrection to come. *(pause)*

Our suffering is never wasted, but has the power to convert and transform us and those around us. *(pause)*

St Teresa's prayer, 'Christ has no body but yours,' reminds us of our call to action and the impact that we can have on others as we are invited to continue Christ's mission on earth.

Christ has no body but yours - St Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus Carries His Cross

Our Father...

1. “..And carrying his own cross he went out to the Place of the Skull, or, as it is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.” Jn. 19:17-18

Hail Mary....

2. “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Lk. 14:27

Hail Mary....

3. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Mt. 11:29

Hail Mary....

4. “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” Mt. 11:30

Hail Mary....

5. “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” Mt. 10:39

Hail Mary....

6. “...all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us.” Rom. 8:18-19

Hail Mary....

7. “..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.” Lk. 23:26

Hail Mary....

8. “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children..” Lk. 23: 28

Hail Mary....

9. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Gal. 6:14

Hail Mary....

10. Keep your eyes fixed on those who act according to the example you have from me. Phil. 3:17-18

Hail Mary....

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. **Amen**

Lenten Mission

We have reflected on how Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry his cross. This week we invite you to bring before the Lord those who are suffering in mind, body, or spirit. Resolve to offer whatever support you can give to lighten the load of those who have heavy crosses to bear. Write their names on a piece of paper or place a photograph of them in your sacred space.

As you take time in daily prayer, bring those for whom you pray into the presence of the Lord and pray for the strength to be as Christ for one another.

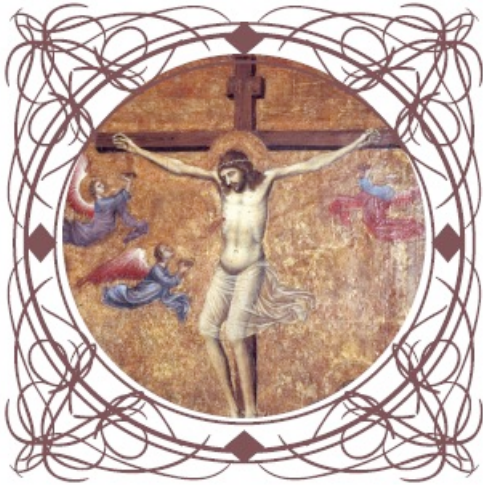
Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray that our hearts are open to your transforming love. Give us the confidence to entrust any challenges or difficulties to you so that you can use it for the greater good, whether it be in our own lives or in the lives of others. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen

Closing Hymn

Week 5: The last words of Christ spoken from the Cross

Opening Words of Welcome



We recall last March the image of Pope Francis praying at the front of St Peter's Basilica as the world entered into a time of pandemic – a time that has brought much mourning. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" Pope Francis stood in prayerful solidarity with the suffering of the world and he teaches us about suffering by his example and in his writings. In *Gaudete et Exultate* Pope Francis teaches that;

"A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathises with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the

suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish, and bringing relief. They sense that the other is the flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. In this way they can embrace Saint Paul's exhortation: "Weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15)⁴

We call to mind all those who wept at the foot of the Cross as we begin our prayer this evening with the sign of the Cross.

† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Jesus' journey along the Via Dolorosa was a lonely one. The crowd who only a week ago welcomed him turned against him and demanded his crucifixion. Most of his friends and followers, overcome by fear, deserted him. Two people who did remain with Him right up to His death on the Cross were Mary, His Mother, and John the Apostle.

May the final words of Christ touch our hearts. Help us to realise that we are not merely onlookers but that we too are part of the story of God's salvation to the world.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Gospel Reading - John 19:23-28 *Jesus' garments divided/Jesus and his mother/The death of Jesus*

Time of Silence/Reflective Music

⁴ *Gaudete et Exultate* (75-76)

Reflection

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) (pause)

These were the very first words spoken by Jesus on the Cross. His suffering in this moment must have been so intense, and yet his heart remained open to forgiving those around him, those who mocked, scourged, tortured and nailed him to the Cross. We pray that we are open to God’s forgiveness and that in turn we too can forgive those who hurt us.

“Today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) (pause)

Jesus responds to the good thief hanging on the cross beside him who recognises Him as the Christ. Even in Jesus’ final moments he continued to forgive. We pray for those who are nearing their end and who desire the forgiveness of God.

“Woman, behold your son.... Son, behold your Mother!” (John 19:26-27) (pause)

Mary became the Mother of all disciples. John who represents all of those faithful disciples throughout the world accepts Mary as His Mother. We pray that we too remain faithful to Jesus and that we call on Mary, our heavenly Mother, to watch over us and to continue to lead us to her Son, Jesus.

**“Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’
(Matthew 27:46-47) (pause)**

These words are an echo of the Psalms Jesus prayed. A Psalm of one calling out for God to rescue them from persecution and suffering. We pray for all those throughout the world who are suffering due to war, injustice, and persecution, and who struggle to find hope in their situation.

“I thirst.” (John 19:28) (pause)

Jesus thirsts for more than water. He thirsts for us. His love for us is so great that He continually seeks us out, inviting us into a personal relationship with Him. We pray for the courage to respond to God’s invitation of love and to recognise our total dependence on Him.

“It is finished.” (John 19:30) (pause)

It is not the end, but rather the accomplishment of God’s plan for the whole of mankind. Jesus fulfils the Father’s plan from the very beginning. Jesus, the Son of God, is victorious over sin and evil. We pray in thanksgiving to God for giving His life for us in an act of love which the world has never seen nor will see again. There is no Greater love than this.

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46) (pause)

At the beginning of Jesus’ passion in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was given into the hands of men. Here we find Jesus in his final moments offering His Spirit to His Father in heaven. The Father has never abandoned His Son. God has always remained in control. We pray, that we too can have confidence in God’s will and entrust our lives to Him.

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Take time to pray with the Sorrowful Mysteries reflecting on the scripture verses with each recitation of the Hail Mary.

Our Father...

1. "When they reached the place called The Skull, there they crucified him..." Lk. 23:33

Hail Mary....

2. "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.'" Lk. 23:34

Hail Mary....

3. "In truth, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Lk. 23:43

Hail Mary....

4. "Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, Woman this is your son. Jn. 19:26-27

Hail Mary....

5. "Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.'" Jn. 19:27

Hail Mary....

6. "From the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." Mt. 27:45

Hail Mary....

7. "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli eli, lama sabachthani?, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Mt. 27:46-47

Hail Mary....

8. "No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends." Jn. 15:13

Hail Mary....

9. "After Jesus had taken the wine, he said, 'It is fulfilled.'" Jn. 19:30

Hail Mary....

10. "Father, into Your hands, I commit My spirit." Lk. 23:46

Hail Mary....

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. **Amen**

Lenten Mission

We have reflected on those who remained with Jesus on his journey to the cross, in particular his mother Mary and John, the beloved disciple.

Place a crucifix in your sacred space as a reminder that we will each, in turn, have our own crosses to bear.

Spend some time pondering the suffering in your own life and those close to you.

Know you are never alone.

God is with you always, especially in your darkest hour. Call on Him in your time of need.

He is faithful to his promise – he will never leave you.

Just as Jesus conquered death on the Cross be assured that through his Love you will conquer the crosses that you bear.

On Good Friday take time in your home to reflect on the Stations of the Cross and to venerate the Cross.

We close with our final prayer using the words spoken by Pope Francis, from the steps of St Peter's Basilica on 21st March 2020. This prayer reminds us of the hope and joy that is to be found in the Cross. The Cross is our anchor during these times of worry and uncertainty.

We have an anchor:
by his cross we have been saved.
We have a rudder:
by his cross we have been redeemed.
We have a hope:
by his cross we have been healed and embraced,
so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.

In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us:
he is risen and is living by our side.

The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us,
to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen,
recognise and foster the grace that lives within us.

Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. *Is* 42:3) that never falters,
and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring.

It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognise that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity.

By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope,
and let it strengthen and sustain all measures,
and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others.

Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from
fear and gives us hope.

Lord, may you bless the world,
give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts.
You ask us not to be afraid.

Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful.
But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm.
Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5).⁵

¹ Adapted from Pope Francis' meditation at Urbi et Orbi on the steps of St Peter's Basilica 2020

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