



Missionary Society
of St. Columban



Stations of the Cross

By Columban Fr. Finbar Maxwell

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Missionary Society of St. Columban

P.O. Box 10, St. Columbans, NE 68056

toll free: 877/299-1920 | phone: 402/291-1920 | fax: 402/291-4984

mission@columban.org | www.columban.org

Stations of the Cross

- 5 **First Station:**
Pilate Condemns Jesus to Die
- 7 **Second Station:**
Jesus Accepts His Cross
- 9 **Third Station:**
Jesus Falls for the First Time
- 11 **Fourth Station:**
Jesus Meets His Mother, Mary
- 13 **Fifth Station:**
Simon Helps Carry the Cross
- 15 **Sixth Station:**
Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
- 17 **Seventh Station:**
Jesus Falls for the Second Time
- 19 **Eighth Station:**
Jesus Meets the Three Women of Jerusalem
- 21 **Ninth Station:**
Jesus Falls for the Third Time
- 23 **Tenth Station:**
Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes
- 25 **Eleventh Station:**
Jesus is Nailed to the Cross
- 27 **Twelfth Station:**
Jesus Dies on the Cross
- 29 **Thirteenth Station:**
Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross
- 31 **Fourteenth Station:**
Jesus is Placed in the Tomb



First Station

Pilate Condemns Jesus to Die

Jesus began to make it clear to His disciples that He was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Mt 16: 20

Lord, Yours was a lonely night since Your betrayal and arrest, when Your companions fled in the garden and left You alone to Your fate. Even as You surrendered, a part of You must have wanted to flee—yet You stayed, strengthened by Your Father—*not Your will, but His, be done*. How tired You were that night, criss-crossing the city of Jerusalem; being taken from Gethsemane, outside the city walls, back across the city to the High Priest Caiaphas' house, near the upper room where You had just eaten Your last meal with the twelve.

From there to the palace of Herod, then forced and pushed on to the Praetorium, to Pilate, in whose presence You stood with dignity. With nothing to accuse You of he sought to let You go, by having the crowd decide: You or the prisoner Barabbas. Barabbas—what a name; *Bar Abbas*, “son of the father” Here now stood two “sons of the Father,” Barabbas and Jesus. But the crowd had already made up its mind which son it wanted released and who to condemn. Washing his hands Pilate ordered You away, to be scourged and crucified.

**Lord, may we have the courage to stand by You in
the loneliness of Your passion.**

May we know that it is by You our wounds are healed.

May we understand the power of Your love? ~ Amen.



Second Station

Jesus Accepts His Cross

Pilate questioned Him again, "Have You no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against You!" But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply. Mk 15: 4-5

Lord, throughout Your life You called upon Your Father, so that everything You did was done in relation to Him. Did You feel His strength now as You were sentenced to die, in a way that was most shameful and brutal? You did not protest or fight Your cross, You accepted it and all that it would bring. Your captors whipped You, spat at You and tore at Your beard. To add insult to injury they put thorns on Your head—a crown for a king, and draped You in purple, a color reserved only for the powerful.

What were Your thoughts then? What did You feel? How often Your disciples could not understand You, when You told them this time would come. And now that time had arrived. Did You wonder about them now, how they were, how they would survive, and how they would recover? And Your mother, she must know by now. Perhaps Your strength was reserved for what You would now endure—that cup for which You had come?

**Lord, may we have courage to accept the
crosses in our lives.**

**May we feel Your strength and presence
in times of trial.**

**May our love for You be shown in love
for others. ~ Amen.**



Third Station

Jesus Falls for the First Time

Jesus said to them, "You will all lose faith, for the scripture says: I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered." Mk 14: 27

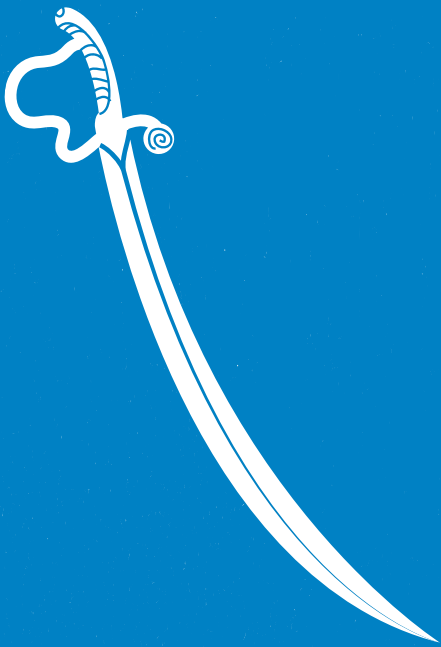
Lord, beaten and bruised You lifted your cross. Its weight on Your shoulders You were led from the Praetorium, and pushed along the streets to Golgotha, the Hill of Calvary outside the city walls. Not for nothing was it known as *the place of the skull*; the shape of its rock face reflecting the deaths for which this site was known.

Tired and thirsty, with sweat and blood in Your eyes, it was difficult to see Your path, so You fell, with none to help You as You struggled to Your feet again. Your companions fell too, as they fled away in fear. How keenly aware of them You must have been. Perhaps they were with You, hidden in the shadows, among the crowds that lined the road.

**Lord, we remember You as You struggled
with Your cross.**

**We remember those who carry their
crosses today.**

Keep us steady, Lord, in all our falling. ~ Amen.



Fourth Station

Jesus Meets his Mother, Mary

A crowd was sitting around Him at the time [a] message was passed to Him. “Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for You.” Mk 3: 32

Mary, you knew Jesus was special when you brought Him into the world. You and Joseph cared for and protected Him from the moment of His birth. There was much about Him that you pondered in your heart, from the arrival of the shepherds and the magi at His birth, to the strange words of Simeon and Anna in the temple, when you went there to fulfill the requirements of the law. How obedient He was growing up, except for that glimpse into His future when you found Him in the temple with the doctors of the law: *“Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?”*

Yet is this where His Father’s affairs was to bring Him, shouldering a cross that would take Him to his death? *“And a sword will pierce your own soul too,”* Simeon said, *“so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.”* Your soul was pierced now, when He came into your view on this crowded street in Jerusalem. You rushed to Him from the crowd. Through tears you held Him, no words, just embrace. Others joined you, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary of Magdala, who held you as the soldiers pushed your son along the road.

**Mary, may we be inspired and encouraged by
your faithfulness to the end.**

**Mary, be with parents who have lost children
to painful and tragic deaths.**

**Lord, may we meet You in others who suffer
on life’s road. ~ Amen.**



Fifth Station

Simon Helps Carry the Cross

They seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus. Lk 22: 26

Simon, you came into Jerusalem from the countryside, perhaps to visit your sons, Alexander and Rufus, whose names belied their Greco-Roman origins. Upon entering the city you saw and heard the crowds, before you saw the focus of their gaze, a man, bloodied, sweating, burdened by the weight of the cross He bore. What were your thoughts as you flinched when you saw Him there, as some in the crowd taunted Him and others cried out for His pain? You must have known where He was destined, given the city's reputation: Golgotha, place of the Skull, place of death.

You were pulled from your thoughts as a soldier enlisted you: from bystander to participant you were called to this stranger's aid. What did you feel as you approached? Did you look into His eyes? Were words exchanged, as you shouldered the weight? Or was fellow-suffering, feeling and compassion enough for Him to know some other soul cared? If only you knew whose cross you carried, and that He was in fact carrying yours, carrying ours. Did you stay longer when you reached the place of the Skull? Or was the suffering already visible there enough to send you on your way? Your kindness is remembered, though. You teach us still.

**Simon, blessed are you who shouldered
the cross of Jesus.**

**May we learn from your example and shoulder
the cross of others.**

Lord, we are grateful for Your love for us. ~ Amen.



Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Large numbers of people followed Him...who mourned and lamented for Him. Lk 22: 27

Veronica, you were among those who mourned and lamented for Jesus on that day. While some in the crowd mocked and taunted, you were moved with sadness and tears. Had you known Jesus earlier, on some day when He taught or healed? Or was He a stranger to you, whom you saw by chance then on the road? Perhaps it was the sight of the man helping to carry the cross that inspired you to break from the crowd and run to Jesus' aid. What more could you do but wipe His face, but in doing so showed your great love.

Removing the linen veil you wore around your neck, you pressed it to His face and offered words of tenderness. Your meeting was all too brief, as one of the soldiers pushed you back to the side of the road. Only later, after He had passed from view and you sat alone with His memory, did you notice the gift He had left you, the imprint of His face on your veil. A treasure by which to remember Him, knowing He would remember you in paradise.

**Veronica, may we have your courage in doing
what we know must be done.**

**May we not be held back by fear, in showing
love and care.**

**Lord, may what we do be done in remembrance
of You. ~ Amen.**



Seventh Station

Jesus Falls for the Second Time.

“He saved others;” they said, “He cannot save Himself.”

Mt 27: 42

Lord, at what point on the road were You, when You fell for the second time? You knew Jerusalem well, having travelled there each year since You were a child. Had You passed yet through the First Wall, with the Temple in the distance to Your right, and the Judgement Gate, near Calvary, to Your left? Was Simon the Cyrenean still with You, or were You carrying Your burden alone, as You walked that narrow pathway between heaven and hell?

At whatever point You fell, Your cross was heavy to carry; the weight of the world itself upon Your shoulders. For comfort and solace You returned in Your mind to the Garden of the night before, Gethsemane, a place You loved: *Father, if it is possible let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless let it be as you, not I, would have it. Let your will be done, not mine.* As always, Your focus was the Father, His will, His presence, His strength, His love. Lifting Yourself up You carried on, toward the chalice You knew You had to drink.

Lord, we feel your struggle at every step of the road.

May we offer others our help and support when they fall.

**Lord, we thank You for Your sacrifice
and love. ~ Amen.**



Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Three Women from Jerusalem

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. Lk 22: 28

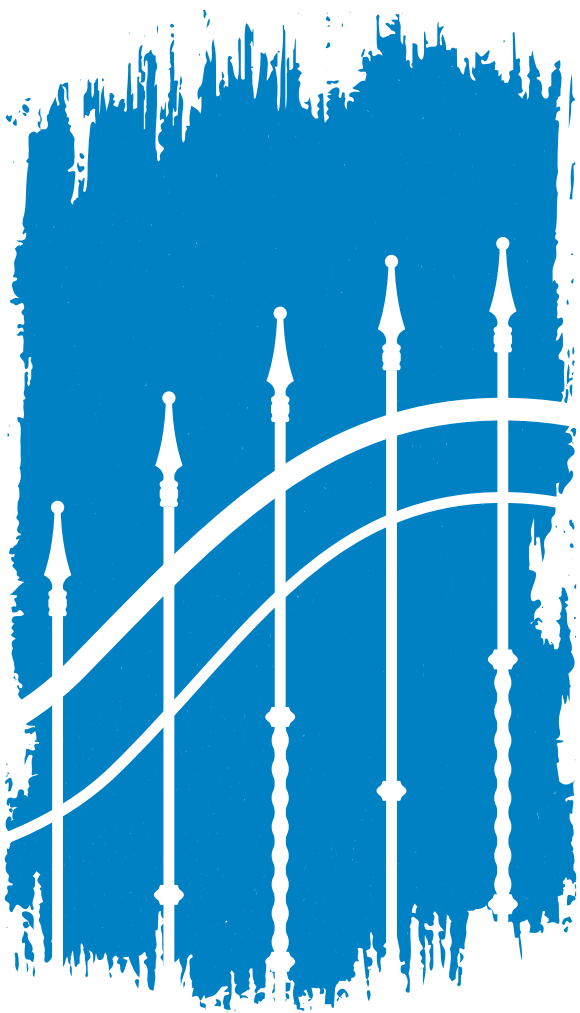
Lord, the women of Jerusalem are in shock at how they now see You on the road. Shielding their children from the sight, they know what is to become of You when you reach Golgotha. Perhaps, like Veronica, they too had seen You heal the sick and cure the blind and lame. Seeing them cry You stopped for them, *“Do not weep for Me, but for yourselves, and for your children.”* For such is the travesty of what is happening that it would be happier had their children never been born to witness it.

Lord, when You spoke to the women of Jerusalem You referred to yourself as “greenwood” that men were now using for burning. You were really saying that just as green wood is not for burning (for it is still full of sap), so too an innocent man is not for executing. And if this is how the innocent are treated, what about the “dry wood,” the truly guilty? But Your death was an expiation for our guilt, for our sins. Repositioning the weight of Your cross, You continued Your walk, alongside two other condemned men, on the road.

**Lord, everyone who knew You, experienced,
through You, life to the full.**

**You told Your disciples not to fast while the
bridegroom was still with them.**

**We fast as we walk with you now, as with the
women of Jerusalem we mourn. ~ Amen.**



Ninth Station

Jesus Falls for the Third Time

Jesus said to His disciples, "Pray not to be put to the test." Then He withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed. Lk 22: 41

Lord, for much of Your life you walked; annual pilgrim journeys from Nazareth to Jerusalem with Your parents and extended family; then later, in Your last three years with Your disciples, and with other followers and friends. Your years of ministry brought You back and forth over countries we now know as Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Syria; through places that are etched in our imagination: Caesarea Philipi, Tyre, Capernaum, Gennesaret, Cana, Nain, Shechem, the Decapolis, Jericho, Bethany, and so many more, where people listened, followed, sought You out and were healed.

On all these journeys, Lord, You walked with Your disciples, through villages and towns covering thousands of miles, and always with dust on Your feet. There were so many people whose lives You touched and transformed, freed and healed, who were changed by Your presence, and to whom You showed the face and heart of God. You were walking again now, on this final journey before Your death, when once more You fell, for a third time, as You neared the Judgement Gate to Golgotha – the Hill of Calvary.

**Lord, You asked that we remember You;
we do so in Your walking.**

**We remember the way You brought life by Your
presence and by Your Word.**

**May we never be afraid to get our feet dusty;
may we walk in Your Spirit. ~ Amen.**



Tenth Station

Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

They took His clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; they threw dice to decide who is to have it. Jn 19: 23

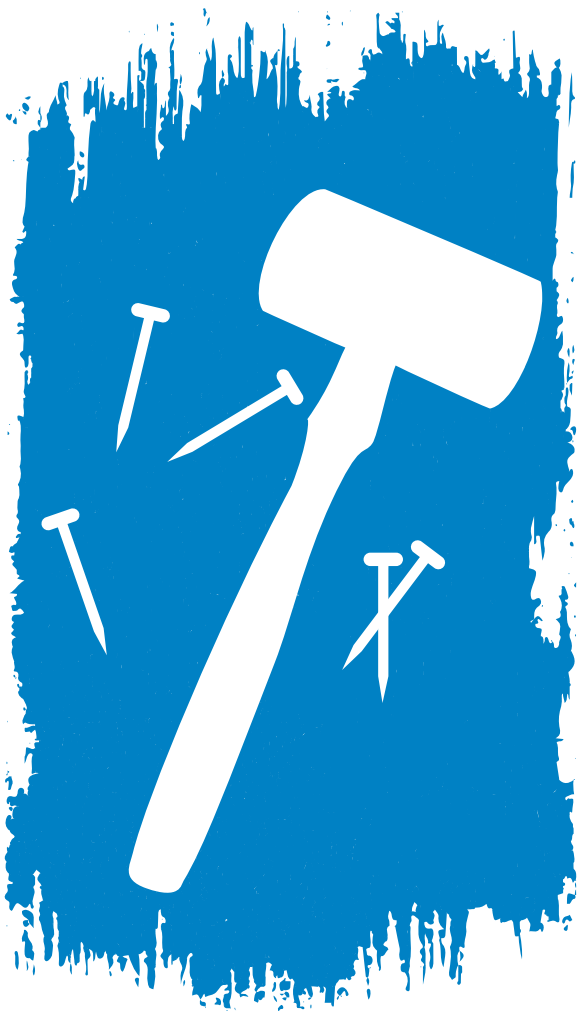
Lord, when You met people You clothed them in dignity. We think of Peter at the moment of his call; in him who was so conscious of his sinfulness You saw such future and promise. You defended the woman caught in adultery and disarmed her accusers by the reality of their own sin. The widow of Nain so moved You to pity that You not only brought her only son back to life, but restored the security of her life too. To the blind man, the lepers, the paralyzed, the insane, and the woman who touched Your clothes, the hem of Your garments, all these You clothed again in dignity; their lives healed and restored.

On the last day of Your earthly life, Lord, You were stripped of Your dignity and Your clothing. First to be mocked and beaten and then to be crucified. You were made to feel shame, to feel vulnerable, exposed to the world, as though Your tormentors did not even fully see You, as they were concerned with who got Your clothes. It was Your seamless garment that drew their attention most—a seamless garment for a seamless life; a life fully united with God and with all of humanity; a life in which You lived what You taught, a life in which You were the Kingdom You proclaimed.

**Lord, we keep vigil with You as you are stripped
of Your dignity.**

We thank You for clothing us in Your love.

**May we ever respect the dignity and
life of others. ~ Amen.**



Eleventh Station

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

When they reached the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there and the two criminals also...Jesus said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Lk 23: 33

Lord, Your long and tortuous walk through Jerusalem brought You to the Gate of Judgement and out onto Golgotha, the place called the Skull. How can we ever know what You were feeling then and what sustained You as You carried Your cross? You prayed to Your Father just before Your arrest; how He must be suffering too, at what His Son, the Beloved, would now endure. Your two companions on the road were already stretched upon their crosses; You knew what awaited You now. We flinch from the pain You endured, as the nails pierced Your hands and feet, on a cross You took upon Yourself for us.

In Your life You felt the pain of the least of our brothers and sisters, so that we could all know we were held in the redemption of Your wide embrace. Even while You were taunted and mocked—*"He saved others...He cannot save Himself"*—You turned to the man hanging next to You and assured him a place with You in paradise. Both men beside You were in distress; You were aware of that. May we be aware of what comes out of us, in our times of duress and stress. Through pain that was so intense You'd felt deserted by Your Father, You entrusted Your mother to the care of John, beloved among Your disciples. From this point on he would be called her son—and so we were all made her children.

Lord, may we not forget the pain You suffered for our sin.

Lord, may we help others carry their crosses, and so follow You as disciples.

Like the man on the cross next to You, may we have a place with You in paradise? ~ Amen.



Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

With the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land and when Jesus cried out in a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." With these words He breathed His last. Lk 23: 44

Lord, at Your birth a bright star heralded Your arrival into the world. So momentous was Your coming that all the forces of heaven and earth worked together to keep You safe, with Your parents keeping God's dream for You alive. Throughout Your years of "hidden life" You grew in wisdom and God's favor was with You. From the moment of Your baptism, Your testing in the wilderness and Your years of public ministry, You were light, life, joy, and hope for the world. Everything You said and did pointed to the Father and to His Kingdom among us.

But everything brought You to this point now, as on the cross You gave up Your spirit and breathed Your last. How could Your disciples, Your mother and loved ones, find any meaning in this? They couldn't. How could this be part of God's plan, this madness; this desecration? What devastating grief they felt now, as Your light went out in the world? With a darkness over everything, they stood together numb at the foot of Your cross, while soldiers, oblivious to who you were, divided Your clothing among themselves. With a final wound a soldier pierced Your side, releasing blood and water from Your body: blood, the sacrifice of the lamb, and water, the Spirit's grace upon us all.

**Jesus, we stand with your mother at the foot of
Your cross. Lord have mercy.**

**We remember Your self-giving in the sharing of
bread and wine. Christ have Mercy.**

**Through darkness over the whole land we ponder
Your wounds. Lord have Mercy ~ Amen.**



Thirteenth Station

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, following the Jewish burial custom. Jn 19: 40

Joseph, you were from Arimathaia, a Jewish town in Judea in the hill-country of Ephraim. A man of deep faith, and a member of the Sanhedrin, you were a secret follower of Jesus, living in the hope of seeing God's kingdom. Through word of mouth you came to know of Jesus' arrest, and were present as He carried His cross to Calvary. After witnessing His death you arranged with Pilate to take His body from the cross, and place it in a tomb you yourself owned. Jesus' death brought your faith out from the secrecy of your own inner tomb, as publicly, and with tender reverence, you and some men removed the nails from Jesus' hands and feet, and lifted Him down from His cross.

But first, time for His mother to mourn. Kneeling on the ground, she cradles Him in her arms and holds Him, rocking back and forth, remembering how she cradled Him as a child. A cry comes from her, piercing heaven, as she too wonders why God has deserted them. Supported by John and the other Mary, she cries and ponders the dream that has died, the dream that has been killed. Joseph, you stand at a respectful distance, holding linen cloths for His body. Only when the moment is right, you move towards them, offering Mary the cloth, and helping, with the others, prepare Him to be placed in His tomb.

**Lord, our minds can't fully comprehend Your death,
but we stand with You at Your cross.**

**Lord, we feel the pain of Your mother and friends.
It is our pain too.**

**Lord, may we not forget that the pain You suffered
is the measure of Your love. ~ Amen.**



Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

At the place where He had been crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Since it was the Jewish Day of Preparation they laid Jesus there. Jn 19: 41

Lord, when You died, a light went out for everyone who knew You, and darkness covered not only the whole land but also shadowed their hearts. What purpose had life now, after what they had witnessed on Calvary's hill? Clinging together in numbness of spirit, so as to keep at bay the terror of despair, Joseph, John and Mary of Magdala carried Your body to the tomb, while Your mother and the other women moved together silently behind. The tomb was spacious, clean, never used. In the glow of torchlight, Your body was laid in the resting niche hewn from the rock.

After some time together for Shiva, the prayers of mourning for the dead, they left the tomb before night fell, while Joseph instructed the men standing by to roll the stone over the entrance and seal it into place. Still outside, finding it hard to leave, each of the mourners pondered in their hearts what the world would be like now, without You in it. What was the world like for them then, and what would the world be like for us now, without You here? We too stand outside Your tomb, united in our sadness, in our uncertainty, and in our grief.

Lord, let us be still to ponder Your absence.

Let us ponder where Your spirit has gone.

Let us keep alive an ember of hope. ~ Amen.



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