Stations of the Cross for Everyone: March 31st 2021 prepared by Fiona

Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We are no longer providing video resources every week but may continue to create these important seasons of the year. We have attached some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation. If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate in our homes at 7.30pm on Wednesday. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centring Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: *Eternal God,* through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, peace and justice making. **Amen**

Introduction: The Stations of the Cross give us an opportunity to reflect not only on the suffering of Jesus but of all those suffering injustices today. The Stations need not be experienced as a wholly Christian encounter. On my own visit to Jerusalem a few years ago it struck me how the traditional 'Way of Sorrows' in Jerusalem's Old City, begins at the Lion Gate in the Muslim Quarter, meandering through Arab souks to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. While this may be a grief to many Christians, to me it shows that Christ is at the centre of all.

If you are either Christian or not, I hope that these Stations and their deeper themes may provide inspiration by understanding the crucifixion as a metaphor for all suffering, sin and its effects on a world in need of redemption. When we consider the cross as a burden and bloody sacrifice, we can consider several social issues, the present pandemic, the brutal loss of life and suffering, social isolation, racial issues, climate and environment, immigrants and refugees, human despair, exploitation, humiliation, and abandonment. These are issues relevant to society today and not just to Christians. According to D.T. Suzuki, the celebrated Buddhist teacher and commentator on Christian mystical thought, particularly Meister Eckhart, Christians believe that crucifixion means crucifying the self or the flesh, since without subduing the self we cannot attain moral perfection. Although both traditions speak of suffering, this is where Buddhism diverges from Christianity. Buddhism teaches that there is from the very beginning no self to crucify, realization or enlightenment come from surrender and the emptying of the illusory self. It is clear that however we understand suffering is part of the experienced human condition. Like many before and after him, the historical Jesus died a brutal death at the hands of hegemony and fearful oppressors. For those suffering, the universal experience is often one of profound and undeserved physical and emotional pain.

The fourteen Stations traditionally represent events from Jesus' passion and death. They are commonly depicted by fourteen images or icons in Cathedrals and Churches. Medieval Christians used the images so those unable to read or write could reflect on the crucifixion and resurrection story. In our present day it is usual to read a relevant scripture passage at each station to inspire the imagination and reflect upon Jesus' suffering. The Images are from the Church of Holy Cross, Sisak, Croatia.

Reflection: Station One: Mark 15:1-5 - Jesus is condemned 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."'



Reflection: We hear elsewhere in the Gospels that Pilate took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood . . . " (Matthew 27:24). For sure handwashing has been given a lot of attention to control the spread of Covid, but here Pilate is presiding over unjustifiable torture. We can think today of racial discrimination and the Black Lives Matter campaign. Pilate shows ritual abdication of responsibility. It is easy to walk on by…

Station Two: John 19:13-17 – Jesus carries his cross 'When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside…Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to the Place of the Skull…Golgotha.'



Reflection: Jesus carried his burden by himself. Have you been forced to take the cross of isolation and physical distancing? Perhaps you have borne the cross of risking your own life to save other peoples, or through no fault of your own seen your livelihood either demolished or diminished through the crisis of pandemic.

Station Three: Isaiah 53:4-7 – Jesus falls the first time 'He has borne our infirmities…yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions…upon him was the punishment that made us whole…We, like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent…'



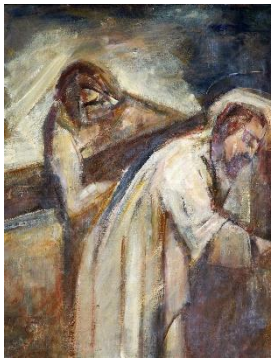
Reflection: This too shall pass, and the resurrection is coming. Many innocent people have suffered, but what are collective responsibilities? How much has the way we treat animals and our wasteful use of plastic and natural resources contributed to the pandemic, climate crisis and humanitarian disasters. With God's help can we bring about resurrection for ourselves?

Station Four: John 19:25-27 – Jesus meets his mother 'And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. 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: Jesus entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple—and to us. Catholics have a great love of Mary, a gift from a loving son to all disciples. During this pandemic many have had to entrust their mothers to the care of others in hospitals and nursing homes. Other families live apart on different continents relying on the internet which is no substitute for physical contact

Station Five: Mark 15:21 – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross '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: We may need help with anxiety, fear, fatigue or overwork. Perhaps our burdens are financial, perhaps it is difficult to speak out about abuse. Imagine having the weight lifted so we no longer have to face our struggles alone. Imagine helping others in this way.

Station Six: **Revelation 21:4 - Veronica wipes the face of Jesus** "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."



Reflection: Veronica's response to inequity and violence was love. Although she is not actually mentioned in the Bible she teaches that whatever we can't control, we can control our compassion and we can choose not to stand by as others are mistreated.

Station Seven: **2 Corinthians 12:10 - Jesus falls the second time** Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.



Reflection: How true is this statement? Human beings are seldom content with insults, hardships and persecutions. What we do have to learn is acceptance. Jesus shows our precarious instability during this unprecedented pandemic we long for a return to known worlds and an end to uncertainty which is why the coming resurrection experience is so important.

Station Eight: **Luke 23:27-31 - Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem** 'A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were …wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren…' 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: Jesus points to women both as disciples and in as carriers of Wisdom. God's creation is buried under desolation, a mountain of inequity, of consumer goods. The barren landscape of secular society has crushed the religious spirit and awaits resurrection from unbelief and awaits restoration of the Kingdom as it comes in power.

Station Nine: **Psalm 34:18-20** – **Jesus falls the third time** 'The Lord is near to the broken hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken.'



Reflection: Brokenness is the means through which God performs his deepest work. The Gospel of John is useful here: Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24). We Jesus' death and resurrection as a metaphor of the Divine pattern.

Station Ten: **John 19:23-24 – Jesus is stripped of his garments** 'When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."'

Reflection: Garments at one level signify the value of respect and at another are symbols of position. The seamless garment spoken of is a symbol of tells us the Jesus was acting as High Priest. The High Priest wore such a garment at Passover. In fact, without the garment, the priest was not fit to serve (Ezekiel 44:19).





Station Eleven: Luke 23:33-43 – Crucifixion: 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 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, 37 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." 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…, 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: What did it feel like for Jesus to be mocked, to be forced to wear and imitation crown of thorns, to be disbelieved? On a domestic level what does bullying feel like, to be intimidated at home or in the workplace. On a global scale what about persecution for beliefs, whatever they may be.



Station Twelve: John 19:28-37 – Jesus dies on the cross 'After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath. This was because the Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken…"'

Reflection: Jesus is both the Lamb (sacrifice) and the High Priest who offers the Lamb (himself). Jesus was crucified "at the sixth hour" (John 19:14). That was the very hour in which the High Priest began the slaughter of the Passover lambs in the Temple. Four cups of wine were taken at the Passover meal, but only Three cups are consumed before Jesus gets up and leads the apostles to the garden. The fourth cup is served to Jesus on the cross (John 19:28-29) and completes the Passover.



Station Thirteen: John19:38-40 – Jesus is taken down from the cross 'After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes…They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.'

Reflection: One can only Imagine the grief of Mary, Jesus' mother and perhaps her gratitude at Joseph and Nicodemus the secret disciples.



Station Fourteen: Mark 15:46-47 - Jesus is laid in the tomb 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. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

Reflection: Equally poignant in our present time are the stories of those who cannot be with their loved ones at the moment of death, denied this last act of intimacy.

Beginning Meditation: Let us prepare now for our meditation. Notice any tightness in your shoulders and neck and allow any tension in your muscles to relax. Allow your back to rest upright. Be conscious of where your body is touching

the chair. Allow your breathing to settle, allow your body to slow down. You may wish to silently repeat a sacred word, bring to mind an image, or simply focus on your breath as an aid to mediation.

We Meditate for 25 Minutes…

Post Meditation reading: Feeling the Passion of Christ, Julian of Norwich

It seemed to me that I could feel the Passion of Christ strongly, but yet I longed by God's grace to feel it more intensely. I thought how I wished I had been there at the crucifixion with Mary Magdalene and with others who were Christ's dear friends, that I might have seen in the flesh the Passion of our Lord which he suffered for me, so that I could have suffered with him as others did who loved him…

It suddenly occurred to me that I should entreat our Lord… so that he would fill my whole body with remembrance for the feeling of his blessed Passion… for I wanted his pains to be my pains, with compassion, and then longing for God. Yet in this I never asked for a bodily sight or any kind of showing of God, but for fellow-suffering, such as it seemed to me a naturally kind soul might feel for our Lord Jesus, who was willing to become a mortal man for love. I wanted to suffer with him, while living in my mortal body, as God would give me grace.

And suddenly I saw the red blood trickling down from under the crown of thorns…
(Revelations of Divine Love, pp. 3 and 6)

Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation, and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Moments of your personal prayer follow…**Amen.**

Thank you for meditating with us; please join us again soon. Stay safe and well.

Into Easter…



Station Fifteen: Mark 16:4-8 – The Resurrection: 'When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was exceptionally large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection: How do you imagine the Resurrection? Jesus is a concentration of God's presence in his creation, so the resurrection breaks the confines that were required for his earthly ministry. This takes us to a place unseen and can't be seen. It is what follows that leads his friends and followers to the gradual understanding. Death could not contain him, and the sign of defeat fixed to his cross has become a banner of victory. Christ who died is risen. Alleluia!

Resources:
https://mocra.wordpress.com/2020/04/08/stations-of-the-cross-in-a-time-of-pandemic/
https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/new-york-stations-cross-art-1256954
https://sites.google.com/site/stationsofcrossandresurrection/part-1/scriptural-stations/15---jesus-rises-from-the-dead
The Images are from the Church of Holy Cross, Sisak, Croatia, final image by Fiona



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