

Back-Yard Stations of the Cross

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On April 10th, 2020 (Good Friday), I will be “self isolating” at home in the midst of the COVID-19 world-wide pandemic. In order to try to help slow the spread of the virus, all the churches are closed and we are not permitted to gather. So, I decided I would construct a “Back-Yard Stations of the Cross” using items I had at home as part of an act of worship for Good Friday.

“Stations” (in Latin meaning “to stand”) are a way to commemorate the various events of Jesus’ passion and death. Stations of the Cross are often walked and prayed on Good Friday. To create this simple guide, I surveyed various source materials and decided on simply reading corresponding Scripture while “visiting” each of my home-made stations. (I’ve outlined it for you here).

Set Up: Using a Stations of the Cross guide I found online (thank you to St. Rita’s Roman Catholic Church in Long Island, NY! Find their guide here:

[http://stritalic.org/GoodFri2013StationsCross%20\(1\).pdf](http://stritalic.org/GoodFri2013StationsCross%20(1).pdf)), I read their commentary and then contemplated each Station’s story (see St. Rita’s guide). I chose a word or phrase that “popped out” to me and noted it. I then thought about the things around my house and imagined how to represent each Station. I wanted all my senses to be involved - touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight... as well as my emotions.

Choosing my items took a little time and it did require a stretch of my imagination, but my intent is sincere and so is my desire to “walk with Jesus!” What we each choose should have meaning for each of us, besides we are home alone anyway!

On Maundy Thursday, I plan to set up my stations around the perimeter of my yard. On Friday I will gather my readings (which I’m sharing with you here!) and will take my journal and pen on my journey. I am planning plenty of time for my “walk.”

Simple directions to walk the Stations:

Stop at each station to interact with your chosen item/action:

Read the Scripture

Contemplate

Imagine the situation and try to “see” Jesus

Move onto the next station when ready. Take your time. (You probably aren’t going anywhere anyway...?!)

You may want to take photos, make notes or simply enjoy the moment of God’s grace at each Station. The “rules” are yours.

First Station - Jesus is condemned to death.

- My chosen items: bowl of water and piece of rope. St. Rita's Meditation notes that Pilate washed his hands of the whole affair and Jesus' hands were tied behind his back.
- **Scripture: John 19:13-19** When Pilate heard those words, he led Jesus outside. He sat down at the judgment seat in the area designated Stone Court (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). It was the preparation day for Passover. The hour was noon. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king."

15 They shouted back, "Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said, "I am to crucify your king?"

The high priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar."

16-19 Pilate caved in to their demand. He turned him over to be crucified. - version The Message

Second Station - Jesus carries His cross

- My chosen Items: old wood pile behind our shed
- **Scripture: Mark 8:34-37** Then he called his disciples and the people around him, and said to them, "If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, take up his cross and follow me. The man who tries to save his life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's who will save it. What good can it do a man to gain the whole world at the price

of his own soul? What can a man offer to buy back his soul once he has lost it? - version J.B.Philips

Third Station - Jesus fall the first time

- My chosen Action: lay on the ground (preferably in dirt with my face to the dust)
- **Scripture: Isaiah 53:2-6**

The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling,
a scrubby plant in a parched field.

There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing to cause us to take a second look.

He was looked down on and passed over,
a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand.

One look at him and people turned away.

We looked down on him, thought he was scum.

But the fact is, it was *our* pains he carried—
our disfigurements, all the things wrong with *us*.

We thought he brought it on himself,
that God was punishing him for his own failures.

But it was our sins that did that to him,

that ripped and tore and crushed him—*our sins!*

He took the punishment, and that made us whole.

Through his bruises we get healed.

We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost.

We've all done our own thing, gone our own way.

And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong,
on him, on him. - version The Message

Fourth Station - Jesus meets his mother

- My chosen Item: Picture of my mom who died in 2016 after living with cancer for 10 years. I miss her very much and think about her all the time.
- **Scripture: Luke 2:33-35** Jesus' father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words. Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,

This child marks both the failure and
the recovery of many in Israel,

A figure misunderstood and contradicted—
the pain of a sword-thrust through you—

But the rejection will force honesty,

as God reveals who they really are. - version The
Message

Fifth Station - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross

- My chosen Item: Touch, lift and hold concrete blocks that are sitting behind our shed.
- **Scripture: Luke 23:26** As they led him off, they made Simon, a man from Cyrene who happened to be coming in from the countryside, carry the cross behind Jesus.

Sixth Station - Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

- My chosen Action: Create a charcoal rubbing on paper using a bag of spilled charcoal in our shed floor.
- **Scripture: Matthew 25:37-40** "Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.' - version The Message

Seventh Station - Jesus falls the second time

- My chosen Items: Pictures of friends. I will think about the community watching Jesus and surrounding him - people who love him and are sharing in his sorrow.
- **Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8** Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status

with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human!* Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.
- version The Message

Eighth Station - Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

- My chosen Item: Sign I made for the Women's March in 2018 that I attended in Washington, DC. I recently found it while I was reorganizing my room. Been cleaning and organizing since I've been home so often.
- **Scripture: Luke 23:28** At one point Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children. - version The Message

Ninth Station - Jesus falls a third time

- My chosen Action: Read a Rainer Maria Rilke Poem, entitled "Initiation." I often use poetry in my spiritual meditations.
- **Scripture: Psalm 22:14-16**

14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
16 For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—

Tenth Station - Jesus' clothes are taken away

- My chosen Item: My favorite blanket that I cuddle up with every evening. I can't imagine not having it.
- **Scripture: John 19:23-24** When they crucified him, the Roman soldiers took his clothes and divided them up four ways, to each soldier a fourth. But his robe was seamless, a single piece of weaving, so they said to each other, "Let's not tear it up. Let's throw dice to see who gets it." This confirmed the Scripture that said, "They divided up my clothes among them and threw dice for my coat." - version The Message

Eleventh Station - Jesus is nailed to the cross

- My chosen item: a cross made with two nails that reminds me of the crosses hanging on the wall in the retreat cells at Mepkin Abbey (a Trappist monastery in Moncks Corner, SC that I visit once a year). I have been praying with the community online during this time and it lifts my soul and warms my heart to be connected with so many like-minded friends.
- **Scripture: Luke 23:33-35** When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.

34-35 Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; they don’t know what they’re doing.”

Dividing up his clothes, they threw dice for them. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders made faces, taunting, “He saved others. Let’s see him save himself! The Messiah of God—ha! The Chosen—ha!” - version The Message

Twelfth Station - Jesus dies on the cross

- My chosen Item: Gaze at Bloch’s work entitled, *Christ on the Cross*. Art found in “The Master’s Hand: the art of Carl Heinrich Bloch,” by Dawn C. Pheysey and Richard Neithzel Holzapfel (Deseret Book Company, 2010, pg 100). Bloch’s art depicts real scenes with much symbolism. I love his work - especially the expression on the faces of his characters.

- **Scripture: Mark 15:33-39**

Mark 15:33-34 At noon the sky became extremely dark. The darkness lasted three hours. At three o’clock, Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”- version Living Bible

35-36 Some of the bystanders who heard him said, “Listen, he’s calling for Elijah.” Someone ran off, soaked a sponge in sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

37-39 But Jesus, with a loud cry, gave his last breath. At that moment the Temple curtain ripped right down the middle. When the Roman captain standing guard in front of him saw that he had quit breathing, he said, “This has to be the Son of God!” - - version Living Bible

Thirteenth Station - The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

- My chosen Item: Mom’s handwriting sample. As I was researching for this exercise, I came across my Mom’s handwriting in her Bible. Her handwriting is how she lives on forever and is constantly present in my life. I take great comfort in looking at it.
- **Scripture: Mark 15:42-46** This all happened the day before the Sabbath. Late that afternoon Joseph from Arimathea, an honored member of the Jewish Supreme

Court (who personally was eagerly expecting the arrival of God's Kingdom), gathered his courage and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

44 Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead so he called for the Roman officer in charge and asked him.

45 The officer confirmed the fact, and Pilate told Joseph he could have the body.

46 Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth and, taking Jesus' body down from the cross, wound it in the cloth and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb, and rolled a stone in front of the entrance. - version Living Bible

Fourteenth Station - Jesus is laid in the tomb

- My chosen Item: spices in cloth. I took some spices from our spice rack and wrapped them in a small piece of cloth. I am also going to gaze at my crystal cross.
- **Scripture: John 19:40-42** Together they wrapped Jesus' body in a long linen cloth saturated with the spices, as is the Jewish custom of burial. **41** The place of crucifixion was near a grove of trees, where there was a new tomb, never used before. **42** And so, because of the need for haste before the Sabbath, and because the tomb was close at hand, they laid him there. - version Living Bible

Sit in Silence....

Close with Prayer.

My Closing Prayer:

Thank you Lord Jesus for the way of your cross. I pray that You will grant me the graces I need to take up my own cross today. Help me to be a servant of Jesus on mission to the world. I remember today the experience of Stations of the Cross and think about how Your way to real life is not easy. I remember that the good news of the cross is that dying in Christ, we are raised to new life - life everlasting.

I hold others in prayer today, as I pray for our world, our city and my community during this strange and difficult time of COVID-19. I also am grateful for the gifts that I am discovering in the daily challenges of this time. Thank you Lord for your unending graces and comforts. Amen.

Personal Notes: