



## Stations of the Cross in a Time of Loss

*... Every year  
everything I have ever learned  
in my lifetime  
leads back to this: the fires  
and the black river of loss  
whose other side  
is salvation,  
whose meaning none of us will ever know.*

*To live in this world  
you must be able to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it  
against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.*

*from IN BLACKWATER WOODS by Mary Oliver*

*This booklet and its reflections are the loving work of Martha Dudich for Trinity Buckingham  
The cover art is by Joan Brand-Landkamer, artist-in-residence, St. James Cathedral, Seattle WA  
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Church of St. George the Martyr in Newbury, England*

*In these most recent days of Lent, we've witnessed more and more of our country and our way of life come to a standstill. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, countless people are experiencing tremendous loss: loss of life, loss of health, loss of industry and income. For those who have lost loved ones, there is also the loss of the traditional rituals of funerals and communities gathering to grieve together. Smaller losses are also devastating. Each day, it seemed, something closed. Those familiar markers we have counted on, socially, spiritually, traditionally - Opening Day of baseball, proms and graduations, Holy Week - will not happen publically. Weddings and vacations are postponed. The predictability we take for granted is gone as well: that there will be eggs and toilet paper at the grocery, that we can safely touch a doorknob or reach for someone's hand, go to the dentist or the movies. And for many, perhaps, the most distressing certainty in this time of vast uncertainty: that we are to cope separated from friends and family when we need them most.*

*Our faith reminds us: we are never separated from the love of God. We do not need holy places to be in direct contact with God. We can be daughters and sons of God anywhere.*

*The ancient devotion known as Stations of the Cross evolved so that anyone anywhere could journey to the Holy Land - the archetypal goal of early Christian pilgrims - without leaving home. Most local churches displayed images of Jesus' short journey from Pilate's palace in Jerusalem, where he was condemned to death, to the cross and then to his tomb. Anywhere in the world, the faithful could walk with Jesus, see him embrace his mother, meet the daughters of Jerusalem, be crucified and buried.*

*Loving our neighbor while many of us are hunkered down in our homes may be more challenging this Holy Week, but we are still called to find ways to take care of one another. To that end, recognizing the grace that is the "domestic church" - families, in all their forms, shaping the larger faith community - let us unite in praying the Stations of the Cross with and for one another. This is a beautiful expression of the core of our faith, that Jesus embraced the dramas of every human life, our triumphs and failures, our joys and sorrows.*

*In the Stations of the Cross, we remember how Christ is with us, particularly when we have lost the way forward. Each station recalls a moment when Jesus stopped. He stops to speak with people in compassion; he stops when he falls to the ground exhausted, unable to go on; he stops at Golgotha because that is the end of the road. Jesus is with us now, as we are stopped in our tracks, wondering how we are to carry on. Jesus carries on, making his way to the cross and to the resurrection, and he brings us with him in hope.*

And so we pray:

We come to you now, Loving God, as we have so many times before. We come to you in times of joy and gratitude. We come to you in times of pain and loss. We come to you. At the foot of the cross, we bring you our lives. Your cross makes sacred every loss, every disappointment, every moment, every life. As the one true Shepherd, you lead us. Lead us now as we walk the way of the cross, this path of love. Lead us, no matter how the road of life unfolds. Amen.



## 1. The First Station of the Cross: Jesus is condemned to die

Jesus said, “The one who enters through the gate is shepherd of the sheep; the keeper of the gate opens for him. The sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out.”

The shepherd calls his own. Sometimes, too many distractions, too many other voices, prevent us from hearing his voice. How alone Jesus must have felt in that moment when a voice speaks words condemning him. In that moment, Jesus stands with every human person abandoned, neglected, excluded. He stands with every human person who may think that God has forgotten them. In the silence of this moment, we listen for the shepherd’s voice that tells us: *you are not alone* .

(Pause and reflect)



## 2. The Second Station of the Cross: Jesus accepts his cross

The prophet Micah writes, “Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, that dwells apart in the woodland.”

With a hand outstretched, Jesus takes upon his body the weight of the cross. Like a shepherd’s staff, the cross shows us the way of Jesus. The way of Jesus is the way of love. Maybe he lost his balance as the beam came toward him; but he did not push it away. He held it firmly in his hands, as a kind of promise to hold us when the way is hard, when we have lost our balance. In this moment, open your hands; we let the Shepherd show us the way.

(Pause and reflect)



## 3. The Third Station of the Cross: Jesus falls

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is no shepherd, nor owner of the sheep, catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered.”

Jesus falls the first time; maybe he did not see it coming. Maybe it surprised him, that he should stumble and fall so quickly. Yet it did not shake his faith. As shepherd, he turns to each of us. Often our losses are sudden; sometimes we do not see them coming. And in that moment, we may be discouraged or disillusioned, and our faith shaken. Yet the shepherd does not look away. In the silence of this moment let us pray: *Lift me Lord, when my faith is shaken.*

(Pause and reflect)



#### 4. The Fourth Station of the Cross: Jesus meets his mother

Luke the evangelist writes, “. . . the shepherds said to one another: *Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this event which the Lord has made known to us.* They went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.”

There is a tenderness, and incredible sadness, to think of the meeting of Jesus and Mary in that last terrible moment. The Good News is first told to the lowly shepherds. They are given the message not to be afraid, and that God would bring them peace. In their final meeting, Mary’s heart must have remembered the message also given to her: *you have nothing to fear.* In the silence of this moment let us pray: *I have nothing to fear.*

(Pause and reflect)



## 5. The Fifth Station of the Cross: Jesus is helped by Simon

The prophet Jeremiah writes, “I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none of them shall be missing, says the Lord.”

For one brief moment, the weight of the cross is made bearable by a man named Simon. He moves closer to Jesus, and uses his own body to ease the weary, trembling body of Jesus. In our times of loss, sorrow and despair, there have been Simons. Men and women have stepped forward and shared our pain, calmed our fear, eased our trembling spirits. In this moment of quiet, whisper a prayer of gratitude for the Simon who stepped forward in your hour of need.

(Pause and reflect)



## 6. The Sixth Station of the Cross: Jesus is assisted by Veronica

Jesus said, “Who among you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wasteland and follow the one until you find it? And when you find it, you put it on your shoulders in jubilation.”

The story of Veronica is the remembrance of those who wished they could do more. Her heart was moved with pity, seeing the exhaustion of Jesus. On the road of life, when faced with difficulties and trials, we wonder if we could have done more. And sometimes, we realize, all we can do is stand with those we love. In the silence of this moment, ask for the grace to see the face of Jesus, even in times when there is nothing you can do.

(Pause and reflect)



### 7. The Seventh Station of the Cross: Jesus falls

In Psalm 78 it is written: “But his people he led forth like sheep and guided them like a herd in the desert. He led them on, secure and unafraid. . . and brought them to his holy land.”

Jesus stumbles again, and maybe, for just a brief moment, wonders if he should even get up. He may have felt dazed and lost. In his entire life, he always sought out those who had fallen; looked for those who were lost. He went to wherever they were. In our life, Jesus comes to us. He comes when we are happy and grateful; he comes when we are lost and heartbroken. In the silence of this moment, ask Jesus to come to you, to find you, no matter where you are.

(Pause and reflect)



## 8. The Eighth Station of the Cross: Jesus consoles the Jerusalem women

The prophet Isaiah writes, “Like a shepherd he leads his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs. Carrying them in his bosom, leading the ewes with care.”

Even in his pain, Jesus could see the pain of others. He embraces our life, our joy, our pain, so that we will know and believe *no one is ever alone* . He is with us. So in one brief moment, he looks up from his own pain, and consoles the women who weep for him. He asks us to do the same. We who have experienced loss and pain are called to console others, because we understand. In the silence of this moment, we ask: *who needs my understanding, my tenderness, my consolation?*

(Pause and reflect)



## 9. The Ninth Station of the Cross: Jesus falls



A third time Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked a third time, “Do you love me?” so he said to him, “Lord, you know everything. You know well that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Jesus falls a third and final time. It must have been a time, not only of physical pain, but deep hurt and sadness. And yet, he gets up again, for we know very well that he loves us. How often we hurt one another, especially those whom we love. We don’t mean to hurt them, but we do. In the silence of this moment, we ask: *who needs to know, not only from my words, but from my actions, that I do love them?*

(Pause and reflect)

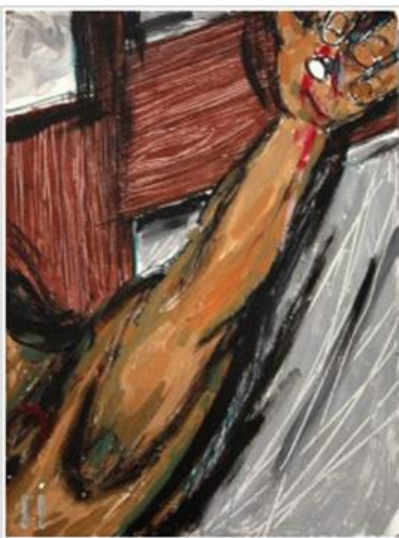


## 10. The Tenth Station of the Cross: Jesus is stripped of his clothing

In the First Letter of Peter, it is written, “Be examples to the flock, not lording it over those assigned to you, so that when the chief Shepherd appears you will win for yourselves the unfading crown of glory.”

With the end now near, the clothing of Jesus is torn from his body. In this moment, the shepherd prepares to lay down his life for his sheep. In our times of loss, so many things may seem to have been torn from us. Our certainty and security; our physical comforts, our understanding. And yet, in those moments, we are called to remember that the meaning of our life is not found in what we have, but in who we are. In whose we are. In the silence of this moment, remember that you are God’s son and God’s daughter.

(Pause and reflect)



## 11. The Eleventh Station of the Cross: Jesus is nailed to the cross

In the First Letter of Peter, it is written, “In his own body he brought your sins to the cross, so that all of us, dead to sin, could live in accord with God’s will. By his wounds you were healed. At one time you were straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd.”

Surely it is the pain that enters our mind, when we imagine Jesus being nailed to a cross. But there is even something deeper: it is a moment when Jesus surrenders control, even of his body. His arms are open, relying only on God’s grace. Times of loss are often painful when we realize there is much we cannot control. In the silence of this moment, we pray: *I surrender myself to your grace.*

(Pause and reflect)



## 12. The Twelfth Station of the Cross: Jesus dies

The psalmist writes, “You are my shepherd: I will never be in need. . . You lead me to streams of peace. You refresh my life. . . I may walk through valleys as dark as death, yet there is nothing to fear. . . Your kindness and love will always be with me and I will abide with you forever.”

The Word of God is silenced. What possible words do we have? Yet this dead man on the cross is the Word that speaks most loudly of a love beyond imagination. In him, God embraces everyone who feels abandoned and betrayed: people struggling with the loss of those whom they love, those who are angry at senseless terminal illness or who grieve broken relationships, those who feel God has departed. In Jesus, God embraces the absence of God. In this moment, at the foot of the cross, entrust whatever death you need to into God’s care.

(Pause and reflect)



### 13. The Thirteen Station of the Cross: Jesus is removed from the cross

The prophet Ezekiel writes, “In good pastures will I tend them; and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing ground. There they shall lie down in good grazing ground, and on rich, safe pasture shall they feed; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord God.”

A handful of faithful friends remain, as the body of Jesus is taken from the cross. Tenderly and lovingly they lay him to rest. We think now of those we have loved in this life who have died. Whether their lives were short or long, they touched us. We grieve their loss. Yet we trust they are with God. In the silence of this moment, we

pray: *Give them eternal rest. Peace to their spirits and the hearts of all who love them.*

(Pause and reflect)



#### 14. The Fourteenth Station of the Cross: Jesus is buried

In the Letter to the Hebrews, it is written, “May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our Lord, furnish you with all that is good, that you may do God's will.”

For those who follow Jesus, there is no thought of his burial without Easter. The tomb that was sealed opens to a new beginning. Those who stood in sorrow at the foot of the cross, realized a new beginning was possible on the first morning of the week. In this moment, at the cross of Jesus, we do not stand alone. Certain that the God of peace will renew us, open your hands in front of you, and whisper words of peace into a worried, wounded and waiting world.

*And we pray now as Jesus taught us:*

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Loving God, remain with us, heal us, forgive us, comfort us, transform us, renew us, strengthen us, challenge us, sustain us, and bless us. We ask this in your name.  
Amen.