



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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## THE WAY OF SORROW

This night we journey together to the cross by listening to God’s Holy Word and singing sacred songs. There are 14 stops we will make on this journey or stations, if you will, at which we will pause. This tradition of stations became a way to make pilgrimage and walk the Way of Sorrow with Jesus in those last hours of his life. Pilgrims to Jerusalem would journey and stop where tradition said the events happened. Eventually it became difficult for most people to make an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. These stations, then, in a sanctuary or on church grounds, became a way to make a pilgrimage to an “interior Jerusalem”—to journey to that place Augustine called “more inward than [our] most inward part.” Just as the disciples, and Jesus himself, searched their hearts in that moment of trauma and tragedy, we search our own hearts. And yet, we know that at our very core, we are connected to others through our connection to God. And so our stations will invite us not only to examine ourselves, but also to intercede on behalf of others, as we pray for those who know suffering and sorrow. We will turn to a God who knows that pain and ensures we never have to face it alone. At each stop along the way, we will hear the story of Jesus’ own suffering and sorrow. We will listen. We will pray. We will sing songs that witness to Jesus’ sacrifice and God’s life-giving love for us.

**Choir**

*He Became a Lamb*

### **1. Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. - Matthew 26: 36-41**

*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to the disciples, “Stay here while I go and pray over there.” When he took Peter and Zebedee’s two sons, he began to feel sad and anxious. Then he said to them, “I’m very sad. It’s as if I’m dying. Stay here and keep alert with me.” Then he went a short distance farther and fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it’s possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want.”*

*He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Couldn’t you stay alert one hour with me? Stay alert and pray so that you won’t give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.”*

Have you ever just wished that the situation you are in or the pain you feel could simply be lifted from you like waking from a bad dream? Jesus knows this pain. At this station we pray for those who live in fear of persecution for who they are or for the stands they take on the side of the oppressed. And we find the Jesus who felt afraid and alone and yet offered himself for a higher purpose.

## **2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas. - Mark 14: 43-50**

*Suddenly, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came with a mob carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders. His betrayer had given them a sign: “Arrest the man I kiss, and take him away under guard.” As soon as he got there, Judas said to Jesus, “Rabbi!” Then he kissed him. Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him. One of the bystanders drew a sword and struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear. Jesus responded, “Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, like an outlaw? Day after day, I was with you, teaching in the temple, but you didn’t arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” And all his disciples left him and ran away.*

The sting of difficult relationships is something most of us have experienced. Perhaps as children, trust was betrayed by an adult who did not care for us as we needed or perhaps as adults, family or spousal relationships crumbled under the weight of addiction or illness or resentment. At this station, we pray for the ability to forgive and move on. We find here the Jesus who knew of the betrayal and who broke bread with Judas anyway.

## **3. Jesus is condemned to death by the Sanhedrin. - Luke 22: 66-71**

*As morning came, the elders of the people, both chief priests and legal experts, came together, and Jesus was brought before their council. They said, “If you are the Christ, tell us!” He answered, “If I tell you, you won’t believe. And if I ask you a question, you won’t answer. But from now on, the Human One will be seated on the right side of the power of God.” They all said, “Are you God’s Son, then?” He*

*replied, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “Why do we need further testimony? We’ve heard it from his own lips.”*

Perhaps church has always felt like a welcoming and safe space for you. But there are many in this world who have been harmed as they were cast out, denied the right to become religious leaders, ostracized and judged or “sentenced” for who they are. There are also those who have been the victims of religious and clergy abuse. At this station we pray for the victims of the world, especially when the violence was done in the name of God and we find the Jesus whose death was caught up in the entangled political and religious climate of his day.

### **Song**

*Alas and Did My Savior Bleed, 263*

#### **4. Jesus is denied by Peter. - Matthew 26: 69-75**

*Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant woman came and said to him, “You were also with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, “I don’t know what you are talking about.” When he went over to the gate, another woman saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” With a solemn pledge, he denied it again, saying, “I don’t know the man.” A short time later those standing there came and said to Peter, “You must be one of them. The way you talk gives you away.” Then he cursed and swore, “I don’t know the man!” At that very moment the rooster crowed. Peter remembered Jesus’ words, “Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times.” And Peter went out and cried uncontrollably.*

Denial is a powerful coping mechanism when faced with pain that is too difficult to accept. In our weakness and despair, we sometimes turn to denial in order to survive. At this station we find the Jesus who knows that we are human and will have moments of denial when circumstances feel impossible. And we ask for forgiveness for the times we might have turned our backs on our friends.

#### **5. Jesus is judged by Pilate. - Matthew 27: 11-14; 22-24**

*Jesus was brought before [Pilate], the governor. The governor said, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “That’s what you say.” But he didn’t answer when the chief priests and elders accused him. Then Pilate said, “Don’t you hear the testimony they bring against you?” But he didn’t answer, not even a single*

*word. So the governor was greatly amazed... Pilate said [to the crowds], "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify him!" But he said, "Why? What wrong has he done?" They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!" Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem."*

So many people around the world suffer under governments who have washed their hands of the plight of the poor. Money for the weapons of war outweigh money for education, for public assistance, for food and shelter, for at-risk youth, for safety of all the world's citizens. At this station, we pray for those in government who make decisions that affect people's lives and we find the Jesus whose witness on behalf of the oppressed got him killed.

#### **6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns. - John 19: 1-3**

*Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. Over and over they went up to him and said, "Greetings, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.*

Unimaginable numbers of people are victims of abuse. Abuse of all kinds leaves scars that last a lifetime. At this station we pray for healing for those who have endured violence inflicted on body, mind and spirit and find the Jesus who knew this pain yet also knows the depth of pain inside perpetrators that drive them to commit atrocities.

#### **Song**

*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, 284*

#### **7. Jesus carries his cross. - John 19: 15-17**

*The soldiers took Jesus prisoner. Carrying his cross by himself, he went out to a place called Skull Place (in Aramaic, Golgotha).*

The Roman techniques of death by crucifixion were notoriously brutal. Beyond the actual excruciating physical pain, the humiliation of bearing the instrument of death through the streets on the way to the execution was meant to prolong and intensify the suffering. As we find the Jesus who carried the burden of his cross to Golgotha, we remember his earlier words that if we would only come to him, he would carry

our burdens. We pray for all those who carry heavy burdens and ask God to give them rest.

**8. Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene. - Luke 23: 26**

*As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus.*

The bravery and compassion of those who rush to help in times of great need is something to experience. First responders, neighbors, friends and strangers rush to assist in crises in ways that restore our faith in humanity. At this station we find the Jesus whose burden was lightened by one who bore the weight of his cross for a while. And we pray for all those who come to help in time of need and ask God for the strength to put ourselves in that place whenever we have the opportunity.

**9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. - Luke 23: 27-31**

*A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. The time will come when they will say, ‘Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”*

Expressions of grief and mourning are much more demonstrative in some cultures than others. The women whose weeping and wailing accompanied Jesus’ march to the cross offered him an opportunity for his own lament and despair. At this station, we find the Jesus who proclaims his sorrow about the state of the world and its people and we pray for all those humanitarians and advocates who walk alongside, keep vigil with, keep proclaiming and keep before us the suffering of the world.

**Song**

*Old Rugged Cross, 260*

**10. Jesus is crucified. - Mark 15: 22-24**

*They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place. They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he didn't take it. They crucified him. They divided up his clothes, drawing lots for them to determine who would take what.*

Roman crucifixion was used as a way of terrorizing the people whose lands they occupied and was most often the preferred method for making a statement about political insurgents. And so death was not the main goal, but rather prolonged and lingering suffering. Hanging from nails through the hands and feet would ensure a slow death and make sure those who witnessed were frightened and intimidated into submission to the Roman state. At this station we find the Jesus whose body was tortured to death and pray for all who are terrorized by abuse of power.

**11. Jesus promises to share his reign with the good thief. - Luke 23: 39-43**

*One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

*Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise."*

The conversation from the cross between three persons facing their own deaths ranged from denial to acceptance. We all do this when faced with grief... we want to be saved from the pain, we barter with God, we get angry and vengeful and then accept the inevitable. At this station we find the Jesus that is with us, no matter who we are or where we are on the journey, Jesus is with us and promises redemption at any moment.

**12. Jesus is on the cross, with his mother and disciple below. - John 19: 25-27**

*Jesus' mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then*

*he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

Jesus knows his absence will be felt by many, but perhaps no greater than the absence his mother will feel. The band of disciples has become family and this commissioning of his closest disciple to take his place as her son is repeated over and over again throughout humanity when a dying loved one says, “take care of them.” At this station we find the Jesus who loves deeply and invites us to care especially for those who have no family. We pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those who have become chosen family to us.

**Song**

*Lamb of God, 281*

**13. Jesus dies on the cross. - Luke 23: 44-46**

*It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I entrust my life.” After he said this, he breathed for the last time.*

At this station, we find the Jesus whose final breath was accompanied by the ultimate letting go into God... “I give you my Spirit.” At the time of Jesus, breath was considered to be life and spirit. When someone gives their last breath, we are aware that the life has gone out of the body that was only home to their spirit on this earth. For those that are left behind, it is difficult to accept that all is finished. God’s last words in the human form of Jesus were that the Spirit was returning to the Creator and we give thanks that this is true for all those we have lost. We lift up the names of those we have lost and give thanks that God holds them even now.

**14. Jesus is placed in the tomb. - Matthew 27: 57-61**

*That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate gave him permission to take it. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb.*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?...  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?...  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?...

**Song**

*Were You There, 283*

**Prayer**— God of Suffering, God of Sacrificial Love, God of Redeeming Grace, there are no more words, for it is finished. And while we know the rest of the story, we pause this night to stay in the abyss where there is no light. We listen for the new Jerusalem to be born in us out of the womb and tomb of darkness. Be with us, we pray, through the night of letting go. Amen.

**Postlude**

*Partita on “O Sacred Head”*