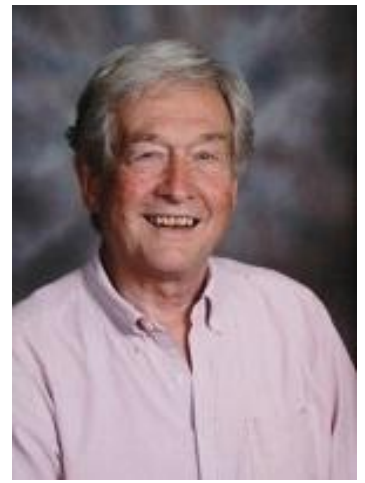


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STATIONS OF THE CROSS For Good Friday

- 1 In the weeks leading up to Easter last year, I was approached by a friend and congregational member, who is one of our parish's most dependable voices for social justice issues. He suggested I write a set of Stations of the Cross for an urban setting, that would re-imagine the traditional Stations for use in a Good Friday march through our own downtown.
- 2 The traditional Stations of the Cross, you will recall, are retraced every year on Good Friday in Jerusalem, in an act of piety going back hundreds of years. Pilgrims – often including the current Pope, and often including members of the faithful carrying an enormous wooden cross – will walk the presumed route Jesus followed through the streets of the ancient city, pausing for prayers and Bible readings at specific “stations”. There are traditionally fourteen such Stations.
- 3 And today, pictures or carvings of the fourteen Stations can often be found mounted around the walls of many churches, Roman Catholic and increasingly also Protestant. This gives the faithful – who cannot otherwise afford a trip to the Holy Land! – an opportunity to walk “the way of the cross” with Jesus as a private or corporate devotional exercise. And there is a growing literature of contemporary, non-traditional Stations.
- 4 I agreed to select the Bible passages and to write the prayers. He agreed to gather a group of friends, and members from our parish, who might be sympathetic to the idea. Our Stations would constitute a kind of protest march in our city's downtown. (All liturgical processions are a kind of protest march, as I have argued here before: Our allegiance as Christians is not to the Emperor but to the Christ.)
- 5 I constructed the prayers with two important constraints in mind. First, I felt it would be appropriate to cast the prayers in language that would be deliberately non-accusatory and even non-confrontational. Since we'd be very visible in a very public space, I thought it profitable to make friends, not enemies. We'd chiefly be raising consciousness in this march, nothing more.
- 6 Second, because our crowd of pilgrims would be gathered from a very wide population of faith groups and indeed of no faith, I wanted to cite the broadest possible assemblage of witnesses. Hence my appeal to the testimonies of Jesus – and Mary and Francis and Moses and Mohamed and even the Buddha. Each a shining exemplar of righteousness for us today.
- 7 Here's what I came up with. We'll probably walk this path again this Good Friday. O yes: We walked with a processional icon of Jesus the Teacher, ribbons fluttering in the breeze!

8 START: AT SPEAKERS CORNER

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah:
Seek the welfare of the city
where I have sent you into exile,
and pray to the LORD on its behalf,
for in its welfare you will find your welfare....
For surely I know the plans I have for you,
says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm,
to give you a future with hope...
(Jeremiah 29: 7 and 11)

9 Let us pray.
Blessed are you, O LORD our God,
maker of all things.
Your servants the Hebrew prophets
call us to repent the wrongs we have inflicted
on each other, on our sisters and brothers, and
on our wounded world,
in what we do, and in what we have failed to do.
Accept our sincere repentance,
and turn our minds and hands and hearts
to the building of a better world,
a better nation,
a better city,
a better community,
and our own better selves.
Amen

10 SECOND STATION: AT THE COURT HOUSE / JAIL

A reading from the Book of Lamentations:
Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see if there is any sorrow
like my sorrow...
(Lamentations 1:12)

11 Let us pray.
Blessed are you, O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
Your servant Moses calls us
to seek justice for all people, and
to protect the lives and livelihood
of the whole human family.
Keep our eyes
and the eyes of all magistrates
on the plural prize of justice tempered with mercy.

Grant us all to live in a community of
more perfect harmony,
more perfect peace,
more perfect unity.
Amen

12 THIRD STATION:
AT REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS / CITY HALL:

A reading from The Gospel of Matthew:
Then Pilate released for [the crowd] Barabbas,
and having beaten Jesus,
[Pilate] delivered [Jesus] to be crucified.
(Matthew 27:26)

14 Let us pray.
Blessed are you O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
You send us holy prophets
and take delight in deeds of truth.
Your servant Jesus was sentenced to death
by the powers and principalities of Empire,
and so walked the way of the cross.
Give to our elected leaders today
the grace to govern with compassion and wisdom,
putting the needs of people first,
so they may seek and find
the greatest good for the greatest numbers.
Amen

15 FOURTH STATION:
AT A SHELTER FOR WOMEN

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah:
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them,
and give them gladness for sorrow.
(Jeremiah 31:13)

16 Let us pray.
Blessed are you, O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
Your servant Mary calls us
to bring wholeness and health
to all who suffer in body, mind or spirit.
Strengthen the hands and hearts
of all who serve the poor and the abused.
And bring us to that Day
when there shall be no more suffering,
when each shall sit under her vine
and under her fig tree
with none to make them afraid.
Amen

17 FIFTH STATION:
AT A PUBLIC PARK:

A reading from Genesis:
The LORD God took the man
and put him in the garden of Eden
to till it and to keep it.
(Genesis 2:15)

18 Let us pray.
Blessed are you, O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
Your servant Francis calls us
to honour our sister earth,
not to abuse or to pollute or to waste it,
but to treasure our wounded world
as our only home.
Give us grace
to treat with respect and compassion
all our world's teeming wonders –
its flora and fauna,
its stones and stars –
as precious fellow citizens
in a finite universe,
our very brothers and sisters
in our common journey
into the more perfect paradise you have promised.
Amen

19 SIXTH STATION:
AT A CENOTAPH HONOURING WAR DEAD:

A reading from the prophet Isaiah:
Behold my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights:
I have put my spirit upon him,
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not fail or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.
(Isaiah 42:1,4)

20 Let us pray.
Blessed are you O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
Your servant Mohamed reminds us
that, always and only,
it is justice and righteousness
that are the parents of peace.
Give us grace to find the flowers and fruits
of your peace – a holy shalom, salaam, salem –

by bringing the fires of justice and righteousness,
to our homes,
to our communities,
to our media, and
among the nations,
so that neighbours may be nourished
and none shall fear another.
Amen

21 THE SEVENTH AND LAST STATION:
AT A BANK:

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:
The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free.
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
(Luke 4:18-19)

22 Let us pray.
Blessed are you, O LORD our God,
Maker of all things.
Your servant the Buddha calls us
not to trust in worldly wealth,
but to seek those unseen things
that are timeless and eternal.
Give us grace not to be blinded
by an unheeding trust in this world's wealth,
but to lay up for ourselves instead
those values that endure,
and to seek the good, the true, and the beautiful
above all things.
Amen

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