



STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR COUPLES



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Stations of the Cross – History & Purpose

From the earliest of days, followers of Jesus told the story of His passion, death and resurrection. When pilgrims went to Jerusalem, they were anxious to see the sites where Jesus was. These sites become important holy connections with Jesus. Eventually, following in the footsteps of the Lord, along the way of the cross, became a part of the pilgrimage visit.

The Stations, as we know them today, came about when it was no longer easy or even possible to visit the holy sites. In the 1500's, villages all over Europe started creating "replicas" of the way of the cross, with small shrines commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the set of 14 stations we now know and were placed in almost every Catholic Church in the world.

What matters most in the Stations of the Cross is to follow Jesus Christ in His passion and to see ourselves mirrored in Him. To face life's dark side in ourselves and in our world, we need images of hope, and Jesus offers images of hope in His passion. By accompanying Him on the Way of the Cross, we gain His courageous patience and learn to trust in God who delivers us from evil.

Stations of the Cross – for Couples

This version of the Stations of the Cross for Couples is especially designed for us to accompany Jesus on His way to Calvary. The struggles we face in our couple relationship can be a very heavy cross to carry, but when we journey with Jesus to Calvary as a couple, we find hope and courage to fight for our marriage and so gain victory to rise with Him.

This presentation starts with 14 lit candles. As each Station is read, one candle is put out. After the Twelfth Station, everyone kneels and prays silently. After the Fourteenth Station, the candles are rekindled.

Couples take turns to read the sections. There are three parts for each section: (A) Explanation of the Station, (B) Reflection, and (C) Prayer Intercession.

OPENING PRAYER:

Leader: God of power and mercy, in love You sent Your Son that we might be cleansed of sin and live with You forever.

Bless us as we gather to reflect on His suffering and death, that we may learn from His example the way we should go as married couples.

We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

A. In our married lives we are often very quick to rush to judgment. We assume that things which annoy us are done deliberately to us by our spouse. We repeatedly ask (whether out loud or in our hearts), “Why didn’t you ...?” or “I thought you said you would ...” Our words imply bad will on the part of our beloved.

When we do this, we are like the chief priests or like Pontius Pilot, quick to judge and quick to condemn without looking closely at our own insecurities or at the person at whom the judgment is directed.

We fail to see the image of Christ in those we judge harshly. Again Jesus stands condemned.

B. *Reflection (1 minute of self reflection)*

How do I feel when we judge each other harshly?

C. *Prayer Intercession* **[Response: Lord, hear our prayer.]**

For all couples, that we may refrain from making rash judgments about each other. Let us pray. **[R]**

For our sensitivity to see each other's gifts and reflect Your goodness. Let us pray. **[R]**

SECOND STATION: JESUS ACCEPTS HIS CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. How often do we receive the crosses of daily life with complaining and grumbling? How often do we count the burdens that we have without appreciating the burdens being borne by our own spouse? How aware are we of the burdens we place on our spouse through our own lack of consideration, taking one another for granted, or even deliberately out of bad will?

It is so easy to take for granted the mundane contributions of our spouse, easy to forget to say 'thank you' - for hours worked to support the family; for laundry done, meals cooked, floors cleaned; for nights up with babies; for making phone calls we do not care to make ourselves; and for little courtesies and sacrifices our spouse makes for us.

B. *Reflection*

What is something we have suffered together? How have we come closer to Jesus through suffering?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That husbands and wives will embrace their common lives with courage, supporting each other in joy and sorrow. Let us pray. **[R]**

That trials and tribulations will not discourage us. Let us pray. **[R]**

THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

A. During our engagement, on our wedding day and in the early days of our marriage, we were filled with joy, expectation and excitement over the wonderful step we were taking. We 'just knew' we were doing the right thing, that our marriage would be the most beautiful in the world, that we'd always feel this way about each other. We expected of ourselves that we would be different and better somehow than we'd ever been before.

Then that first disillusionment hit - maybe a fight, a disappointment, or just the first realisation that the excitement was over. We felt like we were falling. These are the times we really show what our love is made of.

When the feelings are gone, when we think we may have made a terrible mistake, when life seems boring, dull or long - then we must pick ourselves up and keep moving forward by choice, will and the grace of God. We must work to make our lives together beautiful again.

B. *Reflection*

What mistakes or disappointments about myself most discourage me now?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

For the ability to accept our limitations. Let us pray. **[R]**

For the courage to rise from our failures. Let us pray. **[R]**

FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. Even though we leave our homes and set up a new household in marriage, we continue to encounter our mother, father, and siblings. We may still compete with them, judge them and be judged by them, or in other ways find our marriage challenged by them - even though we love them.

And when we are not physically with our 'family of origin', we continue to carry them in our hearts and minds, our habits and expectations. Often, these influences from our past are not discussed and not even conscious to ourselves. And often the different expectations and assumptions husbands and wives bring to a marriage are the source of conflict and hurt.

We must come to terms with our family of origin. Husbands and wives need to talk about patterns and assumptions each brings into the marriage. Then they should consciously choose which of these from each family they will reject, and which to incorporate into their own lives.

B. Reflection

How do I feel when you share with me your hurts, disappointments, fears, and failures?

C. Prayer Intercession

For trust in one another, let us pray. **[R]**

For the courage to reach out even more, let us pray. **[R]**

FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A. We love to think of ourselves as competent and self-sufficient. But all of us need help. Often we are called to be “Simon” to each other as husband and wife. Sometime the hardest part is to be the one who is helped, to accept assistance.

Sometimes it is hard to give exactly what our spouse needs rather than what we prefer to give or what we are talented at giving. It is important to know the limits of our abilities to fill the needs of each other.

We both need to recognize “Simons of Cyrene” in our lives, and let them help us. “Simon” may be a good friend, a priest, a marriage counsellor, psychological counsellor, or even our parents.

B. *Reflection*

How do I feel letting other couples help us when we are hurting?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That troubled couples will find the assistance they need. Let us pray. **[R]**

That we will be open to the love and caring of others. Let us pray. **[R]**

SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

A. What could Veronica do? Jesus was in terrible pain and was bound to die. Veronica could do nothing about that. But she did

what she could. She was a loving presence to the Lord. Can we doubt that she lifted the Lord's spirit by her kindness?

So often in marriage our partner has pain or trouble or a problem. We often tend to respond by giving advice, criticism or logical problem solving. And we may become annoyed when our spouse is not grateful for our advice. But many times what is most needed is "Veronica" - A loving presence: Listening. Caring. Empathy. Concern. Love.

Sometimes we fail to reverence the simple gifts brought to us by our spouse. We don't want to admit our need for kindness and tenderness, but we hurt our beloved when we reject their acts of love.

B. *Reflection*

What are some things you have done for me which have made me happy and brought me joy?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That we may be more aware of the needs of others and respond generously with love. Let us pray. **[R]**

That families everywhere may have examples and encouragement for their faith, and peace and love within their home. Let us pray. **[R]**

SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS AGAIN

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

A. "How can this happen again? Didn't we deal with this before?"

When challenges resurface, we can be tempted to let anger and frustration dominate how we treat our spouse. It is easier to focus on what they are not doing than on the heavy cross they carry.

The crosses we bear can help us to let go of our plans for our lives and to humbly open ourselves to God's ability to redeem even our greatest struggle and suffering. Sometimes the cross will be too heavy to carry and our spouse will need our help when we don't feel like giving it.

That is when we must remember St Paul's writing, "Love is patient, love is kind ... it does not seek its own interests ... it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

B. *Reflection*

What are some stumbling blocks in our relationship that cause us to often fall short of our goal of being lovers?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That failures to love will not conquer couples. Let us pray. **[R]**

That we might generously use the grace of healing in our marriage. Let us pray. **[R]**

EIGHTH STATION: JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

A. The holy women looked with pity and compassion on Jesus when he went by. He looked back at them with even more compassion and challenged them to look beyond themselves.

Jesus said, "I come not to be served, but to serve." Do we serve others together as a married couple? Do we build our spiritual muscles and grow in holiness by ministering to others as a couple? Can anyone say they are closer to Christ because of

what you and your spouse have done? If not, we need to ask God to show us a way to minister as a couple to others.

B. *Reflection*

How can we as a couple imitate Christ in helping others?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That families will support each member in times of need. Let us pray. **[R]**

That couples might bring comfort and compassion to each other. Let us pray. **[R]**

NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. St Paul pleaded to God three times for relief from a thorn in his flesh. Christ's response to him was, "My grace is sufficient for you. For my strength is made perfect in weakness."

It is easy to complain about the crosses we carry in life. We can grow tired and lose heart along the way. The better response is to join our suffering to Jesus' suffering. This will open our hearts to receive God's grace so that we may be made perfect in our weakness.

These are great opportunities to support each other in developing the cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. These four virtues are the foundation of all the human virtues in our lives.

B. *Reflection*

How do I feel when I see you are discouraged?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

For the grace of perseverance in our bond of marriage. Let us pray. *[R]*

That troubled couples will ask for the grace of the Lord in their difficulties. Let us pray. *[R]*

TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. God gave us our bodies so that we could be a gift to our spouse. Nakedness in the marital embrace is supposed to remind us that we are made for each other like the Church is made for Christ. Christ's persecutors degraded Him by ripping His clothes off Him against His will. Christ was willing to give Himself as a redeeming gift to us, His Church. Our role as the bride of Christ is to open ourselves up to His love. He will never force Himself upon us though. He is a perfect gentleman.

Let us remember our bodies are meant to be a gift for our spouse. That gift should never be coerced or forcefully taken. Husbands show their wives love through both offering the gift of their body and respecting when she isn't ready to receive the gift. Wives show their husbands love when they open themselves up to receive His gift in the marital embrace.

B. *Reflection*

How have I treated the gift of your body in the past?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That we may strip ourselves of selfishness, fear, worry, competitiveness, and all else that keep us from pure loving trust. Let us pray. **[R]**

That our trust in the Father's unceasing love will strengthen us. Let us pray. **[R]**

ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. It is humbling to acknowledge Jesus needed to suffer on the cross because of our sins. He is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” He even prayed for us while suffering on the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

It takes great humility on our part to return to our spouse, or God, when we have offended them. It is easier to be angry and blame them than it is to ask for forgiveness.

Healing can't start until we acknowledge that we have hurt our spouse. Do we humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness when we've wronged our spouse? Do we extend mercy and forgiveness when our spouse sincerely seeks it? Do we seek Christ's forgiveness regularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so we can share Christ's mercy with our spouse?

B. *Reflection*

How have I caused you to suffer? Do I seek forgiveness from you easily?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That the refusal to forgive might give way to generosity. Let us pray. **[R]**

That the Church, the family of God's people, may demonstrate to all the Father's message of love and hope. Let us pray. **[R]**

TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

[Kneel, if possible. Pause to reflect on Christ's love.]

- A. Jesus said, "This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Do we follow Jesus' instructions? Do we love our spouse as He loved us? What are the things in our lives that keep us from fully loving our spouse?

Do we need to 'lay down' our attachments to work, hobbies, friends or addictions that keep us loving our spouse? Are we clinging to unrealistic or unneeded expectations of our spouse that keep us from loving him or her for who they are?

Let us resolve to 'lay down' any attachments that keep us from totally loving our spouse.

- B. *Reflection*

What is one expectation I have of you that keeps me from totally loving you?

- C. *Prayer Intercession*

That we might reflect the love of Jesus by our lives. Let us pray. **[R]**

That the gift of our lives together and our special matrimonial love might enrich this world. Let us pray. **[R]**

[Pause for a moment for a silent prayer.]

THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

- A. On our wedding day, we committed to love our spouse until death do us part. We promised to love in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. We promised to love and honour each other all the days of our lives.

These are difficult vows to live out. They are impossible to live out if we don't access the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Jesus will help us fulfil our vows if we invite Him into our marriage and open ourselves up to His grace. He can help us to love our spouse with the tenderness He was shown, as His mother and friends took Him down from the cross. They weren't motivated by what Jesus could do for them at this point but by what they could do to love and honour Him until the very end.

B. *Reflection*

How have we invited or How have we been not opened ourselves to Jesus in our marriage?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That those who depart from us will always find joy in Your Love, Lord. Let us pray. **[R]**

For the faith to see beyond pain to the fullness of love. Let us pray. **[R]**

FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS BURIED

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: **Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.**

A. Do we recognize our own mortality? Do we live this life as though it is preparation for eternity or do we only live for the pleasures of this world?

Do we recognize that the greatest responsibility we have to our spouse is to help them get to heaven? If our spouse were to be laid to rest tomorrow, would I have helped prepare him or her to meet our Lord?

Do we pray together? Do we pray for each other? Do we encourage each other on our journey of faith?

Let us resolve to live God's plan for marriage more fully. Let us resolve to love our spouse and be the partner to them God calls us to be.

B. *Reflection*

If I were to be laid to rest tomorrow, would I have loved you enough for you to experience God's love?

C. *Prayer Intercession*

That we might draw from the graces of our marriage to support each other when we are sad or discouraged. Let us pray. **[R]**

That we might help make God's love real to each other. Let us pray. **[R]**

CLOSING PRAYER:

Father, by Your power You made everything out of nothing. In the beginning You made the universe and made mankind in Your own likeness. You gave man the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and You teach us that what You have united may never be divided.

Father, You have made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and His Church. Father, by Your plan man and woman are united. And married life has been established as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in a flood. Look with love upon this woman, Your daughter, now joined to her husband in marriage. She asks Your blessing. Give her the grace of love and peace. May she always follow the example of the holy women whose praises are sung in the scriptures. May her husband put his trust in her and recognise that she is his equal and heir with him to the life of grace. May he always honour her and love her as Christ loves His bride, the Church.

Father, keep them always true to Your commandments. Keep them faithful in marriage and let them be living examples of Christian life. Give them the strength which comes from the Gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children's children. And, after a happy old age, grant them fullness of life with the Saints in the kingdom of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.





About Worldwide Marriage Encounter

Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) is an international movement committed to making marriages great for more than 50 years in over 83 countries around the world.

WWME runs a stay-in weekend program for married couples that transforms spouses in the way they communicate and live their Sacrament of Marriage, to deepen their love for each other. Marriage Encounter Weekends in Singapore are held on the first Friday of each month at Marriage Encounter House in Punggol.

For more information, visit www.wwmesg.org. For registration and Weekend details, call 6315 1887.

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“Love one another as I have loved you.”