

St Laurence, Upminster: Holy Week at Home

Holy Week will be a rather different experience for us this year. But we hope that the following prayers and reflections, alongside the 'Worship at Home' booklet, will be helpful.

Susannah will say Mass at home at 11am on Palm Sunday and 8pm on Maundy Thursday, and Fr Roy will say Mass at 11am on Easter Day.

Palm Sunday

Bible readings: Please see Porchtalk

Christ Jesus, like your disciples on Palm Sunday, we too need a joy to help prepare us to bear, with you, our own cross. While you tell each of us: do not be afraid, take the risk of following me, again and again, for ever.

Amen

(Brother Roger of Taizé)

The Donkey

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

G.K. Chesterton

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

Maundy Thursday

Bible readings: Exodus 12.1-4, 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert

Good Friday

Bible readings: Isaiah 52.13-end of 53, Hebrews 10.16-25, John 18.1-end of 19

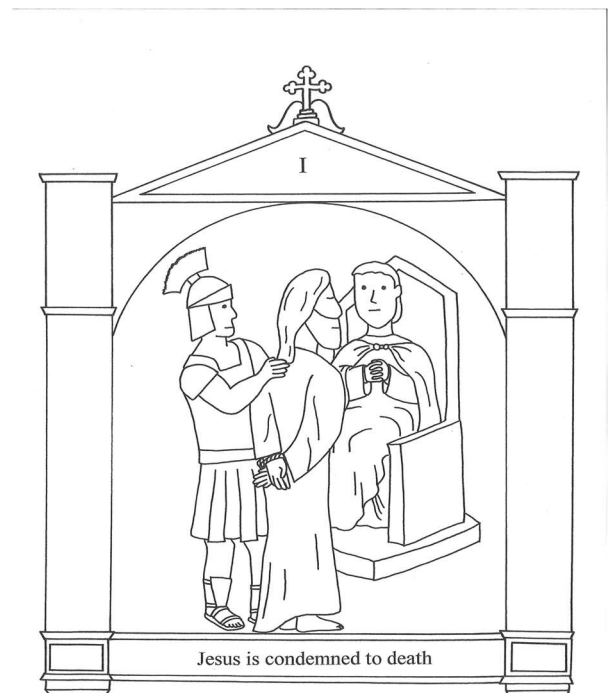
The Stations of the Cross are a traditional devotion for Lent, Holy Week and Good Friday. They involve reflection on moments in Jesus' journey to the cross, as recorded in the Bible and/or Christian tradition.

Malcolm Guite, a priest and poet, has written a series of sonnets to accompany each station. These are reproduced below. We have used them previously during Stations of the Cross at St Laurence.

For more of Malcolm's work, please visit www.malcolmguite.wordpress.com

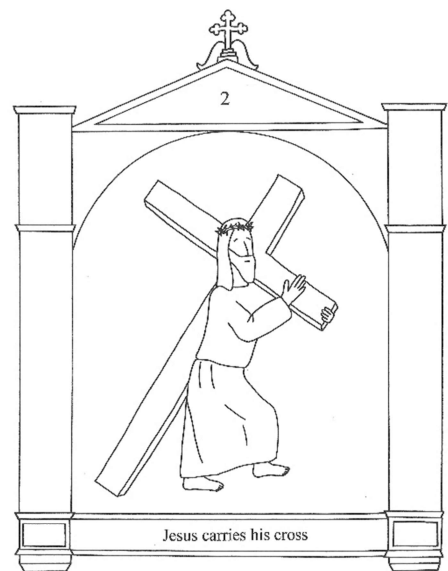
I Jesus is condemned to death

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers
Of perception and discrimination, choice,
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,
His consciousness of self, his every sense,
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.
The man who stands there making no defence,
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels
That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.
He gives himself again with all his gifts
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away
A door swings open. This is judgment day.



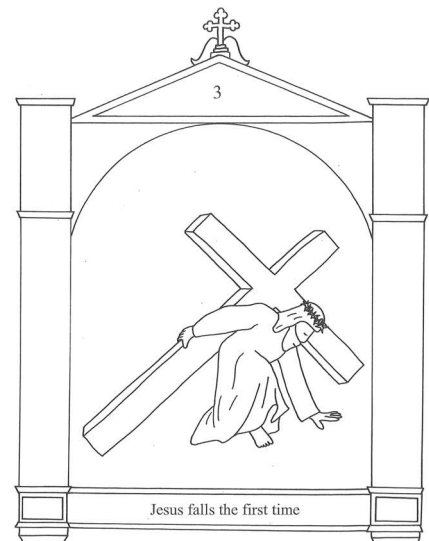
II Jesus is given his cross

He gives himself again with all his gifts
And now we give him something in return.
He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,
Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,
And from these elements he forged the iron,
From strands of life he wove the growing wood,
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
He saw it all and saw that it is good.
We took his iron to edge an axe's blade,
We took the axe and laid it to the tree,
We made a cross of all that he has made,
And laid it on the one who made us free.
Now he receives again and lifts on high
The gifts he gave and we have turned awry.



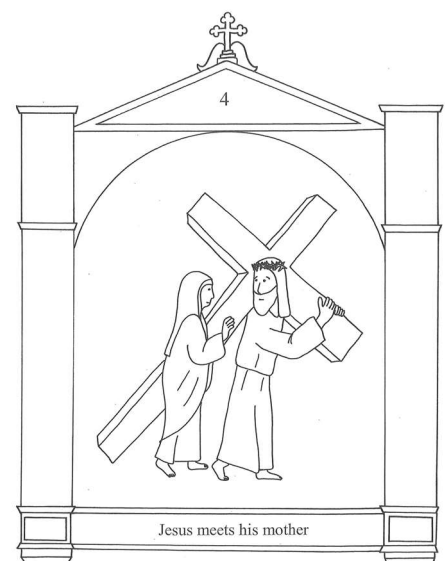
III Jesus falls the first time

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
And well he knows the path we make him tread
He met the devil as a roaring lion
And still refused to turn these stones to bread,
Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,
This darker path into the heart of pain.
And now he falls upon the stones that bruise
The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.
He and the earth he made were never closer,
Divinity and dust come face to face.
We flinch back from his *via dolorosa*,
He sets his face like flint and takes our place,
Staggered beneath the black weight of us all
And falls with us that he might break our fall.



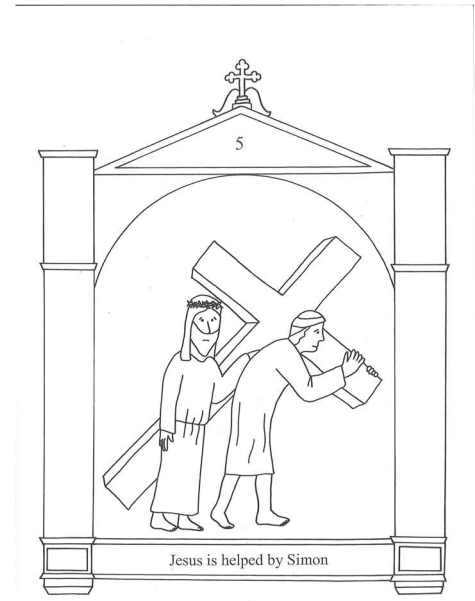
IV Jesus meets His Mother

This darker path into the heart of pain
Was also hers whose love enfolded him
In flesh and wove him in her womb. Again
The sword is piercing. She, who cradled him
And gentled and protected her young son
Must stand and watch the cruelty that mars
Her maiden making. Waves of pain that stun
And sicken pass across his face and hers
As their eyes meet. Now she enfolds the world
He loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared
Who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled
In desperation on this road of tears,
All the grief-stricken in their last despair,
Are folded in the mantle of her prayer.



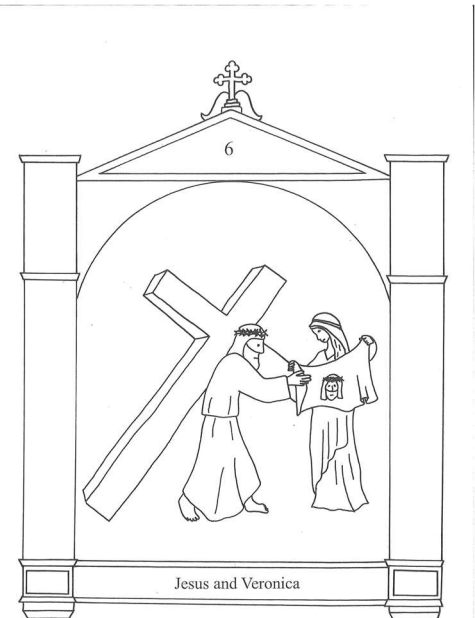
V Simon of Cyrene carries the cross

In desperation on this road of tears
Bystanders and bypassers turn away
In other's pain we face our own worst fears
And turn our backs to keep those fears at bay
Unless we are compelled as this man was
By force of arms or force of circumstance
To face and feel and carry someone's cross
In Love's full glare and not his backward glance.
So Simon, no disciple, still fulfilled
The calling: 'take the cross and follow me'.
By accident his life was stalled and stilled
Becoming all he was compelled to be.
Make me, like him, your pressed man and your priest,
Your *alter Christus*, burdened and released.



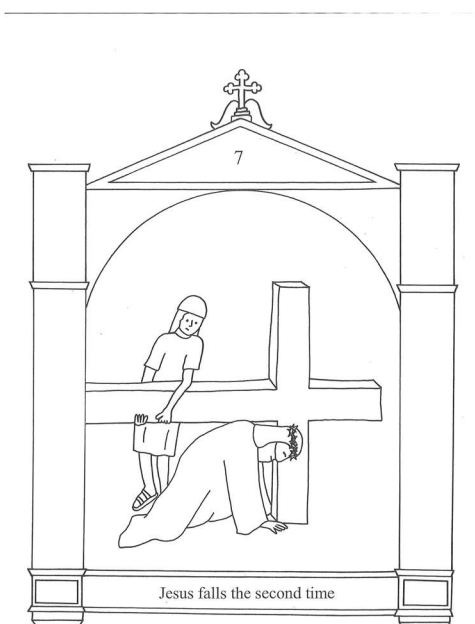
VI Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Bystanders and bypassers turn away
And wipe his image from their memory
She keeps her station. She is here to stay
And stem the flow. She is the reliquary
Of his last look on her. The bloody sweat
And salt tears of his love are soaking through
The folds of her devotion and the wet
folds of her handkerchief, like the dew
Of morning, like a softening rain of grace.
Because she wiped the grime from off his skin,
And glimpsed the godhead in his human face
Whose hidden image we all bear within,
Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain
The face of god is shining once again.



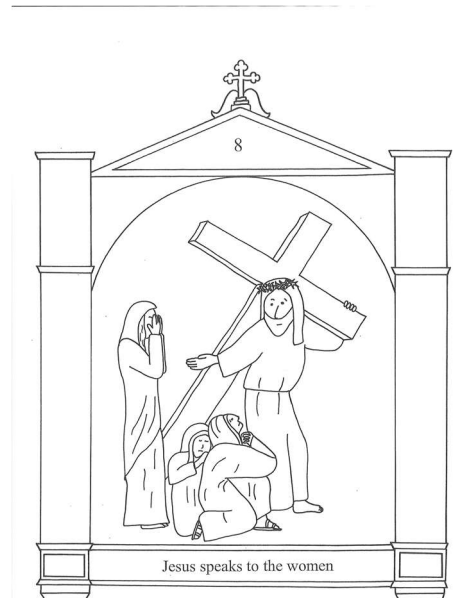
VII Jesus falls the second time

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain,
Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,
He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
When we are hurt again. With us he bears
The cruel repetitions of our cruelty;
The beatings of already beaten men,
The second rounds of torture, the futility
Of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.
And by this fall he finds the fallen souls
Who passed a first, but failed a second trial,
The souls who thought their faith would hold them whole
And found it only held them for a while.
Be with us when the road is twice as long
As we can bear. By weakness make us strong.



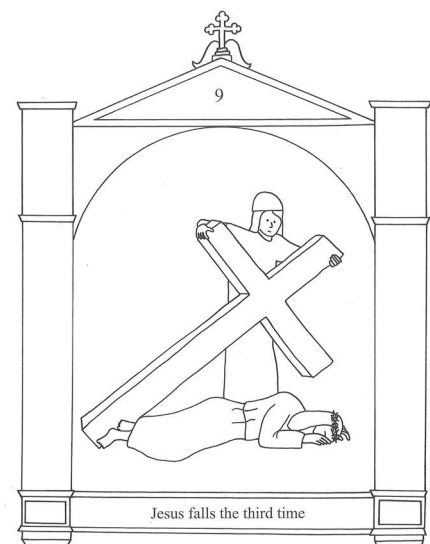
VIII Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
But still he holds the road and looks in love
On all of us who look on him. Our pain
As close to him as his. These women move
Compassion in him as he does in them.
He asks us both to weep and not to weep.
Women of Gaza and Jerusalem,
Women of every nation where the deep
Wounds of memory divide the land
And lives of all your children, where the mines
Of all our wars are sown: Afghanistan ,
Iraq, the Cote d'Ivoire... he reads the signs
And weeps with you and with you he will stay
Until the day he wipes your tears away.



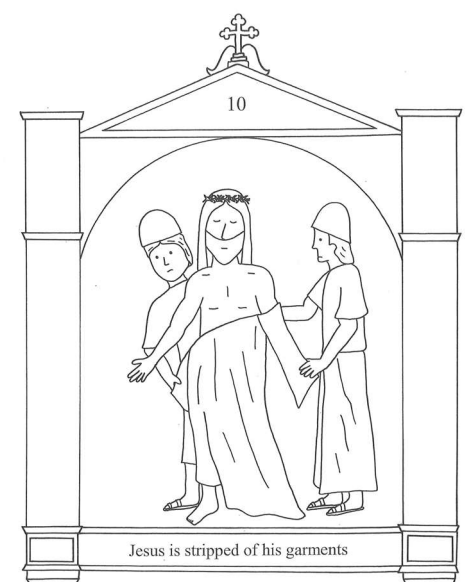
IX Jesus falls the third time

He weeps with you and with you he will stay
When all your staying power has run out
You can't go on, you go on anyway.
He stumbles just beside you when the doubt
That always haunts you, cuts you down at last
And takes away the hope that drove you on.
This is the third fall and it hurts the worst
This long descent through darkness to depression
From which there seems no rising and no will
To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.
Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,
And you could almost wish for that defeat
Except that in the cold hell where you freeze
You find your God beside you on his knees.



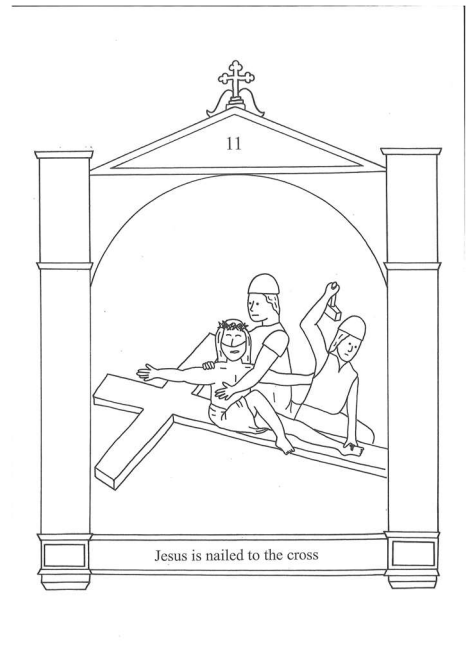
X Jesus is stripped of His garments

You can't go on, you go on anyway
He goes with you, his cradle to your grave.
Now is the time to loosen, cast away
The useless weight of everything but love
For he began his letting go before,
Before the worlds for which he dies were made,
Emptied himself, became one of the poor,
To make you rich in him and unafraid.
See as they strip the robe from off his back
They strip away your own defences too
Now you could lose it all and never lack
Now you can see what naked Love can do
Let go these bonds beneath whose weight you bow
His stripping strips you both for action now



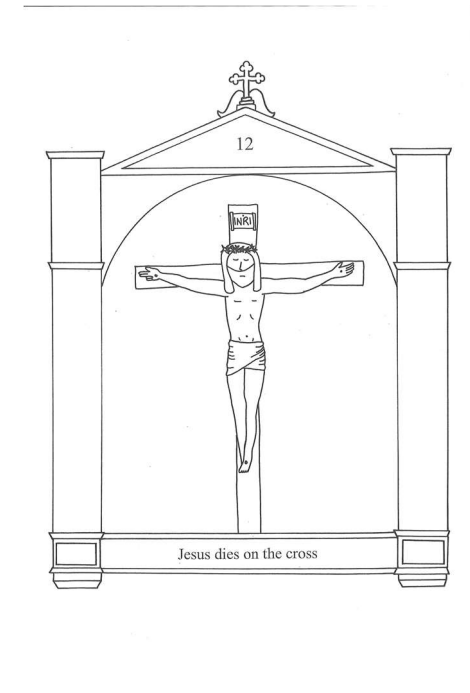
XI Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross

See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light
We see what love can bear and be and do,
And here our saviour calls us to his side
His love is free, his arms are open wide.



XII Jesus dies on the cross

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black
We watch him as he labours to draw breath
He takes our breath away to give it back,
Return it to it's birth through his slow death.
We hear him struggle breathing through the pain
Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,
Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain
And drew us into consciousness from sleep.
His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Mantles his world in his one atmosphere
And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
To cleanse it and renew. His final breath
Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.



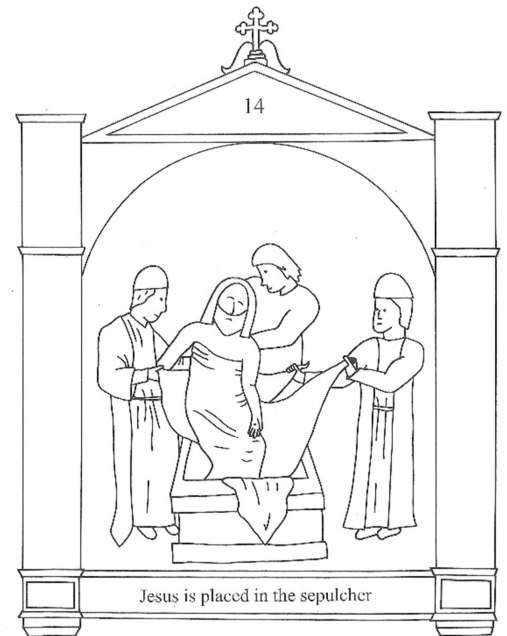
XIII Jesus' body is taken down from the cross

His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Now on this cross his body breathes no more
Here at the centre everything is still
Spent, and emptied, opened to the core.
A quiet taking down, a prising loose
A cross-beam lowered like a weighing scale
Unmaking of each thing that had its use
A long withdrawing of each bloodied nail,
This is ground zero, emptiness and space
With nothing left to say or think or do
But look unflinching on the sacred face
That cannot move or change or look at you.
Yet in that prising loose and letting be
He has unfastened you and set you free.



XIV Jesus is laid in the tomb

Here at the centre everything is still
Before the stir and movement of our grief
Which bears its pain with rhythm, ritual,
Beautiful useless gestures of relief.
So they anoint the skin that cannot feel
Soothing his ruined flesh with tender care,
Kissing the wounds they know they cannot heal,
With incense scenting only empty air.
He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.
The love that's poured in silence at old graves
Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,
Is never lost. In him all love is found
And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground.



A Prayer – sourced by Keith Stewart

They hammered nails into the wood through his hands,
they split his feet through cutting into the rough cross.
Helpless he was hoisted, a shame and a mockery of a man, pinned to a death gibbet.

As grown men do when the pain is past bearing, he must have cried in his heart to his Mother. They had won.
Destroyed, rejected, broken, his very person seemed to have been shattered.
No-one would follow him now,
or believe anything he said any more.
His mother, Mary, with the Magdalen and John, stood by,
and millions of others of all times and nations,
who believed in Him as the beloved Son of God.

Lord Jesus, they tortured you in your body, and shamed you in all that you loved,
and mocked you with hate.
Thus they tried to kill your message and destroy your friends.
This is a great mystery and the heart of your teaching:
You live and burnt the tomb with hope.
Give us the sense to see it and the will to live it.

We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Easter Vigil

Bible readings: Genesis 1.1-2.4a, Exodus 14.10-end, 15.1a, Isaiah 55.1-11, Ezekiel 36.24-28

Easter Night

All night had shout of men
And cry of woeful women filled his way;
Until that noon of sombre sky
On Friday, clamour and display smote him;
No solitude had He,
No silence, since Gethsemane.

Public was death;
But power, but Might,
But life again, but Victory,
Were hushed within the dead of night,
The shuttered dark, the secrecy.
And all alone, alone, alone,
He rose again behind the stone.

Alice Meynell

Easter Day

Bible readings: Acts 10.34-43, Colossians 3.1-4, John 20.1-18

O risen Lord, who in your first appearance to Mary was mistaken for the gardener:
be present with us, and show yourself to us in all our mistakes and uncertainties.

O risen Lord, who appeared to your dejected disciples on the road to Emmaus, and opened
to them the scriptures, so that their hearts burned within them:
be present with us, and set our hearts on fire with love for you.

O risen Lord, who gave to your distraught followers the assurance of healing and
forgiveness:
be present with us, and bring together all Christians in peace and harmony.

O risen Lord, who mindful of the needs of your disciples, prepared a meal by the Sea of
Galilee:
be present with us, and make yourself known to us in all acts of hospitality and sharing.

O risen Lord, who in your final appearance on the Mount of Olives, lifted up hands of
blessing on all people:
be present with us, and grant that our prayers today may be taken up into yours on behalf
of the whole world.

The Church of South India