

The Gathering

Leader says,

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.' *Matthew 16.24*

A brief moment of silence follows.

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. *Amen.*

Let us pray together.

The congregation reads the words in bold.

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

1st Station

Bell rings

Jesus is condemned to death

Jesus had been arrested at night after being betrayed by Judas, one of his disciples. They tied him up and brought him before Pontius Pilot, the Governor, who **was** the only one who could condemn someone to death. They said, "He deserves to die because he is perverting the nation and trying to set himself against the emperor and make himself king." Pilot **sat** on the judgment seat and agreed with them. Then he handed Jesus over to be crucified.

candle extinguished

2nd Station

Bell rings

Jesus takes up his cross

Jesus was thrown into a holding cell with two robbers who were to be executed that day. When the soldiers who were in charge of executions were ready, they were lead out and each was told to pick up and carry one of the heavy crosses. The soldiers laughed as they told them it would be the cross upon which they would die. Then the gate from the prison was opened and they lead Jesus into the street. He was surrounded by soldiers with swords and spears ready. Jesus carried his cross as they made their way through the crowd.

candle extinguished

3rd Station

Bell rings

Jesus falls the first time

Even though Jesus was God, when he was born as a human, he did not try to hold on to being God. He emptied himself and became a servant to all. On the morning Jesus was forced to carry his cross he was tired. He had been up all night. He had been beaten, whipped, and mocked by the soldiers. He hurt all over. He was exhausted when they told him to carry his heavy cross. He tried his best but the weight was too great. He stumbled and fell, with the heavy cross crashing on top of him.

candle extinguished

4th Station

Bell rings

Jesus meets his afflicted mother

As Jesus struggled up the crowded street he suddenly saw his mother, Mary. She was horrified to see him, bloody and staggering under the weight. Though she knew Jesus was special, that he was God's son, she still sometimes did not understand. It hurt her to hear people talk about

Jesus as a rebel, an outcast, and a criminal. She did not know why he let things get this far. She had seen the miracles, she had heard him teach and change people's lives for the better. When she saw Jesus carrying the cross, her heart was broken at the horror and cruelty of it all.

candle extinguished

5th Station

Bell rings

The Cross is laid on Simon of Cyrene

The soldiers on the crucifixion detail were getting impatient; the prisoners, Jesus and the other two, were walking too slowly. The *crowd* was getting unruly. They tried to prod Jesus on with their boots and the back of their swords but they could tell he was getting too weak to continue. They had done this many times before so they looked into the crowd and saw a sympathetic face. They saw an African from Cyrene whose black skin made him stand out. His name was Simon. He was a religious man, a pilgrim to Jerusalem for the Passover; he was confused by all the noise, anger, and hatred. The soldiers came and yanked him out of the crowd and told him to carry the cross. Simon was terrified; he thought that they were going to crucify him. The soldiers laughed and assured him he just had to carry it. When Simon saw Jesus' gentle but sad eyes, he was glad to take the cross for him.

candle extinguished

6th Station

Bell rings

A woman wipes the face of Jesus

The procession began to move a little faster but the crowd thickened. Many people wanted to see this king who was without beauty or majesty. The crowd despised him. He looked awful, barely human. He was covered with blood, dirt and sweat. . When people finally saw him, they backed away like they might catch a deadly disease. Then one lone woman came forward, braving the taunts of the crowd and risking the swords of the soldiers. She was moved with compassion for Jesus and came up and

wiped his face clean with a wet towel. She returned some of his dignity by letting him feel a kind and gentle touch.

candle extinguished

7th Station

Bell rings

Jesus falls a second time

They prodded Jesus on, trying to move up the uneven stairs of the street. Jesus stumbled and fell a second time. The crowd booed. The soldiers cursed him and forced him on his feet. Jesus never said a word. He was trying to keep up but he tripped. He knew what was being done to him was not right but he did not protest or fight back.

candle extinguished

8th Station

Bell rings

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

On the road they came to an empty space. A large crowd was there and among them was a group of women. They were crying and weeping for him. Some had been his followers, some just mourned for anyone who was going to be crucified by the Roman soldiers. Jesus called out to them. He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He comforted them by letting them know that in spite of everything he was alright. He also warned them that they and their children must repent and follow God.

candle extinguished

9th Station

Bell rings

Jesus falls a third time

Jesus struggled on. Pushed and shoved by the guards and the people, he fell for a third time. No one helped him up, he was all-alone. He felt the darkness and gloom overshadow him, there was no way out. He could see no good at all. They teased him and surrounded him with bitterness and hatred. They made him dwell in the dark like the dead of long ago. As he fought to stand he wondered if he would be able to continue. All alone he got back on his feet only to find himself at the top of the bare hill where they would set the cross.

candle extinguished

10th Station

Bell rings

Jesus is stripped of his garments

They had come to the place called The Skull, a barren rock on a hill by a cliff. They prepared to crucify Jesus and the two robbers. They stripped off their clothes so they were naked. The executioners teased the men by pretending to offer them a drink of wine only for them to discover that it was mixed with bitter gall. They threw dice to see who would win the clothing Jesus and the others had worn because they planned to sell it. (*portray soldiers rolling dice for clothing*)

candle extinguished

11th Station

Bell rings

Jesus is nailed to the cross

The soldiers roughly forced Jesus to lie on the cross and pounded nails into his hands and feet. The blood flowed out from the wounds staining the wood and dripping to the ground. They put a sign above his head that read, "The King of the Jews." They raised the cross and set it in the ground. The two robbers were also crucified, one on Jesus' left and one on

his right. They were left there to die a slow and horrible death while the soldiers and crowd watched.

candle extinguished

12th Station

Bell rings

Jesus dies on the cross

As Jesus hung on the cross, the nails tearing at his flesh, he looked out. He could see and hear the crowd. Some jeered him, saying, "He saved others let him now save himself." Jesus answered, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." Others in the crowd pleaded with the soldiers to put him out of his misery. Most stood silent knowing in their hearts that this was wrong. Jesus saw his mother and the other women there. He also saw one of his disciples with them. He told the disciple to take care of his mother. (*SHORT PAUSE – SLOWLY COUNT TO 10*)

Finally, after about three hours, Jesus cried out in a large voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." His head fell forward as he died. (*RIGHT AWAY THERE IS A LONG LOUD NOISE – thunder, pounding, earthquake, etc.*)

candle extinguished

13th Station

Bell rings

The body is placed in the arms of his mother

When Jesus died the ground shook, the sky darkened, and all the people became silent. One of the soldiers, whose job it was to execute prisoners, said, "Surely this man was innocent." The crowd began to go away as they set up the ladder so that they could take down the body. Mary rushed forward and took her beloved son's cold body in her arms as she wept bitterly.

14th Station

Jesus is laid in the tomb

They were about to throw Jesus' body over the side of the cliff like they did to the others they crucified, when a rich man from the city of Arimathea came forward. His name was Joseph and he was a disciple of Jesus. He had asked Pilot if he might give Jesus a proper burial. He had papers and the soldiers were more than glad to get rid of him. Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb that had been cut out of the rock. **Then they rolled a great stone over the door of the tomb.** *(this last line can be read by all narrators together for effect)*

Concluding Prayers

Leader: Savior of the world, by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us: **Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.**

Leader: O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

Let us pray together.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have delivered us from the dominion of sin and death and brought us into the kingdom of your Son; and we pray that, as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his love he may raise us to eternal joys; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Leader: To Christ our Lord who loves us, and washed us in his own blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
All: And also with you.