**The Way of the Cross Service**

The service begins in silence and semi-darkness as the people gather. Food and drink in the form of wine and flat bread may be offered to the people as they wait and gather. Pass out the small pieces of paper and pens. Ask each who is willing to place a small representation of a sin they carry that will be affixed to the cross at the end of the way.

The service may begin with a prayer followed by the announcement of each station, the reading, the prayer, and movement of the symbolic figures. The service should commence slowly with periods of silence between the acts of worship.

**1. Jesus Is Condemned to Death**

**Scripture Reading:** John 19:1–3, 5

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe….When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Holy Father, you gave your only begotten Son to become one of us, to stand in our place and be condemned for us: grant that we who are in him may now journey by faith into his glorious death; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.

**2. Jesus Takes up His Cross**

**Scripture Reading:** John 19:15–17

But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Most merciful God, whose Son came to be the light to shine in the darkness: Shine forth in our hearts and dispel the darkness within us so that we might not join those who turn their hearts from the light of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**3. Jesus Falls the First Time**

**Scripture Reading:** Philippians 2:5–11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,

 did not consider equality with God something

 to be grasped,

but made himself nothing,

 taking the very nature of a servant,

 being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,

 he humbled himself

 and became obedient to death—

 even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

 and gave him the name that is above every name,

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Almighty God, you have exalted the name of your Son above every name in heaven and on earth: grant that we in the hour of his death might bow our knee and humbly confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**4. Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 1:46–55

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

 holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,

 from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

 he has scattered those who are proud in their

 inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones

 but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things

 but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

 remembering to be merciful

 to Abraham and his descendants forever,

 even as he said to our fathers.”

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Heavenly Father, you who chose Mary to be your bondslave and bring forth the Savior of the world: Grant that we like Mary might share in his passion so that we might rejoice with her in his glorious resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Song:** “Jesus, I My Cross” (the symbolic figures move to the next station)

**5. The Cross Is Laid on Simon of Cyrene**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 23:26; Matthew 11:28–30

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Lord Jesus Christ, you who came not to be served but to serve, you gladly gave your life over to suffering and death for us: Give us the grace to follow in your way, to live lives of self-sacrifice for those who suffer and are in need; grant this through the power of the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

**6. A Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 53:1–3

Who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot,

 and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,

 nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men,

 a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces

 he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Loving God, you who gave us the most costly gift of your Son to endure the penalty of our sin in his own body: turn our eyes upon your Son that we, beholding your mercy in him, may by faith take up his cross and enter into his suffering; we offer this prayer in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

**7. Jesus Falls a Second Time**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 53:4–6

Surely he took up our infirmities

 and carried our sorrows,

yet we considered him stricken by God,

 smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions

 he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,

 and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

 each of us has turned to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

 the iniquity of us all.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

O blessed Jesus, you who are the lover of souls, the innocent one, upon whom the iniquity of all peoples of every generation has been laid: grant that we, having been healed by your wounds, may be set free to love and serve you with singleness of mind; who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

**8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 23:27–28

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Holy Spirit of life everlasting, you who bring us the benefits and salvation purchased by Jesus the Christ; turn our mourning into rejoicing that we, having suffered with Christ, may be raised in newness of life with him; through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**9. Jesus Falls a Third Time**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 53:7–9

He was oppressed and afflicted,

 yet he did not open his mouth;

he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,

 and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,

 so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment, he was taken away.

 And who can speak of his descendants?

For he was cut off from the land of the living;

 for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked,

 and with the rich in his death,

though he had done no violence,

 nor was any deceit in his mouth.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Lord Jesus Christ, you who humbled yourself on earth for our sake and are now seated at the right hand of the Father: grant that we be so moved by your compassion for us that we might not only believe in you, but that we might emulate your humility and participate in your suffering; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

**10. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garment**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 23:32–38

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Most blessed Jesus, you who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made righteous: give us the grace of your salvation that being made one in you we might rejoice in your suffering and await with hope your glorious resurrection; who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

**11. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 53:10–12

Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,

 and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering,

he will see his offspring and prolong his days,

 and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

After the suffering of his soul,

 he will see the light of life and be satisfied;

by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,

 and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,

 and he will divide the spoils with the strong,

because he poured out his life unto death,

 and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,

 and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

Almighty and everlasting God, because of your love and mercy you choose to lay upon your only Son the iniquity of us all: turn us, dear one, from the iniquity of our ways, from our oppression of others, and from the love of evil; that we may die to sin through Jesus your Son. Amen.

**12. Jesus Dies on the Cross**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 23:44–46

It was now about the sixth hour, and the darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he said this, he breathed his last.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

O Jesus , you who are one of us, you who participated in the joys and sorrows of human existence, you who went to death for us: take our hate and greed, our self-centeredness and rebellion to the cross with you, and by the power of the Holy Spirit release us from the death that grips our lives; we prayer this for the sake of your glorious name. Amen.

**13. The Body of Jesus Is Placed in the Arms of His Mother**

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 54:4–6

“Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame.

 Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.

You will forget the shame of your youth

 and remember no more the reproach

 of your widowhood.

For your Maker is your husband—

 the Lord Almighty is his name—

the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;

 he is called the God of all the earth.

The Lord will call you back

 as if you were a wife deserted and distressed inspirit—

a wife who married young,

 only to be rejected,” says your God.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

O peaceful Jesus, you who were enveloped in the loving arms of your mother, you who rested your head against the heart broken with grief; touch us in the hour of your death and bring us to everlasting peace; through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

**14. Jesus is laid in the tomb**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 23:50–56

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

**Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray. (silence)

O loving Jesus, you who were stretched forth on the bed of death and entered the gates of hell to proclaim your victory over the power of the evil one; enter the gates of my heart and trample to death the evil that lurks within, that I might rejoice in your resurrection; for you sake. Amen.

After the last station, the people present are offered the opportunity to present their symbolic sins and nail them to the cross. The cross is lying on the ground and nails and a hammer are present. They may ask for assistance in order to properly affix them on the cross.

The people leave in silence.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Robert Webber, *The Services of the Christian Year*, vol. 5, The Complete Library of Christian Worship (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994), 359–363. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)