



## WAY OF THE CROSS

# Background

Though we're not sure of its origins, prayerfully retracing the steps of Jesus on the way to the cross has been a part of Christian devotion for centuries. While participating in this devotional act, Christians have been able to connect with and experience in a personal dimension the pain, sorrow, disgrace, and sacrifice of their Lord and Savior.

The Stations of the Cross (sometimes known as Way of the Cross) have been generally known to be a Roman Catholic tradition. However, it is a Christian tradition practiced by other denominations including, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, and others. The practice is most often observed during Lent to help connect the faithful with the experiences of Holy Week.

Traditionally the Stations of the Cross constitute a series of 14 pictures or carvings depicting the events in the Passion of Jesus Christ from his condemnation by Pontius Pilate to the point of his burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The number and details of the stations have varied throughout history, but the purpose remains the same — to draw Christians more deeply into their faith.

The waypoints included here are based entirely upon the Gospel of John. Using John's Gospel is an intentional choice, not to dismiss the importance of other narrations of the Passion of

Christ, but instead to focus and deeply delve into one telling of the Way of the Cross.

Presbyterian Homes & Services (PHS), established by the Presbyterian Church of USA, was founded on the truth of the Holy Scripture. PHS honors Christian practices that do not infringe on the teachings of the Scripture.

We believe that the events that characterize the Stations of the Cross happened to a historical person, witnessed by historical people, and took place in a historical place (Jerusalem). Therefore, we encourage our staff, residents and guests to our campuses to use the Way of the Cross for devotions, prayer, and reflections on the extent of God's love demonstrated in the ultimate sacrifice of His only Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, indeed, went through all the Way of the Cross portrays. This inspires us to keep replicating what Jesus Christ did for us by loving others as we journey with them in their pains, sorrows, losses, and uncertainties of life. This is in keeping our mission: "To honor God by enriching the lives and touching the hearts of older adults." Therefore, we invite you to take a journey with us as we reflect on each waypoint stop and experience the passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.





# 1

## WAYPOINT ONE

### Jesus is Betrayed by Judas

**John 18.1-8:** When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said. Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

**Reflection:** Imagine the heartbreak Jesus must have experienced in this moment. Judas, so trusted that he was given the task of being treasurer for the disciples, betrayed Jesus, leading soldiers to where it was safe for them to arrest Jesus. We, too, may have suffered the pain of betrayal in our lives. It is devastating to be betrayed by those we love and trust. Jesus knows your pain and loss, for he himself suffered it. And, unfortunately, there may have been times in our lives when we betrayed others. The pain and loss are still devastating, as we come to understand that we broke relationship with those we love. Jesus let himself be arrested in the garden as a part of his way to the cross, a journey he traveled for you. Jesus went to the cross for the sin of all people, including our betrayals. May we know and trust that Jesus — who declared three times “I am”, evoking the very name of God, the great “I AM” — is God incarnate for us, both when we stand as betrayer and when we stand as betrayed.

#### Prayer:

O Eternal Father, you know and understand the pain of betrayal. May you heal all those hurting and grieving the gruesome betrayal of others against them. May those who have betrayed others know of your unfailing mercy and grace. Please bring us to the same faithfulness, which is found in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.



## 2

### WAYPOINT TWO

## Jesus is Denied by Peter

**John 18:15-18, 25-27:** Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." "It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm." ... Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

**Reflection:** It's curious, isn't it? Why would Jesus recruit people whom he clearly knew would betray and deny him (Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter) and even put them in the center of his ministry? God through the prophet Isaiah has a clear response to this puzzle. He says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Yes, He knew they would betray and deny him. Jesus even told them as much! Despite the warnings, the sad news is Judas refused to humble himself, repent and return to the Lord. He followed through with his plan to betray Jesus and it ultimately ended in Judas's death. Peter, too, betrayed Jesus through his denial of Jesus. But Peter ended up being a leader after the resurrection, sharing the Gospel even in the face of trial and tribulation. In hearing the story of Peter, may we remember that no sin is too much for God to forgive. No sinner is too far gone from God to return and be restored. Our God is the God of second chances. He takes repentant sinners and uses them to accomplish his purpose. Peter was restored and used by God in immeasurable ways. He can do it for you. Don't give up on yourself or on God. He is not yet done with you. He never gives up on you, and his goodness and mercy will pursue you all the days of your life.

### Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, I am so sorry that I often blame Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter for betraying and denying you, forgetting that I do the same daily in my actions and inactions. I repent and plead for your gracious forgiveness. Please, forgive and restore me so I can be your instrument as you deem fit until I return to you in eternity.



### 3

#### WAYPOINT THREE

## Jesus faces Pilate

**John 18.33, 36-38:** Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” ... Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Judeans. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Judeans gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

**Reflection:** Have you ever been falsely accused of an offense you knew nothing about? Have you ever been condemned for being good by the beneficiaries of your good? Jesus never committed any sin throughout his short stay on earth. All he did was fulfill his mission as he clearly outlines in Luke 4:18-19: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” By the conspiracy and political intrigues of humans, Jesus was unjustly condemned. But, because he bore our sins on the cross, we have the freedom to live for him, his kingdom, and for others. Don’t give up and never despair for doing good even if you are condemned. Jesus stands with you.

#### Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you so much for taking my condemnation to offer your forgiveness of my sin and give freedom to live for you. Help me to abound in doing good for others all the days of my life.



## 4

### WAYPOINT FOUR

## Jesus is Crucified

**John 19:17-18, 22-24:** Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did.

**Reflection:** Today we reflect on the lyrics of the hymn “The Old Rugged Cross,” written by George Bennard. You can sing or meditate on the words. They have impacted lives and comforted souls throughout the years. The lyrics are still moving because they testify of the power of the cross in showing us the way to our Savior Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins.

1. On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross  
The emblem of suffering and shame  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain

**Refrain:** So, I’ll cherish the old rugged cross  
(rugged cross)

Till my trophies at last I lay down  
I will cling to the old rugged cross  
And exchange it some day for a crown

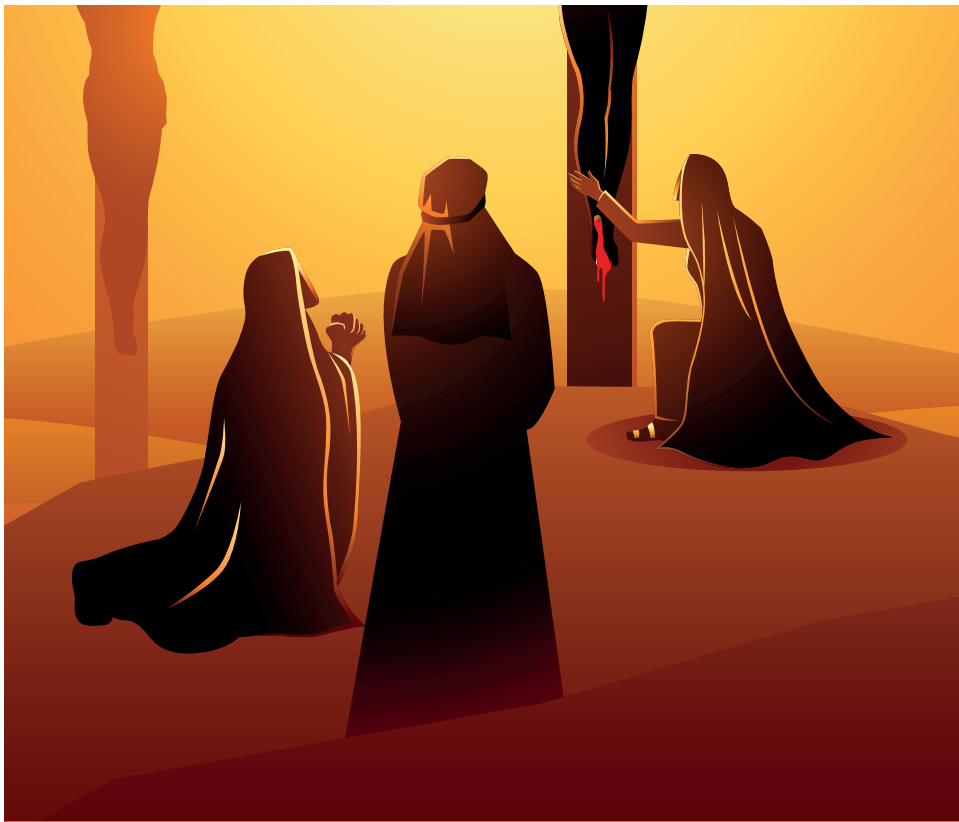
2. To the old, rugged cross I will ever be true  
It’s shame and reproach gladly bear  
Then he’ll call me some day to my home far away  
Where his glory forever I’ll share

**Refrain:** And I’ll cherish the old rugged cross  
(rugged cross)

Till my trophies at last I lay down  
I will cling to the old rugged cross  
And exchange it some day for a crown

### Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you so much for bearing the cross and allowing yourself to be shamefully crucified along with criminals like me so I can have a place in paradise with you. Help me to cling to the cross, trusting in your promises.



## 5

### WAYPOINT FIVE

## Jesus, His Mother and the Beloved Disciple

**John 19.25-27:** Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**Reflection:** Nico Mbarga, a Nigerian song writer, wrote a song eulogizing his mother. It included the line, "sweet mother, I will not forget the sufferings you went through for me". Mothers can be a wonderful source of encouragement and inspiration to their children. They know and understand pain because they bear their children in their womb for nine months and go through the agonizing and life-threatening experience of labor and child delivery. Mothers continue to experience pain when their children suffer. At this moment, the mother of Jesus was experiencing the pain of the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy, "And a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2.35b). Jesus entrusted his mother to someone he knew would love and take care of her. That is what we are called to do for one another, particularly the vulnerable among us. We ought to be there for them with a compassionate presence, intentional silence, a peaceful mind, integrity of heart, and skillful hands when the need arises. We are to love and care for those entrusted to us, as though that person was our mother.

### Prayer:

Our compassionate Lord, please help me to be there to offer your love and be an empathetic presence to those going through all kinds of pains and sorrow, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ.





## 6

### WAYPOINT SIX Jesus Dies

**John 19.28-30:** Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**Reflection:** This was not supposed to happen! Or so at least thought the disciples who rejected the part of Jesus’s message that foretold his death. People thought Jesus was going to conquer and rule earthly kingdoms; after all, Holy Week begins with Jesus triumphantly entering the city of Jerusalem with people cheering and palm branches waving. But instead of a militant conquering king, Jesus gives up his spirit and dies the common death of a criminal on a cross. There are many things about the story of Jesus that is unique; among them is that God dies. Jesus, who is fully God and fully human, dies on the cross. He does not sleep, faint, or go into a coma. Jesus is dead. Death is the ultimate price Jesus paid for our sin to redeem, to save, reconcile and restore humanity back to relationship with God the Father. Jesus, the spotless lamb of God, gave himself fully as a sacrifice for sin – for yours, for mine, for all of creation.

#### Prayer:

O Lord Jesus I remain eternally grateful that you have demonstrated your love for me in your death. It is in your death that I am alive today and will eventually live with you forever in eternity. While I live here on earth, help me to live for you and share the joy of your life-giving sacrifice with others.





## 7

### WAYPOINT SEVEN

## Jesus is Buried

**John 19.38-42:** Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Judeans. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

**Reflection:** The Gospel of John tells us that not only was Joseph of Arimathea instrumental in the burial of Jesus, so was Nicodemus. You may recall that Nicodemus is the Pharisee who visited Jesus by night, asking what Jesus meant by being born again, ultimately leading to one of the most well-known Bible passages – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3.16). God gave his one and only son, Jesus, for you and for all of creation. With the description of the burial of Jesus, we have a sense of the fullness of God's own sacrifice. There is a finality we may feel when our own loved ones are buried, the funeral complete, and everyone has returned to their regular lives. We grieve, knowing that everything has changed and there is no going back. However, we have something Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did not yet know; we live on this side of resurrection of Jesus, so we do not grieve as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4.13). Remember that “whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”. Because God gave his one and only son, because Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, and because Jesus rose again, death does not have the last word. Jesus died and was buried on Good Friday... but Sunday's coming.

### Prayer:

Lord God, I offer thanks and praise that you gave your one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. As I consider the burial of Jesus, help me remember that though the dead are buried like him, those who are in Christ are given the promise of new life. Amen.

# Conclusion

We hope that your time moving through the Stations of the Cross helped to bring you more deeply into the great gift of Jesus Christ given for us.

It may be that a particular Waypoint evoked a strong reaction within you. Should you have the need or desire to process the experience, please know that our campus pastors are here to support you. Do not hesitate to reach out. It may also be the case that you didn't feel strongly about any of it. The Good News is that Jesus is our Savior regardless of if our feelings are strong or barely there at all. Jesus gave himself for us on the cross, not because we felt any particular way, but because of his great love for us. May the remainder of the season of Lent find you being drawn more deeply into the gift and sacrifice of Jesus.

