

MUINTEARAS ÍOSA

# Stations of the Cross 2020

10 April 2020



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Diocese of Limerick

**Introduction:** Dia Dhaoibh agus fáilte. Welcome to the Stations of the Cross, brought to you today by the young people of Muintearas Íosa. For over 40 years Muintearas Íosa has been bringing people together and the Coronavirus wasn't going to stop us doing the same this year. Obviously things are a bit different this year but none the less we have gathered to pray together.

When we gather we usually light three candles to represent the three flames of Muintearas Íosa; Fáilte, Foghlaim and Guí. We can't light these candles today but we encourage you to light them at home and to keep these home fires burning. We thank you for welcoming us into your homes to today and for joining us in prayer.

Today young people from all over Limerick City and County will be leading you in the Stations of the Cross. All of them have given their time and their creativity to this task and we are glad to be able to help people connect with their faith this Easter.

I think this year more than ever, we can all relate to Jesus struggle in the weeks leading up to Good Friday; the sense of isolation and uncertainty he must have felt echoes our current reality. Hopefully we won't get to the point of no food for 40 days though!

We are all aware that we are living through a moment in history. This is a terrible time, but it's also an eye-opener. For the first time in years we are coming to appreciate many of the things we have taken for granted; we are coming together (not literally) to protect the vulnerable people in our communities and we are seeing what is most important, our families, our friendships, our faith.

For those of you who haven't prayed the Stations before it might help to give you a brief outline of what to expect. The Stations of the Cross help us to remember the Passion of Christ, that is, the journey Jesus took from his condemnation to his death. The Way of the Cross has its origins with Our Lady. It is said that she retraced the steps of her Son's Passion and the significant moments along the way on a path near her home with stone markers, beside which she would walk and pray.

For centuries, pilgrims to the Holy Land have also walked the steps of Our Lord's Passion in Jerusalem, and the Franciscans brought this tradition to their churches in Europe during the middle ages. Pilgrims who could not travel to Jerusalem could now experience in a virtual way, the Stations of the Cross, by following a sign-posted path around the inside and/or outside of the church.

Today is the next step in that virtual evolution as we gather in our homes to pray the Stations. We can't get to the Church, and we can't gather in groups but we can still pray together and at times like this that is more important than ever.

Through the Stations of the Cross we reaffirm our faith, We come to appreciate the sacrifice which Jesus made for us. As we join Jesus to retrace his final steps on earth we remember that he is always with us on our journey and we have so much to be grateful for. He died so that we may live and so that we may always have hope.

Each station today will be led by a different young person. Each person took a different station and a theme that related to it and wrote a piece that speaks to them about it. After each station an image will appear on the screen and we will take a few moments to reflect on what we have heard, we will pray the response together when these words appear on your screen – We adore thee O Christ and we praise thee, because we your holy cross we have redeemed the world.

We hope you enjoy our prayer experience today and we will begin now "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen"

**First Station:** It is Friday - early in the morning. Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate, the Governor, on trumped-up charges of treason. Pilate sensed that Jesus was a good man but being afraid of the aggressive crowd he sentenced Jesus to death.

Jesus was treated so unfairly, so unjustly. It can seem hard for us to comprehend this level of injustice because as young people in Ireland, most of us have been blessed to live lives free of injustice. We live in a country that has tried to work against injustice and adapt to social changes. People are becoming more open-minded and barriers like age, skin colour and gender are being broken down as they should be. In the Letter to the Ephesians, St Paul says that "Jesus himself is our peace, he has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility". With less hostility in the world we can live by God's Word and love our neighbours as we would love our selves.

When we see people as different to us, or less than us, we think that we can treat them differently, that they don't deserve the same respect as ourselves. But we are all equal in the eyes of God for God does not show favouritism, the rich and poor have this in common. We are all one in Christ Jesus. Now more than ever we can see that there is more that unites us than divides us as the world battles the Coronavirus Pandemic. At this time of distress and hurt we are also seeing another side to humanity, a wave of kindness, compassion and generosity can be seen in the wake of this crisis. Young people checking on their elderly neighbours, Our Government leaders working together to do what's best for everyone. We hope that this spirit of co-operation, community and togetherness in outlast the pandemic and help to ensure that the world as we know it becomes a world of justice and equality for all.

For those in our world who are suffering from injustice because of their race, skin colour, gender or religion. We pray for them.

For those who have been imprisoned for working to relieve oppression. We pray for them.

For those who are targeted because they have given a voice to truth. We pray for them.

For those who have turned to violence as in reaction to the overwhelming hardships they face.

We pray for them.

For those too weak to help themselves and who have no-one else to help them.

We pray for them.

For those who have been falsely imprisoned. We pray for them.

For those who have lost their jobs and homes and have no means of looking after their families.

We pray for them.

For migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who have had to leave their homes because of war, discrimination or economic uncertainty. We pray for them.

For those who have been forgotten and over-looked because of physical disability or mental health issues.

We pray for them.

For anyone we know who has been treated unjustly. We pray for them.

Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek, to be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

**Second Station:** Jesus takes up his cross - The wood of the tree was finally prepared and was ready for carrying. As well as the cross Jesus also carried the weight of insults and abuse that were thrown at him by an angry crowd.

I think of the weight that Jesus carried. Nowadays I think many people feel that they have to carry a lot of burdens themselves, whether they have to do with school, work or life in general. Young people especially, try to carry their crosses by themselves, whether this is the pressure of the leaving cert or what people think of them. I think that in crisis times like these we shouldn't be carrying our burdens alone; we should be carrying them together, as one. I believe that we are now starting to realise that we aren't divided by borders or religions or even which GAA club you belong to, now is the time realise that we are all struggling with the same things and now is the time to look after one another. So if you know somebody that is carrying a heavy cross, reach out to them, offer to help them, mar a deir an seanfhocal, "Ní neart go cur le chéile." "There's no strength without unity"

I'm now going to tell you about the story of the burden carrier, so sit back and grab a cuppa, if you haven't already (because there's a good few more stations to go)

#### The Burden-Bearer

A long-ago legend has it that, there once lived a man of towering strength, a giant of a man. He was a pagan whose strength perhaps led him to believe that he needed no higher power.

He made his living by carrying travellers across a broad river. One day a beautiful child came to the bank of the river. As the man bent down to allow the child to climb upon his back, the young lad said, "Are you sure you can bear my weight?"

The man laughed. "Why, I've carried full-grown men across the river. You, my little one, will be lighter than a pebble."

"Very well," said the boy. "But I must warn you. I am heavier than I look."

With a grin, the man raised the child upon his massive shoulders and stepped out into the swirling water. But the weight on his back grew strangely heavy. Soon the brawny giant was struggling not to sink. With superhuman effort he crawled up onto the opposite bank of the river and let the child down.

"How can you be so heavy?" the perplexed man asked. "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus of Nazareth," replied the boy. "And I carry the burdens of the world on my shoulders. Let me carry yours too."

And so it was that Christopher, today known as St. Christopher, was converted to Christianity. The story reminds me -- I don't need to struggle across each day on my own. There is One stronger than I. He is the Great Burden-bearer. He even carries St. Christopher, yet on His shoulders there is always room for one more.

Dear God we pray today for the courage to ask for help when we have a burden that we can't carry. Remind us that there is always help there for us if we just ask. Help us to be united Lord in this time of crisis so that we can help to carry the burden for others. Finally we thank you Lord for all the times you have carried us. Amen

**Third Station:** Jesus falls for the first time - All around Jesus were a jeering crowd. The soldiers were pushing him onwards. They had to finish their job as soon as possible. With a bang Jesus fell under the weight of the cross, face down into the path. The soldiers mocked him and roughly dragged him to his feet again.

This station makes me think of how embarrassing this experience must have been, the shame of carrying that cross and falling as people mocked and jeered. We all know that feeling of shame, it is a feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour. Shame is one of the hardest emotions to talk about. It can also be the hardest emotion to recognize in ourselves, and it can feel the most painful. We all feel shame in different ways and for doing different things. It might be that we messed up in school, on a pitch or just doing something wrong at home in front of friends and family. Sometimes making others feel ashamed or humiliated is worse than feeling it yourself.

We're all in uncertain times at the moment dealing with Covid-19 and I'm sure there are a few of us with the feeling of shame, because we feel like we're not doing enough, but staying at home is doing the most you can do, and although it mightn't feel like that right now once this all comes to an end we will see how just the little task of staying at home will have made a huge difference to the so many people. It's important to remember too that there's no shame in having symptoms or having the coronavirus, unfortunately it's something that could happen many of us and no one should be embarrassed to say they have it.

Shame can feel unfixable, because it can be bound up in other emotions. So sometimes even when we feel good, we can feel shame— we can feel like we don't deserve to feel good because we are carrying shame about something. So now I'm just going to show you a few ways of dealing with those feelings that could help you in those moments when you feel hurt or humiliated, when you stumble or fall. Maybe these strategies will help you in the future.

1. You are not alone – everyone makes mistakes! 2. Ask yourself what can I learn from this experience? 3. Try seeing the crisis as an opportunity 4. Forgive yourself 5. Avoid negative people and situations 6. Build positive supports 7. Let go and move on

God our Father, your son Jesus fell under the weight of the cross he carried. He felt the shame and humiliation that we have all felt at different times in our lives. Help us combat these feelings of shame by speaking the truth, by offering up these small prayers of surrender as we can and trusting they are enough. Give us freedom from the shame we are feeling. Help us to fix our thoughts on you, not on the past, our failures or hurts. Give me eyes to see your goodness. Amen.

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**Fourth Station:** Jesus meets his Mother - Mary watches on and is heartbroken. She feels every blow and pain her son experiences. She tries to get closer to offer support. Their gazes meet for a moment. Without speaking a word, she communicates her incredible love for him in a look.

Our parents play a pivotal role in shaping the people we become. Their love for us is unconditional and never ending. At times though we may have taken advantage of them and taken them for granted. During this tough time, some of us have been separated from them and from grandparents and it has helped us to see just how much we depend on them and look to them for support, encouragement and love.

I know that everything good I have learned in my life has been learned from my parents. They are the reason behind my successes and the inspiration behind all my endeavours. I am so grateful for their love, guidance and understanding. For all the sacrifices they have made for me and all the love they have given me.

When I thought of Jesus encountering his mother on his final journey I remembered this poem that Fr Chris used at Mass on Mother's Day.

A Mother's love is something that no-one can explain,  
It is made of deep devotion and of sacrifice and pain,  
It is endless and unselfish and enduring come what may  
For nothing can destroy it or take that love away . . .  
It is patient and forgiving when all others are forsaking,  
And it never fails or falters even though the heart is breaking . . .  
It believes beyond believing when the world around condemns,  
And it glows with all the beauty of the rarest, brightest gems . . .  
It is far beyond defining, it defies all explanation,  
And it still remains a secret like the mysteries of creation . . .  
A many splendoured miracle, we cannot understand  
And another wondrous evidence of God's tender guiding hand.

We pray today to Our Lady,  
and we give thanks for her endearing love  
which has served as an example for all parents.  
We give thanks too for the love of our mothers and our fathers.  
Help us to be as loving to them as they have been to us.  
Open our eyes to the ways that we can be a blessing to them.

Grant that we would be a source of joy for them  
and that we would honour them as they deserve to be honoured.  
We remember today those who have lost their parents.  
We ask our Holy Mother Mary to comfort  
those who are grieving and to ease those who are sick or weary.

Together we pray...

Sé do bheatha, a Mhuire, atá lán de ghrásta, tá an Tiarna leat.

Is beannaithe thú idir mná, agus is beannaithe toradh do bhroinne; Íosa.

A Naomh-Mhuire, a Mháthair Dé, guigh orainn ár peacaigh anois, agus ar uair ár mbáis. Amen

**Fifth Station:** Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross - Jesus is struggling under the load. The soldiers pull from the crowd a sturdy man, Simon from Cyrene, a stranger who just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He is shoved under the cross of this stranger who is being jeered by the onlookers. The wood of the tree was finally prepared and was ready for carrying. As well as the cross Jesus also carried the weight of insults and abuse that were thrown at him by an angry crowd.

Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Priest and a member of the Franciscan order. Had had worked as a missionary priest before returning to Poland before the outbreak of World War II. His monastery helped to shelter Jews who were fleeing the country and he allowed the publishing press in the monastery to print anti-nazi publications. He was arrested in February 1941 and brought to Auschwitz.

He was beaten and treated very harshly because of his status as a priest. Later he gave his life to save a husband and father who had been chosen to die. While waiting for death he continued to lead the other prisoners in prayer. He chose to respond to hate with love. At his Canonisation in 1982, Pope John Paul II said "Maximilian did not die, but gave his life... for his brother". His charity and self-sacrifice has always inspired me.

We are reminded of his sacrifice, during this Covid-19 outbreak, as throughout the world, frontline staff are risking their own lives every day, in the service of their brothers and sisters.

Like Simon we didn't ask for this cross. It has been thrust upon us, but we can still choose our response. In the news and media, today, we see people going to heroic lengths, like the nurses and doctors, returning from Abroad, to be on call for Ireland. As young people it is inspiring to witness selfless actions of others which create a ripple effect of well-being in our society. We too can play our part by helping at home, keeping in touch with grandparents and volunteering in our local communities for the benefit of others.

Let us pray:

Grant, gentle Father, that your Spirit may give us the will and the courage to act to make a difference, in order to make real your kingdom among us, so that we may all live together in peace, truth, justice and love, sharing the resources of the earth.

Amen.

**Sixth Station:** Veronica wipes the face of Jesus - In an instant someone from the bystanders broke ranks. It was a woman. She felt Jesus' suffering. Unable to bear it any longer, she pushed the soldiers aside and lovingly, gently, wiped the blood and the sweat from His face. She did it instinctively, without a thought for herself.

We have never been so aware of the reassurance of a hand on your shoulder, or the connection that comes with a handshake or the comfort that is contained in a hug as we are now; Now that we have to maintain a distance to try and keep the virus contained. There is so much that we have taken for granted.

I can't help but think of that as I read this station. I think it must have meant so much to Jesus who was seen as a criminal and outcast. I don't think he took it for granted, I think he was probably so touched and grateful. I also think Veronica must have been a person of amazing compassion and kindness. It makes me think of those people in life who go out of their way to be kind, and who make a point of including everyone. Those people are special and we are lucky to count them as friends.

I want to share with you a friendship blessing written by John O'Donoghue; May you be blessed with good friends. May you learn to be a good friend to your self. May you be able to journey to that place in your soul

where there is great love, warmth, feeling and forgiveness. May this change you. May it transfigure that which is negative, distant or cold in you. May you be brought into the real passion, kinship and affinity of belonging. May you treasure your friends. May you be good to them and may you be there for them; may they bring you all the blessings, challenges, truth and light that you need for your journey. May you never be isolated; but may you always be in the gentle nest of belonging with your Anam Chara.

Dear God, We pray that the gift of true friendship stays strong within all of us. We pray that everyone has a friend to turn to in their time of distress. We pray that we can be people of kindness, generosity and compassion. We pray that even though we have to be apart we will come together to ensure that no-one feels alone. We pray for the courage to reach out in friendship to anyone who needs a friend. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

**Seventh Station:** Jesus falls for a second time. Despite Simons' help Jesus falls again. The weight of the cross, the beads of blood from his crown, the raw wounds on his back all take their toll. The soldiers roughly drag him to his feet again.

We are all so afraid of failure, of disappointing our loved ones and letting ourselves down. But failing is not what people remember; what they remember is how often you got back up and tried again, just as Jesus did. It might result in another stumble, another fall but there's nothing more we can do but push ourselves to try our best. It's easy to become impatient or frustrated with ourselves when we find things difficult or we perceive that others are doing the things with wish we could do with seemingly little effort. Everybody knows what it is to feel like this. We have all experienced it, even Jesus himself.

Before facing a new challenge, we must ask ourselves what's the worst thing that could happen if we fail? Yes we might be disappointed or embarrassed but that doesn't mean we should give up. It just means that when we finally succeed we will have the satisfaction of knowing that we worked hard to get where we are and our success will feel all the better.

As teenagers some of the main issues we struggle with are school related. The pressure of exams can be so difficult and the fear of failing can be so strong. It can be hard to realise that we all have different skills. Some of us are visual learners, some of us learn by doing. What we should be doing is trying to focus on finding a way to learn that suits us best and not get so caught up in what others are doing. School can be tough but there is more to life and we are so much more than the results that we get in exams.

I want to share with you a quote by Theodore Roosevelt. He said "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Lord, help us to let go of our fear of failure. These fears hold us back and prevent us from living fully. Help us to have more faith in you so that we can risk more than others think is safe, care more than others think is wise, dream more than others think is practical and expect more than others think is possible. Help us not to compare ourselves to others around us. Help us to live fully as the people you want us to be. Amen



**Eighth Station:** A large crowd of women have followed Jesus on this his final journey. He turned and said to them "Do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children." They did not understand what he was saying. But Jesus, even in this terrible moment, is not thinking only of himself, of his suffering, of his drama. He is concerned for others. They wept for him, yet he knew that they too would have suffering in their own lives.

Jesus made a special point of including the marginalised in his ministry and women were a big part of his ministry even though the society they lived in didn't put much value on them. In the world we live in today there are many groups who are on the margins and at the moment given all that's going on it can be easy to overlook those people who are so used to being overlooked. We need to remember what it is that God has asked of us. He has told us what is good, and this is what he requires of us; to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with him.

What is it God that you ask of me? Three things my child, just three.

First to act justly to all you meet, At home, at work and on the street.  
Always be fair and never be greedy. Be generous to the sick, the poor and needy.  
Be a voice for those whom no one hears, Protect those whom war has brought to tears.  
Care for the homeless and the oppressed, Work for equality and you will be blessed.

Secondly, my child in all that you do, Love others tenderly just as I love you.  
Be gentle of spirit, be caring and kind, Let your love be my living sign.  
Through your works let my love speak, To the lost and lonely whose lives feel bleak  
Let care and compassion rule your days, And love in abundance will be yours always.

And now my child, task number three, Requires so little, just humility.  
Be selfless and humble not arrogant and proud, Let your voice be quiet and your actions loud.  
Remember that service is the key, To contentment and tranquillity.  
Seek not praise, applause, recognition, Remember humility is your mission.

Act justly always and love tenderly, And ever my child walk humbly with Me  
Remember in all things by your side I'll be, For today, for tomorrow, for eternity.

Lord, we pray for all those on the margins at this time. We pray that everyone who needs care will receive it regardless of who and where they are. Amen

**Ninth Station:** Jesus falls the third time – He is almost there but he is growing weaker with every step. Jesus falls again. The soldiers drag him to his feet while others laugh and mock. But Jesus does not give up. He rises again, steadies himself, and struggles onward to his final destination - the Place of the Skull – Golgotha.

Jesus fell three times, but each time he got up and continued on, carrying the weight of the cross all on his own even though he knew where he was going and what waited for him there. Why?

For love... but what does this really mean? It means kindness, compassion, affection, loyalty and concern for others. It means truly believing that we are all connected, that we are all family. It means that how we treat each other matters, because love is spoken through our actions. At the moment we are showing our love for one another by our inaction. By not going out, by keeping our distance, by not buying up all the toilet roll and by staying away, we are saying "We Love You" to the people we share this planet with.

In years to come people will talk about these days we are living through now. And we know that it will be remembered as a time of great sadness and grief but hopefully it will also be remembered as a time of community, co-operation and love.

In the light of the tragedy of September 11th there were thousands of articles written. However, the most striking article was written by Peggy Noonan, entitled "I Just Called to say I love you". Her words focused, not on the images of destruction from that terrible day, but on the words of love. She highlighted that all the phone calls and messages that came from the twin towers that day were messages of love. She includes message after message of parents, children and lovers saying 'I just called to say I love you.' Something terrible had happened, and time was short, life was reduced to its essentials, and in the end all that mattered was love. Noonan highlights that there is no record of anyone calling to say, "I never liked you," or "You hurt my feelings." No when push comes to shove we know that at the end of the day only one thing matters and that is love.

That's why Jesus kept getting up, because he loved us so much. Together we pray...

My Lord, God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you, and I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen

**Tenth Station:** Jesus is stripped of his clothes - Finally they arrive at the place where Jesus was to be crucified. Jesus' clothes are stripped roughly from his back. The soldiers throw a dice for his cloak. Jesus is left standing in front of the crowd - naked, exhausted and humiliated. Nothing left, not even dignity. Some of the people in the crowd make fun of Him.

No - body likes to feel vulnerable, to be stripped of all the things that make us feel safe, secure and protected. It takes courage to be vulnerable and to be ourselves. We think if people know our vulnerabilities they will see them as weaknesses and use them against us. But there is strength in vulnerability and in facing our demons.

In the current climate living in the shadow of COVID 19 we can see that the most vulnerable people amongst us are suffering because of something that knows no boundaries, class or creed.

We see our healthcare and front line workers putting themselves in positions of vulnerability so that they can continue to care for those who are sick. These incredible people have shown tremendous courage and we cannot thank them enough for their work, their commitment and their patience.

Brené Brown says that "Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it's having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it's our greatest measure of courage."

Corinthians 12 : 9 - 10

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

A Prayer By David Tensen

Lord help us know that we are known.  
To accept that we are accepted.  
To love ourselves as much as you do.  
And as we behold your time on Calvary,  
The summit of Your Vulnerability .  
May we have the courage to be vulnerable too.  
To live a life of absolute truth towards you,  
For you are the living one that sees us.  
And as the 'door to our heart' opens, it frees us,  
To love others, ourselves without reservation  
To embrace this imperfect life, with its joy and its pain .  
Knowing well that as we behold you again ,  
The door swings back open by faith.  
For you are the living one that sees us.  
Amen

**Eleventh Station:** Jesus is nailed to the cross – The soldiers grab Jesus and lay him on the cross. They stretch out his arms and in an instant the air is filled with the sound of the hammering of nails, the piercing pain of sharp metal entering the flesh, the echo of the wooden beam, his painful scream. His body was contorted with pain. Blood was dripping from his pierced wrists.

Pain is a word that most of us hate to hear and it's a thing we hate to experience. Sometimes pain can make us feel separate to everyone else. We begin to believe that no-one else can understand what it is we are going through. But as human beings we are connected and so when someone we love is hurting we feel it too and watching someone experience pain can often be just as difficult as feeling the pain yourself. I know that if my parents were in pain I would gladly step in and take their pain myself, rather than have them suffer. This is what Jesus did for us on the cross.

The thing about pain that we sometimes forget is that it actually helps us to grow. The more challenges we face and the more we experience the stronger we grow for the future. It can be hard to see that in the middle of a crisis but when we come through the difficulty and get to the other side we are more resilient, more capable of empathy and more understanding.

C.S. Lewis said "I suggest to you that it is because God loves you that he gives you the gift of suffering. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but God shouts in our pain. Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. You see, we are like blocks of stone out of which the Sculptor carves the forms of people. The blows of his chisel, which hurt us so much are what makes us perfect."

We pray today for all those who are sick, especially those who have contracted the Coronavirus. We can't take your pain away but hopefully we can make it easier to bear by supporting and loving you.

We pray for the families and friends of those who are sick. It must be so hard to see a loved one hurting but please remember you are not alone, we are all in this together and we will carry this cross with you.

We pray for those who suffer due to mental health issues. We know that this time of self isolation must be very difficult for you and we pray that you continue to reach out and connect with people and find the support you need.

We pray for those who are feeling the pain of separation from loved ones. We know that many people can't visit with grandparents or other family members at this time and we pray that they continue to find new ways of connecting.

We pray for those who have died. We know that their pain has come to an end but their families on earth still grieve them. They feel the pain of their absence and their passing has been made even more difficult because of the current restrictions. We ask that you watch over them Lord, and bring them comfort in their sorrow.

We make all these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Twelfth Station:** Jesus dies on the cross - An eerie silence descends on Calvary. Jesus gathered his breath and screamed aloud the lines of the Psalm "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" After three long hours on the cross he whispers, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." He bows his head and gives up his spirit. It is over and darkness fell over the city.

We ask you to bow your heads as we observe a minutes silence.

When Jesus died upon that cross  
His family all wept and felt the loss  
The pain so sharp as he bowed his head  
The reality of "He is dead"

We cry, we mourn and we grieve  
But those who love us never leave  
They are with us always, like stars at night  
They cannot be seen in the bright day light

But still they shine as they were designed  
By God the Father, to guide human-kind  
In the way of truth and joy and hope  
So despite the pain we know we will cope

They live within us, they are always near,  
In every smile and every tear  
In every remembrance we bring them to life  
In moments of joy and trouble and strife.

He dies on the cross but in three days He will rise  
And so life never ends and love never dies  
He is the light through which we see  
And by his death He lives, in you and me.

Dear God, we pray for our loved ones who have died, especially those who have died as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. We take a moment to think of them and of our loved ones who have died (Pause) We pray that their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through your mercy Lord will rest in peace, Amen.

**Thirteenth Station:** Jesus is taken down from the cross - He is dead. What a state he is in, bleeding, broken, limp and heavy. How brutally he was put to death. How gently he was taken from the cross. His suffering and pain are ended, and he was put in the lap of his mother. The dirt and blood are wiped away. Finally he is treated with love.

What does it really mean to love someone? Jesus thought us that to truly love someone we must be willing to forgive them when they have hurt us. But forgiveness is complicated and the only way we can learn to forgive others is by being forgiven ourselves.

Forgiveness means acknowledging and processing what happened and letting go or moving on. It means giving up the hope that the past could've been any different. Forgiveness doesn't change the past but it can change the future.

Even though there are days I wish I could change some things that happened in the past, there's a reason the rear view mirror is so small and the windscreen is so big. Where you're headed is much more important than what you've left behind. When we refuse to forgive it's like we're trying to drive the car forward by looking in the rear view mirror.

We know that the world would be a better place if we learned to forgive each other. If we could move forward and treat everyone without prejudice in a way we would like to be treated, regardless of our pasts. We know that this is the world that Jesus tried to create. At one point during the passion Jesus says of the guards who taunt him, 'Forgive them lord, they know not what they do.'

How quick are we to forgive? Why do we hold grudges? Sometimes our heart needs more time to accept what our mind already knows. Forgiveness is a process which takes time and trust. We can hold onto resentment or grudges because we have been hurt once already and we do not want to re live this pain or humiliate ourselves. Even in his last moments Jesus gives us an example of how we should live, trusting in god and forgiving others.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or excusing the harm done to us. It is not for the good of the person who has hurt us, it releases negativity within ourselves and strengthens and deepens our relationships with God and with each other. As Mary held her son's body for the last time she chose forgiveness, she chose faith, she chose to dwell on the future that her son imagined for us.

To finish we remember the words of Martin Luther King, 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.'

Dear God help us to be people of forgiveness. Help us to be people of positivity, people who choose light over darkness and love over hate. Amen

**Fourteenth Station:** Jesus is laid in the tomb –

Relatives and friends carry his body to the gravesite to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who was also a disciple of Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. They laid his body gently in the new tomb carved out of the hill. They rolled a boulder across the entrance and silently withdrew.

It may seem like this is the end of the story. A sad story with a sad ending, but this is not the end. In three days Jesus will rise again. His death means that we have the gift of eternal life. So this story actually has a happy ending... hope!

Let me share a little reflection with you about hope.

What Does Hope Do For Mankind? - John Maxwell

Hope shines brightest when the hour is darkest.  
Hope motivates when discouragement comes.  
Hope energizes when the body is tired.  
Hope sweetens while bitterness bites.  
Hope sings when all melodies are gone.  
Hope believes when evidence is eliminated.  
Hope listens for answers when no one is talking.  
Hope climbs over obstacles when no one is helping.  
Hope endures hardship when no one is caring.  
Hope smiles confidently when no one is laughing.  
Hope reaches for answers when no one is asking.  
Hope presses toward victory when no one is encouraging.  
Hope dares to give when no one is sharing.  
Hope brings the victory when no one is winning.

Dear God, help us to be people of hope and of joy. We know this is tough at the moment. It's hard to hope when things seem bleak but that's when we need it most. Help us to find moments of joy in our day and to be a source of joy for those we love.

When this crisis has passed and we can return to the world may we bring with us more kindness, more understanding and more love. May our hugs be tighter, our laughs louder and our spirits stronger. We wait in hope. Amen

**Conclusion:** Over two thousand years ago, in the Middle East, an event occurred that permanently changed the world. Because of that event, history was spilt into before and after. Every time we write a date we are using the resurrection of Jesus as the focal point.

Now more than ever we need a focal point, we need to remember that Jesus lives in every one of us. And though we might feel as if we are stumbling in the darkness of uncertainty and fear we have the light of Christ to guide us.

Before we finish we will take a moment of quiet and stillness. Close your eyes, take some deep breaths, let your shoulders fall, and let your body relax. Take a minute to call to mind the things that are worrying you or causing anxiety and stress; think of the cross that you carry. Ask God to relieve your burdens and give you the strength to reach out and ask for help. Remember that you are not alone, God is with you.

Now think of the people in your life who you love, and the people who love you. Think of those people you have been separated from. Hold them close to your heart and ask God to watch over them, to bless them and to keep them safe.

We know that God hears those prayers that we can't speak aloud and we bring all our prayers to him today as together we pray... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be to the Father...

Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;  
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;  
Stronger than the dark, the light;  
Stronger than the wrong, the right;  
Faith and Hope triumphant say  
Christ will rise on Easter Day.

Thank you for joining in our prayer and a huge thanks to everyone who took part and put so much thought and time into making this video. We hope that you all have a safe and happy Easter, that you keep the flame of faith alive and that you try to carry the warmth and light of Christ to those who need it.

May God bless us all in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.