

# LENT: The Stations of the Cross

## THE FIRST STATION JESUS IS CONDEMNED

Every day in our world people are condemned. Every time someone is rejected because of the colour of their skin, or because of what they believe, every time someone who doesn't "fit in" feels unwelcome, they have been condemned. Jesus was one of those that didn't fit in. He did and said things that upset the people in power. The religious leaders wanted him out of their way, so Pilate went along with them. Jesus was condemned to die on a cross.



Thought - Who are the people, individuals or groups, you look down on or condemn, either in the silence of your minds or in the way you speak to them?

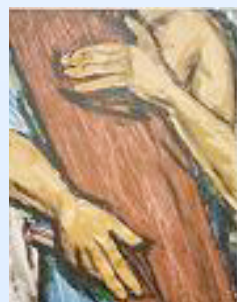
Prayer - Jesus forgive us for the times that we have condemned you in others through our silence and indifference. Help us to love and welcome everyone, just as you did. Help us to forgive those who reject and condemn us. Teach how to follow you.

## THE SECOND STATION JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

All around us people are carrying heavy burdens. Some of these burdens we know about, but others we don't know about, like the burdens carried by teachers or some of the other pupils in school. But do we really care? Other burdens we hear about on the news, like hunger, poverty and injustice. But are we really bothered about what goes on in other parts of the world? Jesus was forced to carry the burden of the cross. People saw the treatment Jesus was receiving and looked away, no one came forward.

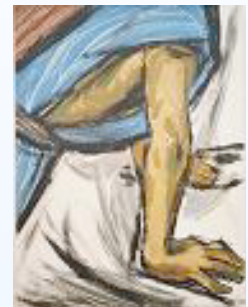
Thought - What are your crosses, the things happening in your life that are difficult or challenging? Are you facing them alone as Jesus did, or do you have people to help?

Prayer - Jesus forgive us for the times we have walked away from the burden of others. Help us to see more clearly their hurt and their pain. During the toughest of times, particularly when we are carrying our own crosses, help us to lean on you and support one another.



## THE THIRD STATION JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

One of the worst things that can happen to us is falling flat on our faces in front of other people: when we do or say something stupid or when we are not accepted for who we are.



Jesus fell in front of the soldiers, in front of his friends and all those people who believed in him. He fell in front of his own mother. He was in this situation because he had spoken out for others.

Thought - Who do you like to see fall and fail? Whose life do you sometimes make difficult?

Prayer - Jesus, forgive us for the times we have shut others out and refused to help them. Help us to be aware of their needs. Forgive us for the times we laugh at others and cause them to fall by our thoughtless words and actions. By the power of your spirit give us the strength to try and keep trying to live in the way you taught us, no matter how many times we stumble and fall.

## THE FOURTH STATION JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



Parents and family can expect so much of us. They want us to be successful. They want to believe that we can get good grades, that everyone will like us, that we will always choose what is right. We want our parents and family to think the best of us; even though we don't always want them to know about the things we do. Mary wanted Jesus to succeed. She wanted people to accept him. But here she meets him carrying a cross, normally used for criminals. Did she think he was guilty, or a failure? Or did she love and support him?

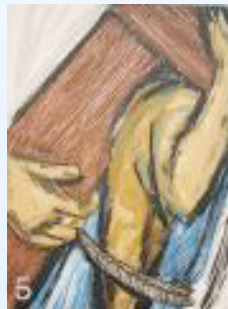
Thought – Think about your parents or those who care for you. What do you appreciate about them? Despite any arguments or disagreements you may have with them what are their good points, their qualities? How can you love them more generously?

Prayer – Jesus, forgive us for not appreciating all the things that those who care for us do for us. Even if it feels like they are going about it in the wrong way. Forgive us for the times we have resented those who care for us. Help us to see their love and be grateful.

## THE FIFTH STATION SIMON HELPS JESUS

Sometimes a teacher may make us sit next to an "outsider". Do we stop to think about that person's feelings? We sometimes only care about how we feel. How does this look to our friends? What if they think we chose this situation? Why was Simon, a foreigner in Jerusalem, chosen to help this "criminal" carry his cross? Would people think he was the criminal? He was probably humiliated and forced into doing this.

Thought – How willing are you to help others when you're asked to do so? How often do you speak or help people outside of your own circle of friends? Think of a time when you have shown people that you care and are concerned for them.



Prayer – Forgive us Jesus, for failing to help others when we have had the chance to do so. Forgive us for our reluctant attitudes when we are asked to help, but won't give up any of our free time. Forgive us for the times that we hurt others by not caring how they feel. Show us how to act with love and compassion. Give us the courage to carry each other's cross.

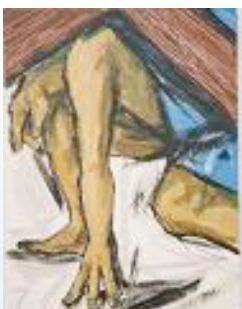
## THE SIXTH STATION VERONICA WIPES JESUS' FACE

There are some people who actually go against the crowd and say what they really feel. Veronica went against the crowd, and actually put herself in danger. Her love and sympathy overcame her fear, and she came forward to wipe away the blood and the sweat from Jesus' face. She didn't stop to think of the consequences or to measure her own needs. At that moment she thought only of Jesus.



Thought – Think about the ways in which you can be more compassionate, gentler with yourself and with others. Would you put away your own fears to help someone else? Let's remember Veronica was a stranger to Jesus, but she saw a need to help. Can we say we would do the same?

Prayer – Jesus forgive us when we have laughed at people who go against the crowd. Forgive us for not loving with the same gentleness and care that Veronica showed to you. By the power of your Spirit help us to act with kindness to ourselves and others.



## THE SEVENTH STATION JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Failure can make us feel terrible. None of us want to be a failure, especially in the eyes of our friends and family. Very often we are concerned about the way we are seen by others and what they think of us. Often we try to look good in their eyes. But sometimes they fail us. They don't stand up when we need them, in spite of all our efforts to please them.

When Jesus fell again, what were his concerns? Was he worried about why one of his friends didn't step forward on his behalf? Was he feeling angry, hurt or betrayed?

Thought – Who do you rely on to get through the difficult times in your life? What would it feel like if you thought that they had abandoned you? Think about the areas in your life where you need to ask for God's help to get up and try again. Prayer – Jesus, forgive us for the times we have failed to "be there" for our friends when they needed us. By the power of your Spirit, pick us up when we fall and give us the courage to keep going on.