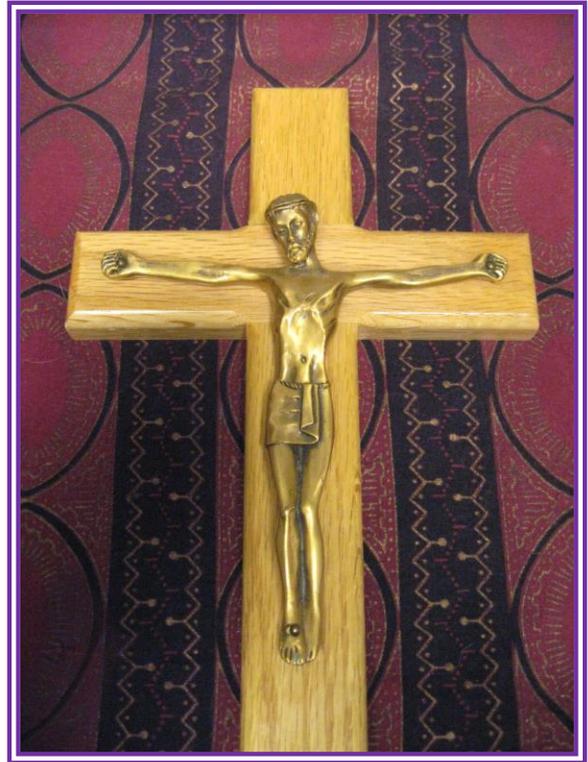


Prayer and Praise

INTRODUCTION:

Howard Thurman, a noted theologian, minister and professor, tells a story (in his book, *Deep River*) about a group of African American students who visited Mahatma Ghandi in India. These students and Dr. Thurman were from Howard University on a travel study, some were on the Howard University Choir. Ghandi asked the visitors to sing one song in his presence; "Were You There." This request intrigued Dr. Thurman as he contemplated its significance for Ghandi who stated that "identification in suffering makes the cross universal and that the mystery of the cross is found deep within the heart of the experience itself."

We too must experience Jesus' walk to Calvary, the weight of the cross, the people encountered, the suffering endured. Let us travel with Jesus and meet him in those high places of pain, and claim this Jesus as our Redeemer. Can we not pray as we walk with Jesus? Can we be moved to act as we pray through social justice action?



Opening Song: *Were You There*
Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (2x)
O' Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Reading from Scripture: *Luke 23:33-43*
Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

Response to Scripture: *The Stations of the Cross*

All: O Lord Jesus, You paid the price – suffering for the redemption of all humankind and You won the victory. We shall walk with You ,O Jesus to those high places of pain, for there is much in our own lives and in our communities that cries out for redemption. And so we pray... **Forgive us O Lord.**

The First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death

O Lord, how many times in life have we been guilty of unjustly condemning each other and blaming those who are poor for being poor. Forgive us , O Lord!

The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

O Lord, there are so many people who are carrying crosses. Strengthen us to help carry the load by sharing what we have. Help us to share Your name through action with those who feel abandoned.

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

O Lord, whenever we fall down in service to You, help us to look up to the many acts of charity and mercy Your Son, Jesus did. If we can look up, we will get up.

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Jesus we know what You are telling us. To watch the pain of those we love is harder than bearing our own. Help us to reach out and comfort those who are suffering.

The Fifth Station: Simone of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross

O Lord, help us to remember that we are called to help each other on the way, along this way, even if it may mean carrying each other on this journey. You did it for us; let us follow Your example and do it for others.

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

O Lord, we marvel at Veronica's compassion in running to You to wipe Your face at the moment of suffering. Help us to act swiftly and reach out to those who are suffering from addiction, homelessness, poverty, and mental or physical abuse. Help us to recognize and respond with compassion to the pain within our midst.

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

O Lord when the road to justice becomes littered with obstacles, help us to be determined to stay on course. O Lord, forgive our apathy!

The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women and Children

Lord God, even in Your suffering, You acknowledged those who were called low in society. O Lord when we become "caught up in our own lives," help us to remember others and forgive us of our self-centeredness.

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Lord God, on the road to Calvary, You fell down, but You got up. O Lord, when the arm of injustice knocks us down, help us to get back up and stand for justice. O Lord, forgive us of our self pity!

The Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes

O Lord, release us from material trappings of this world and make us poor in spirit so that we may be rich in You.

The Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Lord God, as You are nailed to the cross, we pray that the sin of racism and all "isms" shall be nailed to die on the cross this Good Friday.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Lord God, "in dying You restored our lives." O Lord, we pray that we live a life committed to justice and not "just us."

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken From The Cross

Love, tenderly, took You from the cross. O Lord we pray that love will move us to remove others from the crosses they bear.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Acknowledging Your human dignity, Your friends gave You a proper burial. Lord God, forgive us our disrespect for life. We prepare to share resurrection life every time we act justly and strongly in the Lord!

Closing Prayer: O Lord, my voice joins in prayer with my brothers and sisters throughout these forty days of Lent as we seek to know and to do Your will. In obedience to Your Word, I am putting self aside and am casting out into the deep waters of Your love, mercy and grace. Guide my net to the exact place and persons where You would will it to fall. Grant to me Lord, the time and opportunity to speak and witness to the ones whom my net will touch. Send forth Your Spirit, dear Lord, to shower me with wise and gentle actions and words that You would have me do and speak. My net is now cast with You, O God to walk each day by faith and not by sight. Lord, I believe and trust in Your power to perform miracles and to redeem all who cooperate with your grace. Bless our faith and our walk, in the name of Jesus we pray...**Amen**

(Prayers used in the Stations of the Cross created by Therese Wilson Favors and Danise Jones Dorsey)