

Stations of the Cross at St. Basil's

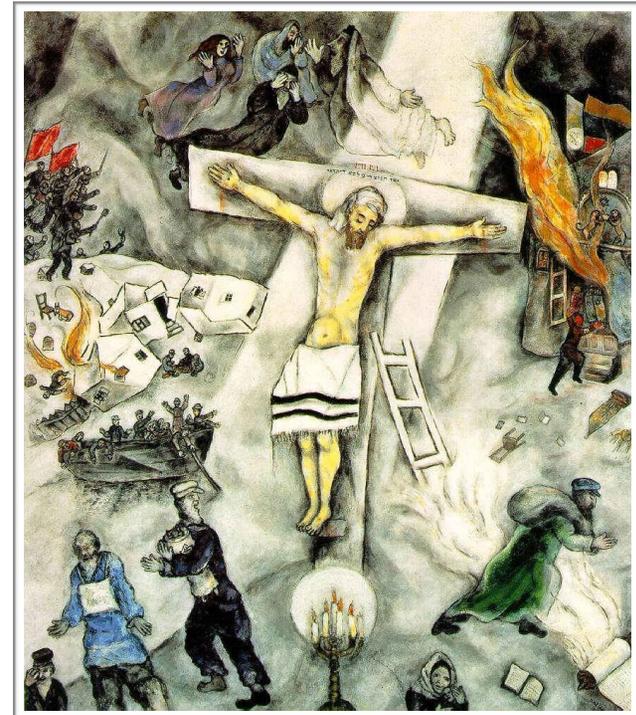
Reflections on Ecology & Justice

*The skies tell the story of the glory of God,
the firmament proclaims the work of God's hands;
day pours out the news to day,
night passes to night the knowledge.*

PRAYER FOR AN EVER WATCHFUL HEART

O Lord my God,
Bestow upon me understanding to know You,
Zeal to seek You,
Wisdom to find You,
A life that is pleasing to You,
Unshakable perseverance,
And a hope that will one day take hold of You.
AMEN

St. Thomas Aquinas



Marc Chagall - "White Crucifixion" (1938)

Chagall's painting the "White Crucifixion" depicts Jesus as wearing the Jewish prayer shawl known as the tallit. Pope Francis cited this as his favourite work of art.

The Stations of the Cross: An Introduction

Early Christians prayed the “way of the cross” as an act of discipleship and devotion.

By the late 4th Century, St. Jerome (who ordered and codified the Christian Bible) noted that pilgrims visiting Jerusalem stopped for prayers at various points along the route Jesus took as he bore his cross to Golgotha. Since most people could not make the physical pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Christian monasteries in medieval Europe began to incorporate the “stations” into their artworks, architecture, and landscapes.

The most common ordering of stations (in the sequence we also have on our walls at St. Basil’s) evolved from the Franciscans, who took up custodial duties of the Christian sites in the Holy Land in the 14th century.

Numerous texts for praying the stations of the cross are now available, including many written by saints, and by communities exploring particular issues or charisms. Many people simply pray the stations quietly, adding their stories, suffering, petitions, and love, to story of suffering and love at the heart of Christian faith. As St. Pope John Paul II wrote, the stations are the “unceasing effort to stand beside the endless crosses on which the Son of God continues to be crucified.”

This particular text contemplates Jesus’ journey as an aid for fostering solidarity with the earth and our natural environment.

Preparatory Prayer:

+ All: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Presider: Gracious and loving God, we gather as your children to walk the steps which Jesus took before us. Still our thoughts that we may make this journey with reverence. Stir our imaginations to encounter the scenes before us more vividly. And open our hearts to experience the revelation of love that humanity’s violence and indifference cannot suppress.

All: We walk these steps in our love and compassion for Jesus. We walk these steps to learn more about His self-offering love.

We walk these steps recalling all our sisters and brothers who have borne great suffering in the cause of justice, faith, and peace.

We walk these steps as sinners to challenge the habits or fears that add to the cross Jesus carries, and cause injury to others.

We walk these steps in need, bearing our own spiritual anguish and physical sufferings.

We walk these steps as community, offering one another prayers and the consolation of being seen, heard and welcomed.

We walk these steps to encounter face-to-face the awful injustice and suffering unleashed by hatred, and to be renewed by the awesome hope which the cross signifies.

We walk these steps for all creation, which St. Paul tells us “awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God... to be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21-22)

The First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Pilate chose not to act. He knew an injustice was being perpetrated, and he had a premonition that Jesus was more than He seemed. Yet he nonetheless sanctioned murder, and then used his power to wash his hands, absolving himself of any responsibility for the violence imposed on the innocent.

Jesus stands silently before us. In what ways do we choose not to act? Present in our neighbours and on our land, Jesus stands silently before us. What do we choose not to do? Among the innocent suffering injustice, and within the species suffering annihilation, Jesus stands silently before us. When do we wash our hands?

Psalm 34 - All: The LORD is close to the brokenhearted,
saves those whose spirit is crushed.

Many are the troubles of the just,
but the LORD delivers from them all.

God watches over all their bones;
not a one shall be broken.

The LORD redeems loyal servants,
no one is condemned whose refuge is God.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

The Second Station: Jesus Accepts His Cross

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: The empire's instrument of torture and death was hacked and hewn from a tree. Heavy and bristling with splinters, that rough wood crafted for the execution of Jesus became what the 8th century Greek monk Theodore the Studite called "the precious gift of the cross" - "wholly beautiful to behold" because "this tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return."

As we contemplate our debt to Jesus we see that He bears as well all our human debts to creation. "Meditate on these," wrote Theodore, "if you are eager to learn. Was it not the wood of a tree that enabled Noah, at God's command, to escape the destruction of the flood? And surely the rod of Moses prefigured the cross when it divided the sea at one stroke saving God's own people?" Do we recognize that all creation sustains us, and indeed, is complicit in how Jesus saved us?

Psalm 31 - All: In you, LORD, I take refuge,

let me never be put to shame.

In your justice deliver me; be my rock.

Into your hands I commend my spirit,
you will redeem me, Lord, faithful God.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

The Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Abandoned by the community and apostles, it is the earth that rushes up to meet Jesus when He can no longer bear the weight. As fully human, Jesus like us is *homō* - which in Latin means “earth being,” from and of the earth. As fully God, Jesus is also earth’s creator - pulled down by its gravity only to be embraced by what St. Paul calls “a new creation.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

With Jesus on the ground, we can imagine His blood seeping into the rocks and dirt, bringing Mother Earth into the same Eucharist He had shared the day before with His apostles and friends. As God’s handiwork, even inanimate matter manifests grace, and participates in salvation. Do we heed that holiness? Do we recognize that all land is Holy Land?

Psalm 37 - All: Trust in the LORD and do good
that you may dwell in the land...

Those whose steps are guided by the LORD
whose way God approves,
May stumble, but they will never fall,
for the LORD holds their hand.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: “All contemplation,” writes the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, “must take its directions from Mary.” “She is ‘the hearer par excellence’ who becomes pregnant with the Word, and bears it as her Son... With all the strength she can muster she listens to this Word as it grows more and more vast, divine and seemingly alien; its dimensions almost tear her asunder, yet it is for this, for everything... that she lets herself be led where “she does not wish to go.”

Mothers, like Mother Earth, are the life givers. And mothers, like Mother Earth, are forever the silent ones on the front-lines when the injury of injustice causes its deepest wounds. Standing with Mary in her grief, how can we stand with the other broken-hearted mothers? Standing with Mary, where does our Mother Earth need us to be that we’d rather not go?

Lamentations 1:16 - All: For these things I weep:

my eyes flow with tears;
For a comforter is far from me
one to revive my spirit,
My children are desolate,
for evil has prevailed.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

**The Fifth Station:
Simon of Cyrene Helps Carry the Cross**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: The stranger's help became indispensable to God's plan. Without this outsider from Cyrene the cross would not have made it to Golgotha. God uses everyone of us in the project of salvation. It is neither fair nor easy to be co-opted into bearing part of the weight of another's cross. But such is our binding relationship as God's children that salvation not only includes strangers, but depends on them.

Each of us have gifts and contributions to offer. As embodied beings who need the earth, have we recognized that the earth also needs us for stewardship and care? As social beings enriched by community, do we understand that the community also needs each of us to heal its failures and imagine its hopes? As members of the body of Christ, are we ready to serve the body of Christ with the Cyrene-like effort to carry the cross of the world's despair to its transforming summit?

Psalm 40 - All: Sacrifice and offering you do not want;
but ears open to obedience you gave me...

So I said, "Here I am; your commands are written in the scroll
To do your will is my delight; my God, your law is in my
heart.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

**The Sixth Station:
Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Veronica stepped through the militarized zone of imperial execution to provide Jesus with the comfort of touch. She came away from that act of compassion with the imprint of Our Lord's holy face. Such is our "relatedness" - to God, to creation, and to one another - that every act of care is an act of communion, of Eucharist, of stamping the fabric of our own lives with the face of Jesus.

"Relatedness," explains the theologian and ecofeminist Ivone Gebara, "is the primary reality: It is constitutive of all beings. It is the foundational reality of all that is or can exist. It is the underlying fabric that is continually brought forth within the vital process in which we are immersed." Are we aware of this deep relatedness in our own lives? Do we "accept the challenge" Gebara sets "of becoming creators of ourselves and of the entire living world?"

Psalm 16 - All: I bless Adonai who has guided me;
my conscience admonishes me at night.

I am ever mindful of the Divine Presence at my right hand;
I shall never be shaken.

So my heart rejoices; my whole being exults, my body rests secure.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: The weight is too great. Even with the Cyrene's help, the burden is beyond bearing. Only part of the way to Golgotha, an infinity of agony is still to be shouldered by the already emptied and exhausted Rabbouni. But the attitude of violence is too impatient to give utter exhaustion any consideration. Prodded and pulled, Jesus resumes His sacrificial march: uphill, up the steep slope of hate and indifference, up the mountainside of betrayal, denial and condemnation.

Before the fallen Lord, our hearts burst: How can we adequately grieve what is impossible for us to fathom? What can we do to console a wounding we cannot comprehend? Only by being available. Only by being available and responsive to grace. Only by being available and responsive to one another.

Psalm 38 - All: I am numb and utterly crushed

I wail with anguish of the heart

My LORD, my deepest yearning is before you;

my groaning is not hidden from you.

My heart shudders, my strength forsakes me.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

The Eighth Station: Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: It is always the women who glimpse Jesus as He is: who first name Him as Messiah; who rush now in hopelessness to console helplessness; who will later be first to visit the tomb and encounter the Resurrected Lord. Where does this gift of recognition spring from?

The answer, as framed by the postcolonial theologian Wonhee Anne Joh is “the heart of our being, our life source, our original grace.” In her book *The Heart of the Cross*, she explains that in the imprint of Trinity “the sacred in life is in relationship with itself.” Our precious earth holds us in this relationship. No matter what we do to our earth, it is there to console us, to be the garden and field that provides us beauty and sustenance. What can we learn from the generous resilience of nature about our own response to suffering? How can we imitate the women who still wanted to give after losing so much?

Isaiah 40:1 - All: Comfort, give comfort to my people,

says your God

Speak gently to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her;

that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated.

Indeed, she has received double from the hand of the LORD for all her sins.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: A trinity of falls. The fragile child of Mary, the self-emptying Son of God, the most holy of teachers and generous of healers, stumbles again to the ground. After the glory of Mount Tabor, this seems cancel out the Transfiguration. But it doesn't. Splayed on the ground, prostrate in the dirt and rocks, our highest priest consecrates all creation as His altar, blessing the earth, suffering with us, and for us, making the Transfiguration pervasive through every atom, and therefore complete.

Philippians 2:6-11 - All: Who, though he was in the form of God
did not regard equality with God something to be grasped
Rather he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself
becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

The Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: At the summit, Jesus is at the nadir. The wandering Rabbi, with no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58), is now stripped of his garments. The holiest of men left wholly exposed. But while the aim was to shame Jesus by defiling the laws of purity, the purity of His heart reverses the desecration. It is those wearing the rich cloaks of power, and those wrapped in the precious robes of religious authority, who are rendered naked by their ambitions, fears, and privileges. It is those wearing armour and carrying weapons, who are exposed as powerless for their reliance on force, cruelty, and violence.

At the summit of our technological development, we sometimes assume to have control over nature. Yet in its naked availability to us, nature reminds us that the power resides not in big machinery, but in even the tiniest interrelationships which bind all living creatures.

Psalm 51:3 - All: Wash away all my guilt;
from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my offense: my sin is always before me.

Against you alone have I sinned...

Still, you insist on sincerity of heart;

in my inmost being teach me wisdom.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

**The Eleventh Station:
Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Golgotha! Rock of death: Womb of life.

Summit of fear: Foundation of hope.

Culmination of hatred: Beginning of forgiveness.

Exposed nakedness: Transposed glory.

Hands ensnared and nailed: Hearts untied and freed.

Feet bound and nailed: Perceptions and hopes liberated.

Hung on the cross: Crossing heaven and earth.

Unimaginable indignity: Unimaginable forgiveness.

The call of the abandoned: The call to abandon.

The death of light: The death of death.

Suffering *kenosis*: Divining osmosis. Golgotha!

Psalm 42:7-III 5 - All: My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you...

Here the deep calls to the deep in the roar of your torrents.

All your waves and breakers sweep over me...

Why are you downcast my soul?

Why do you groan within me?

Wait for God, whom I shall praise again,
my saviour and my God.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

**The Twelfth Station:
Jesus Dies the Cross**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Please Kneel for a Few Moments of Silent Adoration:

Philippians 2:8-11 - All: He humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name

that is above every name,

that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

of those 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.

Hymn:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

**The Thirteenth Station:
Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Despair seems triumphant. Taken down with the limp and bloodied body of Jesus is the hope he embodied. For followers, as well as critics, the promised Kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed, proved to be fleeting, flawed, and foolish. But on the cross, as He had in His ministry, Jesus had already released the holy acid for dissolving despair. Forgiveness was flowing, so what seemed like the end turned out to be only the beginning.

This is the way of creation and the created. The beginning includes, as the theologian David N. Power writes, “A hope that needs to be larger than human community...to encompass in God’s name all that makes up the vast wonder of the universe.... We cannot claim to respect humanity if we do not respect earth, ocean, waterways and heavens, and we cannot hope for ourselves without hoping for them.”

Psalm 60:3 - All: O God, you rejected us, broke our defences,
you were angry but now revive us.
You rocked the earth, split it open;
repair the cracks for it totters.
...Raise up a flag for those that revere you

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

**The Fourteenth Station:
Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb**

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

All: Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.

Presider: Before Jesus came to rest in our hearts, He was laid to rest in a tomb of stone. Before Jesus sent His Spirit to commission the church at Pentecost, He sent His Spirit into the earth to consecrate all life and matter. Before we were baptized, the waters were made holy. Before we were invited to Eucharist, the soil, sunshine, and seeds were sanctified for priestly office. And before He became ours as the Resurrected Lord, Jesus belonged to the garden, where He rested and reposed.

Canticle of Daniel - All: Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord
Praise and exalt God above all forever.

All you waters above the heavens, bless the Lord

All you hosts of the Lord, bless the Lord.

Sun and moon bless the Lord. Stars of heaven bless the Lord.

All you winds bless the Lord. Fire and heat bless the Lord

Dew and rain bless the Lord. Frost and chill bless the Lord.

Nights and days bless the Lord. Light and darkness bless the Lord.

Mountains and hills bless the Lord. Wild beasts and tame bless the Lord.

Let the earth bless the Lord. Praise and exalt him above all forever.

Hymn:

*Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

