

St. Thomas the Apostle Church
Naperville, Illinois
stapostle.org

A Note to Parents

The Stations of the Cross are a simple and powerful way to help children understand how much Jesus loves them. During Lent, the Church invites us to walk with Jesus on His journey to the cross. As we pray these stations, we remember that Jesus knows suffering, disappointment, kindness, forgiveness, and trust. He understands our lives and shows us how to love even when things are hard.

Praying the Stations together helps children see that faith is not only something we learn — it is something we live. These reflections connect the story of Jesus' passion to everyday family life: school struggles, friendships, forgiveness, helping one another, and trusting God during difficult moments. The goal is not to explain every detail, but to gently open hearts to Jesus' love and example.

These prayers may be used in many ways — with others at church, with your family at home, or even quietly on your own. You might pray one or two stations at a time, or all fourteen together. Move at a pace that fits your family. Allow moments of silence. Let children ask questions. Most of all, trust that God is working in simple and quiet ways.

As you walk this journey with your children, you are teaching them something lasting: that the cross is not the end of the story. God's love is stronger than suffering, and the road of Lent leads to the joy of Easter.

Stations of the Cross for Families and Children

Introduction

Jesus' life was filled with love, kindness, and mercy. During Lent, we remember in a special way how much Jesus loves us by praying the **Stations of the Cross**.

The Stations of the Cross help us walk with Jesus as He journeys to the cross. Along the way, we see how Jesus was treated, how He carried His cross, how He fell and got back up, and how He trusted His Father even when things were very hard.

When we pray these stations as families, we remember that Jesus understands our lives, too. He knows what it feels like to be hurt, to feel afraid, to be tired, and to need help from others. Jesus also shows us how to love, forgive, and care for one another, even when it is not easy.

As we pray today, let us walk slowly with Jesus. Let us listen with our hearts. And let us ask Jesus to help our families grow in love, kindness, courage, and trust in God.

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we want to walk with You on Your journey to the cross. Help our families to listen with our hearts, trust in Your love, and learn how to love others as You do. Amen.

The First Station

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

Jesus is brought before the governor, Pontius Pilate. The leaders accuse Jesus and say He has done many wrong things, even though Jesus has only taught people to love God and care for one another. Pilate listens, but he knows in his heart that Jesus has done nothing wrong.

Outside, a crowd gathers and begins to shout. They demand that Jesus be punished and put to death. Pilate is afraid of the crowd and worries about losing his power. Instead of doing what he knows is right, he gives in to their anger and orders that Jesus be condemned to death on a cross. Jesus does not fight back or shout. He quietly accepts what is happening and trusts His Father.

Reflection for Families

Jesus knows what it feels like to be treated unfairly. Sometimes we are blamed for things we did not do, or we see others being treated badly. This station reminds us to choose what is right, even when it is hard, and to stand up for others with kindness and courage.

Prayer

*Jesus, help us to trust You when things feel unfair.
Teach our families to choose what is right and to care for one another with love. Amen.*

The Second Station

Jesus Receives His Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

After Jesus is condemned, the soldiers place a heavy wooden cross on His shoulders. The cross is rough and hard to carry. Jesus is tired, hurt, and weak, but He does not refuse it. He knows that this cross is part of His Father's plan to show love to the world.

As Jesus begins to walk, the weight of the cross presses down on Him. Every step is difficult, and the road ahead is long. Even though He is afraid and in pain, Jesus keeps going. He carries the cross because He loves us and wants to save us.

Reflection for Families

Jesus understands how heavy life can sometimes feel. We all have crosses to carry—homework, sickness, worries, mistakes, or hard days at school or at home. This station reminds us that we are never alone when things feel heavy. Jesus walks with us and helps us keep going, one step at a time.

Prayer

Jesus, help us when our hearts feel tired or burdened.

Teach our families to trust You and to help one another carry our crosses with love. Amen.

The Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

As Jesus walks with the heavy cross, His strength begins to fail. The road is uneven, and the weight on His shoulders is too much. Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground for the first time. The cross crashes down with Him.

Jesus is hurt and exhausted. The soldiers are impatient, and the crowd keeps watching. Even though He is in pain and feels very weak, Jesus does not stay on the ground. Slowly and painfully, He gets back up and takes hold of the cross again.

Reflection for Families

Jesus knows what it feels like to fall down. Sometimes we fail, make mistakes, or feel like we just cannot keep going. This station reminds us that falling is not the end. With God's help, we can get back up, try again, and keep moving forward with hope.

Prayer

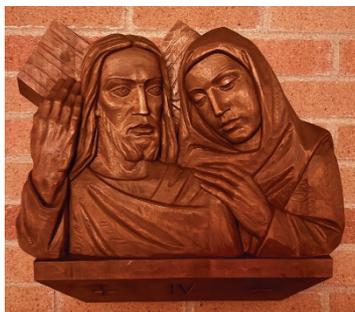
*Jesus, help us when we fall or feel discouraged.
Give our families courage to begin again and trust that You are always with us. Amen.*

The Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Mother, Mary

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

As Jesus carries the cross, He sees His mother, Mary, standing along the road. Their eyes meet. Mary cannot take away His pain, and Jesus cannot stop His suffering, but they share a moment of deep love. Mary's heart is full of sorrow as she watches her Son suffer.

Mary stays close to Jesus, even when it hurts to do so. She does not run away or turn her eyes aside. Jesus knows that His mother loves Him and is with Him in this painful moment. Her presence gives Him comfort and strength as He continues on His way.

Reflection for Families

Jesus knows how important family love is. When someone we love is hurting, we may not be able to fix the problem, but being present matters. This station reminds us to stay close to one another in hard times and to show love through listening, caring, and simply being there.

Prayer

*Jesus, thank You for the love we share in our families.
Help us to stay close to one another and to show comfort and care
when someone is hurting. Amen.*

The Fifth Station

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

As Jesus struggles to carry the heavy cross, the soldiers see that He is growing weaker. They stop a man named Simon of Cyrene, who is passing by, and force him to help Jesus. Simon did not plan to be part of this day, and he may have felt afraid or confused.

Simon takes hold of the cross and walks beside Jesus. The weight is still heavy, but now Jesus is not alone. Together, they continue along the road. Simon's help gives Jesus the strength to keep going toward the place where He will give His life for the world.

Reflection for Families

Jesus shows us that it is okay to need help. Sometimes we are asked to help others when we did not expect it or when it feels uncomfortable. This station reminds us that helping someone else carry a burden is an act of love. When we help one another, we help Jesus Himself.

Prayer

*Jesus, open our hearts to notice when others need help.
Teach our families to share burdens and serve one another with love.
Amen.*

The Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

As Jesus walks along the road, His face is covered with sweat, dust, and blood. The journey is long, and His suffering is great. A woman named Veronica steps forward from the crowd. She is not afraid to show kindness, even when others are watching.

Veronica gently wipes Jesus' face with a cloth. She cannot take away His pain or stop what is happening, but her small act of love brings comfort. Jesus receives her kindness, and Veronica carries His image in her heart as she steps back into the crowd.

Reflection for Families

Jesus teaches us that even small acts of kindness matter. Sometimes we cannot fix a big problem, but we can still show love in simple ways. This station reminds us that comforting someone, offering a smile, or helping quietly can make a real difference.

Prayer

*Jesus, help us to be kind when others are hurting.
Teach our families to show love through small and gentle acts of care.
Amen.*

The Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

Jesus continues along the road, but the journey is far from over. The cross is still heavy, and His body is very tired. As He walks, His strength fails again, and Jesus falls to the ground a second time under the weight of the cross.

This fall is harder than the first. Jesus is more exhausted, and the pain is deeper. Yet once again, He does not give up. Slowly, with great effort, Jesus rises to His feet and takes hold of the cross, choosing to continue the journey out of love for us.

Reflection for Families

Sometimes we struggle with the same problems again and again. We may feel frustrated when we fall more than once or when things do not get better right away. This station reminds us that Jesus understands repeated struggles. He encourages us to keep going, even when we feel tired or discouraged, trusting that God's love gives us strength.

Prayer

Jesus, help us when we feel tired of trying.

Give our families patience and hope to keep going, even when the journey feels long. Amen.

The Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

As Jesus walks toward Calvary, a group of women follows Him. They see His suffering and begin to weep and cry out in sorrow. Their hearts are broken as they watch what is happening to Him.

Jesus stops and speaks to them. Even though He is in pain, He thinks about others. He gently tells them not to weep only for Him, but to turn their hearts toward God and trust in His mercy. Even in suffering, Jesus shows love and care for those around Him.

Reflection for Families

Jesus teaches us that even when we are hurting, we can still care about others. Sometimes we feel sad or worried about the world or about people we love. This station reminds us to bring our tears and our concerns to God and to let them change our hearts in loving ways.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to care about others, even when we are struggling. Teach our families to trust in God's mercy and to grow in loving hearts. Amen.

The Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

The hill of Calvary is near, but the climb is steep and difficult. Jesus is completely exhausted. His body is weak, and the cross feels heavier than ever. As He struggles up the hill, He falls to the ground a third time.

This fall is the hardest of all. Jesus has little strength left. The crowd is still watching, and the soldiers are still urging Him forward. Yet once more, Jesus gathers what strength He can and rises again. With love and determination, He continues the final steps of His journey.

Reflection for Families

Sometimes we feel like giving up. After trying again and again, we may feel worn out or discouraged. This station reminds us that Jesus understands deep exhaustion and disappointment. Even when we feel we have nothing left, God can help us stand again and take one more step forward.

Prayer

*Jesus, stay close to us when we feel like giving up.
Give our families strength to rise again and trust in Your faithful love.
Amen.*

The Tenth Station

Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.



The Story of the Station

When Jesus reaches the top of the hill, the soldiers take His outer garments away from Him. They treat Him without kindness or respect. Jesus stands there, wounded and tired, as the soldiers prepare Him for crucifixion.

Jesus has given everything—His strength, His energy, and now even His clothing. He does not hold anything back. Though He is humiliated and exposed, He remains peaceful and trusts completely in His Father's love.

Reflection for Families

Jesus knows what it feels like to be embarrassed or treated without respect. Sometimes we may feel left out, made fun of, or uncomfortable. This station reminds us to treat every person with dignity and kindness. It also teaches us to trust God's love, even when we feel vulnerable.

Prayer

*Jesus, help us to treat everyone with respect and care.
Teach our families to trust You when we feel embarrassed or unsure.
Amen.*

The Eleventh Station

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.



The Story of the Station

The soldiers place Jesus on the cross. They stretch out His arms and fasten Him to the wood. Jesus feels great pain, but He does not speak words of anger. Instead, He prays and forgives.

As the cross is lifted up, Jesus looks down at the people around Him. Some are confused, some are sad, and some do not understand what is happening. Even in this painful moment, Jesus' heart is full of love. He is giving His life so that we may be close to God forever.

Reflection for Families

Jesus shows us that love can be stronger than pain. When we are hurt by others, it can be very hard to forgive. This station reminds us that forgiveness brings healing and peace. With God's help, we can choose love instead of anger and kindness instead of revenge.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to forgive when we are hurt.

Teach our families to choose love, even when it is difficult. Amen.

The Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

Jesus hangs on the cross for several hours. The sky grows dark, and the world seems very quiet. Jesus speaks a few final words, trusting completely in His Father's love. Then He bows His head and gives His life.

The people nearby stand in silence. Some are filled with sorrow, and some begin to understand how much Jesus loves them. Through His death on the cross, Jesus shows us the greatest love of all. He gives everything so that we may share in God's life forever.

Reflection for Families

This is the most serious moment in our prayer. We pause and remember that Jesus truly gave His life for us. His love is stronger than fear, stronger than suffering, and even stronger than death. When we face sadness or loss, we remember that God's love never ends and that hope is always near.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for loving us with a love that never gives up. Help our families to trust that Your love is stronger than anything we face. Amen.

The Thirteenth Station

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

After Jesus dies, His friends gently take His body down from the cross. They handle Him with great care and love. Mary, His mother, is there. She holds her Son once more, her heart filled with sorrow.

The crowd has grown quieter now. The noise and shouting have stopped. In this tender and painful moment, those who loved Jesus stay close to Him. They do not turn away. They remain faithful, even in their grief.

Reflection for Families

This station reminds us that love stays close, even in sadness. When someone we love is hurting or when we experience loss, simply being present matters. Jesus' friends show us that faithfulness and love continue, even when we do not understand everything.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to stay close to one another in times of sorrow. Teach our families to show gentle love and faithful care when someone is grieving. Amen.

The Fourteenth Station

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

All: *Because, by your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.*



The Story of the Station

After Jesus dies, His friends carefully take His body down from the cross. They wrap Him in clean cloth and carry Him to a nearby tomb. The tomb is a quiet place carved from rock. A large stone is rolled in front of the entrance.

Everything feels still and silent. Jesus' friends are filled with sadness and do not yet understand what will happen next. It seems like the story has ended. But even in this quiet and sorrowful moment, God's plan of love is still unfolding.

Reflection for Families

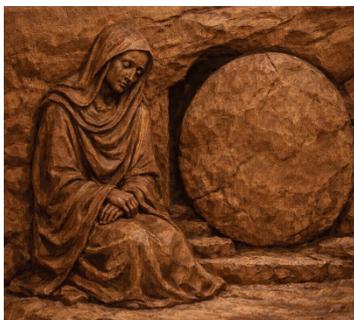
Sometimes we experience moments of waiting, sadness, or confusion. We may not see how things will turn out, and we may feel unsure about the future. This station reminds us that God is at work even in quiet and dark moments. When we trust in Him, hope is never lost.

Prayer

*Jesus, stay with us when life feels quiet or uncertain.
Help our families to trust that Your love is always working, even when we cannot see it. Amen.*

Closing Reflection

We now stand quietly at the tomb with Mary. The stone has been rolled into place. The world feels still. The friends of Jesus are waiting. They do not yet see the joy of Easter morning, but they trust that God's promises are true.



With Mary, we hold on to hope, even when we cannot yet see the joy of Easter.

Sometimes our lives feel like this quiet moment. We may be waiting for healing, for answers, or for something hard to change. In those times, we remember that God is still at work. Just as Lent leads to Easter, and the cross leads to resurrection, God brings new life even when we cannot yet see it.

Closing Prayer

*Loving Jesus, help us to trust You when we are waiting.
Teach our families to believe that Your love brings new life - from the cross to the resurrection, from sorrow to joy.*

Stay with us through Lent and lead us to the joy of Easter. Amen.

Suggestions for Praying the Stations at Home

The Stations of the Cross can be prayed in simple and meaningful ways. There is no perfect way—just begin and let your family grow into the prayer.



Take Turns Leading

Let different family members announce the station, read the story, or lead the prayer. Even young children can say the response.

Move Around the House

Place pictures of the stations around a room or throughout the house. Walk from station to station, just as we do in church.

Pray at Your Own Pace

You do not have to pray all fourteen stations at once. Pray one or two at a time during Lent, or the full set on Good Friday.

Sing a Simple Refrain

Between stations, sing a short line such as *“Jesus, Remember Me,”* *“Were You There,”* or another familiar Lenten song.

Allow Silence and Conversation

Pause briefly after each station. Let children share a thought or ask a question. Silence is part of prayer.

Remember: Lent leads to Easter. The cross leads to resurrection. God’s love always brings new life.



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