

Stations of the Cross 2021

by Bishop Jonathan Goodall

On the evening of Easter Day, on the road to Emmaus, the two disciples asked Jesus if He was the only person in Jerusalem who didn't seem to know about the troubling events leading up to Jesus's crucifixion, and the even more alarming reports of His resurrection (Lk 24.32). Jesus turned their question back on them: 'How foolish you are; how slow to believe all that the prophets declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things? And beginning with Moses and the prophets, He interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.'

On their way to Emmaus Jesus opened for them the *meaning* of the way of the cross, the *via crucis*. It was a personal testimony from Jesus as to how the Messiah had fulfilled the words of the prophets before him. No wonder their hearts burned within them as they listened. God wants to speak to *us* too; He longs for our hearts to burn within us also, as we hear and contemplate the words, and actions, and sufferings of Jesus, and His Passover to glory.

Each of these stations is laid out in a traditional format. With each station this is the pattern:

- Open your heart to the Lord – *invocatio*
- Read the Scripture – *lectio*
- Search the Scripture by meditating – *meditatio*
- Pray to the Lord who has spoken to you – *oratio*
- Contemplate – *contemplatio*
- Store up the word in your heart

This devotion is especially suitable to be prayed throughout Good Friday. The images are the Eric Gill's original sketches for the sequence of bas reliefs now in Westminster Cathedral: www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/tour_stations.php.

Several stations could be taken at a sequence, or one at once. You may want to have a cross or an icon of the crucifixion and near it a lighted candle; alternatively you might find a sequence of images on the internet. You do not need a copy of the Bible: all scripture is provided here.

This year, of course, like last year, it will be impossible to gather around the Stations that grace the walls of so many churches around the world. But nothing prevents us from following it at home, alone or with others in your household.

You may be free of the virus, staying as safe as possible at home; you may be a health care worker or other key worker risking your life for the common good; you may be self-isolating or shielding; or like so many around the world you may have COVID-19 or some other troubling illness.

The way of the cross is the way that the whole of humanity travels together this Good Friday, and I pray that this mediation may help you walk the *via crucis* in your own life, in fellowship with Jesus Christ, and that in His company you may grow in faith and courage.

+ Jonathan Goodall
Bishop of Ebbsfleet



Introduction

from the Gospel according to St John 13.1

“Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

The painful story of Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion can be for each of us a school of life. We too must walk the ‘via crucis’ – in His company, as He is the great teacher of life – if we want to be fully human, if we want to experience and give witness to life and salvation. May Jesus Christ, teach us *from* His cross, and *by* His cross, to know who God is. May He teach us to know who man is; and teach us to know who we are.

A year into the pandemic, let us not cease to pray for all those who suffer the consequences in any way, that God our Father may grant health, strength, comfort to those who are affected, and salvation to all who have died.

ALMIGHTY EVER-LIVING GOD, only support of our human weakness, look with compassion upon the sorrowful condition of Your children who suffer because of this pandemic; relieve the pain of the sick, give strength to those who care for them, welcome into Your peace those who have died and, throughout this time of tribulation, grant that we may all find comfort in Your merciful love. Through Christ our Lord.