

The Scriptural Way of the Cross

Four Versions — By each of the Four Evangelists

By John Donald O'Shea



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John Donald O'Shea

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Preface

There are already a great many published versions of the *Stations of the Cross*. So, why have I undertaken to write a new version?

Through two millennia it has been the story of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, that has set Jesus apart from all other men and women who have dedicated their lives to showing their fellow men the way to God. St. Peter and St. Paul suffered and died for Christ's gospel, but only Christ himself has been witnessed as having been raised from the dead.

I first became acquainted with the *Stations of the Cross* when I was a boy in the late 1940s. I still have my little red book of *Stations of the Cross for Children*, printed by the Paulist Press.

Throughout my life, the *Stations of the Cross* have generally been utilized as a Lenten devotion. I write my version of the Stations, to create a version for *daily meditation*. I do so, to provide four versions of the stations — each one based on one of the four separate Gospel accounts — to keep the devotion fresh.

The reason for creating my version of the Stations, therefore, is to move the *Stations of the Cross* from being a once-a-week Lenten devotion into the realm of a year-around daily devotion.

And there was another reason. In my little red book, there were fourteen stations. As I grew older, I slowly came to realize that six of them had little or no basis in any of the four Gospels. And I wasn't the only one who noticed.

On Good Friday 1991, Pope John Paul II introduced the *Scriptural Way of the Cross* to better align the devotion with the gospel accounts of Christ's passion and death. Then, 16 years later, in 2007, Pope Benedict XVI approved this list of stations for both meditation and public celebration.

The *Scriptural Way of the Cross* [the new version of the stations], as approved by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, are as follows:

1. Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane;
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested;
3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin;

4. Jesus is denied by Peter three times;
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate;
6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns;
7. Jesus takes up his Cross;
8. Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene to carry his Cross;
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem;
10. Jesus is crucified;
11. Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief;
12. Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other;
13. Jesus dies on the Cross; and
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

I have used that list in creating my versions of the *Scriptural Way of the Cross*.

What I have done, that is unique, was to create *four* separate versions of the Stations of the Cross:

My first version can fairly be called the *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. Matthew*. To the extent that Matthew has provided a gospel passage for a station, Matthew's passage is used. If Matthew has written nothing concerning a particular station, the gospel account or passage of another of the evangelists is used.

My second version can fairly be called the *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. Mark*. To the extent that Mark has provided a gospel passage for a station, Mark's passage is used. If Mark has written nothing concerning a particular station, the gospel account or passage of another of the evangelists is used.

My third version can fairly be called the *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. Luke*. To the extent that Luke has provided a gospel passage for a station, Luke's passage is used. If Luke has written nothing concerning a particular station, the gospel account or passage of another of the evangelists is used.

My fourth version can fairly be called the *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. John*. To the extent that John has provided a passage for a station, John's passage is used. If John has written nothing concerning a particular station, the gospel account or passage of another of the evangelists is used.

The bottom line is this: Where an evangelist says nothing about one of the new stations, I have taken the "artistic liberty" of interpolating the account of another evangelist to fill the void.

For each station, besides a passage from one of the four Gospels, I have also fashioned a “Meditation,” and a “Chant.”

The “Meditations” are entirely the results of my own efforts. There is one “Meditation” for each of the fourteen Stations. The fourteen “Meditations” that appear in my *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. Matthew*, also appear, without change, in my *Scriptural Stations of the Cross according to St. Mark*, *St. Luke* and *St. John*.

Similarly, the “Chants” I have supplied are the same in all four versions of my *Scriptural Stations of the Cross*. For example, the Chants that appear in Matthew’s version, are the same as those that appear in Mark’s version, and so on. There are all sung to the music of the hymn — *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. (12th Century. Attributed to Jacopone da Toda 14th C.)

You will note that I have supplied *alternative* versions of the Chants after each station.

The *first version* is based on the lyrics created during the 19th century by Edward Caswall (1814 – 1878), which are in the public domain. Some of his verses I have used without change; others, I have modified, in an effort to tie them more closely to the language of the scriptures, and to eliminate archaic language. In my *first version* of my chants, I have tried to retain the “feeling” and “spirit” of Father Caswall’s lyrics. The Caswall lyrics may be fairly said to be “Mary-centric” — expressing the pain and feelings of Christ’s mother, as she follows her son to his crucifixion, and witnesses his suffering.

The *second version* of the lyrics — the alternative version — is entirely mine. My version may be said to be “scriptural-centric.” I created my *second version* from the language of the gospels.

The traditional music for the *Stabat Mater* hymn is set out on the last page hereof.

It is in Christ’s passion, death and resurrection that we find the special uniqueness of our Christian faith. We are told that St. Francis of Assisi, who is said to be the first person to receive the stigmata, held the passion of Christ in special veneration. Perhaps we should, too.

Because I am attempting to create a daily devotion, I have tried to keep each Station brief.

The Scriptural Way of the Cross

Based on Matthew's Gospel

(with a hand from Luke and John)

By John Donald O'Shea



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First Station

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou has redeemed the world.

Matthew 26: 36 – 46

Then Jesus went with them to a garden, which is called Gethsemani. And he said to his disciples, “Sit down here, while I go there and pray.”

And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and saddened.

Then he said to them: “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Stay here and keep vigil with me.”

And continuing on a little further, he fell prostrate on his face, praying and saying: “My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass away from me. Yet truly, let it not be as I will, but as you will.”

And he approached his disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter: “So, were you not able to keep vigil with me for one hour?”

Be vigilant and pray, so that you may not enter into temptation. Indeed, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again, a second time, he went and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away, unless I drink it, let your will be done.”

And again, he went and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

And leaving them behind, again he went and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he approached his disciples and said to them: “Sleep now and rest. Behold, the hour has drawn near, and the Son of man will be delivered into the hands of sinners.

Rise up; let us go. Behold, he who will betray me draws near.”

Meditation:

When Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow and apprehension, He fell on his knees, and turned to his Father in prayer. Should we not do the same — while always remembering that it’s God’s will, and not ours, that must be done?

But not all prayers are done on the knees. As we live our lives, all our actions can be our prayers.

Jesus spent his entire public life, teaching us the way to live lives pleasing to His Father in Heaven.

Before entering into his passion, Jesus conformed His will to his Father’s, by consenting to die on the Cross to save us from our sins. Dying on the Cross was His great sacrificial prayer for which He became man.

When our actions flow from love of God, and love of our neighbors, do not our lives become living prayers? Was not Jesus’ entire life a continuous prayer?

Chant:

At the cross her station keeping,
 Stood our Savior’s mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.

— Or —

Agony and death await me.
 Father, let this cup pass by me.
But your will, not mine, be done.

Second Station

Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou has redeemed the world.

Matthew 26: 47 – 56

While he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, sent from the leaders of the priests and the elders of the people.

And he who betrayed him gave them a sign, saying: “Whomever I will kiss, it is he. Take hold of him.”

And quickly drawing close to Jesus, he said, “Hail, Master.” And he kissed him.

And Jesus said to him, “Friend, for what purpose have you come?” Then they approached, and they put their hands on Jesus, and they held him.

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus, extending his hand, drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Then Jesus said to him: “Put your sword back in its place. For all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.

Or do you think that I cannot ask my Father, so that he would give me, even now, more than twelve legions of Angels?

How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must be so?”

In that same hour, Jesus said to the crowds: “You went out, as if to a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me. Yet I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not take hold of me.

But all this has happened so that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples fled, abandoning him.

Meditation:

In His “Bread of Life Discourse,” Jesus promised all who were listening, “I will not reject anyone who comes to me.”

Judas was Jesus’ friend and apostle. He was trusted by Jesus and the other apostles to hold the common purse. Judas nevertheless betrayed Jesus. But on the Cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.”

In his great love for us, and in his mercy, Jesus asked his Father to forgive our sins. Even his betrayer was one of “us.” All Judas had to do was to ask Jesus’ forgiveness. “I will not reject anyone who comes to me.”

Chant:

Is there one who would not weep,
 Whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold.

— Or —

Judas, planning to betray Him,
 Said, “The man I kiss, arrest Him!”
Thus, the scriptures were fulfilled.

Third Station

Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou has redeemed the world.

Matthew 26: 57 – 66

But those who were holding Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had joined together.

Then Peter followed him from a distance, as far as the court of the high priest. And going inside, he sat down with the servants, so that he might see the end.

Then the leaders of the priests and the entire council sought false testimony against Jesus, so that they might deliver him to death.

And they did not find any, even though many false witnesses had come forward. Then, at the very end, two false witnesses came forward, and they said, “This man said: ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and, after three days, to rebuild it.’”

And the high priest, rising up, said to him, “Have you nothing to respond to what these ones testify against you?”

But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, “I bind you by an oath to the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus said to him: “You have said it. Yet truly I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his garments, saying: “He has blasphemed. Why do we still need witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.

How does it seem to you?” So, they responded by saying, “He is guilty unto death.”

Meditation:

Caiaphas and the other Jewish leaders had been taught from the time when they were children that there was but one God, and that “him alone shall you worship.” When Jesus answered, “I am,” to Caiaphas’ question, “whether he was the Messiah and the son of the Blessed One,” Christ seemed, to be saying he was the Son of the Blessed One, and thereby equating himself with the one God of the Jewish people, in violation of the commandment. For this, the assembled leaders sought Christ’s death. On his Cross, Jesus, in his love, nevertheless, forgave them. Jesus understood that even in our ignorance, that we can hurt our neighbor.

Chant:

Let me share with you his pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
For my sins, condemned to die.

— Or —

On your oath, I must require,
Tell us if you’re the Messiah.
It is you, who say I am.

End of Free Preview