

The background of the entire page is a painting. The upper portion shows a bright, glowing sun in a deep blue sky, with some wispy clouds. Below the sky is a horizon line, and the foreground is a dark, reddish-brown landscape. In the lower center of the foreground, there is a body lying on the ground, possibly a person, with their face visible and appearing pale or yellowed. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber.

Stations of the Cross

UoN Catholic Chaplaincy

**Walking with Christ on the
Way of the Cross, in the
time of the COVID-19
Pandemic**



Stations of the Cross

The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Die

Fr Jonathan: The First Station, Jesus is Condemned to Die. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus was captured at night, taken away by soldiers, stripped of His garments, interrogated, tortured, crowned with sharp thorns and now handed over to be condemned to death by Pontius Pilate.

(moment of silent prayer)

Today, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grip the world, many of us may feel condemned. Condemned to fear and uncertainty, condemned to illness and poor health, condemned to isolation and being apart from loved ones. Perhaps we have friends, family members, or colleagues who have known first hand, the pain and torture of this virus that silently condemns. As we journey with Christ on His way to Calvary, let us walk in prayer and solidarity with those who's journeys are yet to unfold. Those condemned through illness, war, or poverty, to walk a pathway that they have not chosen for themselves.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, As the Roman Soldiers failed to recognise You in Your only Son, we pray that we may always seek the face of Christ in the suffering, the lonely, the isolated, and those who are condemned through no fault of their own to suffer pain and anguish within their lives at this present time.

Glory be....



Stations of the Cross

The Second Station: Jesus takes up His cross

Fr Jonathan: The Second Station, Jesus takes up His Cross. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus was led away, shouldering the weight of the cross by Himself. Subjected to the mockery and threats of the Roman guards and Pharisees, He began the long walk towards Calvary. A cross is not just a piece of wood, it is everything that makes life difficult. Jesus carried His cross as he carries now the crosses of our own lives too, without complaint. Through His death and resurrection, He has transformed the cross from an instrument of torture and symbol of condemnation, into one of liberation and new found hope. In Jesus Christ, all our lives, all that we are and all that we do, find their true meaning.

(moment of silent prayer)

Today, there are burdens which we all carry. Some are very obvious and others we take great care to hide. As we look around us at our world gripped by the pandemic, we see clearly the burdens of others, the pain and sickness, the sense of loneliness, fear and isolation of so many people who are suffering in the world. At a time when we are all encouraged to be apart it can often feel as though we too bare all our pains and struggles, all the many crosses of our lives, on our own. The Second Station reminds though that, just as Christ bore the heavy burden of the cross, so too He invites each of us to hand over our own crosses to Him.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, as your Son took up His cross to journey towards Calvary, help us to bare all that we must carry in life. May Jesus be our constant companion and our support at this time.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

Fr Jonathan: The Third Station, Jesus falls for the first time. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: As Jesus falls under the weight of the cross, He shows us that being heroic does not mean remaining on one's feet at all costs. To be heroic means to get up again after falling and continue on our path in life. The crowds look on at Jesus with disdain at the man they have condemned to death, unaware that He truly is the Son of God.

(moment of silent prayer)

In life, we can often hide amongst the crowd, failing to love and support those who seem different from ourselves, or whose viewpoints or ideals do not reflect our own. The coronavirus shows no prejudice. It cares not if we are old or young, rich or poor. It does not recognise our difference of politics, nor care about our sexuality or ethnicity. The coronavirus is the silent and insidious visitor in our midst, reeking torment, havoc and pain to all of our lives and to the life blood of our communities. Yet this time of pandemic has shown us too that we all need each other, that we are all joined together in one common humanity. At this station we must ask ourselves will we remain hidden in the crowd, our silence condemning others who may be different from ourselves? or are we prepared to stand out from the crowd and offer the loving hand of friendship and support to those whose need is far greater than our own, to truly see the person of Christ in them?

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, your Son fell under the weight of the cross, the crowd failed to support him in His hour of need. Help us never to condemn others by our silence or indifference, may our lives always reflect the love we find in you.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Fr Jonathan: The Fourth Station, Jesus meets His Mother. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus meets His Mother's gaze and Mother and Son look lovingly into the eyes of each other. Surely words cannot express the pain they both must feel. Mary sees her Son, the child she carried in her womb, taunted and humiliated, tortured and bruised. Jesus looks towards His Mother in his pain, he sees the anguish in her heart, He knows her deep pain for him.

(moment of silent prayer)

At this station we remember that Jesus knew that His death would mean a letting go of the earthly, loving, relationship, between a mother and her child. As the pandemic has continued over so many months, so too have the strains and worries it puts upon family life. Single parents meeting the needs of their children; Children living in abusive homes; Families struggling financially to eat and stay warm; Schools desperately trying to keep young minds active in education. We can often take the love, safety and support of family and friends for granted. Perhaps it goes unnoticed until the time comes when it is gone. Just as Mary gazed, in heartfelt pain towards her Son, so let us remember that we are the brothers and sisters of Christ, we are the children of God who remain constantly in Mary's loving care and are held now in her protective gaze of love.

Fr Jonathan: When Jesus met the gaze of Mary his mother, He saw as he looked into her eyes the deep love, sorrow and pain of a mother for her suffering son. Mary looks towards us and all who suffer in our world with that same gaze of love. May Our Lady's prayers continue to support us and all who live in fear and anguish at this time. May Mary enfold us in her love, and with the maternal care she showed to Christ her beloved son, may she continue to support us by her prayers at this time.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus

Fr Jonathan: The Fifth Station, Simon helps Jesus. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: As Jesus struggles under the unbearable weight of the Cross, Simon of Cyrene, a stranger to the city, is told to help him by the surrounding guards. Pulled from the crowd, Simon lends his shoulders to those of Christ's. He helps the Son of Man to walk painfully towards His death, carrying with him the cross on which Christ will be left to hang, and to die, in agony and pain.

(moment of silent prayer)

At this time of the pandemic, we are reminded in the symbolic care of Simon of Cyrene for Our Lord, of the acts of loving kindness and service being offered by so many people at this time. The countless members of our NHS; its doctors and nurses, cleaners and maintenance staff, cooks and delivery drivers, pharmacists and students training for the profession. We see this in the selfless love, of the care workers and those who look after the elderly and most vulnerable. We see the Simons of today in all our Key Workers; those who put food on the shelves, teach our children, drive our public transport and in countless ways help to keep our country running during this time of pandemic. Just as Jesus was willing to accept the help of Simon, so we too must understand that there are times in all of our lives when we need to accept the help of others, let us be grateful when such help is given.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, when Our Lord struggled under the burden of the weight of the cross, Simon of Cyrene came to his support. Help us to reach out to one another when we need support within our lives, and help us to be like Simon of Cyrene, the strong hands of care and support to all who are in need within our world.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Fr Jonathan: The Sixth Station, Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Moved by the sight of Jesus' suffering and pain, Veronica courageously stepped away from the crowd to wipe the blood, sweat and tears from Christ's face. As she pulled the towel back close to her, she was rewarded with the imprint of his sacred face upon the towel she held. A face of suffering, a face of pain, and of disfigurement. It is this image of Himself that Christ chooses to leave for us. An image of his own suffering that he endured lovingly for each of us. A love which brings us freedom and new life in him.

(moment of silent prayer)

On the coat of arms above our Bishops *cathedra*, in the Cathedral of St. Barnabas, in Nottingham, we see his motto: "Seek the face of Christ". Just as Veronica was willing to step out from the crowd and wash the face of Christ, so we too must be prepared to do the same for others in their need. Today, the visible face of Christ, His Church, has a mission of mercy and love to proclaim to the world. We are all called to the seek the face of Christ in one another and especially those who in greatest need of Gods love: the elderly, the poor, the lonely, the marginalised, the homeless and the refugees. May Veronica be our inspiration. May our lives reflect her loving care and gentle kindness.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, Just as Veronica washed the face of Christ, when He was in anguish and deep pain, so may we too always help and reach out with loving care support to those who needs are greater than our own. Help us to seek the face of Christ in them, and in one another.

Glory be....



Stations of the Cross

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Fr Jonathan: The Seventh Station, Jesus falls for the second time. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Stretched to breaking point by His awful scourging, bowed under the weight of the cross, worn out by the abandonment of His friends, Jesus falls for a second time.

(moment of silent prayer)

Just as soon as we pick ourselves up to carry on our journey, we can find ourselves back at breaking point and falling down once more. The crosses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are not limited just to our physical health but have widespread impact in other areas of our lives as well. All around us are those who suffer the silent strain of mental health, financial worries, redundancy, isolation, loss of loved ones, eviction from homes and uncertainties for the future. All too soon we too can buckle under the pressures of our present life, in ways that are not obvious to those around us. In Christ we see the example of courage and great fortitude. His example helps us to continue sometimes upon a path in life that we would rather not tread. In Christ we find the assuredness of hope, when all the signs of hope seem dim within our hearts and lives.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, when we fall in life and when the cares and worries of our present lives over burden us and make us fearful for the future, help us to put all our hope and trust in the power of your great love.

Glory Be...



Stations of the Cross

The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Fr Jonathan: The Eighth Station, Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: The women of Jerusalem wept when they saw how Jesus suffered and He recognised their distress. For the first time, He broke His silence saying: 'Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children.'

(moment of silent prayer)

The women of Jerusalem cried at the sight of Jesus in pain. Even in the midst of fear and anguish, the selfless love of Christ urged them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and for their children. Who are the women of Jerusalem today? Do we weep with them and for the children of God? Let us weep for those who are victimised and abused. Let us weep for all who suffer the tyranny of body image, self-loathing and hatred. We weep for those who starve in the shadow of abundance; for all men and women whose bodies grow tired of fighting the corona virus. As Christ turned to the women of Jerusalem with true generosity of heart, let us follow His example of selflessness in a world that stands weeping for His love.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, as Our Lord recognised the distress in the weeping women of Jerusalem, help us to see with loving eyes the pain and sorrow in the lives of those around us. May we reach out to one another with kindness and compassion, help us to become your loving hands at work within our world today.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls for a Third Time

Fr Jonathan: The Ninth Station, Jesus falls for a third time. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Broken and exhausted, physically and emotionally, Jesus falls for a third time. Lying on the ground He must decide – to get up and continue once more, or to stop and give up His struggle? Again, Christ rises to His feet. What strength and determination it must have taken to continue on His journey towards his crucifixion? A journey that would lead to His death. Knowing what was to come, Jesus bore the weight of the cross once more and carried on.

(
moment of silent prayer)

Sometimes it can feel as though our burdens and crosses will never end. Just as things begin to seem brighter, suddenly out of nowhere, we find ourselves beset with greater worries and concerns. Over the course of this year, the world has been confronted with a virus like no other. Seemingly beyond our control, we were urged to stay apart, keep indoors, protect one another, and become accustomed to a new way of living. In the midst of our distress and anxiety however, there are those who inspire us to take courage and to seek a new found hope. Scientists that develop vaccines, care givers who tend to the needy, food banks that nourish the starving and those many people who offer acts of selfless love to those who are shielding or alone. Let us, like Christ, find within ourselves the strength to carry on in the face of affliction; confident in the loving support of Christ who reaches out to help us through all our anguish and pain.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, your Son fell for the third time bowed down by the heavy burden of the cross. When we are suffering physically or mentally help us to seek the love, support and friendship of others, help us to reach out to you, be present with us, and give us the courage to face the future, whatever that future may hold.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing

Fr Jonathan: The Tenth Station, Jesus is stripped of His clothing. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Broken and bruised along His journey to Calvary, Jesus' humiliation continues as His clothes are ripped from off Him. As His garments are stripped away, so too is His dignity –naked before a jeering crowd of onlookers. The very men and women, your Son came to save from their sins. In His nakedness, Christ continues to surrender everything, in order to ransom all.

(moment of silent prayer)

Dignity costs nothing and yet it is a precious commodity. For many however, it is non-existent. As we turn on our televisions, laptops and phones to search the latest developments in the fight against the coronavirus, how often do we search for the dignity of care. As we see reports of hospital wards and care homes, do we see the dignified care of those who choose to serve others as their profession? The nursing home staff who provide the most basic needs of food, personal care and sanitation. The caregivers who provide for the paralysed and disabled. The funeral directors who strive to maintain the sanctity and dignity of the body after death. Like Christ, do we stand with those who are stripped of a all dignity in life? Do we sometimes even overlook our own worth and dignity in the eyes of God?

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, your Son was stripped of all his outward vesture, laid bare before a mocking and angry crowd and yet he turned with love even to those who gave no love or care to him. Help us to see the goodness in one another and reveal your love in all we seek to be and do in life.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Fr Jonathan: The Eleventh Station, Jesus is nailed to the cross. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Huge iron nails are hammered through Christ's wrists and through His ankles. Jesus, nailed to the very cross He was made to carry through the city, is unable to move. The hands that wiped blindness from the eyes of those who could not see; the hands that opened the seal of deafness, cured the leper and blessed the children. The carpenter's hands joined to the wood once more.

(moment of silent prayer)

As Christ is nailed to the cross, He hangs there for all the world to see. Stripped, His body battered bruised and broken, He is left in a state of vulnerability. Over the course of the pandemic, we have learned to put the vulnerable before ourselves. What does it mean to be vulnerable? It is to be without strength and open to attack. It is to be powerless and unable to seek shelter. To be vulnerable is to be afraid, and so often those in a vulnerable position find themselves unable to rise up from chains of life which hold them. Hauled up high upon the cross Jesus continues to be crucified in those who suffer today. Crucified in those who are abused. Crucified in those who are marginalised. Crucified in the exploitation of our planet and its resources. As the world continues to hang in its own position of vulnerability, we pray for God's grace and strength to continue; as we place all our hope and trust in him.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, when we are weak, so we are strong, in our powerlessness, in our weakness and in our vulnerability, lift us up from our anguish and pain. Help us to see that you hold all our futures in the power of your loving hands, reach out to us and gently bare us forward, and give us new hope and trust in you alone.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Fr Jonathan: The Twelfth Station, Jesus dies on the cross. We adore you O Christ and we praise you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: As the life of Jesus ebbs away, His words are not of condemnation or pity for Himself, but of forgiveness; 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. In the midst of His anguish and suffering Jesus calls upon His Father to forgive those who are putting Him to death. This is the real challenge of the cross; forgiveness even of those who hurt us the most.

(moment of silent prayer)

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul tells us that 'If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him'. Throughout the pandemic, many millions of people have died at home and abroad, this has been distressing and hard for us to comprehend. Behind the growing numbers of dead are hidden the real lives of individuals, precious and loved in the eyes of God. Behind the numbers of the dead, are mothers and fathers, children and siblings, grandparents, family members, friends and loved ones. To Christ, we are not a number. We are a life worth dying for. In His final breath He commended His Spirit into the hands of His Father. Right until the end Christ continued to give – He gave His life for us upon a cross, He gave his life in love for each and every one of us, and His love for us has no end.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, help us to know that we are all precious in your eyes. May your love become alive and active in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Be present with the dying, and all who mourn the loss of a loved one. Show your loving mercy to all those who have died, particularly those who have died as a result of this pandemic. Welcome them now into the Kingdom of everlasting mercy and peace.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Fr Jonathan: The Thirteenth Station, Jesus is taken down from the cross. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Waiting at the foot of the cross, Mary takes into her arms the broken body of her Son. The Son who was once worshiped by shepherds and kings. The Son who performed miracles and preached to the crowds that gathered around him. Her Son whom in the end the world rejected.

(moment of silent prayer)

Just hours before His crucifixion, Jesus sat with His disciples to celebrate the Passover Feast. Over the bread He proclaimed: 'This is my body, broken for you' and over the wine, 'This is my blood poured out for you'. To His friends sitting in the upstairs room, these words must have been met with confusion. To Christ however, they were the institution of His greatest gift, the gift of the Holy Eucharist. Over the course of His ministry, Christ had preached; 'Greater Love has no one than this; to lay down one's life for one's friends' – As His Mother cradled her broken Son, Jesus had done just that. Today, around the country and the world, countless people remain on the front line of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. Like Christ, they too are prepared to give everything they have in the cause of love for their neighbour. Let us remember in prayer today, all those who are willing to lay down their life for the sake of others.

Fr Jonathan: Almighty Father, help us to love our neighbour as ourself, help us to give our lives in the service of you and of each other. Give us courage in our weakness and strength when we are downcast. May we do all in the power of your love and for the good of all humanity.

Glory be...



Stations of the Cross

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Fr Jonathan: The Fourteenth Station, Jesus is laid in the tomb. We adore you O Christ and we praise you; because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader: The night Christ's body lay in the dark earth of the tomb, all those who had loved Him must have felt exhausted and alone. There must have seemed no longer a sense of purpose to anything in their lives. As the stone was put in place, and the tomb was tightly sealed, a deafening silence, and an aching loneliness was felt by all who had followed Christ during his life on earth.

(moment of silent prayer)

Over the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many have felt a sense of loneliness and isolation like those who watched around Christ's tomb. Trapped at home, alone and separated from others, the vulnerable face a deafening silence too. The followers of Jesus would mourn at the death of Christ. Today however, there are those who will die with no one left to mourn their life here on earth. At times it may feel as though we are overcome by the darkness of the tomb, the emptiness of our own surroundings. Yet, resting in the sepulchre of the tomb lies the answer to all our grieving and despair. The tomb of Christ is now the tabernacle of God. Out of its depths come a new hope and new joy the Resurrection joy we will experience at Easter. Out of the tomb's darkness will come a great light. As we wait for the end of the pandemic, let us join our hope with the followers of Christ who waited beside his empty tomb, not knowing yet of the joy that would in time fill their hearts.

Fr Jonathan: Lord Jesus, now you are laid in the tomb. May we rest in your love, confident that even when the future seems obscure, we are held in your Father's care. Grant us patient endurance until we hear your final summons to the fullness of new life. Graciously calm our fears, and increase in us new faith, hope and love. Amen

Glory be...

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