

2026



A SCRIPTURAL WAY OF THE CROSS

Eastbourne Men's Way of the Cross

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you of infinite power, glory, and mercy, you sent us your Son so that we might be cleansed of all our sins and live forever in your house. With your grace bless us as we gather in fellowship, so that we may learn from your example and be surefooted on our path to righteousness. Amen.

Men of St Joseph

A Scriptural Journey

Based on those celebrated by Saint John Paul II
&
Inspired by the writings of Saint John Henry Newman

Compiled for the Men of Saint Joseph by Neil Taylor

We are all called to pick up our cross. As Christ said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Those who want to save their life will lose them, and those who lose their life for my sake will find them. What will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?" (Mt. 16:24-26).



During Lent, we take time to reflect on our past and look ahead to the future. As we get ready to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection, prayer and fasting remind us of our deeper calling to follow Christ. Travelling with Christ to the Cross by reading scripture helps us discover what we are truly meant to do in his name.

As Men of St. Joseph, we seek a deeper connection with God during our pilgrimage through Eastbourne and across the South Downs. Our journey takes place at night—a time dedicated to quiet prayer and thoughtful reflection.

The First Station

Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (26:36-41)

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

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

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour?"

Watch and pray that you may not enter temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Reflection

As we stand together at the beginning of our journey, we remember Christ Jesus' journey. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he, too, faced a moment of deep sorrow and uncertainty. Sometimes prayer and love are learned most deeply in those hours when words fail us, and our hearts feel heavy or numb.

Jesus knew that the time of his suffering was near, and so he turned to his Father in prayer. In his anguish, he asked that the cup might pass from him, yet he entrusted himself to the Father. When he returned to his disciples, he found them asleep, overcome with sorrow. Gently, he urged them to remain awake and to pray, so that they would have strength for the trials ahead.

In this moment, we are reminded that even when we feel tired, sorrowful, or unsure, we are not alone. Christ has walked this path before us, and he invites us to stay close to him in prayer and trust.

Let us pray

O Lord, as you prayed in the garden, let your will guide us, may we be strengthened by your love and overcome the tribulations of life. Please help us to follow your path and accept your plan for us. **Amen.**

The Second Station

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark (14:43-46)

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard."

And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him.

And they laid hands on him and seized him.

Reflection

As we face the first trial on this night's journey, we are reminded that Judas was given the freedom to choose his path, just as each of us is given freedom in our own lives. In every moment, we are invited to choose whether we will accept or turn away from the love and grace that Christ offers.

God does not ask of us the sacrifice of our bodies, but the offering of our hearts and our will. What God desires most is that we turn toward him in trust and love.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest disciples. Yet even in that moment, his love for Judas did not cease. He loved him with a divine and faithful love, and the sorrow he felt was not the hurt of personal offence, but the deep sadness of seeing one he loved was to lose his way. Even in betrayal, the heart of Christ remained a heart of mercy and compassion.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as you were rejected by one who was close to you, help us to recognise the false affections of others and let us not be enticed by earthly rewards. **Amen.**

The Third Station

Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin

A reading from the Gospel of Luke 22:66-71

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

Reflection

As the sun rose in the east, Jesus was brought before his accusers. Unable to condemn him for cleansing the temple of corruption or for standing with the poor, they brought false charges against him, claiming he had threatened to destroy the temple. Yet Jesus had spoken only the truth, fulfilling the words of the prophets.

Before those who accused him, Jesus chose silence and self-offering. In this, we see a profound love—one that endures injustice without returning hatred for hatred. He shows us that it is still possible to do what is right, even when we are treated unfairly.

Through his suffering in the face of injustice, we come to understand the mercy of Christ more deeply. In his self-giving love, he offers reconciliation for all sin, even for the ways people wound and treat one another unjustly.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as our protector, be our shield against false accusations. Let your truth and love open the accusers' eyes, so they can speak with truth and honesty. Let us trust in your justice. **Amen.**

The Fourth Station

Peter denies Jesus

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (26:69-75)

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."
But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean."
And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."
And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."
After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you."
Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed.
And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Peter denied Jesus in public. Fear had taken hold of him—fear for his own life and fear at what he had seen done to his Lord. He had watched as Jesus was falsely accused, beaten, and insulted, and in that moment of great pressure, the darkness seemed to close in around him.

After Jesus had been condemned and led away, he caught sight of Peter. In that glance, Peter realised, with deep sorrow, that he had missed the chance to stand in loyalty beside his Master. And just as Jesus had foretold, the cock crowed.

Yet Peter's story does not end in failure. As St Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans, when we fall short, we are not abandoned. If we turn back in repentance, God is always ready to forgive. With the help of the Holy Spirit, our fear and weakness can be transformed into courage, so that we may rise again and continue the work Christ has given us to do.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, be our strength, always stand by us, and let us not be tempted by those who would lead us in the wrong direction. We vow to commit our lives to you; our faith, our hope, and our love are for you.

Amen.

The Fifth Station

Pilate judges Jesus

A reading from the Gospel of Mark 15:1-5,15

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so."

And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you."

But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

As we continue this journey, we begin to glimpse the difficulties that lie ahead. Like each of us, Pilate was a man with both strengths and weaknesses. He held the authority to set Jesus free, yet instead he chose to wash his hands of the matter.

Pressed by the chief priests and fearful of unrest among the crowd, Pilate gave in to their demands. Though he represented the greatest military power of his time, it is striking that the one who appears powerless and vulnerable before him—Jesus—is the one who truly reveals the deeper truth. In that moment, it is Pilate's own choices that are laid bare.

We, too, often face difficult choices in our lives. On this journey, we are invited to keep walking, to face our trials with courage and faith. Pilate chose the easier path, even though it was the wrong one. Christ shows us another way—the way of truth, mercy, and faithfulness, even when the road is hard.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as I carry the wounds of my earthly existence, help me to carry the weight of those times when I have sinned, sins that were mine, but will be forgiven by you. **Amen.**

The Sixth Station

Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

A reading from the Gospel of John (19:1-3)

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.
And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.
They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

Our journey tonight may be physically demanding, but it is only a small reflection of the suffering Jesus endured. Before he began the way to the cross, he was subjected to the brutal punishment of scourging. Such flogging was often so severe that many did not survive it. Its purpose was not only to cause pain, but also to humiliate—to belittle and degrade.

Mocked and beaten by the soldiers, Jesus stood helpless in the eyes of those who oppressed him, treated with cruelty and contempt. Yet even in that moment, his heart remained turned toward mercy. The very people who wounded him were among those he came to save.

Like Jesus, we live in fragile and wounded bodies, in a world where pain and suffering are often close at hand—sometimes unhealed, sometimes unnoticed, sometimes unspoken. In his suffering, Christ enters into the depths of that human pain. Though he is demeaned by his tormentors, he meets cruelty not with hatred, but with a love that refuses to give up on humanity.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as my rock, my creator, let me take refuge with you. My pain is nothing when compared to that which was suffered by you for us. My pain is outweighed by your love for me. I give thanks that you are there in my hour of need. **Amen.**

The Seventh Station

Jesus Bears the Cross

A reading from the Gospel of John (19:6,15-17)

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

Tonight, each of us is given the chance to carry a physical cross for a short time. Yet to take up our cross each day means something deeper—it means gently embracing the struggles and challenges that come as we try to follow Christ.

To walk with Jesus is to trust him with our lives, to place our hopes, our plans, and even our fears into God's loving hands. At times this asks us to let go of our own will and to open our hearts more fully to the will of God.

Each of us will face suffering in different ways. The crosses we carry can sometimes feel heavy and painful. Yet God does not give them to us as punishment, but allows them within the mystery of his love. With his grace, even our suffering can be transformed into something meaningful and life-giving.

When we walk with Christ, our struggles are never empty or wasted. Instead of feeling lost, we discover that our lives have purpose—both in this world and in the hope of the life to come.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, that you took up your cross so we may be saved, help us to gain strength from your teachings so we can pick up our cross daily. As you began your journey with the cross, as you bore your cross, help us to bear ours. **Amen.**

The Eighth Station

Simon the Cyrenian helps Jesus to carry the Cross

A reading from the Gospel of Mark (15:19-21)

And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

Simon's experience reminds us of how we often respond when an unexpected cross enters our lives. Our first reaction may be surprise, reluctance, frustration, or even embarrassment. Simon was an ordinary man, much like any one of us, suddenly drawn into a moment he had not chosen.

Yet in that moment, Simon's actions show us something of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Christ walks the path before us, and we follow in his footsteps, sometimes simply by carrying the cross that lies before us.

Simon was compelled to help carry the cross as Jesus struggled under its weight. In that moment of deep suffering, we glimpse the humility of God—Jesus, the Son of God, accepting help from another. It reminds us that none of us walks the journey of life alone; we all need help at times.

Through Simon of Cyrene, we see the first person to quite literally take up the cross and follow behind Jesus. His story gently invites us to trust God's plan for our lives, even when the path is unexpected, and to walk faithfully beside Christ, step by step.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, when my strength fails and my path is difficult, give me the spirit to overcome my suffering, and let my heart be pierced by the agony of Jesus as he carried his cross. **Amen.**

The Ninth Station

Jesus speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (23:27-31)

And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Jesus continues on the way to the cross, freely accepting the suffering that lies before him. In his death he takes upon himself the burden of humanity's sin, standing in love before the weight of human failure and God's judgment.

Along the road were the women of Jerusalem—faithful and courageous women who wept for him. Jesus turned toward them and spoke to them, recognizing their compassion and their grief. Yet with great tenderness he gently shifted their mourning, inviting them to reflect not only on his suffering, but on the sorrow that would come upon the city.

In his words, we hear both compassion and warning. Jesus sees the suffering that will one day fall upon Jerusalem when the Romans will bring destruction upon the city. Many families, many sons and daughters, would know hardship and loss.

Yet even in this moment, Christ's words are not spoken in anger but in sorrow and love. They are a call to reflection, a call to turn back to God while there is still time, and a reminder that his deepest desire is always to draw people toward mercy, repentance, and life.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, your love is a great thing, as we bemoan our suffering, help us to think of others and turn our works toward them, ultimately bringing us closer to you. **Amen.**

The Tenth Station

Jesus is Crucified

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (23:33-34)

And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
And they cast lots to divide his garments.

The crucifixion stands at the very heart of the Christian faith, and the cross remains the most powerful sign of Jesus' love for the whole world. On the cross, Jesus freely gave himself for us, offering his life in perfect love and reconciliation. Nothing was held back; his love was complete.

Through faith in him, we are offered forgiveness and the promise of new life. Though the charge against Jesus was politically arranged to protect the power of those who feared him, his true mission was far greater. What appeared to be weakness was, in truth, the deepest expression of God's strength and mercy.

Even in his suffering, Jesus is the one who forgives. Even in death, he is the one who will ultimately triumph.

As we draw closer to the end of our journey this evening, we turn our hearts toward Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). In him we find hope, mercy, and the promise that love is stronger than suffering.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, grant us a heart that is open, fully open to your love, so we may never feel abandoned, and let us receive the Holy Spirit, so we will have a place of refuge in your house. **Amen.**

The Eleventh Station

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (23:39-43)

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Known to many as the thief who stole paradise, Saint Dismas reminds us that hope and salvation are never out of reach. Though once lost, he courageously faced his fate, letting go of his past and recognising Jesus as the wellspring of everlasting life. His journey shines as a beacon of encouragement for anyone seeking change, no matter their history.

Let us set aside our pain and embrace the liberating love and compassion of Christ, trusting in His mercy. In the presence of God, two paths emerged: one clung to bitterness, whilst the other rose through acceptance.

Like Dismas, we long for forgiveness, welcoming Jesus as our saviour. His story speaks to all who feel beyond hope, showing that even in our darkest moments, we can turn to God and discover new life and forgiveness.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, should I be so blessed as the good thief, let my sins not keep me from you, let me receive the gift of your salvation with open arms. My trust is in you. **Amen.**

The Twelfth Station

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple John

A reading from the Gospel of John (19:25-27)

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Reflection

As we gather here, united as brothers and sisters, let us imagine ourselves at the foot of the cross, surrounded by the deep love and compassion that Jesus shows even in His final moments. With tenderness, He places the needs of those He loves above His own suffering, entrusting the care of His precious mother Mary to His beloved disciple, John.

In this sacred act, we are warmly welcomed into the family of God. Just as Mary was lovingly placed in John's care, our connections within Christ are gently strengthened, reminding us that, especially in times of great hardship, we are called to set aside our pain and lovingly support one another. As John embraced his new role with humility and devotion, so too are we invited to recognise our calling.

Through this one beautiful gesture, Jesus gives Mary to each of us as our spiritual mother, and we are entrusted with the tender care of the Christian Church, which nurtures us with kindness and compassion.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as we stand at the foot of your cross, we stand in your presence, asking for your forgiveness, gratitude, and grace. Let us take Mother Mary into our home and grant us pardon and salvation in our time of need. **Amen.**

The Thirteenth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (23:44-46)

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this, he breathed his last.

Reflection

As we gaze eastward in this sacred moment of quiet reflection, let us open our hearts to the gentle truth of the word. Jesus' death stands as the ultimate expression of boundless love, a gift freely given for each one of us. His willingness to surrender his own earthly life was a profound act of compassion, embracing our humanity and offering hope where there was none. This crowning event, a radiant turning point in history, paved the path to reconciliation between God and mankind, granting forgiveness and peace to all who seek it. In this single, selfless gesture, He conquered death itself, bringing cosmic triumph over sin. As we near the end of our journey together, may we feel the warmth of His love, leaving behind the shadows and stepping confidently into the light.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as you begin your journey to triumph over evil, let us give praise to your glorious victory, which was accomplished for us. We acknowledge that there was none but you who was good enough to pay for our sins. We will never forget your sacrifice. **Amen.**

The Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (27:57-60)

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

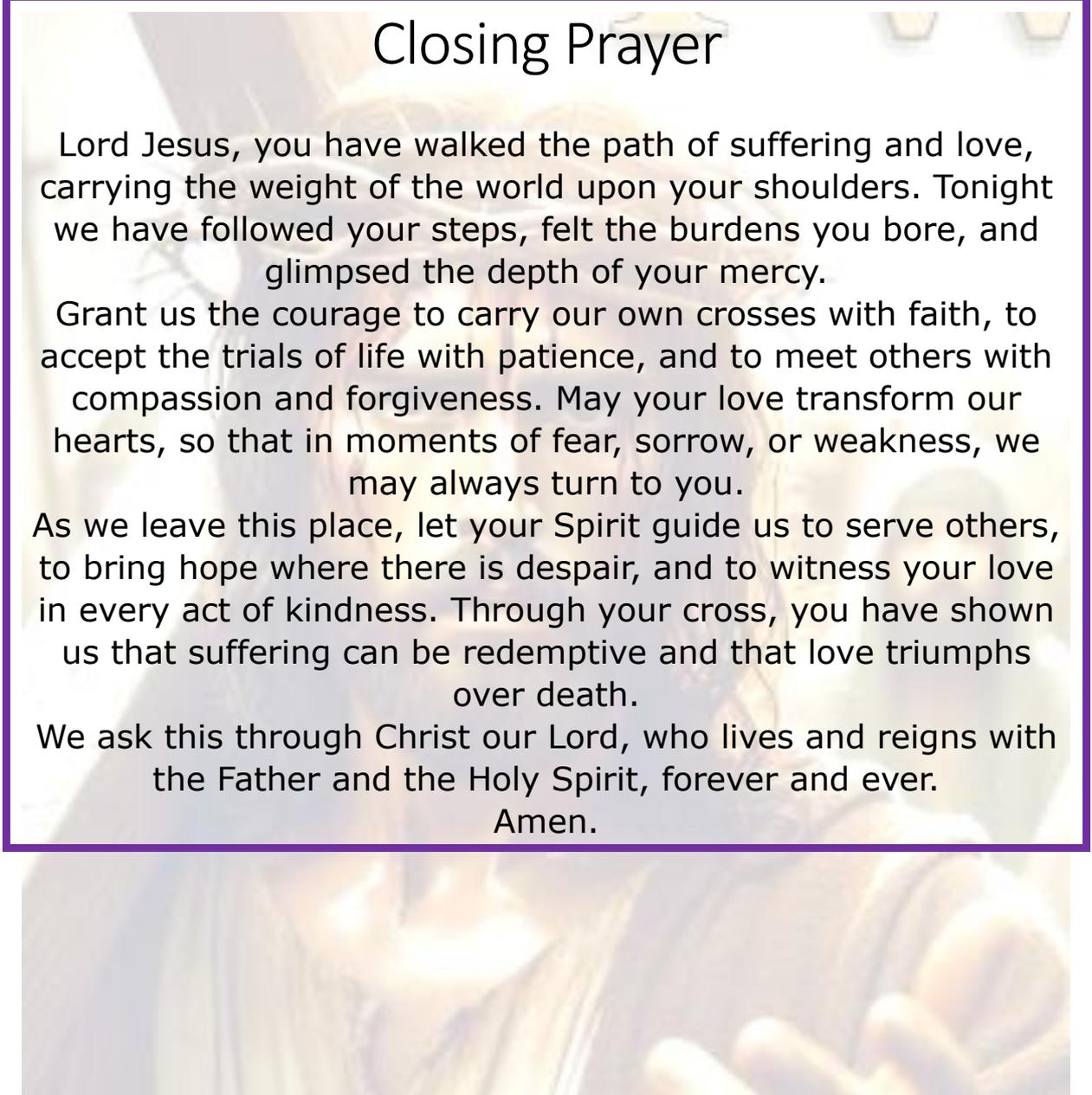
Reflection

Although Pilate had recognised Jesus's innocence, he was the one who surrendered him to his fate. Joseph of Arimathea, now a devoted disciple, approaches with faith and hope, his heart full of compassion. Perhaps Pilate, burdened with regret, wishes simply to be rid of the body, while Joseph receives it as a precious gift, treating it with deep reverence and tenderness. Picture Joseph, gently cradling Jesus's body, laying it lovingly in the tomb he had once prepared for himself. As we rest alongside Jesus in this quiet moment, let us place ourselves in the silence of the tomb—a silence that comforts and soothes, reaching into the depths of our being. As we pause to reflect, the world stands still. Death seems final, and the guard is posted; yet within this stillness, hope flickers, and love remains.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, as you surrender your human form, it is time to rest before your great works continue. Your new covenant is upon us. Help us let go of our dependence on earthly wants; let us trust in you and in what you have created for us.

Amen.



Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have walked the path of suffering and love, carrying the weight of the world upon your shoulders. Tonight we have followed your steps, felt the burdens you bore, and glimpsed the depth of your mercy.

Grant us the courage to carry our own crosses with faith, to accept the trials of life with patience, and to meet others with compassion and forgiveness. May your love transform our hearts, so that in moments of fear, sorrow, or weakness, we may always turn to you.

As we leave this place, let your Spirit guide us to serve others, to bring hope where there is despair, and to witness your love in every act of kindness. Through your cross, you have shown us that suffering can be redemptive and that love triumphs over death.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen.

