

# The United Benefice of Headcorn & the Suttons



The Stations of the cross  
with reflections



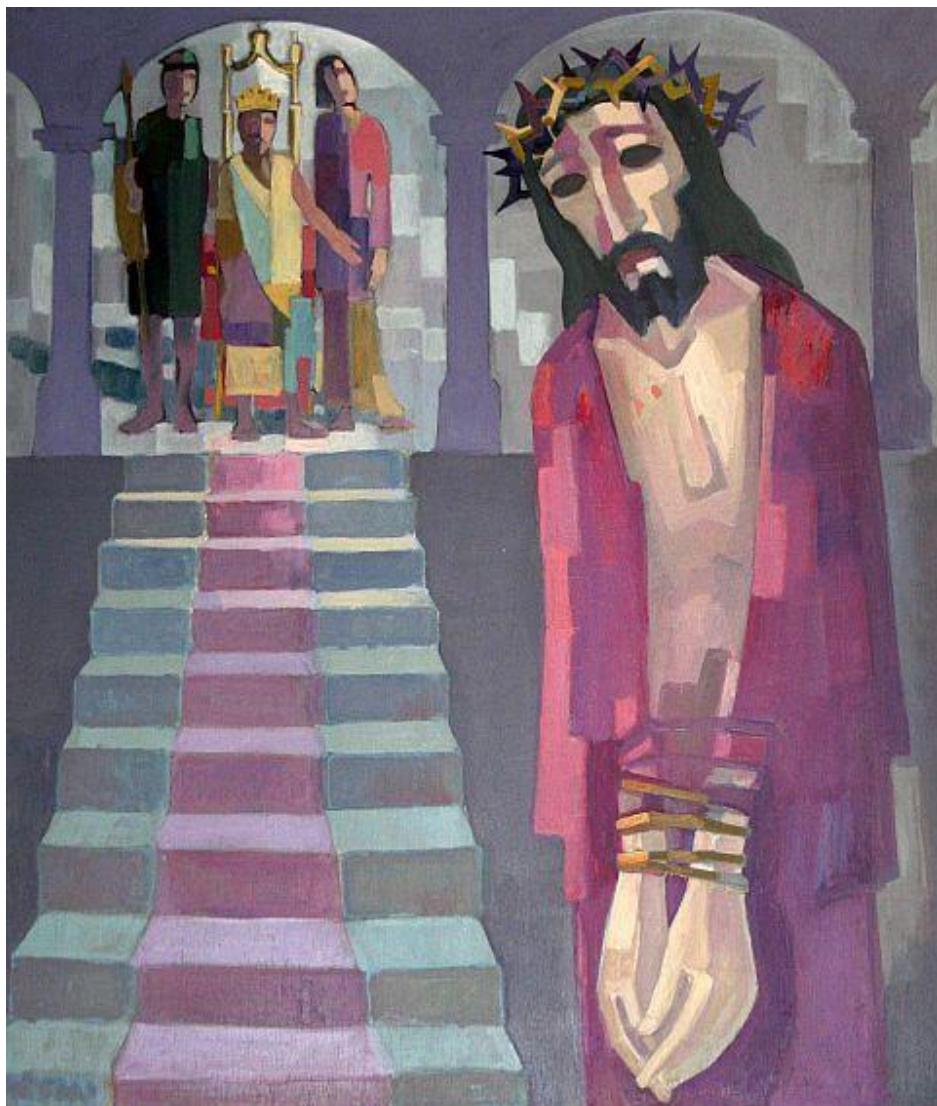
## The stations of the cross

The Stations of the Cross is a very old devotion which encourages Christians to echo the final Journey of Christ, from his condemnation by Pontius Pilate to the moment he is placed in the tomb. Although it is most commonly associated with the Roman Catholic tradition, it is also quite common in Anglican & Lutheran Churches.

Over the centuries the number and format of this devotion has changed, however, it's present format of 14 "stations" or stopping places, has been in existence since the 15th century.

As you journey through Holy Week, we would encourage you to stop and prayerfully enter into these last moments of Jesus' life. Stop at the different "stations" and imagine that you are there alongside him by pondering on the pictures and thinking about the associated reflections.

We hope that you will find these pictures and reflections helpful.



**1.**  
**Jesus before Pilate**

## Jesus is condemned to die

*Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth, by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.*

View the scene,  
try to be moved by both outrage and gratitude.  
Look at Jesus.  
His face.  
The crown of thorns.  
The blood.

His clothes stuck to the wounds on his back.  
Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair.  
Jesus' hands are tied behind his back.

This is for you.  
That you might be free.  
That you might have eternal life.



**2.**

**Jesus carries the cross**

## Jesus carries his Cross.

*Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. It represents the weight of all our crosses. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.*

contemplate the wood of that cross.

Imagine how heavy it is.

Reflect upon all it means that Jesus is carrying it.

Look into his eyes.

It's all there.

This is for you.

Place yourself with him in this journey.

In its anguish.

In his freedom and surrender.

In the love that must fill his heart.

With sorrow and gratitude,  
continue the journey.

Moved by the power of his love,  
be drawn to him.



**3**

**Jesus falls for the first time**



## **Jesus falls the first time.**

*The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life of so many on this earth! He lays on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue. He is pulled up and made to continue.*

Stare at the weakness in his eyes.  
Look at his whole body and see the exhaustion.  
Behold him there on the ground,  
being roughly pulled up,  
Know forever how profoundly  
he understands your fatigue and your defeats.

This is for you.  
Watch him stand again and gain an inner strength,  
Accept his love  
and express your thanks



**4.**  
**Jesus meets his mother**

## Jesus meets his mother.

*Jesus' path takes him to a powerful source of his strength to continue. All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Now they look into each other's eyes. How pierced-through her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her tears! Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God bind them together.*

Watch them in this place along the way,  
contemplate the mystery of love's power to give strength.  
She knows the sorrow in every mother's heart,  
who has lost a child to tragedy or violence.  
Look at the two of them very carefully,  
and long for such love and such peace.

This is for you.  
Such incredible freedom.  
The availability of a servant.  
Try to find the words to express what is in your heart.



**5**

**Jesus is helped by  
Simon of Cyrene**

## **Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.**

*Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying this burden on his own.*

Look into his face and contemplate his struggle.

His weariness and fragility.

His powerlessness .

See how he looks at Simon,  
with utmost humility and gratitude.

This is for you.

So feel anguish and gratitude.

Express your thanks that he can continue this journey.

That he has help.

That he knows your inability to carry my burden alone.



**6.  
Veronica wipes the  
Face of Jesus**

## **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

*Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. His face shows the signs of his solidarity with all who have ever suffered injustice and vile, abusive treatment. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face - his gift to her. And, for us to contemplate forever.*

What does the face of Jesus hold for you?  
What do you see, as you look deeply into his face?  
Can you try to comfort the agony and pain?  
Can you embrace him, with his face so covered with his  
passion?

The veil you behold is a true icon of his gift of himself.  
This is for you.  
In wonder and awe,  
behold his face now wiped clean,  
and see the depth of his suffering in solidarity with all flesh.



**7**

**Jesus falls for the second time**

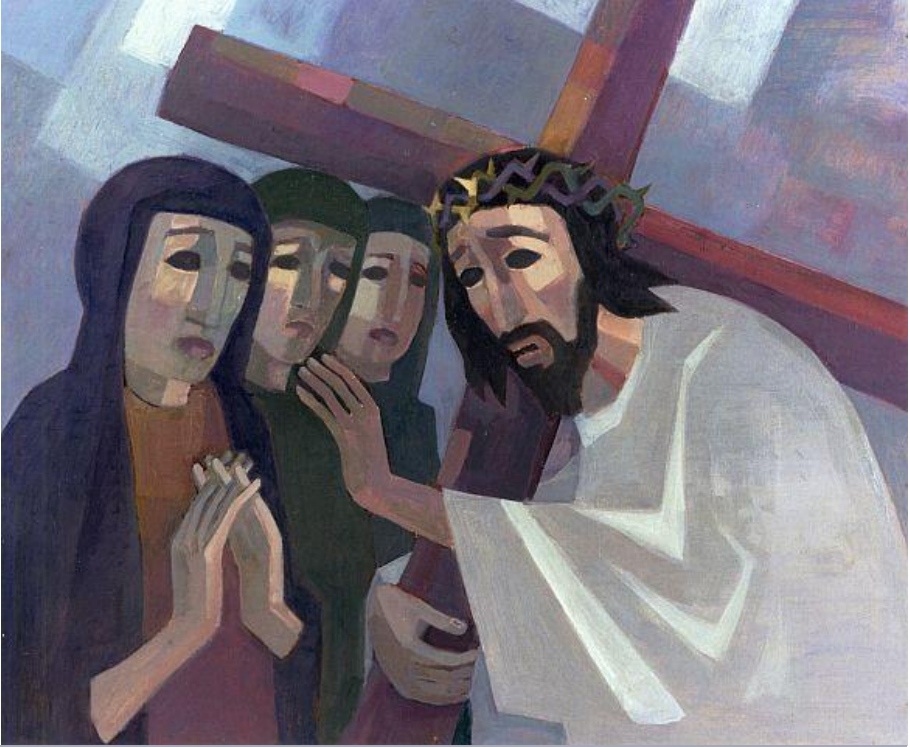


## Jesus falls the second time.

*Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him. "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." He has seen death before. Now he can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.*

Contemplate Jesus brought very low.  
Behold him there on the ground,  
with all the agony taking its toll on him,  
let my heart go out to him.  
Store up this image in your heart,  
knowing that you will never feel alone in your suffering  
or in any diminishment,  
with this image of Jesus on the ground before you.

This is for you,  
so express the feelings in your heart.



**8**

**Jesus meets the women  
of Jerusalem**

## **Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.**

*The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He had broken all kinds of social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing he can't remain to help them more in this life. He knows the mystery of facing the separation of death.*

Look at their faces.

So full of love and gratitude,  
loss and fear.

Contemplate what words might have passed between  
them.

Remember all his tender, compassionate,  
merciful love for them.

Place yourself with these women and children to support  
him.

This is for you.

So, I let this scene stir up deep gratitude.



**9**

**Jesus falls for the third time**

## **Jesus falls the third time.**

*This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. Summoning all this remaining strength, supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic yet paying a price he deserves. They help him up so he can make it up the hill of crucifixion*

Pause to contemplate him there on the ground.

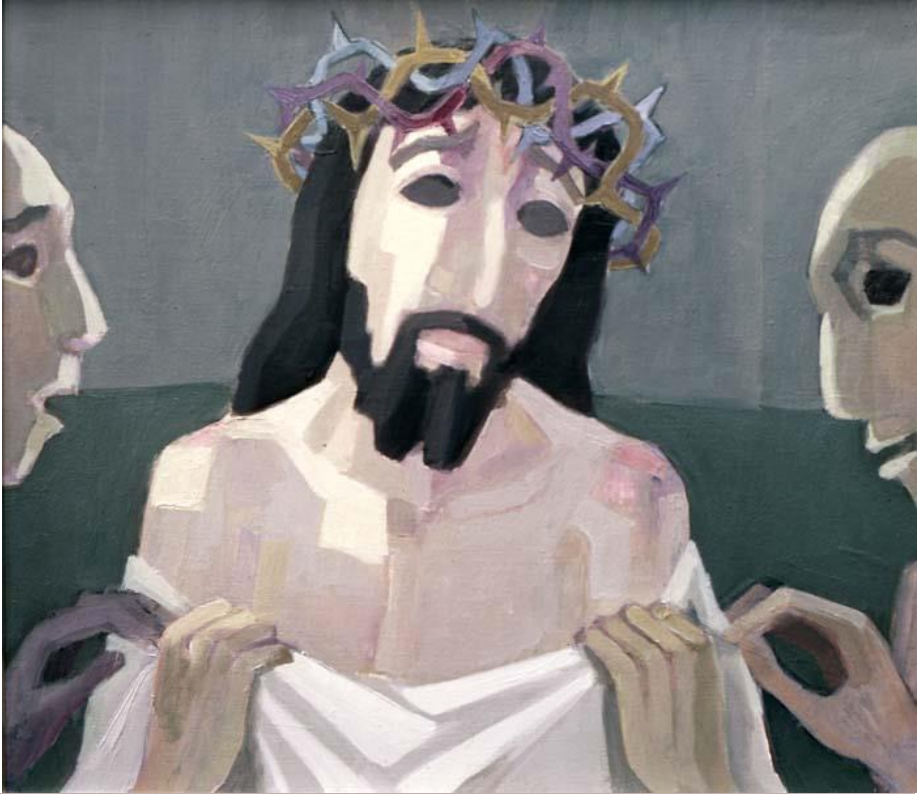
The brokenness that makes you whole.

The surrender that gives you life.

Pause to experience and receive  
how completely he loves you.

He is indeed completely poured out for you.

As you treasure this gifted experience,  
express what is in my heart



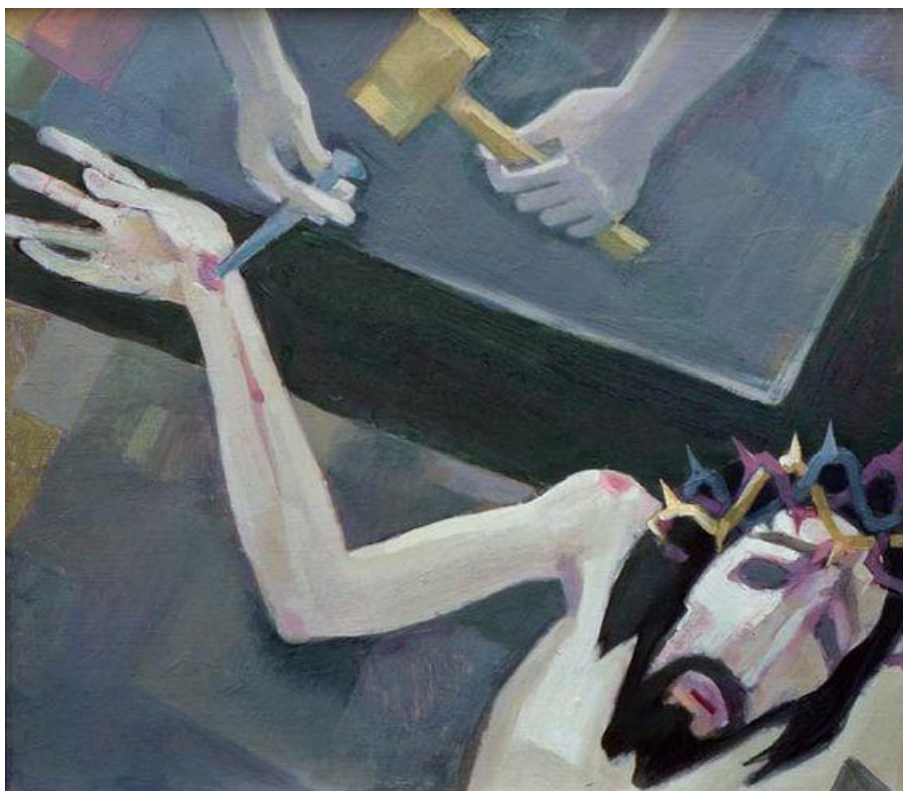
**10.**  
**Jesus is stripped  
of his garments**

## **Jesus is stripped.**

*Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the ultimate vulnerability of the defenceless. No shield or security protects him. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.*

Pause to watch the stripping.  
Contemplate all that is taken from him.  
And, how he faces his death with such nakedness.  
Reflect upon how much of himself  
he has revealed to you.  
Holding nothing back.

As you look at him in his humility,  
know that this is for you,  
and share your feelings of gratitude.



**11.**  
**Jesus is nailed to the cross**



## **Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

*Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.*

Make yourself watch the nails being driven through his  
flesh.

Watch his face.

Contemplate the completeness of his entry into our lives.  
Can there be any pain or agony he would not understand?

This is for you.

Nailed to a cross to forever proclaim liberty to captives.  
What sorrow and gratitude fill your heart!



**12.**  
**Jesus dies on the cross**

## **Jesus dies on the cross.**

*Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head,  
with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to  
support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your  
hands I commend my spirit."*

Stand there, at the foot of the cross,  
side by side with all of humanity,  
and behold our salvation.

Carefully watch and listen to all that is said.

And then,

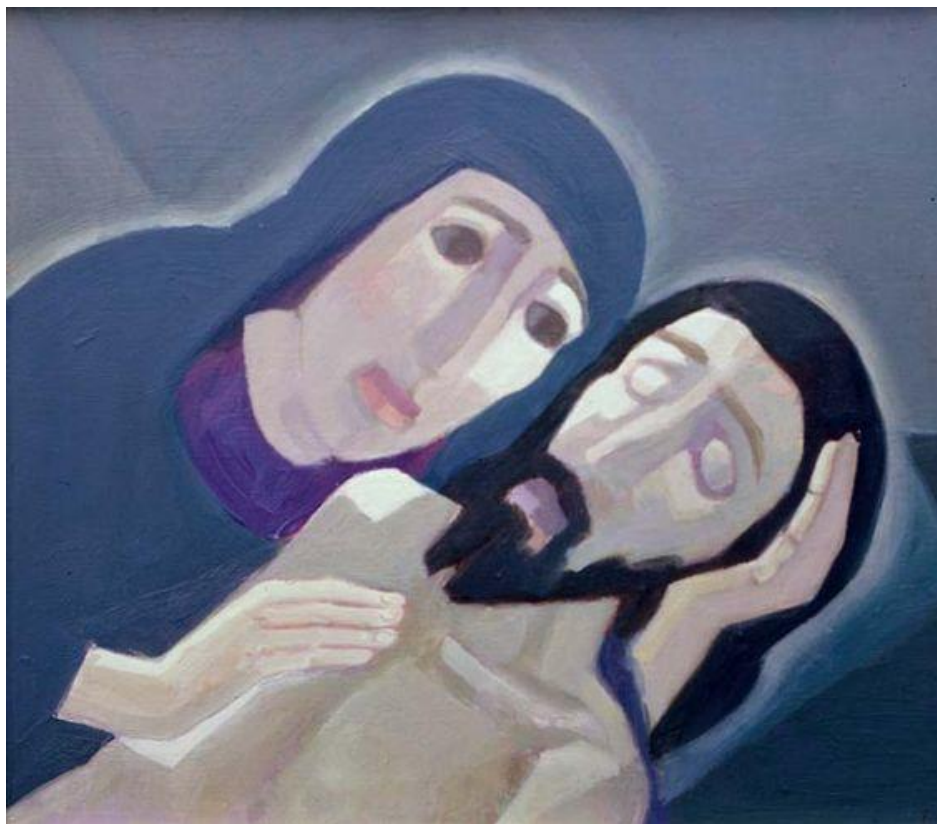
experience the one

who gives life pass from life to death, for you.

Console Mary and John and Mary.

And let them console you.

This is the hour to express the deepest feelings within  
you.



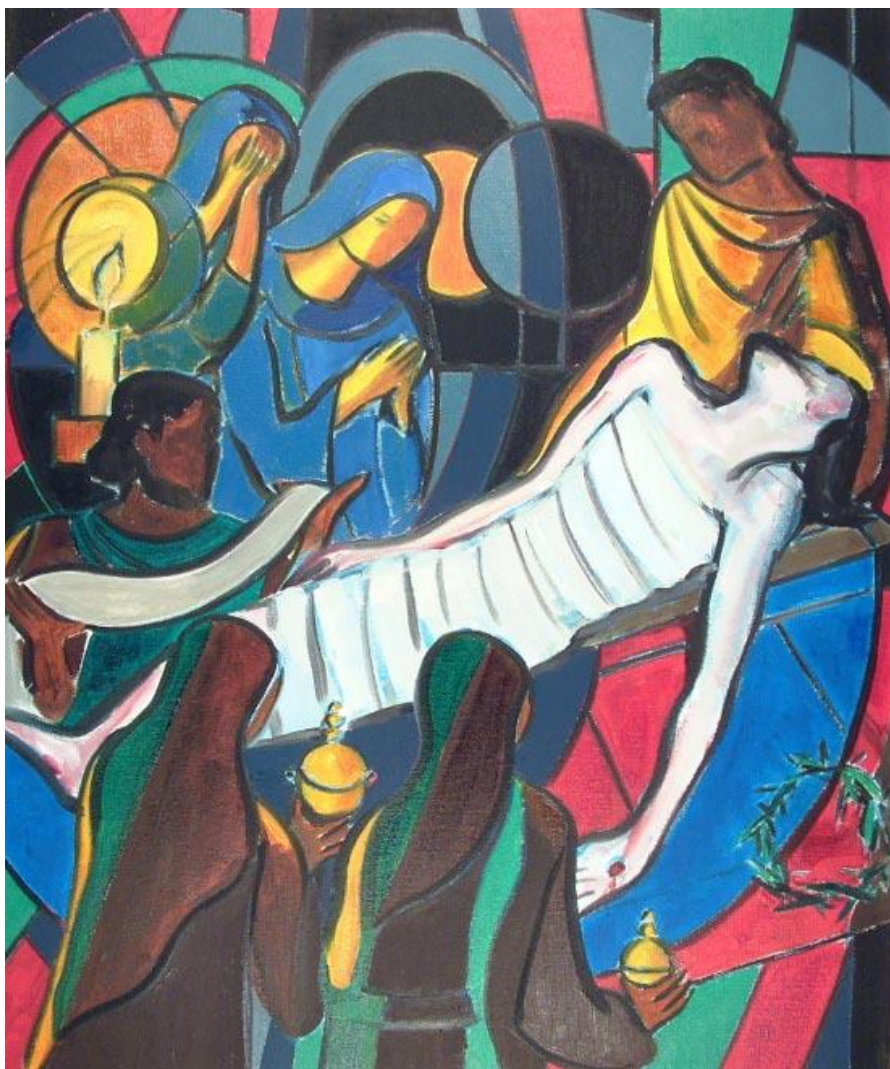
**13.**  
**Jesus taken down  
from the cross**

## **Jesus Is taken down from the cross.**

*What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lays in his mother's arms. He has truly died. A profound sacrifice, complete.*

Behold this scene at the foot of the cross.  
Contemplate touching, caressing his body.  
Remember all his hands have touched,  
all who have been blessed by his warm embrace.  
Pause to let it soak in.  
He knows the mystery of death.  
He has fallen into God's hands.

For you.  
That you might love as you have been loved.  
Pour out your heart to the God of all mercies.



**14.**  
**Jesus laid in the tomb**

## Jesus Is laid in the tomb.

*They take the body of Jesus to its resting place. The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognise him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.*

Pause to contemplate this act of closure on his life.  
In solidarity with all humanity, his body is taken to its  
grave.

Stand for a moment outside this tomb.  
This final journey of his life has shown you the meaning of  
his gift of himself for us.

This tomb represents every tomb we stand before with  
fear,  
in defeat, struggling to believe it could ever be empty.

In the fullness of faith in the Risen One,  
given by his own Holy Spirit,  
express your gratitude for this way of the cross.  
Ask Jesus, whose hands, feet and side  
still bear the signs of this journey,  
to grant you the graces you need  
to take up your cross to be a servant of his own mission.

## **When I survey the wondrous cross**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
save in the death of Christ, my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them through his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small.  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.