MEDITATIONS

ON THE PASSION, DEATH
& RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The original paintings used for each station are to be found in the CHAPEL OF MARY at St David’s Marist Inanda.
Artist: Joseph Capelle (2007)

The texts are adapted from the booklet compiled by Fr Michael Austin SJ, chaplain to the College from 1999 to 2007.
THE WAY OF THE CROSS

A BRIEF HISTORY

A year after Constantine claimed the imperial throne of the Roman Empire, he issued the Edict of Milan (AD 313) which granted toleration to Christianity. His mother, the Empress Helena, was a devout Catholic who travelled to Palestine in AD 325 to identify some of the chief sites associated with the life of Jesus. Over the tomb and the hill of Calvary she saw to the erection of the great Church of the Holy Sepulchre which still stands today in Jerusalem. This started the journey of devout pilgrims to Palestine to visit the holy places which were central to the birth, life and death of Jesus. One of the pious exercises they practised was to walk the way that Jesus did, carrying His cross to the place of crucifixion at Calvary. This walk was called the *Via Dolorosa*, the "sorrowful way", for obvious reasons.

The devotion evolved and changed over the centuries, so that the number of "stations" or stops to recall a particular incident on the *Via Dolorosa* varied from 5 to 17. Over the centuries it became increasingly hazardous and difficult to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Thus, the “Stations”, or *Way of the Cross* as we know it, became a feature of Catholic life, especially during Lent and Holy Week. In 1731 Pope Clement XII stabilized the number of stations to 14, the traditional set that most parish churches still have.

Since 1976, successive Popes have encouraged people to make alterations to the traditional fourteen. Of the set of seventeen chosen for the *Chapel of Mary* at St David’s, all but two, the Fall and Veronica, are based on the Passion account contained in the Gospels.
OPENING PRAYER:
LEADER: LET US PRAY

God of power and mercy, in love you sent your Son that we might be cleansed of sin and live with you forever.

Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death that we may learn from his example the way we should go.

We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord.

ALL: AMEN

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.

Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had pass'd.
FIRST STATION
JESUS INAUGURATES THE NEW COVENANT 
AT THE LAST SUPPER

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
At the Last Supper, the feast of the Passover, Jesus took the unleavened bread and said, "Take and eat, this is my body which will be given up for you." Then he took the cup of wine and said, "This is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant which is to be poured out to save many. Do this in memory of me."

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
help me to understand the meaning of the Covenant; that out of your great love for us, you committed yourself to us - to love us, to forgive us, to save us. Help me to remember this each time I attend Mass and hear your words during the consecration.

Jesus, remember me,
when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me
when you come in to your kingdom.
SECOND STATION

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
After they had sung a psalm,
Jesus and the disciples left the Upper Room
and walked down to the garden of olives
called Gethsemane.
There he fell on his knees and prayed to his Father,
"Abba, Father, take this cup of suffering from me.
But let it be done according to your will,
not mine."

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
you had to struggle to accept your Father's will
that you had to die on the cross.
Obedience to lawful authority is not always easy.
Often I rebel against God's will, too.
I am weak and I don't always say a resounding "No!" to temptation.
Help me, Jesus.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord? O!
Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
THIRD STATION

PETER DENIES JESUS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Peter was so cocksure and confident that he would always be faithful to Jesus. But Jesus warned him that before cockcrow he would deny Jesus three times. And this is precisely what he did when he was asked if he was a disciple of Jesus. He clearly denied knowing him. As the cock crew at day break, Jesus looked at Peter and the apostle went out and wept bitterly with shame and sorrow.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
sometimes I am too full of myself.
I think I am stronger than I really am.
I don't rely on your strength, then I fail.
May I always turn to you in any trouble and know that your grace is always enough for me.

Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us, and is risen from the dead. He is our saving Lord, he is joy for all ages.
FOURTH STATION
PILATE CONDEMNS JESUS TO DEATH

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Jesus is brought
before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate,
by the Chief Priests and the Council of the Jews.
He is all alone:
no friends or disciples to speak up for him;
no one to help defend him.
He spent all his life helping others,
curing the sick, and doing good for people.
Now they want to kill him for it.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
when I am criticized or scolded for something I didn't do,
Help me to remember how you too were falsely accused;
how you suffered in dignified silence;
how you suffered criticism and scolding - but didn't complain.

Oh, how sad and sore distress'd
Was that mother highly blest
Of the sole-begotten One!

Christ above in torment hangs;
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.
FIFTH STATION

JESUS IS SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
As punishment and to weaken him,
two soldiers beat Jesus across his back
with whips tipped with metal (up to 120 lashes).
His skin was broken
and drops of blood fell to the ground.
Then the soldiers plaited thorns into a crown for his head
and mocked him by pretending he was a king.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
you had always respected every person as made in God's image,
no matter whether young or old, rich or poor.
Now these coarse Roman soldiers,
who knew nothing about you and your good news,
mock you, kneeling before you and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"
Help me to remember that everyone is made by God in his image.
May I always respect others and never hurt them
by using offensive and objectionable names.

Jesus, remember me,
when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me
when you come in to your kingdom.
LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
The soldiers now lay the crossbeam across the shoulders of Jesus - those same shoulders that have been wounded and torn in the terrible scourging.

He has to take up his cross and carry it to Calvary where he will be nailed to it.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS, crosses are problems and nobody wants them or likes them. But we know that they are, unfortunately, part of life. Help me to take courage and be heartened by your example. Help me to shoulder my cross each day and bear it with You, without complaining.

Were you there when he carried his own cross? O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when he carried his own cross?
SEVENTH STATION
JESUS MEETS HIS GRIEVING MOTHER

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
In the middle of all the yelling and shouting, swearing and hate-filled words of the soldiers and the crowd, Jesus sees his mother watching his painful sorrowful progress. There isn’t much she can do for him - except give him a look of love and support.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
you were surely touched by your mother’s look of anguish and love. What a support that was for you as you stumbled on - to know that someone does understand. Thank you for my own parents. I know that they made sacrifices for me – especially my mother, during pregnancy and childbirth. And my father too. Help me to appreciate and love them always, even if at times they have not been models of parenthood.

Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us. and is risen from the dead. he is our saving Lord, he is joy for all ages.
EIGHTH STATION
JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Jesus was weak.
He had been up all night
being tried in the High Priest's court
and then detained in a cold prison.
He had lost a lot of blood in the vicious scourging.
The crossbeam on his shoulders was heavy.
He stumbled on the uneven cobblestones and fell.
The soldiers swore at him, and pushed and kicked him to get up.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
I know there are lots of times that I begin a project
and then get tired and give up,
or I do it in a slipshod and careless manner,
and then want to forget about it.
I get reproved by others for negligence or laziness.
Help me to be like you, Jesus,
to keep at the things I start and complete them as best I can.
Help me to be attentive to the task at hand.

Let me share with you his pain,
who for all my sins was slain,
who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with you,
mourning him who mourned for me,
all the days that I may live:
NINTH STATION
SIMON IS FORCED TO HELP JESUS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER The soldiers, seeing how weak Jesus is becoming and fearful lest he not make it to Calvary, grab a bystander, Simon from Cyrene in North Africa, and force him to help Jesus.

He certainly doesn't want to be associated with a condemned man but he can't resist the soldiers. So unwillingly he takes the weight of the crossbeam.

ASSEMBLY O MY JESUS,
if I am honest
I would have to say that I am often like Simon.
How many times could I not have helped somebody: staying at home with a family member who is ill or very young and needs care, offering to help a friend or colleague with some task, helping someone carrying a heavy load, or getting down to do a necessary household chore. There are so many ways I could have been helpful - and yet I have turned away pretending not to see.

Jesus, remember me,
when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me
when you come in to your kingdom.
TENTH STATION

VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Suddenly the march to Calvary stops.
A woman steps forward with a towel
and wipes the face of Jesus,
clearing away the sweat and blood.
Imagine the courage that she needed
to step out of line like that.
The crowd was shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him!"
and she goes against the tide
and offers a little practical comfort.
And so, the world remembers her for that small act of kindness.

ASSEMBLY

O MY JESUS,
help me to overcome my selfishness and self-centredness.
Help me to think of others
and do what I can to help another
- even in a small matter like Veronica did.
I want to help others
but sometimes wait for the big dramatic moment - but it doesn't come.
And so, I miss the opportunities to help that do indeed come my way.

For the sins of his own nation,
She saw Jesus wracked with torment,
All with bloody scourges rent:

She beheld her tender Child,
Saw him hang in desolation,
Till his spirit forth he sent.
ELEVENTH STATION
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Having reached the hill of Calvary, the solders now rip the clothes off Jesus' back and expose him to the mocking gaze of the crowd. All the wounds are torn open again and his whole body is a mess of blood and sores. Some people jeer at him and tell him to work a miracle to save himself. Jesus, the innocent one, is beaten and cowed.

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS, as you were stripped and humiliated and mocked, let me always be aware of the need to respect my own body and that of others. Help me to overcome temptations of the flesh, and to be faithful to commitments to my spouse. May I be known as a Christian by my thoughts, words and deeds.

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree? Were you there when they nailed him to a tree? O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble! Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
TWELFTH STATION
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
The body of Jesus
is now stretched out on the cross beam
that he has carried
and the soldiers drive nails through his wrists.
Then the crossbeam is lifted
and joined to the upright already stuck firmly in the ground.
The soldiers complete the act of crucifixion
by nailing his ankles to the upright.
Can we imagine the excruciating pain of crucifixion?

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
you gave them nothing but love and kindness
and they reward you with nails through your hands and feet.
Sometimes we can be cruel too in the way we treat people -
laughing at the colour of a person's skin,
or the way he/she speaks, or the way he/she dresses
- all things that are really unimportant and yet we make them the most important.
Never let me drive a nail into another person
by my display of prejudice, hatred, bigotry or injustice.

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree? O!
Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
THIRTEENTH STATION
JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS MOTHER

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Even while nailed to the cross
and suffering the most terrible agony,
Jesus is able to consider others and their feelings.
As an only child and with Joseph dead,
who will look after his mother?
So, to John, the youngest of the disciples,
and the only one of them to be there at the foot of the cross,
he tells his mother, "This is your son".
And to John he says, "This is your mother" - meaning that he is to take care of her.
Then, as the prophet foretold, he cried out, "I thirst"
and they offered him a sponge dipped in a mixture of wine and myrrh.

ASSEMBLY

O MY JESUS,
even as you are dying totally exhausted by loss of blood and failing lungs,
you manage to ensure that Mary, a widow, and soon also to be childless,
will be taken care of.
Help me to be practical in my care for others,
to be sensitive to their needs,
and to be generous in serving as you were.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelm'd in miseries so deep
Christ's dear mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that mother's pain untold?
FOURTEENTH STATION
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
After calling out for a drink,
Jesus cried out to God his Father,
"It is finished. Into your hands commend my spirit."
And bowing his head he breathed his last.
Jesus had said:
"Greater love has no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends."
And, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,
it remains forever a grain;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

ASSEMBLY

O MY JESUS,
what can I say or do?
you offered your life on the altar of the cross to save me;
may I never reject my belief that you offer me the grace of salvation.
And let me remember that I too have to die.
Help me to be ready for death
whenever and however it comes.

Jesus, remember me,
when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus remember me
when you come in to your kingdom.
FIFTEENTH STATION
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
After calling out for a drink,
Jesus cried out to God his Father,
"It is finished. Into your hands commend my spirit."
And bowing his head he breathed his last.
Jesus had said:
"Greater love has no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends."
And, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,
it remains forever a grain;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

ASSEMBLY
O MY JESUS,
what can I say or do?
you offered your life on the altar of the cross to save me;
may I never reject my belief that you offer me the grace of salvation.
And let me remember that I too have to die.
Help me to be ready for death
whenever and however it comes.

Were you there when they laid him in a tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in a tomb? O!
Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when they laid him in a tomb?
SIXTEENTH STATION

THE BODY OF JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
Fortunately, there is a garden nearby with a new tomb hewn out of the rock that had been prepared for Joseph of Arimathea, one of Jesus' disciples. He offers it, so the body of Jesus is hastily wrapped in a burial cloth, laid in the tomb and a large stone is rolled across the doorway. It is almost sunset on Friday, the eve of the Sabbath day.

ASSEMBLY

O MY JESUS,
your mother and your friends return home sadly but with the intention of returning on Sunday morning to complete the burial procedures for your body. Little do they know that they will not find it there. Help me to remember always the way to happiness with you in heaven, and to cooperate with your grace in walking my path in this life so as to get there.

Christ, when you shall call me hence,
be your mother my defence,
be your Cross my victory;

While my body here decays,
may my soul your goodness praise,
safe in paradise with you.
LEADER We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ASSEMBLY
Because by your holy cross you redeemed the world.

READER
As the dark of night gives way to the faint light of dawn, God works another miracle of NEW LIFE.
Jesus rises, totally unseen by any living person, and leaves the tomb empty except for the burial cloths. The hardships and tortures of his earthly life are now swallowed up in the glory of his Resurrection.

Christ is risen - he is truly risen and all the world cries out: ALLELUIA!

Were you there when he rose up from the dead? Were you there when he rose up from the dead? O!
Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?

(ANNOUNCEMENTS ...)

LEADER: LET US PRAY

Lord Jesus Christ, your passion and death unites earth and heaven and reconciles all people to you.

May our reflections on these mysteries lead us to follow in your steps and so come to share your glory in heaven where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God, for ever and ever.

ALL: AMEN.