

Walking the Way of the Cross Through Nature:

A Good Friday Practice for Families



Adapted for Parish of the Epiphany from *The Way of the Cross in Nature*, by the Rev. Mia Kano, St. Andrews, Wellesley. We thank Rev. Kano for graciously sharing her work.



The Tradition

The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross, is a spiritual pilgrimage through the events of Good Friday—Jesus’ trial, condemnation, walk to Calvary, crucifixion, and death. It is a journey physically walked, often within a church or in a church’s garden, as you make your way from one numbered station to the next, reading scripture and looking at a piece of artwork or an icon. This tradition translates wonderfully to nature, perfect for a year when we are outside of our church building. It welcomes families to think, discuss, and prayerfully meditate upon the important events of Good Friday.

We invite you to use the guide found on the following pages as part of your observation of Holy Week. Head into your favorite wooded area--or even your backyard. Each of the nine stations include a natural object to find, a short scripture and narrative, a question to ponder, and a prayer.

Why Good Friday

Good Friday is perhaps the most difficult of church holy days to share with children. The Jesus who is usually taught in Sunday School classes is an unlikely figure for condemnation, and stories of violence in the Bible are softened if not outright ignored. But Good Friday—the condemnation, crucifixion, and death of Jesus—are absolutely central to the Christian faith. Without the crucifixion there is no resurrection—no risen Christ for us to rise through and with. It is through Good Friday that the loving, reliable Good Shepherd in Sunday School becomes the Savior and, as we say in our Christmas pageant, the Prince of Peace.

The Christian faith, like all of life, is full of joy and sorrow; triumph and desolation. As our Book of Common Prayer says, when we walk in the way of his suffering, we also share in his resurrection. Walking the stations of Good Friday with our children, and with Jesus, deepens both faith and compassion.

When we end Good Friday with children, we remind them that this is just the middle of the story. Jesus suffered for this world he loves, but he also triumphed. Jesus rises again and lives still, with the eternal and loving God, with whom we too are forever connected, forgiven, and loved.



List of Stations

1. Jesus is condemned to death
 - *find water*
2. Jesus picks up his cross
 - *find a heavy log or rock*
3. Jesus falls with the cross
 - *find a quiet place to sit and rest in silence*
4. Jesus meets his mother
 - *find a bud or flower*
5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross
 - *find a tree leaning against another tree*
6. Jesus is stripped of his garments
 - *find a tree whose bark is stripped*
7. Jesus dies on the cross
 - *find a stump or fallen tree*
8. Jesus is laid in the tomb
 - *find a large stone or rock*
9. We wait for Easter
 - *find a sign of new life*



1. Jesus is condemned to die

– *find water*

we tell the story:

After Jesus rode into Jerusalem treated like a king, Jesus' jealous enemies pressured the Roman leader of Jerusalem, Pilate, to sentence Jesus to death on the cross. Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, Pilate did what they demanded. He washed his hands to show that he did not feel responsible for what he did.

we read:

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing... he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

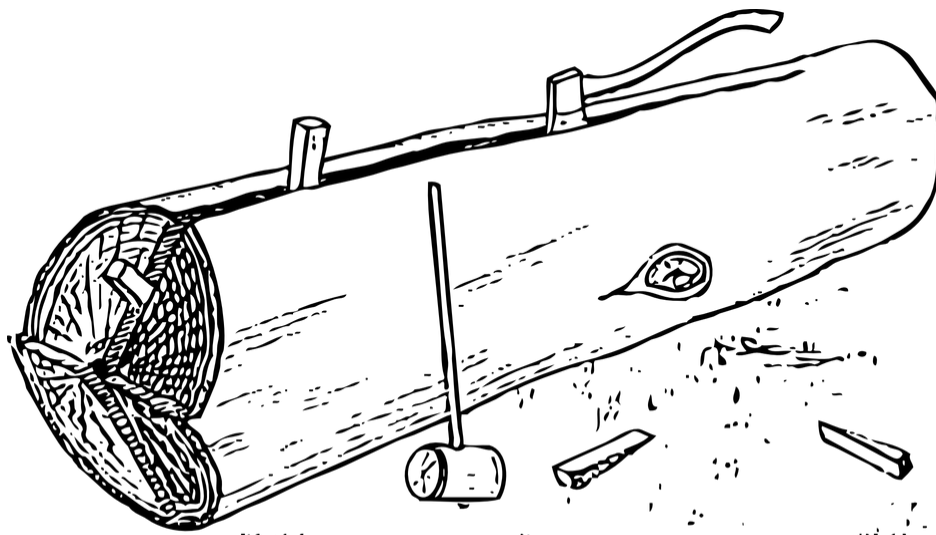
– *Matthew 27: 23-24*

we wonder:

Pilate didn't really think Jesus deserved to be killed, but he saw other people being mean to Jesus, and he didn't do anything to help. Why do you think that was?

we pray:

Jesus, forgive us for all the times when we have stood by and watched while other people were being treated in a way that is wrong or cruel. Help us to forgive the people who have been mean to us, and the people who didn't step up to help. Help us be brave enough to stand up for other people when they need us. Amen.



2. Jesus picks up his cross – *find a heavy log or rock*

we tell the story:

Jesus' punishment was to be nailed on a cross, the very worst death that his enemies could imagine for him. But first, Jesus had to carry his cross outside the city, where he was to be killed. The cross was very heavy and hard to carry.

we read:

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

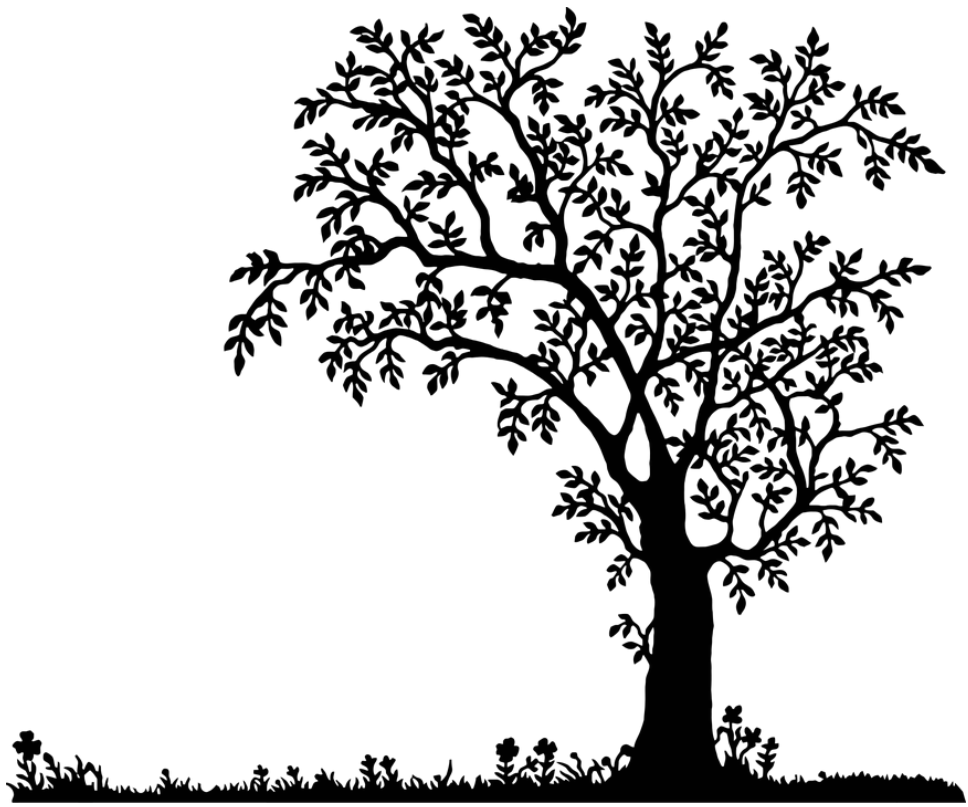
– *John 19:16-17*

we wonder:

Why did Jesus willingly carry such a heavy thing such a long way? What do we mean when we say things in our life are “heavy” or “a lot to carry?” Where is God in those times?

we pray:

Jesus, help us to face the hardest parts of our lives. Help us to remember that you know what it feels like to be scared and in pain, and that you are with us even during scary and sad times. Amen.



3. Jesus falls with the cross

- find a place to sit and rest in silence

we tell the story:

The cross was so hard and so heavy that even Jesus fell down when he was carrying the cross and walking to Calvary. He didn't just fall once, he fell three times. But Jesus didn't give up, because he knew what he had to do—and he knew the end of the story: Easter Sunday.

we read:

Upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

- Isaiah 53:5

we wonder:

Sometimes when we have to deal with something that makes us scared or sad, it can feel like we keep falling, over and over, and nothing can ever go right again. The same thing happened to Jesus. How does Jesus help us get up when we're tired and in pain?

we pray:

Jesus, help us when we feel like giving up. Help us to remember it is okay to fall and need to rest. Thank you for being there to help us up and give us the strength to keep trying. Amen.



4. Jesus meets his mother – *find a bud or flower*

we tell the story:

But Jesus wasn't alone. There were special people who were there to help Jesus and be with him in his pain. The first person Jesus met was his mother, Mary, who loved him just as much as your parents love you. She knew he was very special because of what the angel had told her. She also knew that his life would be difficult.

we read:

Then Simeon... said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

– *Luke 2:33-35*

we wonder:

Jesus must have been grateful his mother was there for him. Who has been there for you when you are sad or scared?

we pray:

Jesus, we thank you for the love of our parents and the other adults who take care of us, the same way that your mother Mary took care of you. Help us to show our love to them every day. Amen.



5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross – *find a tree leaning against another tree*

we tell the story:

Jesus had a friend along the way who helped him. Simon helped Jesus to carry the cross.

we read:

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

- *Luke 23:26*

we wonder:

Everybody needs some help sometimes. Who has helped you? Can you think of a time when you helped somebody else?

we pray:

Jesus, we thank you for the friends in our lives who help us when we feel sad or scared. Help us to be good friends to other people, and to show our love to them by taking care of them. Amen.



6. Jesus is stripped of his garments

- find a tree whose bark is stripped

we tell the story:

Before Jesus died, the people in charge pushed him around and made fun of him. They took all his clothes, and they made him wear a crown made out of thorns that hurt his head. They were hurting his body, but they also wanted to make him feel bad about himself.

we read:

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head... they spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him.

- Matthew 27:5-34

we wonder:

Has anyone ever made you feel bad about yourself by making fun of you? Have you ever seen someone else make another person feel bad by making fun of them?

we pray:

Jesus, forgive us for the times when we have hurt other people or made them feel bad. Help us to think about how we use our words, and to use them in kind and helpful ways instead of using them to hurt people. Amen.



7. Jesus dies on the cross

- find a stump or fallen tree

we tell the story:

Jesus died on the cross. Jesus gave over his spirit and life to God.

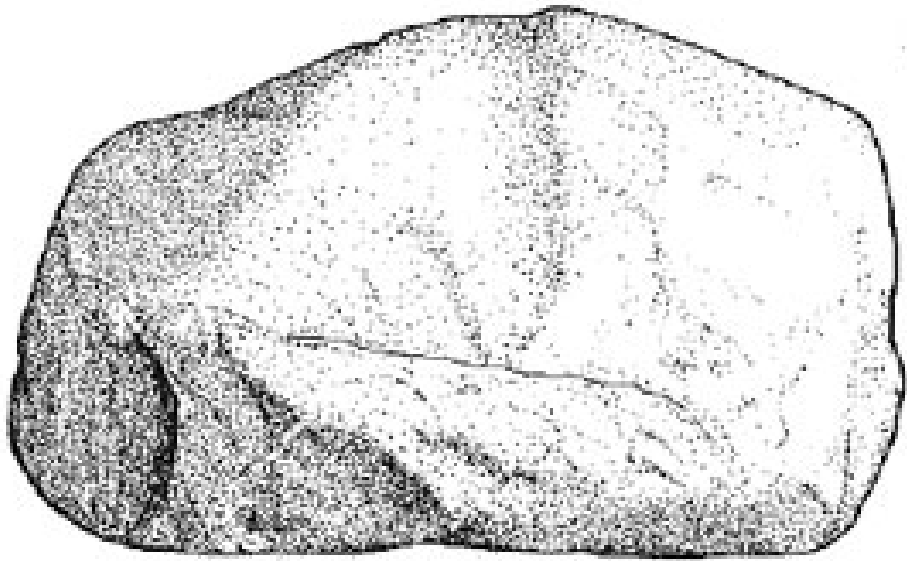
we read:

Jesus said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- John 19:30

we pray:

Share a moment of silence.



8. Jesus is laid in the tomb

- find a large stone or rock

we tell the story:

Jesus' friends were very sad. They took good care of his body. They washed it and wrapped it in spices that smelled good. They laid him in a tomb, and rolled a huge stone in front of it. They went away in grief, but God had a surprise for them on Easter.

we read:

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.

- John 19:30

we pray Jesus' prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespasses against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

we wonder:

How must the disciples have felt at that moment? How do you feel when you read this part of Jesus' story?



9. We wait for Easter

– *find a sign of new life*

we tell the story:

For two days, Jesus' body laid in the tomb, and his friends and disciples were very, very sad. But on Sunday morning, some women went to the tomb to care for his body. When they arrived, the stone was rolled away. Jesus was alive – God had raised him from the dead!

we read:

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said.”

–*Matthew 28:5-7*

we pray:

Praise to you, Lord God! Alleluia! The Lord is Risen and is with us. Amen.

we wonder:

What do you think the most amazing part of Easter is?



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