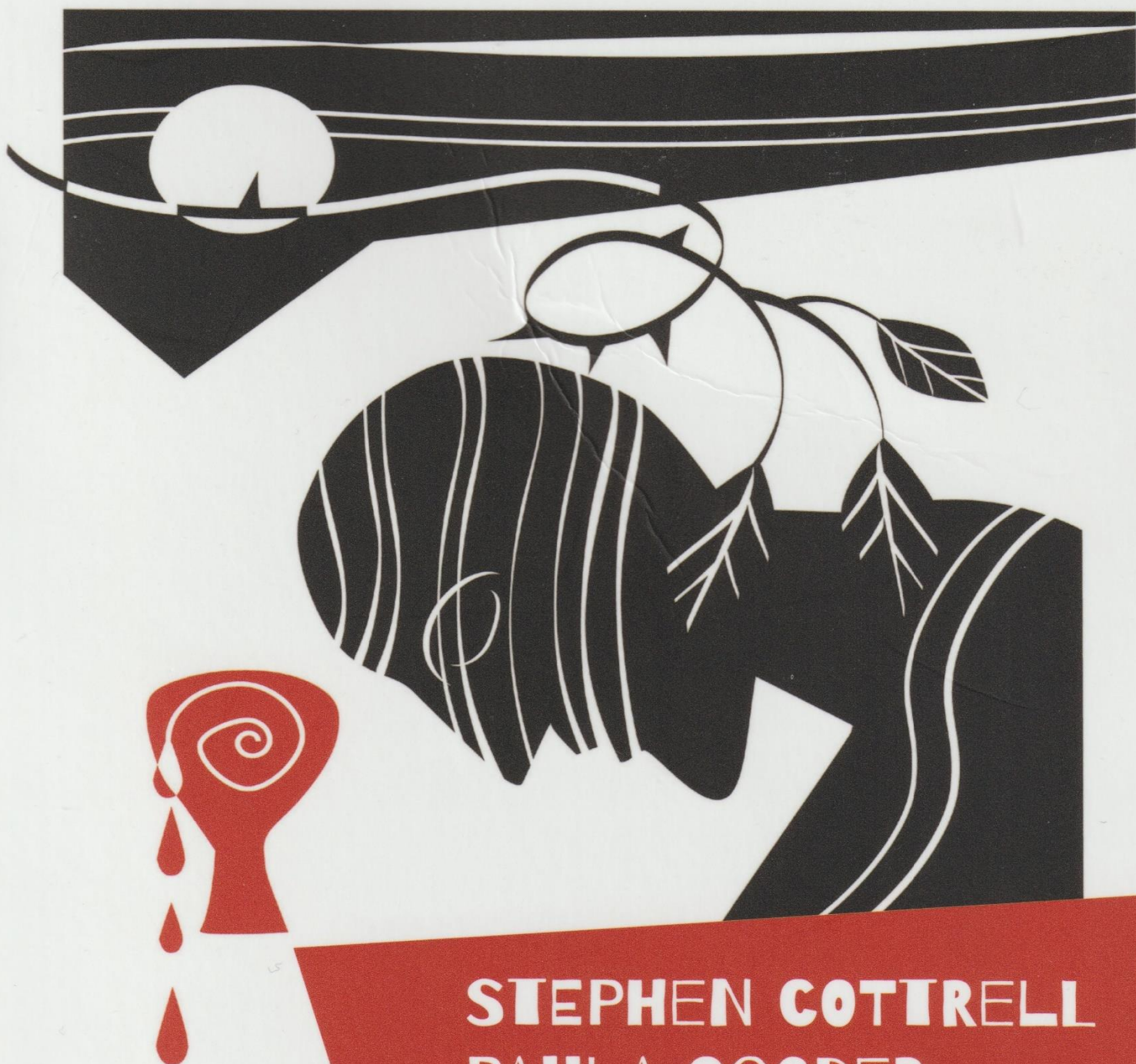


WALKING **THE** WAY **OF THE** CROSS

PRAYERS **AND** REFLECTIONS ON THE
BIBLICAL **STATIONS** OF THE **CROSS**



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The Gathering

The ministers enter in silence.

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit,

All **Amen.**

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Matthew 16.24, 25

Once we were far off, but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood, for he is our peace.

Ephesians 2.13, 14

An appropriate greeting may be given.

A minister may introduce the service and then says

Let us pray.

A brief moment of silence follows.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience
and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *Eleventh Station:*
Jesus promises the kingdom
to the penitent thief

All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.

Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? 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 have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Luke 23.39–43

Reflection / Meditation

Reflection or meditation may follow.
See pages 78–80.

*Eleventh Station:
Jesus promises the kingdom to the penitent thief*

Reflection A

by Philip North

'Today you will be with me in paradise'

A police station in North London. A priest is in the queue waiting to report a crime when suddenly the man in front turns and says, 'Can I talk to you?' He tells the priest what he has done, an act that weighed deeply on his conscience but was not a criminal offence. Yet he felt that reporting himself to the police was the only way to deal with the guilt.

The priest starts to talk to him about other sources of forgiveness and other ways of dealing with guilt. 'But what if I don't believe in God?' the man asks. The priest looks blank. He is simply unable to answer the question.

Without God forgiveness is hard, if not impossible, because it is not a human instinct. Human nature requires revenge, and so it struggles to forgive either others or itself. It is through the cross of Jesus Christ, that we can know what it is to be forgiven and to forgive.

As he hangs on the cross, Jesus forgives a criminal. And the forgiveness he offers has authority because of the death that he is dying in that very moment. As Jesus offers his life to the Father, so he dies the death that we sinners deserve. Sin is defeated and forgiveness comes flowing into the world.

As he ministers to the criminal, so Jesus demonstrates that forgiveness is available to each one of us. If we turn to Jesus, sorry for what we have done, longing for a fresh start, the forgiveness will always flow from the cross. And as we receive forgiveness from him, so we are empowered to forgive others.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, even in your deepest agony you listened
to the crucified thief:

hear us as we unburden to you our deepest fears.

You spoke words of love in your hour of death:

help us to speak words of life to a dying world.

To you, Jesus, who offer hope to the hopeless,

be honour and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

¶ *The Conclusion*

A response may be made to the preceding stations. This might take the form of praise, penitence, intercession or some other relevant action, accompanied by silence or singing.

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom in the words our Saviour taught us.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son
 Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

One of the following responsories is used

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and nation;
you have made them to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.

**All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

To him who loves us
and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
and made us a kingdom of priests
to stand and serve before our God;

**All to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honour, glory and might,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

(or)

**All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

Christ was manifested in the body,
vindicated in the spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed in throughout the world,
glorified in high heaven.

**All We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross
you have redeemed the world.**

The Lord be with you
All and also with you.

May God bless us,
that in us may be found love and humility,
obedience and thanksgiving,
discipline, gentleness and peace.

All Amen.

The ministers depart in silence.