



## THE WAY OF THE CROSS



A LAKOTA "STATIONS OF THE CROSS" REMEMBERING THE DEATH OF JESUS

*Good Friday, April 14, 2006*

**L**akota members of the United Church of Christ in South Dakota worship on Good Friday using this distinctive ceremony. Sometimes this version of the "Stations of the Cross" is done in a walk as long as seven miles, stopping along the way. Other times, it is done at the church. The service, adapted here, was celebrated at the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM) Board of Directors meeting, April 2005, in relation to Holy Week.

A cross is carried along the way, stopping at each "station." A leader, perhaps a different one for each station, describes the station and invites the congregation to respond. At each station, an eagle feather is attached to the cross symbolizing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Among the Lakota people, each heroic deed earns one's right to wear an eagle feather to commemorate it. The cross displays the accumulated number of eagle feathers. The cross, with feathers, honors Christ's great deeds of suffering death on behalf of all.

### Beginning Unison Prayer

**O God, you are the loving Spirit who made all things: creatures that swim in the water, that fly in the air, and that move on the ground. You also made people like us who walk the earth, and who have hearts that look for happiness. Like any good parent, you want us to be happy, so when we follow the wrong way of sin that leads to sadness, you take pity on us.**

**You sent us your son Jesus, to walk the way of suffering that leads to death on the cross. It was not easy for him to suffer and die for us, but you took the evil that happened to him and turned it into something good for us. On the day Jesus died, hatred lost the battle. We will remember what he did for us as we follow in his footsteps on the way of the Cross.**

### First Station

### "Jesus Is Given the Death Sentence"

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:** **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:** Jesus begins his journey to the cross by being betrayed. Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent, but he does not want any trouble that day, so he turns away from Jesus and does not help him. How many times have

we let something happen to others because we didn't want to be bothered? How many times have we looked away when someone was being hurt or needed help?

We remember the words of Jesus now: "I was hungry and you did not feed me—naked and you did not clothe me." Let us never turn away from those in need and "sentence" them to die.

**People:**                **O God, give us generous hearts.**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Second Station                "Jesus Is Given a Cross"**

**Leader:**                We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:**                **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:**                Jesus is taken out to the street and a heavy wooden cross is placed on his shoulders. He is already weak from hunger and beatings, but he carries it because he wants to.

Each of us has something that is sad and hard to carry. Each of us has something we need courage to face. Jesus challenged us one time when he said: "Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be called my disciple."

**People:**                **O God, give us the courage to face hard and difficult things, so that our hearts and spirits can grow to be like you.**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Third Station                "Jesus Falls to the Ground"**

**Leader:**                We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:**                **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:**                The road to the place of execution is outside the city. It is long and steep at times. As Jesus carries his cross, he begins to feel weak and dizzy. Finally he falls to the ground and has to be helped up again.

Whenever we see someone staggering and falling down from weakness, whether in body or spirit, let us remember the suffering of Jesus, and help them up if we can. They, too, are carrying a heavy burden and "there but for the grace of God go I."

**People:**                **Jesus once said: "Do not judge, unless you want to be judged."**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Fourth Station

### “Jesus Meets His Mother”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: Jesus looks up and sees his mother, Mary, who is standing by the side of the road. The two do not say anything but their eyes say it all, as both their hearts are filled with pain and love.

What mother could stand to see her child this way? Yet she could not stop it from happening and her heart felt as though it would break. How often do we see people we love being hurt or hurting themselves? How much it hurts when we cannot stop it from happening!

**People: It’s like the words of the prophet to Mary: “A sword of sorrow shall pierce your heart.”**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Fifth Station

### “Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: Jesus staggered, and the soldiers were worried that Jesus wasn’t going to make it. So they pulled Simon out of the crowd and made him help Jesus carry the cross. Maybe Simon felt disgusted and wondered: “Why me?” Or maybe helping Jesus changed his life from then on. We do not know. But sometimes it is hard to help the poor and the weak. We get dirty and sweaty, or maybe even feel “used.”

**People: Let us remember the words of Jesus: “As long as you did it for one of these my least ones, you did it for me. Welcome to the joy of our Creator!”**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Sixth Station

### “A Woman Cleans the Face of Jesus”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: Sometimes during a game, no one sees the person who brings the towels and water, but they are there helping the players just the same. In the same way, a woman stepped out of the crowd at just the right moment and wiped the blood and sweat off the face of Jesus. Others

saw a criminal, but she saw the face of Jesus and she gave him kindness and respect.

When we see someone that no one else likes or notices, do we look deeper and see a child of God? Do we show them kindness and respect while others make fun of them?

**People:** **God said: "Let us make human in our image and likeness."  
Therefore, in each face is the face of God.**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Seventh Station "Jesus Falls the Second Time"**

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:** **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:** In spite of all the help, Jesus falls to the ground again. He has lost blood and struggles hard to get up on his feet. Finally he gets up and continues down the road. Jesus is determined to get to the top of the hill and keep his promise to die for us.

We know what it means to fall down and have to get up again. We feel ashamed and discouraged, and it is hard to pick ourselves up again and try once more. We have to have faith in ourselves and faith in God to help us.

**People:** **Jesus used to say: "Your faith has made you well!"**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Eighth Station "Jesus Meets Some Women Who Cry for Him"**

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:** **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:** Jesus looks up again and this time sees a group of women crying for him. All they can give him are their tears now. Jesus, who is suffering so much himself, feels sorry for them and tells them to take care of themselves and their own children.

Sometimes all we can do for others is to listen to them and cry with them while they are suffering. Our tears are all we can give to them to show we care.

**People:** **Jesus knew this when he said: "Blessed are they who are sad, for they shall be comforted."**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Ninth Station

### “Jesus Falls the Third Time”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: Jesus falls for the third and last time. It seems as if he cannot get up and the soldiers help him up because they are worried that he will die before crucifixion. They do not really care about him. They want to get their job done.

Sometimes we are like the soldiers, because we help others, but the only reason we do it is because we are thinking about ourselves and what we want. We do not really see what others need, yet what they need most from us is respect and the freedom to be themselves. How do we really love someone?

**People: Jesus told us: “You must love your neighbor as yourself.”**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Tenth Station

### “Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: When Jesus finally gets to the top of the hill, he is prepared for the execution. He is stripped of everything he owns—including the clothes on his back. He stands before God and all people in a pitiful way—weak and shaking—but his heart is strong. His vision of what he must do has led him here, and he will not give up and turn back. He loves us so much that he gives up everything for us.

**People: He said it himself once: “Whoever puts his hand to a plow must not look backward, or he does not belong in God’s realm.”**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## Eleventh Station

### “Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross”

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People: By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

Leader: Jesus’ hands and feet are nailed to the wooden cross, and then he is lifted up for all to see. Some people who are there make fun of him, and ask him to come down if he is really the Son of God. But he stays there, and does not come down because he is the Son of God who is suffering that we might live.

God takes the cross that people who are evil have given him and turns it into a tree of life instead. We would never know what God was really like until Jesus showed us. Some think the cross is foolish, but to God it is very wise.

**People:** **Jesus said: "I praise you God, because you have let the little ones understand this!"**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Twelfth Station "Jesus Dies on the Cross"**

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:** **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:** To some, Jesus looks poor and weak on the cross when he dies. He is full of blood and dirt, and he looks like he has lost the fight. But to those who know how to see, he is a brave warrior and athlete—who has won a great prize—the health and happiness of our spirits.

When the end comes, he cries out in a loud voice: "Father, I place my life in your hands!" It is finished, and he has kept his promise.

**People:** **"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Thirteenth Station "Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross"**

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:** **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:** There are no words to say how it feels when someone you love dies. So it is for the mother of Jesus and followers when they come to take his body down from the cross. Without speaking a word, they take out the nails, hold his body for a moment, and then wrap it in a clean white cloth.

The night before all this happened, Jesus took a round loaf of bread and broke it up into pieces, saying: "This is my body, broken for you." And he took a cup of wine and said: "This is my blood poured out for you."

**People:** **Now here is his body broken. His mouth can no longer speak, but his body still teaches us about love.**

*(A feather is attached to the cross. The people continue to the next station.)*

## **Fourteenth Station     “Jesus Is Buried in the Earth”**

**Leader:**                We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

**People:**                **By the tree of the cross you bring health to the world.**

**Leader:**                Jesus was a poor man who did not own anything, so his friends borrowed a grave from someone else. Jesus said about himself once: “Even the foxes have holes, but I have nowhere to lay my head.”

As they lay his body in the grave, his friends fear that this is the end of Jesus. But as surely as morning comes after a dark night or spring comes after winter, Jesus will live again, showing us that death is not the end of life. Our spirits keep on living with him in a new manner, if we only believe.

**People:**                **Jesus stood in a wheat field once and said: “Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it can never grow up and bear fruit.” And so it must be with us!**

*(A feather is attached to the cross.)*

## **Closing Unison Prayer**

**O God! Spirit of Love,**

**We thank you for sending us the gift of your son, Jesus.**

**We have just now followed his bloody footsteps along the sacred way of the cross.**

**His apostle Peter called the cross a tree, and that is what it is. But for us it is the tree of life, because Jesus died on it so that we might be happy and live.**

**Help us to remember this cross of Jesus and make us strong against whatever is evil.**

**Help us live good lives so that Jesus did not die in vain.**

**In this way we will be happy on this earth and live with you always in heaven.**

**Amen.**



This liturgy for the way of the Cross has been used by our Lakota brothers and sisters in South Dakota. It was adapted by José Abraham De Jesús, minister and team leader for the Worship and Education Ministry Team, Local Church Ministries.

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