

## THE FIRST STATION

### Jesus is condemned by Pilate

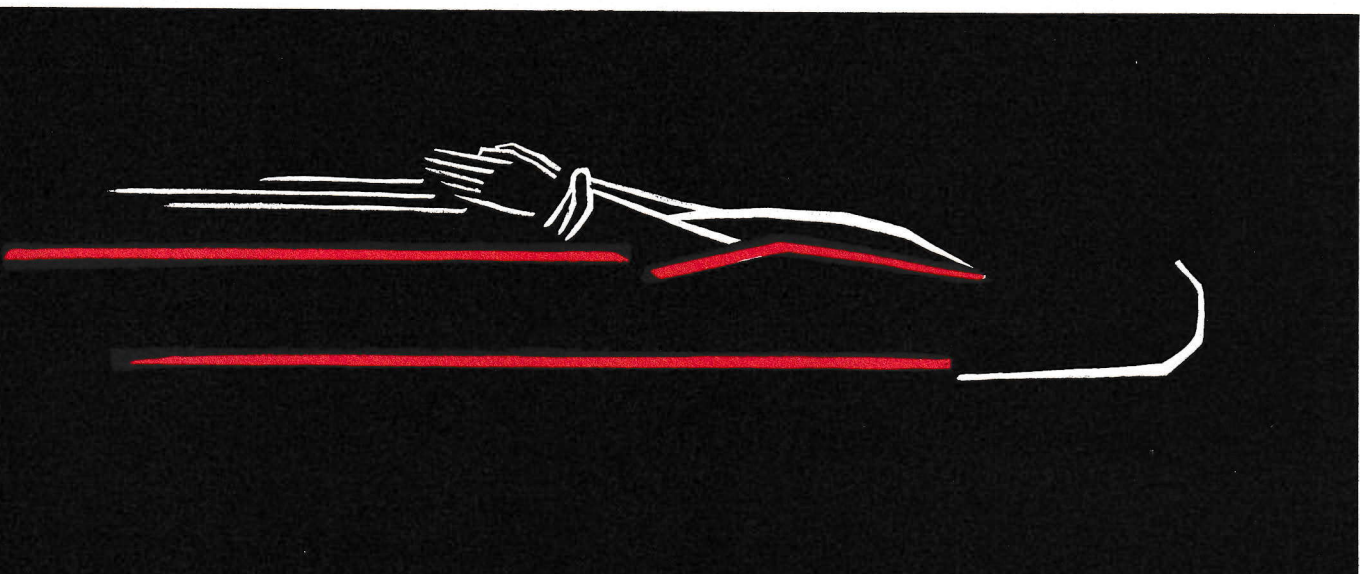
First Pilate condemned me to be scourged because he hoped that this would satisfy the people. He knew that I was innocent, but his job was to maintain law and order in Palestine, and if this could be done by beating an innocent man, then peace was worth a little injustice. My stripes might save a lot of bloodshed later.

But it was not enough to satisfy the leaders of the Jews. Now Pilate was caught by his own argument. If peace was worth a little injustice, and if it could be preserved by a little more, by allowing me to be crucified, shouldn't he order my death?

I was only a poor religious fanatic from another province. No one would blame him for my death, under the circumstances. But a full scale riot, and possibly the death of a Roman soldier, that could be serious. So he washed his hands publicly, to show that he knew that I was innocent, and then handed me over to be crucified.



Lord Jesus, I am sorry for the many times that I have agreed to injustice because I was afraid to be different, to be laughed at, or to share discomfort and unpopularity for something I knew to be right. Give me your power to follow your will from now onwards, regardless of the consequences.



## THE SECOND STATION

Jesus accepts his crown of thorns and his cross

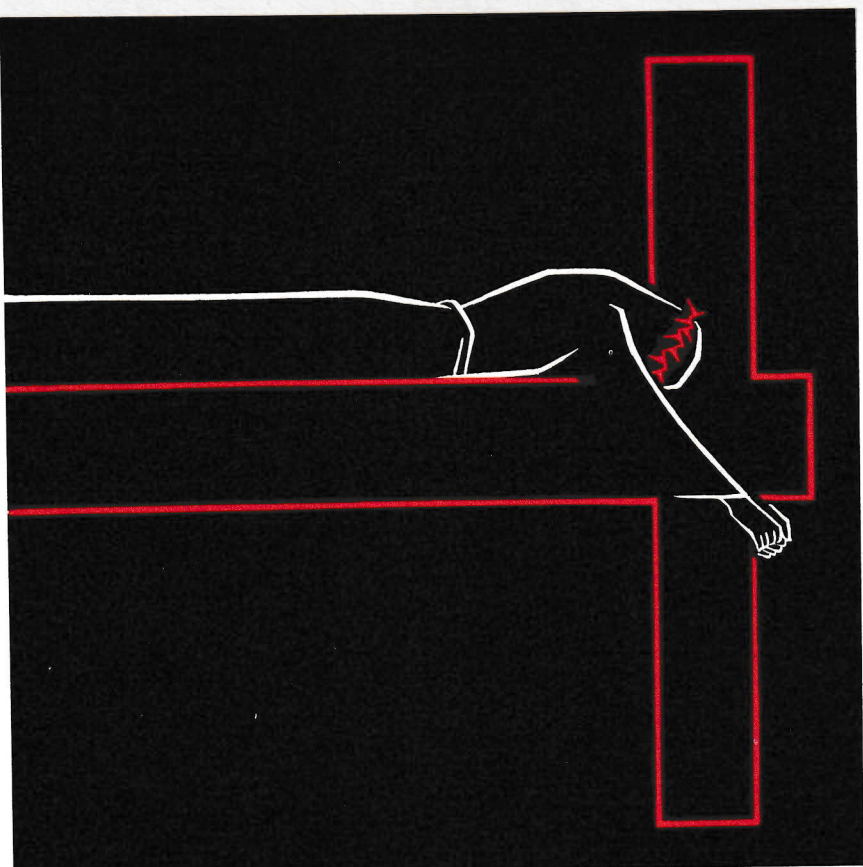
In the beginning my Father spoke a word,  
and the whole creation was made out of nothing;  
and it was good.  
I am that Word,  
and everything is created through me.

The pain of the crown of thorns  
and the agony of the heavy cross  
on my torn and bleeding shoulders  
were made worse by my sorrow  
at the misuse of things  
that were made good.

As my blood  
covered the thorns and the wood  
they were re-created  
and made even more glorious  
because they became signs of my love.

How can you expect peace on earth  
if you misuse my creation so badly?  
You cannot have peace  
until you act as my stewards,  
shepherds of my creatures,  
and do not seek to exploit the world  
for your own selfish benefit.

I accepted my crown and my cross with love  
and bore the pain to bring you new life.  
I embraced the wood with tenderness  
and re-created it as a holy sign  
of my care for everything that I have made.



Lord Jesus, I am sorry that I have treated your  
creation carelessly, or misused it for my own  
selfish ends. Please inspire in me such a love  
for your creatures that I may see you at work  
in their making. Give me a reverence for your  
world so that I treat everything in it as a means  
of showing you to others and bringing your  
kingdom on earth.

## THE THIRD STATION

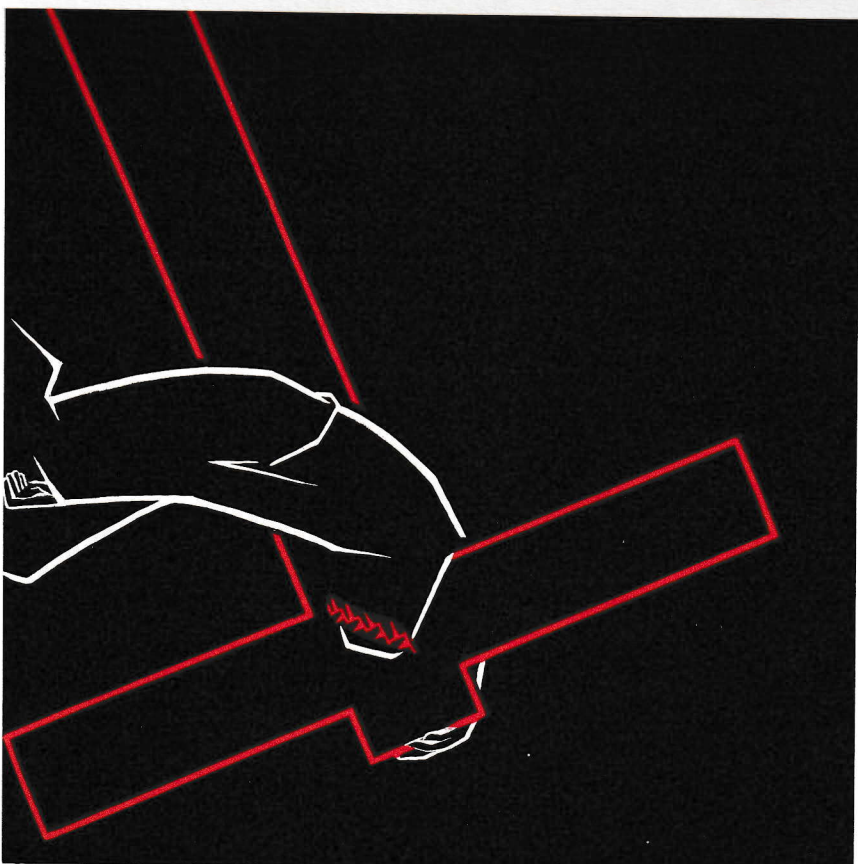
### Jesus falls for the first time

Why did I go on?  
Why didn't I stay on the ground?  
Why did I force myself to rise again  
so that I would get to Calvary,  
and the still more dreadful torment  
that waited for me there?  
There were many who hoped  
that I would die on the way  
and so be spared  
the final hours of agony.

But I came to fulfill my Father's will  
and all the prophecies that spoke of my passion.  
Everything had to be fulfilled in me  
so that there could be no doubt  
that it was of me  
that the scriptures spoke.  
Nothing could be missing.  
I had to die,  
lifted up so that all could see that I was really dead;  
so that the spear could pierce my side to prove it.  
If I had been seen to die on the road  
and to be removed by my disciples,  
who would then have believed the power of God  
shown by my Resurrection?

I would not accept an easier end  
because I wanted to be a clear sign of love for all,  
one that no one could misunderstand;  
a sign that sin and death had been conquered  
and that the kingdom of God  
was created again on earth.

Lord Jesus, teach me by your example to keep  
on trying to hear your will and to do it how-  
ever hard life becomes. You forced yourself  
to walk to Golgotha and refused to accept  
an easier death. Let me follow you wherever  
you lead me without avoiding any of the work  
or sorrow that is on my path.



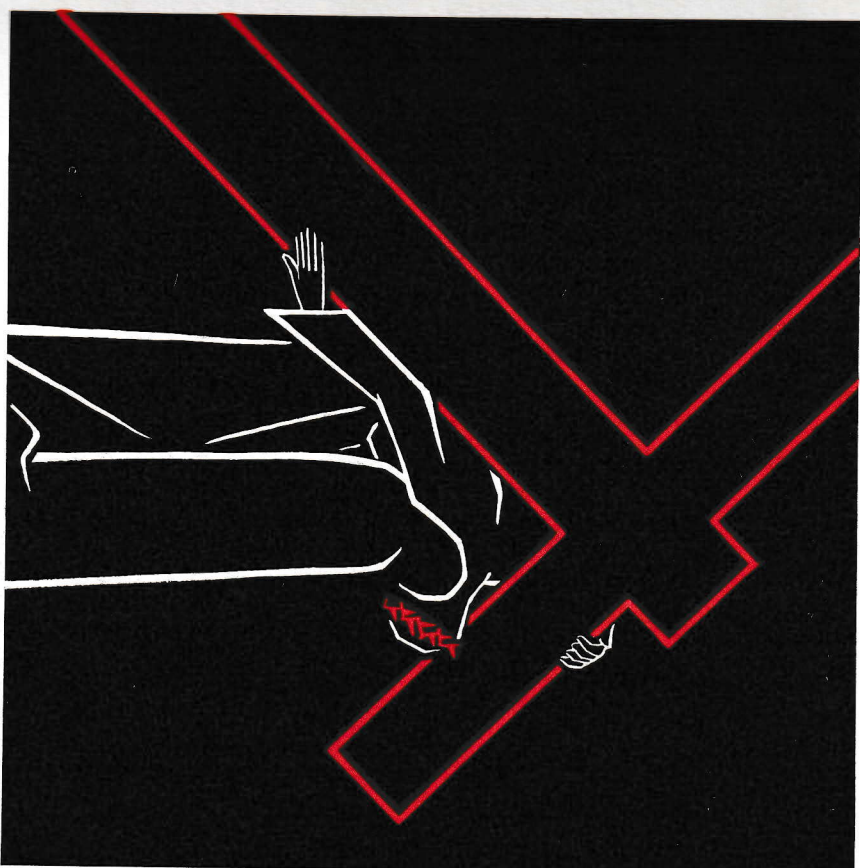
## THE FOURTH STATION

### Jesus meets his mother

My mother trusted God  
even when we met on the road to Calvary.  
She did not understand why I had to die,  
and her hope that I might live  
was finally extinguished  
when they loaded the cross onto my shoulders.  
There was nothing for her to do  
but to trust in God.  
She had nothing left,  
but like Abraham  
she trusted God  
to fulfill all his promises.

My mother suffered  
like every mother in the world.  
She knows the feelings of a mother  
who watches her children die of starvation,  
or dragged away by the police,  
or destroyed by drugs.  
She has seen the injustice of the rich,  
the fickleness of the crowd  
and the cruelty of those acting on behalf of authority.  
But she trusted in God  
and her trust was rewarded.

My mother's trust in God  
made my passion easier.  
If she had despaired,  
it would have added one more pain  
to my way to Calvary.  
Her trust in her unknowing  
was a bright light in the darkness.  
It gave me strength to continue  
and to hope that all would be fulfilled.



Lord Jesus, help me to imitate your mother  
Mary and to trust even when all hope seems  
to be gone. Your promises are true, but the  
way in which you fulfill them is not always  
obvious. I want to trust you but I am weak.  
Give me that strength that made it possible  
for your mother to trust in God's love when  
everything seemed to be ending in defeat.

## THE FIFTH STATION

### Simon of Cyrene helps to carry the cross

Give help whenever you see that it is needed.  
No one wanted to help me to carry my cross.  
It was not a spectacular or exciting job.  
It was humiliating and unpleasant.  
No one would volunteer, so they forced Simon to help me.  
He was glad to slip back into the crowd when we reached  
Golgotha.  
It was dangerous to be associated with a condemned man  
and the cross was dirty and heavy.

I love those who give hidden help  
and who do the distasteful and humiliating jobs  
for the poor and rejected.  
I love those who wash the dying beggar,  
who visit the mentally ill,  
who care for the dirty and destructive orphan.  
I see all these gifts of willing love  
and I pour out my love on my lovers in return.  
For they have loved me in my poor  
and I reward love with love overflowing.

Do not seek to be noticed.  
Accept all opportunities to help the poor and outcast.  
Simon shared my passion and did not know his privilege.  
The wood of the cross touched him,  
and his name will live for ever.  
Simon looked on that day in Jerusalem  
as a frightening moment of humiliation and pain.  
But he found that it was the one moment of glory in his life.

Lord Jesus, give me eyes to see where your  
poor need help. Give me the courage to face  
humiliation and pain, dirt and disgust, for love  
of you in your poor. Let me accept the op-  
portunities you send me to love you in your  
rejected people, and not to ask for more impor-  
tant tasks. Let me rejoice if I can do some  
hidden act of love for you.



## THE SIXTH STATION

### Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

It took courage for a woman to push through the soldiers and to wipe my face with a cloth.

She risked being identified as one of my friends.

The soldiers might have handled her roughly.

I was terrible to look at, bleeding, bruised, broken.

But she did not think of herself, only of me.

Do you see me in the tired, unhappy faces of those condemned to poverty, to disease, or to punishment?

Do you dare to offer them love and help,

or are you ashamed to be with them?

Do you think of loving me,

or only of your fear of mockery,

or of being associated with outcasts?

My glory is within, cased in lowliness, poverty and pain.

It will only flash out and spill over

if you are prepared to touch me, to love me

in the poor and dispossessed.

Do not think of yourself

but of them.

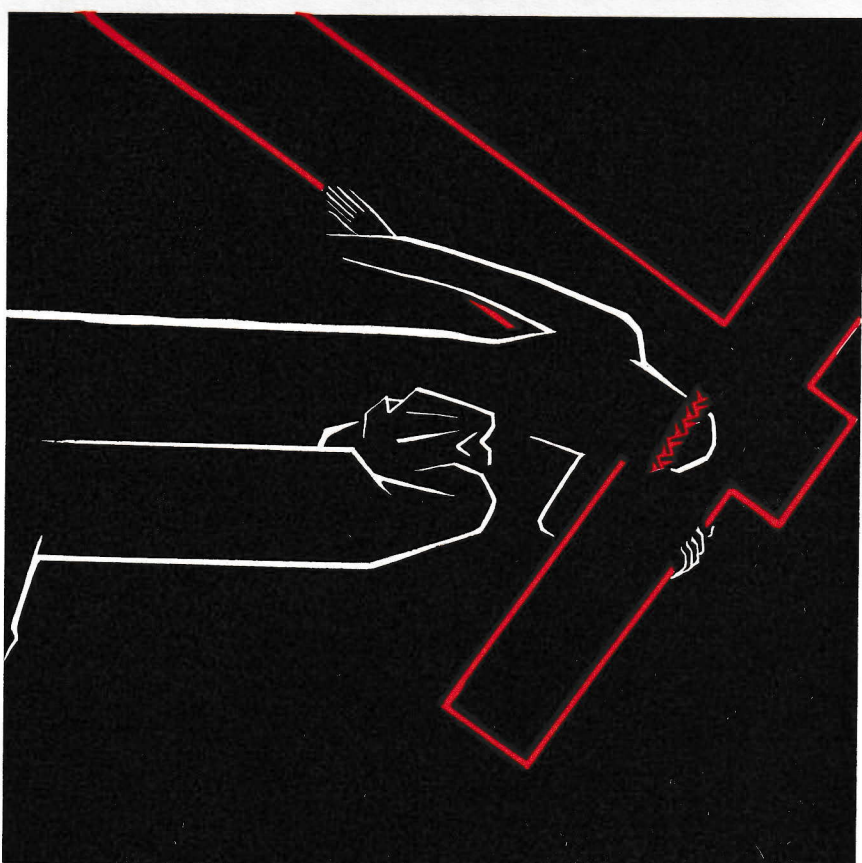
You will find me among them

on their way of the cross through life.

Break through the guards

and bring love to them

as Veronica did to me.



Lord Jesus, teach me to see you in the poor and the rejected. Give me courage to approach them in love. Let me offer compassion without patronising them but by sharing in their pain. Remind me that you are to be found among those whom the world despises and rejects; for it is only by accompanying you that I can come to eternal life.

## THE SEVENTH STATION

### Jesus falls the second time

I was so weak that I could not see where I was going and could hardly move one leg in front of the other.

I stumbled  
and the weight of the cross piece forced me to the ground.

The soldiers pulled me upright again,  
anxious to get me to Calvary  
as quickly as they could.

They could not be certain  
that the crowd would not turn against them.

After all, these were the same people  
who had cheered me into Jerusalem  
less than a week before.

I didn't blame the soldiers.

It is hard to be a foreign authority in a minority  
and in the midst of a fanatical crowd.

In the city with its narrow streets

it was hard for them to defend themselves

against those who could hide

in every doorway,

or drop from every window.

They could show no sign of the fear that they felt

and could only hope to control the people

by a show of brutality and force.

No weakness, no tenderness for me

seemed possible for them

for fear of losing control.

But I loved all of them

as they were behind their fear,

and I prayed

that their hearts would be softened  
so that I could heal them.

Lord Jesus, I have hidden my true feelings so often because I have been afraid or too proud to admit the truth. Let your love soften my heart and fill me with courage so that I may show others my real face and feelings. May your love so fill me that I am able to love those who torment me for fear of the world's opinion; give me the strength to bear the mockery and pain as you did on your way to Calvary.



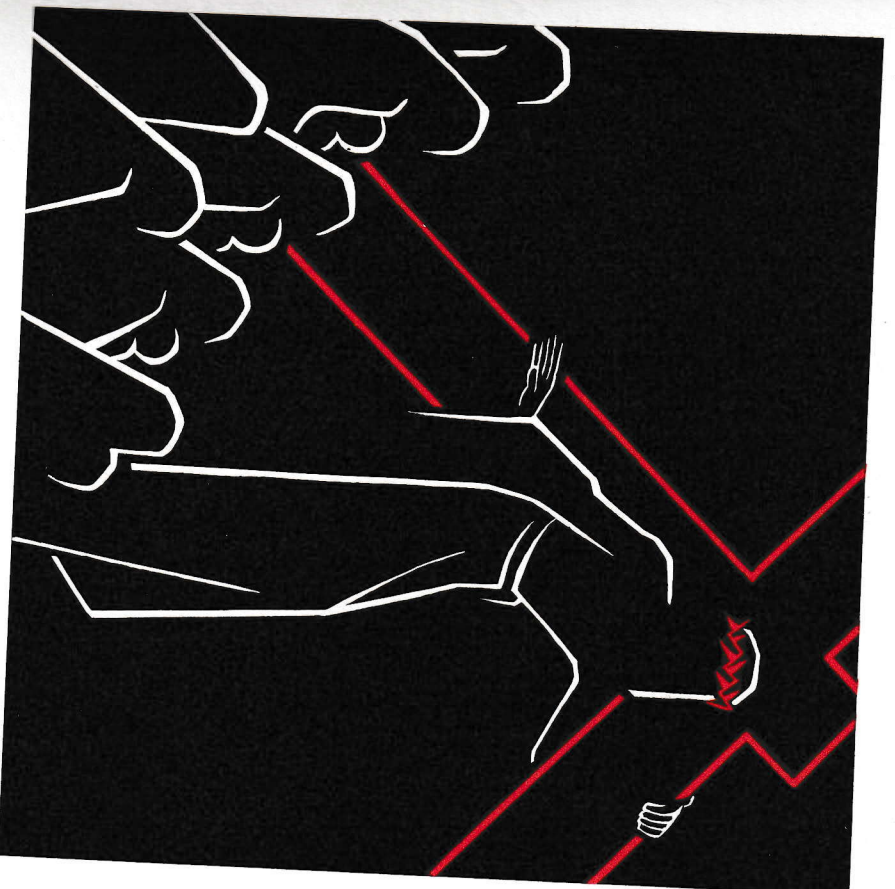
## THE EIGHTH STATION

### The women of Jerusalem

You are not separate from me,  
able simply to sympathise and mourn;  
you must also suffer  
humiliation and death beside me.  
You cannot just observe and comment;  
you are involved.  
It is not enough  
to wail and lament my fate;  
it is yours also.

But there is a difference,  
for I am beside you  
on your way to your cross.  
There is nowhere that you can go  
that my Spirit cannot follow you.  
You cannot flee from my presence,  
for all things own me as Lord.  
The mountains may fall on you,  
but I will be there with you;  
only call on me.  
You may ask the hills to cover you,  
and you will find my hand  
reaching for yours  
if you will only reach out for me.

Weep not for me,  
but for yourselves.  
We are on the same road,  
companions in pain and torment,  
bringing the kingdom to be,  
in the pangs of new birth.  
Come, my beloved children,  
let us make haste to Calvary  
so that the kingdom may come on earth  
as it is in heaven.



Lord Jesus, do not let me stand apart from  
those who are suffering or rejected. Let me  
share their pain and their humiliation and feel  
it in my own body and mind. But above all  
let me bring your companionship and strength  
to them as I enter into their troubled or im-  
poverished lives.

## THE NINTH STATION

### Jesus falls the third time

I fell at the foot of Calvary  
with the high post of the upright tree  
in front of my eyes.

I would not touch the earth again  
until I was dead.

The earth clasped me warmly and firmly.  
It was the earth that I had trodden  
between Galilee and Jerusalem many times.

As I fell, the crowds drew back.

I had come to the place where I would suffer alone.

In the city I had been surrounded by crowds,  
pitying, mocking, frightened people.

I was among men and women.

But here on the cold open hillside,  
I was alone.

It was my lonely task to be lifted up  
for all to see.

Why do you draw back from those who suffer,  
and leave them alone in their moment of greatest need?

A touch, an arm to lean on,  
a friendly smile,

may decide their whole future,  
whether they choose to love or hate,  
life or death.

It is in your power to save or to destroy,  
by sympathy or by backing away.

Remember my last fall

when only the earth embraced me.

Do not leave me alone again  
in one of my poor suffering friends.



Lord Jesus, let me always walk towards those  
who are alone or suffering. Give me strength  
to overcome my fears and hesitations. Do  
not allow me to find excuses. I long to love  
you in your poor and your suffering people,  
but I am afraid and embarrassed. Be with me,  
Lord. Let me see you in them, and let them  
see you in me.

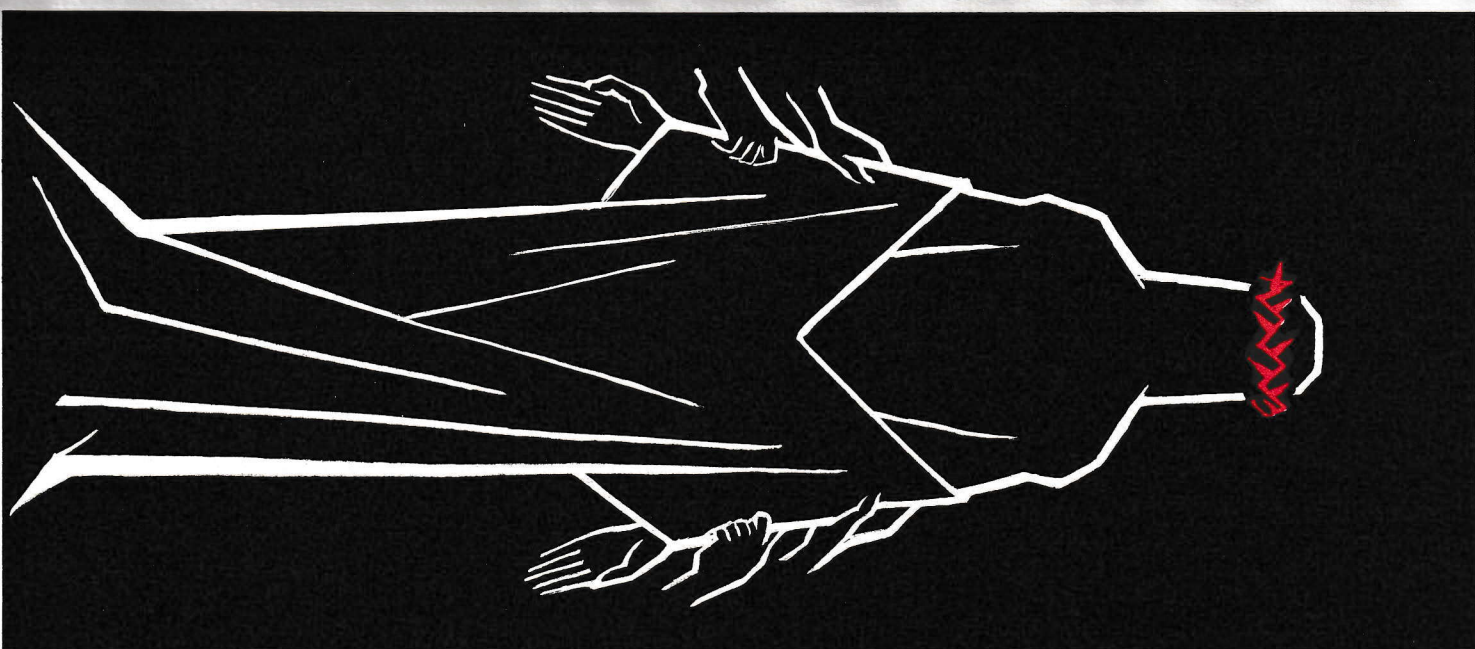
## THE TENTH STATION

### Jesus is stripped of his clothes

I was naked at my death.  
Before I was nailed to my cross,  
I was stripped of my clothes.  
There is no dignity,  
no covering up possible  
in nakedness.  
I was exposed to the eyes of everyone,  
without protection,  
without comfort.

My nakedness made me open  
for all men and women.  
I could not hide behind fine clothes  
nor beautiful rituals.  
There could be no pretence,  
no comfort in a uniform  
showing to which group I belonged  
and to what office I had been appointed.  
I was a naked man,  
stretched out on a cross  
for all to see.

Are you all open  
and vulnerable to your fellows,  
as I was?  
Do you hide behind your denominations and your divisions,  
your clerical collars,  
your exclusive rules,  
or your divisive beliefs?  
Open yourselves as I did  
and make yourselves vulnerable,  
and you will have unity  
because no one can be afraid  
of a naked man on a cross.



Lord Jesus, help me to do  
without those things which I  
use to protect myself from  
others, fine clothes, status  
symbols, the rules and rituals  
of my church, anything which  
makes me feel different and  
superior. Help me to make  
myself naked and open to  
everyone I meet, so that they  
may catch a glimpse of you  
in me.

## THE ELEVENTH STATION

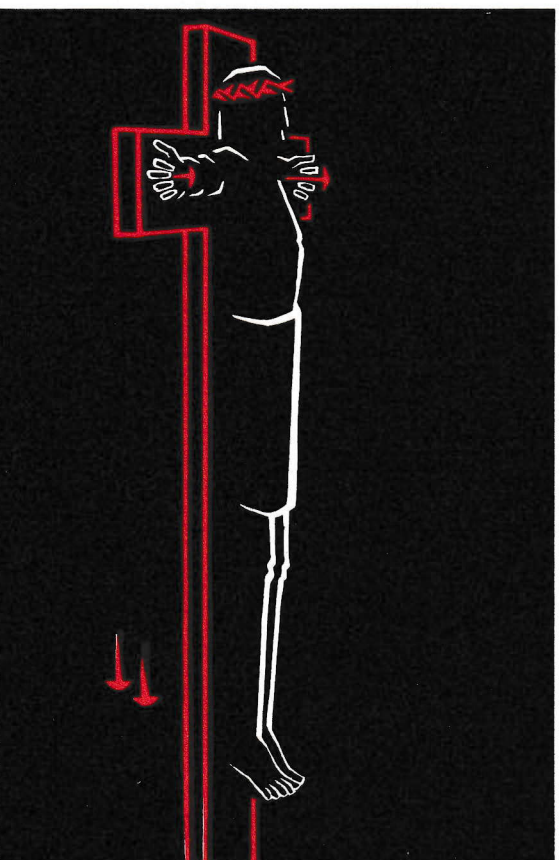
### Jesus is nailed to the cross

What sort of man could place a nail on my wrist  
and drive it through into the wood?

Can you imagine the pain  
as the nails parted the bones of my wrists  
and as they dragged me  
nailed to the crosspiece  
up to the upright post  
and lifted me hanging on the nails?  
And the redoubled pain  
as they hammered the nails  
through my ankles?

Could you have hammered in those nails?  
Could you have asked that those men should be forgiven?  
Do you forgive those who hurt you in any way?  
You do not know why they are able to do such things;  
they may be afraid;  
they may have been terribly hurt themselves;  
they may be ambitious;  
they may never have known what it is to be loved.  
Your forgiveness and love as they hurt you  
may change their lives.  
Can you offer them this chance  
even as they attack you?

I loved those men who nailed me to my cross,  
even though they were misusing tools  
that I had learned to handle with love in Nazareth.  
Forgive those who do you injuries  
as I forgave all who had a part in my passion.  
If they accept your forgiveness,  
you will have saved them.



Lord Jesus, lead me on a path of forgiveness.  
Whenever I am tempted to repay injury with  
further injury, remind me of your love for  
those who nailed you to your cross. Be with  
me, Lord, in my anger and my pride, and let  
me not miss the opportunities you send me to  
save my enemies by loving them with your  
help.

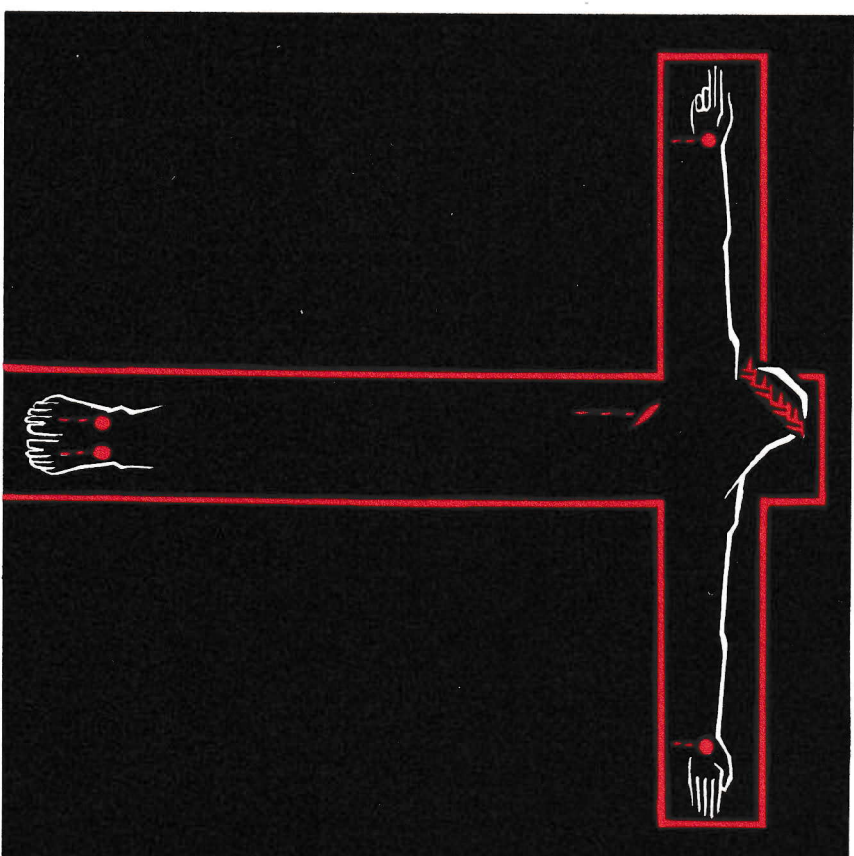
## THE TWELFTH STATION

### Jesus dies on the cross

Everything was accomplished; I could do no more;  
I had fulfilled every prophecy by my actions.  
I had become as naked and poor as I had been at my birth.  
I had entrusted my beloved mother to my dearest friend.  
But there was one more scripture to be lived  
so that everything might be complete,  
one more word that I had to take into myself  
and speak out again, fulfilled.  
I had learned all the psalms at my mother's knee  
and this was my final word.  
'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'  
I am a worm and no man; all who see me mock at me;  
I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint;  
they stare and gloat at me.'

The sky grew darker as the sun's eclipse became complete.  
It seemed to be the final defeat  
and my words removed all hope from my friends as they heard  
them,  
except for my mother who trusted God as she had always done,  
even in complete darkness and chaos.  
But there is no darkness so complete  
that my light cannot dispel it,  
no circumstances so desperate that I cannot overcome them.  
For the psalm goes on;  
'But you, O Lord, be not far off; deliver my soul from the sword;  
I will tell of your name to my brethren  
for you have heard when I cried to you.  
Men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation  
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
that he has wrought it.'

My Father had seemed to be absent  
but only to allow me to trust in his love to the very end.  
His word had been a lifeline to me  
so that my last words and thoughts were not of his absence  
but of his love and salvation.  
And I died with words of hope and praise on my lips.



Let us remember that you are a loving Father  
and that nothing can separate us from your  
love except our own desires. If you seem to  
withdraw from us for a moment, we are lost  
in darkness and fear. Bring us through the  
darkness and into your light and life once  
more.

## THE THIRTEENTH STATION

### Jesus is taken down from the cross

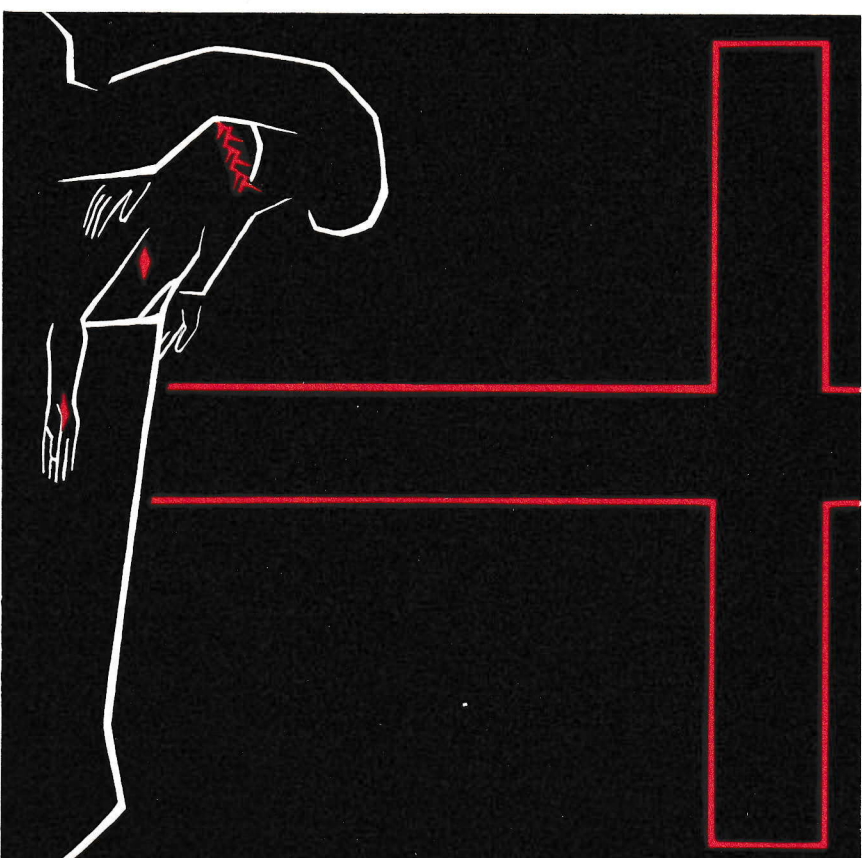
He was too dangerous to risk his being alive  
and so the soldiers pierced his side with a lance,  
while they broke the legs of the other two thieves.  
Why didn't they pierce them too?  
Why inflict that extra suffering on them?

So we know that Jesus really died  
and that even in death  
he provided us with further symbols  
of his love and care;  
blood flowing from his heart,  
cleansing the world;  
water from his side,  
washing away our sins.  
Those who loved him  
could be glad that he could suffer no more,  
their gladness mingled with sadness  
that he was no longer there  
to guide and protect them.

Then at last the bodies  
could be taken down  
and hidden away  
in case they polluted  
the great day of Passover.  
But it had been replaced by a greater day,  
when God in his own person  
healed the whole world  
from sin and death.

A silence fell on Calvary;  
no longer the groans and screams  
of the dying men;  
just the sobbing of the mourners  
as they placed the limp, tortured body  
in Mary's arms.

Father, you allowed your only son to be killed,  
by men, on a cross. You made us in your  
image and yet you allowed us to torture and  
kill your Word. Help us to see your power  
in what appears to be weakness, your love in  
what seems to be failure, your promise in the  
darkness and pain of death. Give us the  
strength to trust you when all seems finished,  
so that we may come to your everlasting  
kingdom through Jesus Christ your Son, our  
Lord.



## THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb, and on the third day rises again

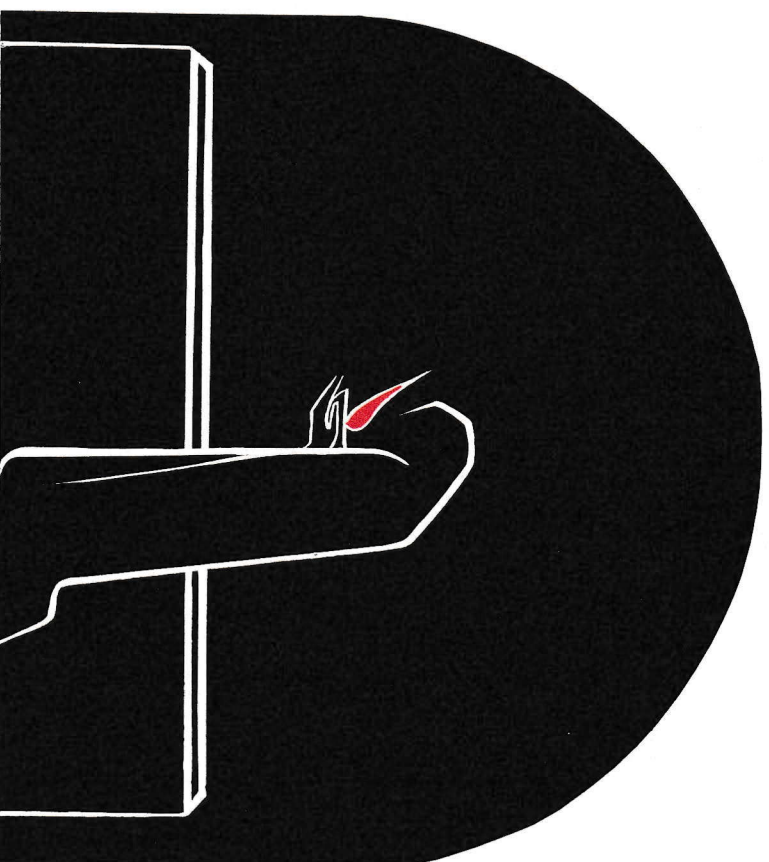
Did those carrying my limp body to the tomb  
feel the energy within longing to burst out into new life?  
I died and in my dying the world was recreated:  
Once again I was by my Father's side,  
a master craftsman, delighting him day after day,  
ever at play in his presence,  
at play everywhere in his world,  
delighting to be with the sons of men.

I am the uncreated Word,  
begotten by the Father before time began.  
I am the Word by which all that is was made.  
I am the Word who remade all that had been unmade by sin.  
I am he who died and rose again.  
My death was victory;  
all that follows it is conquest by love.  
My body had to lie in the tomb  
to fulfill the prophecies  
so that all would see and believe.

But I was impatient to rise again  
in the dawn of the new age,  
to dance once more in the world  
my Father made through me  
and to be with my friends,  
the sons of men.

I am the living bread, the living wine,  
flesh and blood,  
food for your eternal salvation.  
Oh my beloved friends!  
how I longed for the morning of Easter day  
when I rose again,  
as you will at the last day.

There is no more death,  
only a way to eternal life, to joy, to peace,  
to dancing in the presence of my Father.  
Come, join me in the dance,  
the endless play that creates the new life.  
Let us delight to play in the world my Father made.



Come, Lord Jesus, lead us in the joyful dance  
of the Resurrection. Help us to cast off our  
cares and our sadness and let us be free and  
unashamed to play with you in the world. You  
are our Lord, our Redeemer, our Lover and our  
Brother. Teach us to be joyful in the midst  
of sorrow, peaceful in the midst of anger and  
pure in the presence of lust. We are your people.  
Lead us in the eternal dance of love.

