

### Family Discussion:

How have you and your family felt if you have lost a loved one?

Think about all the good and kind things that the person who has died has done in their life and try to use that goodness as an example of how to live your life.

If need be, consider participation in a counselling and support program such as 'Seasons for Growth' involving both children and adults.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, at times we are very sad because someone we love has died. Help us to remember you are always with us and that the person we have lost is with you.*

### Family Discussion:

How do we work to overcome discouragement and hopelessness which can be part of family life today?

Are we aware of the support that is available to us within our parish and school communities and CatholicCare to help us when times are difficult?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, even when things look very difficult and sad, we trust that God will bring new life and hope.*

## THE FIFTEENTH STATION <sup>15</sup>

**Jesus rises from the dead.**

Jesus' tomb is empty, Jesus is alive!

### Reflection:

In most churches we see 14 Stations of the Cross on the walls. In recent times we have been encouraged to add a 15th Station to complete The Way of the Cross with a celebration of Jesus' rising to new life.

It is important to take time to thank God for your life, for the good things you have been able to do, for the people in your life, and for the good things that people have done for you. When you get up in the morning or when you go to bed at night, do you say "Thanks" to God for your life and for the wonderful things you can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell?

Jesus taught us that there is life after death and that he is always with us.

### Family Discussion:

Thank God for giving us life and each other.

What could your family do to celebrate that Jesus loves us and is with us? For example, attend Easter Mass and school celebrations.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, help us to be always thankful for our families and to know that you live in our hearts and in the hearts of those we meet.*

### Concluding Reflection

Pope Francis has encouraged us to follow Christ on the way of the cross; he says this means, "sharing his merciful love, entering into his great work of mercy for each person and for all mankind. And this forgiveness passes through the cross". (Sunday Angelus, St Peter's Square, 8 September 2013)

It is hoped that praying The Way of the Cross will help your family to follow Christ and to understand his message of a forgiving and sustaining love for all.

1/2014 - This is part of a series of handouts on Nurturing Faith in Family published by the Parish Support Unit, Diocese of Broken Bay. For further information please contact Janette Davidson, Diocesan Coordinator Family Life Ministries janette.davidson@dbb.org.au

## Nurturing Faith in Families Series

## The Stations of the Cross (The Way of the Cross)

## for Families

### General Reflection

We are all born into a family, as Jesus was. We grow up in a family, as Jesus did. Whether we live alone or with several generations, we all live most of our lives in the context of family relationships, as Jesus did. The Stations of the Cross (The Way of the Cross) is an enduring devotion which provides an opportunity for families to reflect on how each of 'The Stations' can be applied to our daily lives. Many families cannot make it to Church for scheduled times for The Stations, they can however have a great impact on us by visiting a Church for a private family saying of The Stations or when they are said at home as a family. With young children they can be coupled with night time prayers and reflected on over several nights progressively. The most important element of this devotion is the effect it can have on our daily lives and how it can change our hearts.

What The Stations record were not moments of failure for Jesus or the people involved in His passion and death. They were moments of great courage, compassion and hope. The reflections focus on key moments in our lives. Some occur daily. They present an opportunity for family conversation around important life and relationship issues. Hopefully, this journey of faith will help us to experience courage, compassion and hope in our own 'Way of the Cross'.

*Please feel free to adapt the reflections, discussions and prayers to suit your particular family situations.*

## THE FIRST STATION <sup>1</sup>

**Jesus is sentenced to death.**

Jesus was accused of many crimes he did not commit.

### Reflection:

How do you feel when someone blames you for something you didn't do?

Share a time when you were misunderstood or when you misjudged someone else. How did you deal with the situation?

There are times in our lives when it is easier to go along with the crowd, even though we know it is wrong. It takes real courage to stand up for what is right.

### Family discussion:

Try not to join in criticizing and judging others. Have the courage to stand up for those being picked on (or alert an adult) and offer friendship to unpopular children at school/in groups.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, help me to have the courage to try to do what is right even when I am being criticized. Help me to be kind to others, even when it is not the popular thing to do.*

## THE SECOND STATION <sup>2</sup>

**Jesus takes the cross.**

Jesus carried the heavy cross without complaining.

### Reflection:

What crosses/burdens/struggles are weighing on you individually and as a family?

All families have worries and concerns at times. There are no perfect families. Sometimes we too feel tired and weak (and can be cross and upset), because we have some problems that are worrying us.

### Family discussion:

Be honest with children about your struggles and encourage them to do the same. Sharing a worry sets up an important sharing of worries for the future. Help them to learn from these experiences.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, as a family we pray that we may receive the strength to carry our crosses and our difficulties whatever they may be.*

## THE THIRTEENTH STATION <sup>13</sup>

**Jesus is taken down from the cross.**

Jesus' mother and friends gently care for his body.

### Reflection:

We all know people who are very sad, have lost a family member or close friend or a loved one.

They have feelings of being alone, afraid, abandoned and can be angry with life and God.

Remember a time when someone did something good for you when you were feeling sad.

### Family Discussion:

Give thanks for the people who have encouraged and supported you. As a family make a conscious choice to do something helpful for others such as actively supporting a local or international charity or community group. Make it an enjoyable time for your children. Emphasize the importance of keeping commitments.

**Prayer:** *Sometimes it is risky to step out and help people who are in need. Jesus, I am willing to be a risk-taker and help others. Mary, mother of Jesus help us to care for others and show them our love and compassion.*

## THE FOURTEENTH STATION <sup>14</sup>

**Jesus is laid out in the tomb.**

Jesus' body is wrapped in clothes and placed in the tomb.

### Reflection:

There are times in our lives when we become discouraged and things seem hopeless and have not worked out the way we thought. Problems with family, friends in school and work can make us unhappy. It can be helpful to share our problems with others.

### THE THIRD STATION <sup>3</sup>

*Jesus falls the first time.*

Jesus finds the weight of the cross is heavy, he falls.

#### Reflection:

How often in the life of a family do we feel we are being crushed by the weight of our crosses (worries)? Are we able to laugh at/learn from our mistakes and forgive ourselves our more serious errors? Share a mistake you have made recently.

Think about the times you tried something new, failed and quit. Maybe with some help or advice, you could try again – and be successful!

#### Family discussion:

We need to get back up when we have fallen.

Prepare children for the fact that whilst they might do their best, sometimes they may fail, but they will always have the love of their family and of Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, when things get hard for me I sometimes give up. You fell, but got up and kept going. Help me to get up when I fall and keep going.*

### THE FOURTH STATION <sup>4</sup>

*Jesus meets his mother.*

When Jesus meets his mother he understands the sorrows and worries of all mothers.

#### Reflection:

Our parents love us and are always there for us. We need to think about all the things they do for us and don't get time to do for themselves. We need to remember how much they love us and we need to thank them for all that they do.

#### Family discussion:

Share a time when you were really glad to see your mum. When has your family been there to specially help you?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, our parents (and grandparents) love us very much, and sometimes we don't have time to thank them or hug them because we are too busy or interested in other things. Jesus, I thank you for my parents (and grandparents) and their love for me.*

### THE FIFTH STATION <sup>5</sup>

*Simon helps Jesus to carry the cross.*

Jesus is grateful to Simon for his help.

#### Reflection:

Sometimes helping someone can be difficult, for so many different reasons. Maybe you haven't finished doing something that you like to do, when someone asks you for help.

#### Family discussion:

Is it difficult for you to ask your family or friends for help or say thank you when you are helped?

Share a time when someone helped you when you really needed it or when you helped someone. How did you feel?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, sometimes I pretend not to hear when someone calls out for me or I am just too busy to offer my help. You gave help to everyone. When you needed help, you accepted it. Help me to have courage to offer help when I see that it is needed and also to accept help when I need it.*

### THE SIXTH STATION <sup>6</sup>

*Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.*

Veronica showed love for Jesus by her kindness and Jesus was grateful.

#### Reflection:

Share a time when you were kind to someone. How did being kind make you feel?

#### Family discussion:

As followers of Christ we need to reach out to those who feel left out and alone.

Help us remember that like Veronica, we can 'wipe someone's face' by extending a smile, a handshake, an encouraging word or a gift. Small kindnesses mean a lot because they can ripple and grow and affect others. Help children to see the many little ways they can be kind to others, perhaps watch a movie such as 'Pay it Forward'.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, there are times when I see someone who is sad or lonely or worried. Just as Veronica wiped your face to comfort You, help me to always be kind to others in whatever way I can.*

### THE SEVENTH STATION <sup>7</sup>

*Jesus falls the second time.*

Jesus falls a second time under the weight of the cross and the treatment of the guards.

#### Reflection:

Mistakes are not bad if we learn from them, keep trying in spite of them; sometimes they teach us to be more understanding of others. Consider the times you have, or have not, encouraged others to try again, especially when they made some silly mistakes.

#### Family Discussion:

When others stumble (make mistakes or have problems) offer to help. Involve your family in service projects that help others 'get on their feet', for example, St Vincent de Paul and Project Compassion.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, sometimes when things are going well for me, they are not going so well for others. Help me to watch out for others who need help and re-assure them that You are with them and will always hear their call.*

### THE EIGHTH STATION <sup>8</sup>

*Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem.*

The women saw Jesus suffering and were very sad but Jesus gave them hope.

#### Reflection:

Every family experiences sadness and grief due to such things as death, separation, serious illness and addiction. Affirm the members of your family - tell them something special about them.

Sometimes it is easy to just think about ourselves, about what is not going the way we want it, or about problems that we have. It is very hard, then, to think about how other people feel and about their sadness.

#### Family Discussion:

How do we comfort those who are sad? How can our children reach out to their friends who experience loss?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, I get selfish at times and think only of myself. Help me to reach out to others as you did. Help me to see the needs of others and put their needs above mine.*

### THE NINTH STATION <sup>9</sup>

*Jesus falls the third time.*

Jesus falls down again dropping his cross but gets up.

#### Reflection:

When we have really tried to do our best, and have not been able to succeed, it is easy to feel like Jesus must have felt when he fell a third time. Sometimes people can be mean and criticize us for something we do, or make fun of the way we do something.

There are times in our lives when we feel we can't continue with something as we have tried and tried without success. In these times we need the help of Jesus and of others close to us to 'pick ourselves up and start all over again'.

#### Family Discussion:

How do we cope with repeated struggles/worries?

Share what you like to do when you are feeling worried? Would it help your family to have an activity to count on when everyone is having a bad day? A 'family ritual' to help everyone let go of the 'grumps'? What might it be for your family?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, help us to know that you will always be there to answer our call and to show us a way forward.*

### THE TENTH STATION <sup>10</sup>

*Jesus is stripped of his robes.*

Jesus' clothes are taken away.

#### Reflection:

To be without clothes in front of everyone is a humiliating and embarrassing experience.

Our bodies are sacred, special gifts from God, all bodies are precious.

Stripped of our pride by, for example, being corrected in front of others, we can feel very embarrassed.

#### Family Discussion:

Think of times we may have been embarrassed or have embarrassed others.

Try not to join in with others to embarrass somebody else. Treat others the way we want to be treated.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, help us to think before we do or say something that might embarrass others. Give us the strength and the courage to make the right decision even when doing the right thing is hard.*

### THE ELEVENTH STATION <sup>11</sup>

*Jesus is nailed to the cross.*

Jesus forgives those who hurt him.

#### Reflection:

We sometimes fail to realize that challenges are as much a part of life as rewards. When we are unfairly treated, forgiveness always helps and heals the forgiver.

Can you think of a time when someone hurt you with unkind words or actions? Was it hard for you to forgive that person?

Children can sometimes hurt others without understanding what they are doing. Sometimes they might join with friends and gang up against another.

#### Family Discussion:

When we do things that are unkind and hurtful we also hurt Jesus. Like being rude to parents or saying words that hurt others, we will be forgiven if we say sorry and try not to do the same thing again.

Perhaps you might attend a parish Reconciliation service as a family.

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, sometimes I say or do hurtful things to others. Help me to bring Your love to others and cause them no hurt. Help me to say sorry and also to forgive others who are unkind to me.*

### THE TWELFTH STATION <sup>12</sup>

*Jesus dies on the cross.*

Jesus died for us all.

#### Reflection:

Death is never easy because it seems to have taken away all we have ever known about someone. We need to be aware of the hurt experienced by those who lose a loved one.

We are part of God's family, and we must have compassion and kindness for all.