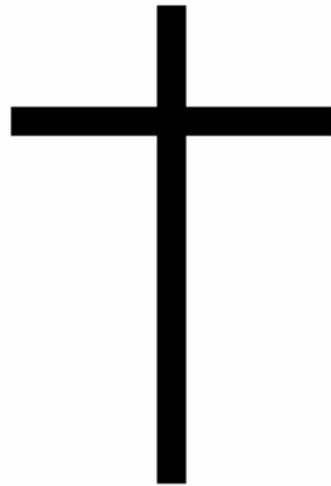


STATIONS  
OF THE  
CROSS



PETRA SHAKESHAFT



## STATIONS OF THE CROSS

THE FOLLOWING IS A SET OF MEDITATIONS, SCRIPTURE AND PRAYERS,  
WHICH RECALL JESUS' FINAL JOURNEY TOWARDS THE CROSS,  
HIS DEATH AND WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN  
TO PRAY THAT JOURNEY IN THE WORLD AND FOR THE WORLD TODAY.  
YOU CAN USE ALL OR PART OF THE MATERIAL IN THIS BOOKLET,  
**The images are all drawings by Eric Gill and are available in many places online.**

## The First Station:



*'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Messiah?'*  
*All of them said 'Let him be crucified' (Matthew 27:22)*

The path is set.  
Pilate has washed his hands.  
He doesn't understand you  
he is afraid.  
Your strength frightened him  
Your silence unnerved him  
Your humility  
Your peace  
as you drank deeply of the source of your power.  
You are God's Son,  
yet the world still has you on trial.  
The world does not understand you either  
nor your power  
or peace.

Your Kingdom is not determined by worldly values;  
the hunger for power  
the need for just another million,  
the desire for celebrity,  
the cult of self.

If the world asks anything it is, 'why is it like this?

What are you going to do about it?

Don't just stand there silently.'

Silent Jesus, give us the grace

to stand tall in the face of the ridicule of the world.

Give us strength not to bend to worldly glory.

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We pray for all those who suffer injustice.

For those who are persecuted for their faith.

For those victimised because they are different,

For those displaced by war, earthquake or famine.

We pray for all prisoners

For asylum seekers

For those imprisoned by their own mind.

For those who seek justice through our courts.

And we pray for those whose lives are so dysfunctional

They cannot stay out of prison.

We pray for those bullied and badgered by unfair systems,

And those who live under the tyranny of cruel regimes.

In your silence Lord,

give us the voice to speak for the voiceless

The courage to reach out where we see injustice.

Amen

## The Second Station:



*The soldiers mocked him, saying, 'Hail King of the Jews!'  
They spat on him and mocked him and led him away to be crucified.  
(Matthew 27: 29-31)*

Your body is torn and bleeding, Weary and worn;  
Thorns driven deep into your head.  
What more humiliation can be heaped upon you?  
Ah the cross!  
It lies heavily on your shoulder.  
You carry the weight of the world.  
Humankind's inhumanity,  
Greed and hunger for power.  
War and violence, Sorrow, Poverty,  
Systems of injustice,  
The rich keep on getting richer  
and the poor?  
Ah, we will have them with us always.  
But not you. Your path is set.

We pray for those who are weighed down with trouble.

For those who are crushed by the world,

For those who cannot negotiate the systems,

for those who do not get a fair start.

For those dealt an unfair hand.

For those who are powerless,

disabled,

alone.

The homeless,

The friendless,

The addicted,

The unemployed,

The hopeless.

Give us compassion

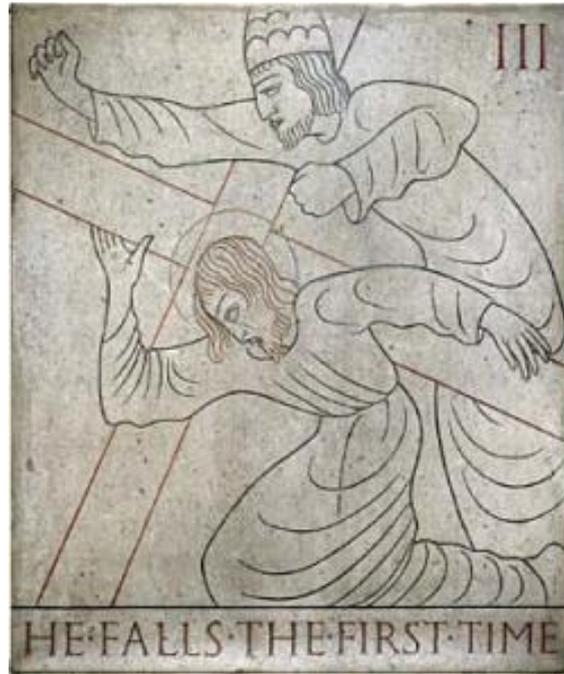
that we may support the heavy hearted,

befriend the friendless

And bring your hope.

Amen

### The Third Station:



*He was wounded for our transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us whole. (Isaiah 53:5)*

You stumble under the weight.

Your legs are tired

You are already exhausted  
and there is still far to go.

You haul yourself back up and stumble on.

Your blood stains the dust.

The jeering crowd bay for more.

Your Kingdom is not of this world  
and nor is your strength.

In this world

we are not permitted to fall or fail.

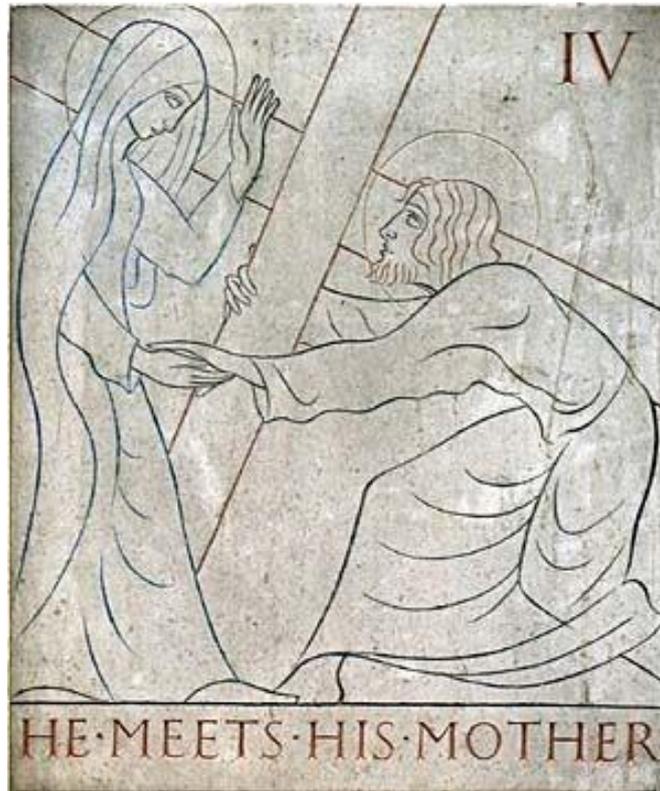
Success is all.

We may not be weak,

We may not give up.

We pray for those who have fallen.  
Those for whom the demands of the world have proved too much.  
Those who have failed to find work,  
Whose relationships have failed,  
Whose attempts at life have failed.  
We pray for those many failures we have endured,  
The many things we have failed to do,  
The things we failed to say.  
Give to us all  
the strength, the courage and hope  
to get up and try again.  
To know that even when we fail  
your love does not fail us.  
Amen

The Fourth Station:



*This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel,  
and to be a sign that will be opposed ...  
and a sword will pierce your own soul too. (Luke 2:34-35)*

Ah, She is here.

She who was there at the start,  
who felt the first fluttering of the Holy Spirit  
As you were encased in flesh inside her womb.

She who bore you out into this world  
In blood and water  
in a lonely stable.

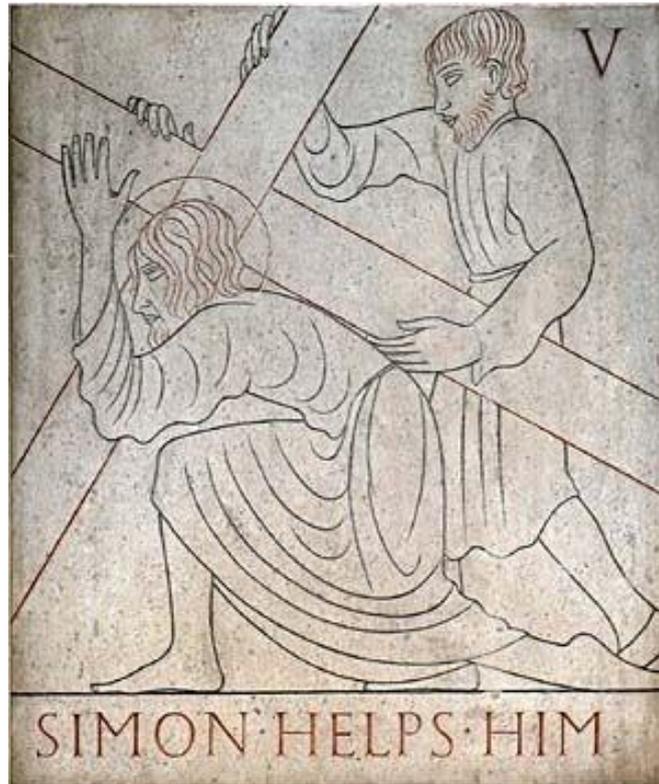
She who the old man told,  
'A sword shall pierce your soul.'  
Your suffering causes her agony  
and her pain is your pain too.

She moves towards you with her arms outstretched  
Her face swollen with tears and unbounded grief.  
She touches your lips with the tenderness of a lover.  
They are cracked and dry  
bloody, caked with dust.  
Are you thirsty yet?

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We pray for Families  
of every shape and size  
giving thanks for those families which provide love and  
understanding for all members.  
We pray for single parents and those parents without support.  
For parents who care for children with disabilities,  
with learning difficulties or anxieties.  
For unhappy parents  
For unhappy children.  
For families where relationships are broken down.  
For children separated from their parents  
and for parents separated from their children.  
For parents who cannot provide for their children  
and families who live in fear  
in war zones or areas of conflict.  
For parents who have lost children  
and for children who have lost parents.  
We ask that they may know something of your love and peace.  
We give thanks for our own families  
and pray that we may not take one another for granted.  
Amen

## The Fifth Station:



*If any want to become my followers,  
let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.  
(Matthew 16:24)*

He appears from the crowd.  
Pushed by some unseen hands.  
He is dark – not from these parts.  
A Cyrenean, perhaps.  
He is tall and muscular  
He hesitates.  
His eyes meet yours  
and there is an almost imperceptible sign between you.  
You stop and lower your eyes  
and he walks towards you.  
He lifts the cross from your shoulder.  
and bears its weight.

His lips tighten, his eyes fixed ahead.

He is defiant, determined.

And you?

Your face is filled with gratitude,  
relief ... and love.

You plant your shoulder again against the wood  
and with renewed strength

You move forward together.

He is another who knows not what he is doing

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We pray for all those who bear another's load.

For those who quietly care for their loved ones  
when they are sick or frail;

For those who worry about friends or family,  
For those who listen, those who hold on to the pain of another.

Give strength to those who are exhausted;  
those caring for patients in hospitals,  
those traumatised by not being able to stop  
the wave upon wave of death and suffering.

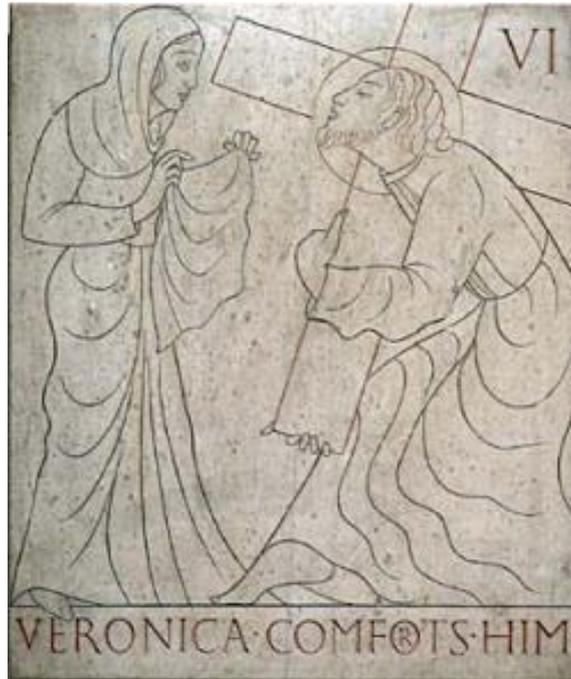
We pray that they will know your presence alongside them  
and feel you take the weight of their burden  
That you will lighten their load.

We pray too, for the courage to step out  
and help those we see struggling.

That we can listen and labour and love for the sake of another.

Amen

## The sixth station



*My heart says to you, 'Your face, Lord, do I seek'.  
Hide not your face from me. (Psalm 27:8-9)*

From the baying crowd comes a woman  
her face contorted with compassion.  
She cannot bear your pain  
though she bears her own grief  
openly before your tormentors.  
She comes close to you;  
close enough to trace each bead of sweat upon your brow,  
the gobbets of ignorant phlegm spat into your beard,  
and blood, drying in the sun.  
She removes her veil.  
She is exposed, vulnerable.  
Tumbling black curls fall across her shoulders,  
and the crowd falls into silence.

The veil of the temple is drawn aside for her  
and she has seen her God face-to-face.  
Tenderly she offers the veil in her hand  
and presses it to your grateful brow.

She ...

She holds your pain for a moment.  
The veil absorbs your pain for a moment  
and your gift to her  
in the sweat, the spit, the blood and tears  
is the recognition of the image of God  
The face on the veil  
the image of God in her face.

\*\*\*

Gracious God

We pray for all those who relieve another's pain.

For those who will risk themselves  
out of compassion for another  
who expose themselves to danger or ridicule.

We pray for those individuals and agencies  
who work in areas of poverty,  
places of war, famine, disease and disaster.

From your grace  
give us compassion and courage  
to pull aside the veil of our human nature,  
that we may bear a resemblance to you,  
to leave behind comfort, security and obscurity  
to step out and relieve the pain of others  
remembering that each one bears your image.

Amen.

## The Seventh Station:



*He has blocked my way with hewn stones,  
he has made my paths crooked.  
He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes.  
(Lamentations 3:9 &16)*

Still you stumble,  
your exhaustion, your pain, the heat.  
it is too much  
and again you sink to your knees.  
You fall forwards on to your hands  
Your fingers sink into the dust of the earth  
Out of this you – we – all were fashioned  
and all will return.  
The dust sticks to the sweat on the back of your hands  
and to the hairs on your arm.  
The shouting starts  
the jeering, the cruel taunting,  
What do they see?

The man of sorrows?  
or the Prince of Peace?  
The man from Nazareth?  
Or the Lord of the universe?

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Man of Sorrows  
Prince of Peace  
We pray to you  
For all those who the world believes are fallen away,  
Those who the world believes cannot make a contribution.  
Those who feel they are a burden.  
Those unable to help themselves.  
The elderly,  
The vulnerable,  
The feeble, the feckless,  
Those who fall because they are weak  
Those who fall because they are disorientated  
Those who fall because they are alone.  
We pray for bruised bodies, for cut knees and split lips  
We pray for pain and frustration,  
For tears and loneliness,  
for feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness.  
We remember that these are the people who you touched and healed,  
The people you walked alongside  
and gave their lives value and meaning.  
Amen

## The Eighth Station



*Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me,  
but weep for yourselves and for your children. (Luke 23:28)*

He spies them in the crowd.  
These are the women who huddle together  
wailing, arm-waving,  
fearful.  
They watch the world but do not change its course.  
They wail and they cry  
but they do not act.  
Do not weep for me  
he cries to them,  
but weep for yourselves and your children  
because you are doing nothing to make this world better for them.  
Your compassion is real,  
but it is misdirected.

Gracious God,  
forgive us

We take for granted those benefits and freedoms  
which have been hard won for us.

We complain but do not act to make changes.  
Forgive us.

Our decisions are informed only by what affects us.  
We consume at the expense of others.

Forgive us  
Our paths do not cross those of the most vulnerable;  
we do not speak on their behalf.  
Forgive us.

Daughters of Jerusalem,  
Weep for yourselves and for your children,  
Weep for us.

Father, forgive us.  
Amen

## The Ninth Station:



*The Lord will not cast off for ever, but, though he cause grief,  
he will have compassion,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.  
(Lamentations 3:31-32)*

Again

You are on your knees.

Again

The crowd cry out for you to get up.  
they cannot see the anguish on your face.

Deep lines etched in your forehead.

Sweat mingled with blood and dust  
smeared on your cheeks.

Your lips white

and black with blood.

Hair stuck to your head and your face.

Your body heaves with each painful breath.

The shouting reaches its rising rhythm;

Ridicule, mocking, derision and scorn.

They do not know you have chosen this path  
That you have chosen it for them.  
The veins on your temple pound  
as you heave yourself up.  
You can look them in the face  
but they cannot meet your eye.  
You, who can forgive them everything  
“for they know not what they do.”  
You, who said  
“I do not condemn you”  
They who accuse, they who condemn,  
for they know not what they do.

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We pray for the fallen of the world  
Those condemned by a world  
“for they know not what they do.”  
We pray for addicts,  
for alcoholics  
for adulterers  
for prostitutes,  
for squatters,  
for liars and deceivers,  
for robbers and thieves,  
for prisoners,  
for the homeless,  
For all those whose lives are messed up.  
We pray for the grace to see your face in theirs,  
that we may not condemn,  
but reach out as you reached out  
to heal, to befriend and to rehabilitate.  
Amen

## The Tenth Station



*So they said to one another,  
'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.'  
(John 19:24)*

The seamless garment  
worn by the High Priest of heaven,  
woven from a single thread  
and stuck with blood and sweat  
to shoulders scarred with vicious stripes.  
What do they care as they strip it from you?  
What do they see of your humiliation;  
A naked Adam preparing to return to paradise?  
A man made in the image of God?  
A garment soiled with the blood outpoured,  
but worth the toss of the dice.  
The blood can be washed away without a trace.

But can you lose the memory of his face?  
We pray for those who are stripped  
of their dignity and self-worth  
through cruel abuse,  
those whose bodies have been violated,  
those whose minds have been tormented with cruel words,  
those bought and sold as chattels,  
those made to feel worthless  
by those who need to feel worthy,  
those unfairly imprisoned  
and those victimised for their difference out of indifference.  
Give us compassion and courage  
to be alongside those who suffer  
and to speak out against unkindness and cruelty.  
Turn the hearts of tormentors  
that they may see your image in every man, woman and child.  
Amen

## The Eleventh Station:



*He is the King of Israel;  
let him come down now from the Cross and we will believe in him.  
(Matthew 27:42)*

And so you reach the place of the skull.

Golgotha.

They take the cross from you  
and lay it on the ground.

You are spared a few moments of respite from your load.  
Your hair is stuck to your face and head with sweat and blood.

They spit on the ground.

You do not flinch but stare at them.

Is it fear or hatred they feel?

They push you to your knees and manhandle you on to the cross.

Then it begins ...

That dreadful pounding ...

blow after blow as they hammer the nails into your hands and feet.

At first you wince with each strike  
But then - then perhaps the pain is so overwhelming;  
the blows are indistinguishable.  
Your eyes are closed  
closed against the day  
against the pain  
against the crowd  
Those who despise you  
and those you love.  
Then you are raised up  
raised up to die and to live ...  
for they know not what they do.

\*\*\*

We pray for those on whom pain is inflicted  
and for those who inflict pain on others.  
For the victims of war, the maimed and injured,  
the dispossessed, the refugee, the orphaned child,  
the childless parent.  
For prisoners of conscience,  
those tortured for their beliefs.  
For those involved in street violence and gang warfare.  
For partners, parents and children who abuse one another.  
For children bullied in the playground.  
For adults abused and bullied at work.  
Man of sorrows – you are acquainted with their grief,  
give them knowledge of your loving, healing presence  
and grant them your peace.  
Help us to become the voices of those who have no voice  
to say and do all we can to bring peace.  
Amen

## The Twelfth Station



*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness  
over all the land until the ninth hour.  
And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,  
“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”  
That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”  
(Matthew 27:45-46)*

They cling to one another  
pairs of followers and friends  
knuckles white with anticipation, grief and disbelief.  
Your mother and the one whom you love  
taking in the white face, the black, retreating eyes and colourless lips.  
Your breath, that ancient *Ruach*,  
which hovered over the waters of creation  
and breathed life into Adam  
is faint with approaching death,  
but still the Word of God speaks life.

‘Woman your son’ - and to him  
‘Behold, your mother.’  
You, who called the thirsty to you,  
who promised rivers of living water,  
now you are thirsty, and they give you sour wine.  
And then, your Spirit leaves you  
not taken from you, but freely given  
breathed at last as a gift for all humankind.  
A soldier pierces your side with a spear  
and from the wound flows blood and water mingled.  
The perfumed one wails.  
The wind moans  
and even the wood of the cross rasps and groans.  
It is finished.

\*\*\*

We pray for the dying.  
For those in pain or filled with fear.  
Be with those who are alone  
separated from loved ones  
and those who have no one to pray for them,  
except as we pray.  
We pray for those who wait, who watch and pray.  
Support us, O Lord,  
all the day long of this troublous life,  
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,  
the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over  
and our work is done.  
Then, Lord, in your mercy grant us a safe lodging,  
a holy rest, and peace at the last;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen

## The Thirteenth Station:



*When evening had come ...Joseph of Arimathea ...  
went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:42-43)*

The baying crowds have gone  
and the day is cooler.

The breeze stirs the linen around your waist  
and even the dusty hairs on your oh-so-still legs.  
Dust and mud, dust and blood, mingled on your feet

Those who are left huddle together  
unable to take their eyes from you.

Filled with disbelief  
it is over for them.

All the dreams unfulfilled  
and all that remains  
is dust and ashes and a lifeless corpse.

There is one thing left to do for you.

One final gift.

And so your body is received into loving arms.  
At last your brow is wiped,  
Your blood-stained hair is washed clean with tears  
And the hair, still fragrant  
from the precious ointment wiped away from your feet,  
is spread across you in great sorrow.  
They are lost, bewildered, disorientated.  
They must wait two more days before they are restored to themselves.

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We offer our prayers for all those who mourn  
We weep with those who weep with sorrow.  
We pray for those who are lost,  
bewildered, disorientated with grief,  
for those who are accompanying someone on their final journey.  
We pray for all those  
who must do those 'last things' for ones they love.  
For those arranging funerals,  
carrying out last wishes,  
dealing with the physicalities left behind,  
or making memorials.  
We offer up our own griefs  
and pray that we may all know the healing power of your love  
the restoring power of your love  
and that nothing in life or death can separate us from that love.  
Amen.

## The Fourteenth Station



*They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths ... Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so ... they laid Jesus there. (John 19:40-42)*

There is nothing left.

Their world has been hollowed out and filled with sickening grief;  
Hopes and dreams hammered through by iron nails.

Those hands that received you  
will smear fragrant oil on limbs that cannot feel,  
wipe blood from the broken brow,  
their lips will kiss the unseeing eyes  
and whisper and weep into silent ears;

lifeless, pointless acts of love to soothe their pain on his body.

And so...they laid Jesus there, the light of the universe  
extinguished, diminished into the darkness of a rock-hewn tomb.

Death has come again to the garden.  
The serpent coils itself around a tree..

We remember those whose lifeless bodies  
have been brought into our churches;  
whose lives and memories have been rehearsed,  
smiled and wept over by those they have loved.  
We remember all those we have loved who have gone before us.

We give thanks for their lives,  
for all they have given us and helped us to be.

We give thanks for our memories,  
those which are still raw and painful  
like open wounds,  
for those which are healing and helpful,  
and for those rich, joyful thoughts  
that carry us forward,  
that rebuild and reward us  
and make us new.

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.

Amen.