

# WAY OF THE CROSS IN THE MOUNTAINS

## **An Ecumenical, Ecological Prayer Service**

**Saturday, March 4th, 11:30 a.m. Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary**

Followed by a Soup & Sandwich Lunch at St. Eugene's Catholic Church  
72 Culvern Street, Asheville.

### **Sponsored by the Six Churches of Christian Discipleship Center:**

First Presbyterian Church  
St. Eugene Catholic Church  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
St. Paul's Methodist Church  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
The Catholic Committee of Appalachia, NC Chapter

**Background:** The Way of the Cross can be traced to St. Francis of Assisi, who lived at a time when Christian pilgrims could not travel safely to the Holy Land. Francis brought the experience of the Holy Land home, as we bring the Way of the Cross home to the mountains. Reflecting on the sufferings of Jesus at each station, we raise the Cross of Christ to remind us that the Earth belongs to God, and we ask for strength and unity to care for God's creation.

**Meditative Walking:** We invite you to walk mindfully and meditatively as we move from station to station in this peaceful place. Using our physical, mental and spiritual experiences, we may deepen our awareness of these surroundings—sun, water, birds—as well as the sounds of humans and machines in the distance.

As we walk, we can practice quiet acts of loving kindness, radiating well-wishing in every direction, to the animals, birds, plants and people we encounter. We may smile inwardly or outwardly, and move quietly, being mindfully aware of our footsteps as we slow down and listen.

### **Opening Song: The Cross of Jesus**

**Come O God, renew Your people; We who long to see your face.  
Strengthen hearts that have grown feeble; Fill our lives with truth and grace.  
Only You can win our freedom; Only You can bring us peace.  
Only in the cross of Jesus, Will the captives find release.**

**Deep within, create a new heart; Melt away the winter chill.  
Help us now to make a new start; Help us now to know Your will.  
Washed in waters of forgiveness, Cleansed in waters of new birth,  
Lead us to the cross of Jesus, Bringing life to all the earth.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death** (The innocent suffer for the sins of others).

**Meditation:** We were present in the Creator's mind and heart, even before these ancient mountains and waters were formed. We are part of the Earth itself, yet we disregard these gifts that we think of as common, ordinary and plentiful. We throw away because there is always more. We burn, discard and waste until the scarcity is before our eyes. It is only then that we recognize God's resources as gifts, and condemn ourselves to shortages, fear and inequity.

**We Pray** Loving God, in your generosity You gave us abundance to meet our needs. You gave Jesus and Earth as Gifts. Forgive us our sins of abuse and neglect. Increase our awareness of the value of Your Gifts, lest we destroy all that gives us life. Amen.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Station: Jesus Takes Up the Cross** (We take responsibility for our Earth)

**Meditation:** Just as Jesus embraced his burden, we lift up our solitary world. When consumerism goes too far, short-sighted greed weighs heavily upon the land and the people. Humans are a part of Nature and a force of Nature. Mountains can be destroyed by human greed when land is bulldozed for building unnecessary shopping centers or removing minerals. Precious water supplies, valuable plants and animal life can be changed forever.

**We Pray:** Precious Jesus, the good Earth is like you, suffering from our sins of thoughtlessness, wastefulness and taking the easy way out. We pray for the grace to take our sins upon ourselves and to become responsible dwellers on this beautiful Planet. Amen.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the First Time** (The fallen state of the environment causes people to emigrate).

**Meditation:** To the weight of the cross, an even heavier burden is added—the powerful beatings, the lies and betrayals, abandonment by his own disciples, the cruel humiliations. Because Jesus cannot bear the terrible pain, he falls. There are so many times that migrants fall in their journeys, the way to the Promised Land becoming the journey of the cross as they deal with hatred and obstacles. Only faith in an active God gives them strength.

**We Pray:** God of life, we pray for You to protect our brother and sister migrants on their journeys full of risks and dangers, as they escape devastation in their homelands. Help them to overcome obstacles; do not allow families to be separated or lost. Walk with them and lift them up after they fall. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

**4<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets His Mother** (Our Mother Earth suffers).

**Meditation:** God created the heavens and the Earth, the cradle for every form of life. As mothers hold their babies, the Earth holds every life. Consider how our choices harm this great Mother Earth. How would you feel to see your mother humiliated and bruised? Consider our contributions to environmental pollution. Are we like the jeering crowds who made Mary's heart feel the pain of her Son?

**We Pray:** Loving Jesus, by the sorrow you felt in meeting Your Mother, "give me a heart of compassion for" the Mother that holds me, provides my food, water and air. May I resist choices that destroy the environment. Help me protect the Earth as I would my own Mother. Amen.

**5<sup>th</sup> Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross** (We speak out in support of marginalized people).

**Meditation:** "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40). The Bible tells us that we are our brothers' keeper, and guardians of the creation entrusted to us. Our responsibility extends to the threatened environment—the vegetation, animals, water and air.

**We Pray:** O God of compassion, help us to recognize that we are our brother's (and sister's) keepers. Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry His cross, may we too work to alleviate the suffering of those crushed by the heavy cross of injustice and violence committed against them and their fellow creatures. Amen.

**6<sup>th</sup> Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus** (We recognize the stains of abuse on people and the land).

**Meditation:** Today there is a great need to slow down the hectic pace of our days. Contact with nature, its beauty and peace, restores us. While we take in nature's wonder, it is also necessary to look into ourselves, into the depths of our hearts, where we come face to face with our conscience.

**We Pray:** O God, we see the face of your Son reflected in all men and women, and in the whole universe created through him and for him. May our works of charity and justice serve to wipe the bloody face of Christ in our world today so that others may see a glimpse of the glory of God. We commit ourselves to the practice of empathy, to be present to others in their pain and to use our own resources to touch and heal. Amen.

**7<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time** (We stumble through frustration and anger).

**Meditation:** Some powerful people are tempted to exploit resources under the urge of unlimited profit. Strong industrial groups damage the balance of the ecosystem, the health of its inhabitants and future generations to come.

**We Pray:** Lord, you fall to the ground, crushed by the forces of greed, consumerism and politics without soul. Help us to recognize you in those who carry the heavy load of unjust public policies. May we not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for a just and sustainable future. Amen.

**8<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem** (We weep over deaths of the innocent).

**Meditation:** Our country faces a time of trial—the conflict between a culture that affirms, cherishes and celebrates the gift of life, and one that declares entire groups of beings to be outside the boundaries of protection. To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence—poverty, hunger, armed conflicts—and mindless damage to our environment.

**We Pray:** Lord, may we resist the culture of death. Like the women of Jerusalem, we weep for our children, who will bear the brunt of global environmental destruction. May our tears purify our vision and empower us to choose life, for our children, grandchildren, and all God's creatures. Amen.

**9<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time** (We need courage to resist despair).

**Meditation:** Under the weight of the cross, as the crowds pressed in and the sun glared down, Jesus falls again. As we carry our cross of stewardship for the Earth, we too feel anguish as exploitation seems so vast, complex and daunting. The harshest anguish of all is to hear people speak of their brothers and sisters with derogatory racial slurs, for the Earth is everyone's home.

**We Pray:** Father, we seek your guidance to enlighten our decisions and ask for courage to boldly acknowledge your creation and your people. As Jesus found the strength to rise and fulfill your wishes, give us the resolve to care for your creation, even when the challenges are daunting.

**10<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments** (The mountains are stripped of their dignity and beauty).

**Meditation:** As Jesus is prepared to be crucified, he was stripped of his clothing, and mocked as an assault to his dignity. Today the Earth is stripped of nutrient rich topsoil and vegetation through mountaintop coal removal and excessive clearing of slopes. Animal and plant habitat is lost, soil runoff clogs waterways and drinking water is endangered, all to fuel consumerism. Communities of rural Appalachia suffer the visual, ecological and physical health effects of Earth's exploitation.

**We Pray:** Lord, help us to seek renewable energy resources and restrain our consumption, so that your creation will not be stripped of mountaintop vistas and streams flowing with life giving water. Amen.

**11<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross** (We share responsibility for Christ's pain and Earth's exploitation).

**Meditation:** Jesus suffered the anguish of nails piercing his hands and feet as his mother and beloved disciple absorbed the scene of injustice and mockery. As we carry our cross of stewardship, we make a commitment to be anchored to the beams of justice, not of convenience. Our hands must prudently use precious resources and our feet to work unceasingly for conservation.

**We Pray:** O God, our obliviousness to the wonder and sacred destiny of your creation, our misguided models of progress—these are like nails with which we crucify you today. May our tears of repentance reawaken us to your abiding presence in which everything lives, moves and has its being. Amen.

**12<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross** (We are often indifferent to those who die) .

**Meditation:** Jesus dies after an earthly life that began as a refugee. Today refugees are dying daily from climate change induced floods, famines and war. Many are tortured, killed or internally displaced within their own countries. How will we respond to those who lack the basic necessities of life?

**We Pray:** Jesus, you died on the cross, surrendering your will to the Father's so that we may have life. May we surrender our moral, economic and social decisions to the Father's guidance. For only in faith can we move beyond self interest to see the interdependence of all God's creation. Amen.

**Taize Chant: Jesus, Remember Me**

**Jesus, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom.**

**Jesus, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom. (Repeat while walking).**

**13<sup>th</sup> Station: The Body of Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross** (We feel discouraged, disillusioned, hopeless).

**Meditation:** As Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus stepped up to care for the lifeless body of Jesus, we must step forward to accept the unjustly crucified Earth. We must acknowledge our responsibility to be co-creators with God in the goodness of creation. We can provide the spark of faith or the seed of hope to blossom for the next generation.

**We Pray:** O God who makes all things new, help us to hold on to our faith, hope and love when we feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the challenges of ecological crisis. Deepen our courage and use us as instruments of the peace you desire for all creation. Amen.

**14<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus' Body is Buried** (We wait with eager longing for the glory of God).

**Meditation:** Jesus was laid in the tomb, but it was only an interlude to the resurrection. In times of darkness and sadness, we must learn to trust God to provide for our needs, not anguish over our wants. We must trust one another and be responsible stewards of the Earth so that no one consumes beyond their needs.

**We Pray:** O gracious God, for whom nothing is impossible, help your Church to be faithful to you in the midst of adversity. Empower us to bear your dream of justice, peace and harmony for all your creation. Amen.

**15<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Christ is Risen**(Our faith gives us hope for new sources of life.)

**Meditation:** Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said 'See, I am making all things new.' "Revelation 21:1-5

**We Pray:** God of love, thank you for leading us from the darkness into the light. May we fan into flame the gifts we have received, mindful that you gave us no cowardly spirit, but one of power, love and self-discipline. Give us wisdom and strength to be a witness to the world as we take up the mission of healing and sanctifying the world so that "God may be all in all." (1 Cor 15:28) Amen.

**Final Song: Lift High the Cross**

**Refrain:** Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, Till all the world adore his sacred name. Come Christians, follow where our Savior trod, Our King victorious, Christ the Son of God.

**Refrain:**

O Lord once lifted on the glorious tree, Your death has brought us life eternally.

**Refrain:**

*Thank you for walking the Way of the Cross with us today! All are welcome to gather for a simple lunch at the Parish of St. Eugene immediately afterward*