

# Veneration of the Cross (Good Friday): Alternative Models

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Frank Henderson's Site for Liturgy and Medieval Women

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The veneration of the cross that is part of the Good Friday liturgy can be carried out in different ways; the present Roman Catholic liturgy describes two. In addition, this part of the liturgy can take on diverse meanings, depending on how it is done, the texts that are used to accompany the veneration, and what implicit and explicit soteriologies are brought to it by members of the assembly.

This is one of a series of studies of the Good Friday liturgy. The others are:

Critical Reflections on the Passion Narrative of the Good Friday Liturgy

Critical Reflections on the Reproaches of the Good Friday Liturgy

Critical Reflections on the Good Friday Liturgy: Anti-Judaism, Paschal Character,  
Relationship to Passion Sunday, Soteriology, Christology,  
the Preeminence of John

Re-visioning the Liturgy of Good Friday

## **Introduction**

Here I offer two new possible alternatives for the veneration of the cross. They are conceived of as “stational” liturgies, taking place in from one to five or six places within the church building – or also outside as well, if weather permits. At each station, texts are offered which may be spoken by many voices. A common response may be sung. Finally, an appropriate action may be carried out – by all or only by those close to the “station.”

These models speak of the cross from different perspectives, but in general attempt to say something about its meaning for us and for our discipleship today. Biblical texts provide the core; western or Byzantine liturgical texts – or both – follow. Byzantine texts have been chosen because they show so much imagination. However their language needs to be modernized and adapted; this has not yet been done.

The two alternative veneration of the cross models that follow need to be filled out and are perhaps only suggestive; hopefully they may provide useful ideas and resources, and an invitation to others to present other proposals.

## The Life-Giving Cross

### Structure:

Invitation and response

Stations: one through six

Typology of the cross in scripture

God's love: John's gospel

Life-giving cross: Byzantine liturgy

Response

Action (e.g., kissing the cross; making the sign of the cross)

### Invitation:

This is the day of the veneration of the precious cross.

Now it is placed before us and shines with the brightness of Christ's resurrection.

Let us all draw near and kiss it with great rejoicing in our souls.

### *Alternative responses:*

This is (Behold) the wood of the cross,  
on which hung the Savior of the world.  
Come, let us adore.

We worship you, Lord,  
we venerate your cross,  
we praise your resurrection.  
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.

Glory to you, Jesus, Savior,  
your cross gives us life.

## Station One

### *Invitation and Response (above)*

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east;  
and there he put the man whom he had formed.  
Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree  
that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,  
the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,  
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:8-9)

For God so loved the world  
that he gave his only son,  
so that everyone who believes in him  
may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)

O come, ye faithful, and let us drink,  
not from a well of earthly water that perishes  
but from the fountain of life,  
as we venerate the cross of Christ; for his cross is our glory.

**Response:** Behold the wood of the cross,  
on which hung the Savior of the world.  
Come, let us adore.

### *Action*

## Station Two

### *Invitation and Response (above)*

Jacob dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth,  
to top of it reaching to heaven;  
and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.  
Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,  
“Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it!”  
And Jacob was afraid, and said,  
“How awesome is this place!

This is none other than the house of God,  
and this is gate of heaven.” (Genesis 28:16-17)  
Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world  
to condemn the world,  
but in order that the world  
might be saved through him. (John 3:17)

Rejoice, O Cross, thrice-blessed and divine wood,  
a light to those in darkness.  
Shining on the four corners of the earth,  
thou dost prepare us for the dawn of Christ’s resurrection.  
O grant to all the faithful that they may come to the festival of Easter.

**Response:** We worship you, Lord,  
we venerate your cross,  
we praise your resurrection.  
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.

**Action**

### Station Three

**Invitation and Response (above):**

Moses looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.  
Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight,  
and see why the bush is not burned up.”  
When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see,  
God called to him out of the bush. “Moses, Moses!”  
And he said, “Here I am.”  
Then God said, “Come no closer!  
Remove the sandals from your feet,  
for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exodus 3:2-5)

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

In paradise of old the wood stripped me bare.  
Now the wood of the cross

that clothes us with the garment of life  
has been set up in the midst of the earth,  
and the whole world is filled with boundless joy.

**Response:** Glory to you, Jesus, Savior,  
your cross gives us life.

**Action**

## Station Four

**Invitation and Response (above):**

The people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt,  
to keep us and our children and livestock with thirst?”

So Moses cried out to the Lord,

“What shall I do with this people?

They are almost ready to stone me.”

The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people,

and take some of the elders of Israel with you;

take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb.

Strike the rock, and water will come out of it,  
so that the people may drink.” (Exodus 17:3-6)

Jesus knew that his hour had come

to depart from this world and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world,

he loved them to the end. (John 13:1)

On this day the wood anointed with life, the cross of Christ,  
fills all things with the perfume of divine grace.

Let us smell its God-given fragrance,  
venerating it with faith for ever.

**Response:** Behold the wood of the cross,  
on which hung the Savior of the world.

Come, let us adore.

**Action**

## Station Five

### *Invitation and Response (above):*

They set out from the mount of the Lord three day's journey  
with the ark of the covenant of the Lord going before them three days' journey,  
to seek out a resting place for them,  
the loud of the Lord being over them by day when they set out from the camp.  
Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say,  
"Arise, O Lord, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you."  
And whenever it came to rest, he would say,  
"Return, O Lord of the ten thousand thousands of Israel." (Numbers 10:33-36)

This is my commandment,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.  
No one has had greater love than this,  
to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:12-13)

O Cross, more worthy than cedar,  
on you the life of the world was nailed,  
on you Christ triumphed:  
death has destroyed death!

**Response:** We worship you, Lord,  
we venerate your cross,  
we praise your resurrection.  
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.

### *Action*

## Station Six

### *Invitation and Response (above):*

You shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,  
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.  
Thus says the Lord:  
Maintain justice and do what is right,  
for soon my salvation will come,  
and my deliverance be revealed (Isaiah 55:12–56:1)

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,  
will draw all people to myself (John 12:32)

O mighty cross of Christ, manifest thyself:  
Shoe xx the divine vision of thy beauty  
and grant me worthily to venerate thee.  
For I speak to thee and embrace thee as through thou wast alive.

***Response:*** Glory to you, Jesus, Savior,  
your cross gives us life.

### ***Action***

## Women and Men At The Cross and Tomb

### Structure

Invitation and Response

Stations (one through five)

Women and men at cross and tomb (gospel passages)

Women and men at cross and tomb (Byzantine liturgy)

Light, Life, Friendship and Discipleship (John's gospel)

Response: The life, cross and resurrection give light, life and friendship

Action (e.g., sign of peace; some act of friendship or of reconciliation or of discipleship)

### Invitation:

This is the day of the veneration of the precious cross.

Now it is placed before us and shines with the brightness of Christ's resurrection.

Let us all draw near and kiss it with great rejoicing in our souls.

### *Alternative responses:*

This is (Behold) the wood of the cross,  
on which hung the Savior of the world.

Come, let us adore.

We worship you, Lord,  
we venerate your cross,  
we praise your resurrection.  
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.

Glory to you, Jesus, Savior,  
your cross gives us life.

## Station One

### *Invitation and Response (above):*

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother,  
and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.  
When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he love standing near,  
he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!"  
Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"  
And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:25-27)

Seeing Thee hanging on the Cross, O Christ the Creator and God of all,  
bitterly Thy Virgin Mother cried: "My Son, where is the beauty of Thy form?  
I cannot bear to look upon Thee crucified unjustly.  
Make haste, then, to arise, that I too may see Thy Resurrection  
on the third day from the dead. (Byzantine liturgy, 599)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:4-5)

**Response:** Crucified and Risen Christ,  
we give you thanks/ we praise you  
for giving new life to the daughter of Jairus  
and the son of the widow of Nain.

### *Action*

## Station Two

### *Invitation and Response (above):*

There were also many women there, looking on from afar,  
who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him;  
among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph,  
and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. (Matthew 27:55-56)

In her despair and grief, the all-blameless Virgin  
said to the women carrying sweet spices:  
Join with me to weep and bitterly lament:  
for see, my sweet Light and your Teacher is placed in the tomb. (Byzantine liturgy 620)

But to all who received him, who believed in his name,  
he gave power to become children of God;  
who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh  
nor of the will of man, but of god. (John 1:12-13)

**Response:** Crucified and Risen Christ,  
we give you thanks / we praise you  
for giving new life to the bent-over woman  
and the paralytic whose friends carried him to you.

**Action**

### Station Three

#### **Invitation and Response (above)**

There were also women looking on from afar,  
among whom were Mary Magdalene,  
and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses,  
and Salome, who, when he was in Galilee,  
followed him, and minister to him,  
and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. (Mark 15:40-41)

An Angel stood before the Myrrh-bearing Women at the tomb, crying:  
“Spices are meet for the dead, but Christ hath revealed himself  
a stranger to corruption. (Byzantine liturgy, H219)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of god.  
Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5)

**Response:** Crucified and Risen Christ,  
we give you thanks / we praise you  
for giving new life to the mother of the wife of Simon and to the man born blind.

**Action**

## Station Four

### *Invitation and Response (above):*

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.

He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre. (Matthew 27:57-61)

Down from the Tree Joseph of Arimathea took Thee dead,  
who are the Life of all,

and he wrapped Thee, O Christ, in a linen cloth with spices.

Moved in his heart by love, he kissed Thy most pure body with his lips;  
yet, drawing back in fear, he cried to Thee rejoicing:

Glory to Thy self-abasement, O Thou who lovest mankind. (Byzantine liturgy 614)

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants,

for the servant does not know what his master is doing;

but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father

I have made known to you. (John 15:14)

**Response:** Crucified and Risen Christ,  
we give you thanks / we praise you  
for your friendship with Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

### *Action*

## Station Five

### Invitation and Response (above):

Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea.  
He was a member of the council,  
a good and righteous man,  
who had not consented to their purpose and deed,  
and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.  
Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud,  
and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid.  
It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.  
The women who had come with him from Galilee followed,

and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid;  
then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.  
On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:50-56)

Joseph with Nicodemus took Thee down from the Tree,  
who deckest Thyself with light as with a garment;  
and looking upon Thee dead, stripped, and without burial,  
in his grief and tender compassion he lamented, saying:  
Woe is me, my sweetest Jesus.  
How shall I bury Thee, my God?  
How shall I wrap Thee in a winding sheet?  
How shall I touch Thy most pure body with my hands?  
What song at Thy departure shall I sing to Thee, O compassionate Saviour?  
I magnify Thy suffering; I sing the praises of Thy burial  
and thy Resurrection, crying: O Lord, glory to Thee (Byzantine liturgy 615)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and  
that your fruit should abide; ...  
This I command you, to love one another. (John 15:16-17)

**Response:** Crucified and Risen Christ,  
we give you thanks / we praise you  
for choosing Paul, Barnabas and Lydia and Tabitha and Peter to bear fruit in your name.

### *Action*