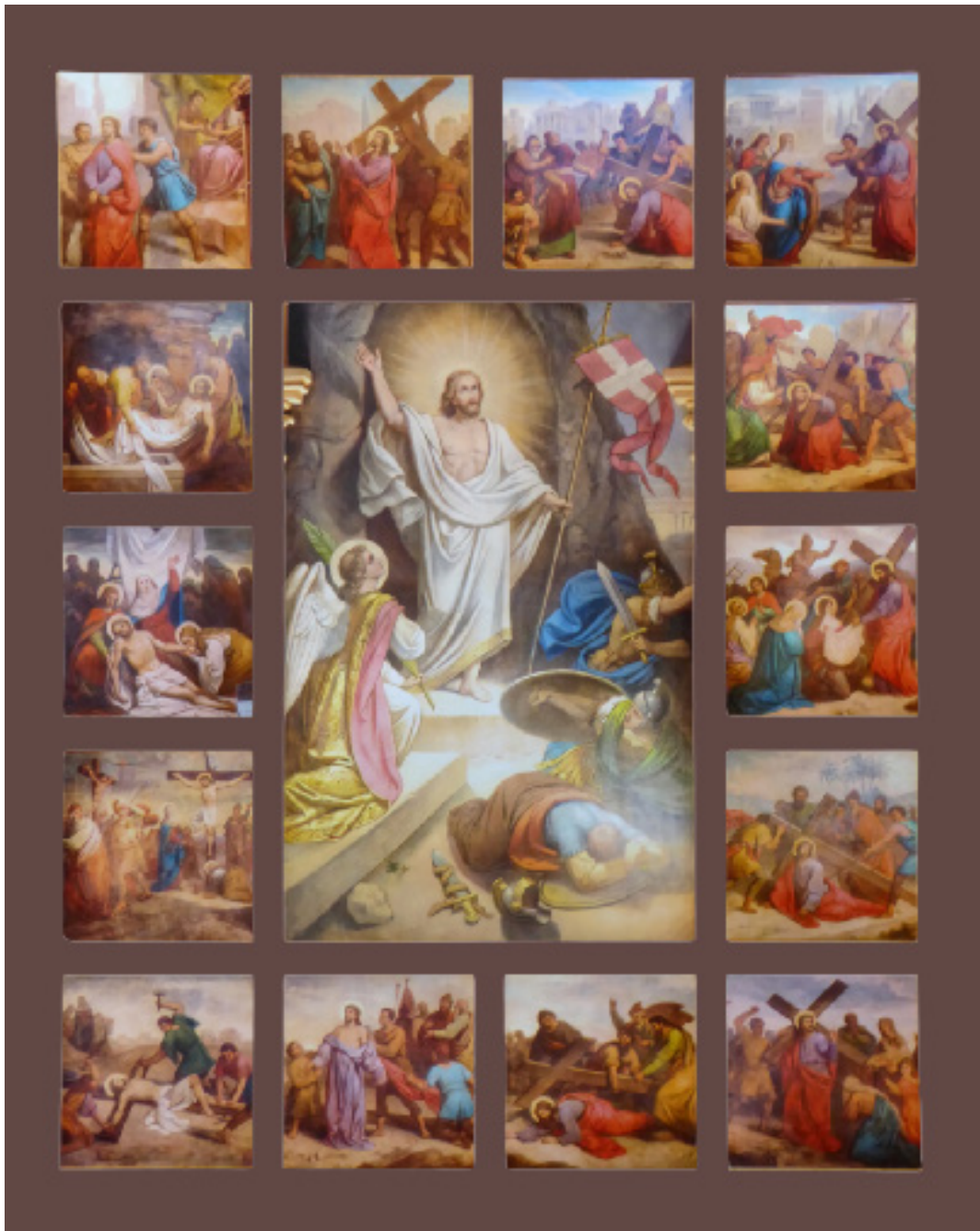
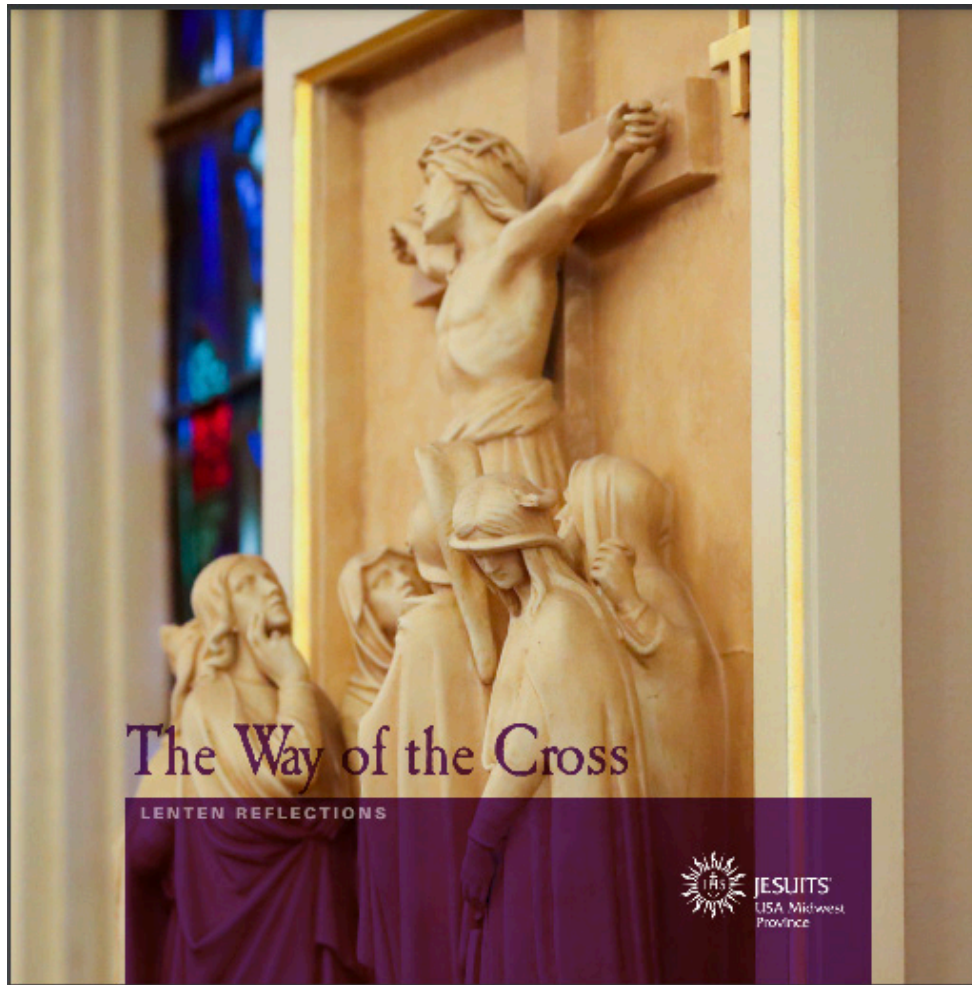


STATIONS OF THE CROSS



An Ignatian Way of the Cross
The Church of St. Francis Xavier

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2025 | 6:30 PM



*The Reflections and Reflection Questions are taken from the
Jesuit USA Midwest Province Lenten Reflection
“The Way of the Cross.”*

**The Stations of the Cross Ministry gratefully acknowledges the
participation and collaboration of members the following Xavier
Ministries in bringing this Stations Offering to fruition:**

- Gay Catholics,**
- Liturgical Ministries, and**
- Spiritual Ministries / ISEL.**

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross are a fourteen step or devotional, focusing on Jesus' last day on Earth as a human being, beginning with His condemnation to death by Pontius Pilate to His being laid in the tomb. They are found in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist churches. The Stations are used as a mini-pilgrimage, imitating the Via Dolorosa, or Way of Sorrows, in Jerusalem to Mount Calvary. Tradition holds that the pilgrimage was initially followed by the Blessed Mother; though, the earliest mention of a Via Sacra, or Holy Way, was in the mid 15th Century, and permission was granted to erect Stations inside all churches in 1731 by Pope Clement XII.

GENERAL VISUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER'S DEPICTION OF THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

William Lamprecht, a German-born artist, one of the most prominent ecclesial painters of his day, painted the Stations of the Cross. The murals are unusually large, approximately eight feet tall by twelve feet wide, wrapping around the Church from the north wall of the east transept to the west transept. The stations begin in rich colors with Jesus wearing a red cloak over a purple garment under a clear blue sky, but the stations grow noticeably darker as Jesus is stripped of his clothes, and the sky darkens until Jesus' death in station twelve. The figures depicted look white and European reflecting the ethnic makeup of the 19th century congregation and the artist. In general, the bold movement of the twenty or so figures in each station convey drama and energy with Jesus and two or three figures typically dominating the foreground. A gold halo always surrounds Jesus' head as well as the head of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Large buildings and palm trees complete the background.

*We adore you O Christ and we praise you.
All: Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*



THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Wearing a purple tunic and red robe, Jesus is led / pushed forward towards the street, where His Cross awaits Him. Pontius Pilate, seated on a throne behind Jesus, is washing his hands of the condemnation.

I've always been struck by the assassinations of people who stand up for what, in the eyes of God, is just, good, and holy: President Abraham Lincoln, condemned for daring to abolish slavery in this country; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., condemned for daring to dream of a colorblind world; St. Oscar Romero, condemned for daring to stand up for the poor and downtrodden. And before all of them, Jesus Christ, savior of us all, condemned for daring to include all whom this world would write off as unworthy.

Yet, even as religious and political authorities were condemning him to a shameful death to end his life on earth, God was stretching out his arms to welcome his son, the savior of us all, back to himself in the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection Questions:

Who are those in your community who may be unjustly condemned, in large or small ways? How is Jesus inviting you to respond?

— Father Raymond Guiao, SJ, president of Saint Ignatius High School in Cleveland, Ohio.

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SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

Still in the same tunic and robe, Jesus looks beseechingly up to Heaven; while two Roman Soldiers, in short white military tunics, lower the heavy wooden Cross onto His shoulders. Members of the jeering crowd, in various colored tunics and robes, point the way to Calvary, the Crucifixion site.

Two thousand years of Christian faith train us to see the cross as a symbol of salvation or perhaps self-sacrificial love. But in Jesus' day, the cross signified a singular shame. It was the most humiliating and brutal way the Romans could execute someone they perceived as a threat to their empire. It was a punishment so inhumane that no Roman citizen could be crucified, no matter how grotesque or grave the offense.

Jesus' teaching and healing ministry—marked by inclusive, merciful love—is met with barbarism and revulsion. When Jesus takes up his cross, he exposes the cruelty that results from the human impulse toward fear, hatred, and violence. Jesus takes up his cross in fidelity to the God he called father. We also see Jesus' solidarity with us in the mystery of suffering and death. Where there is failure, a wound, or any kind of suffering, there he is.

Imagine the scene as Jesus embraces this tool used for his own degradation and execution. What thoughts and feelings arise in you? Looking into his eyes, what does Jesus say to you? What do you say to Jesus?

Reflection Questions:

What cross seems heavy in your own life? What does it mean to imagine Jesus taking up his cross for you?

— Marcus Mescher, associate professor of Christian ethics at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

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THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Weak after the Scourging at the Pillar and the Crowning with Thorns, Jesus Falls for the First Time under the weight of the heavy Cross. While being whipped by the attending Roman Soldiers, Jesus is mocked by the crowd.

What do you carry? They say that we shouldn't compare crosses – that everyone is carrying something particularly heavy for them. They also say the relics of Jesus' cross would fill a ship if they were all collected in one place.

My cross may not always seem so big. It's made up of my griefs, my individual sufferings, my struggles to accept my own limited humanity. And yet I fall under it all the time. Jesus shares my experience even there, even in stumbling over uneven ground and falling. Even Jesus, who walked on water, healed the incurable, and brought life to the dead...fell. What was Jesus carrying that day? Was he carrying the weight of the world in that cross, the combined weight of everyone's crosses throughout history, or was the weight of his own very personal cross his focus in that moment?

Reflection Questions:

What are the times in your life that you have stumbled under the weight of your burdens? How is Jesus inviting you to stand back up?

— Molly Mattingly, director of music ministry at St. John's Parish and Creighton University.

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FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS SORROWFUL MOTHER

Pushing through the crowd, the Blessed Mother, dressed in a blue cloak and white head scarf, sees her Son and holds out her hands, imploringly to Him. Jesus, sadly and painfully, looks at Mary, and, knowingly, their eyes meet.

A Black mother keens upon hearing her only son is riddled with bullets. A South American mother marches with the Mothers of the Disappeared. A Jewish mother lights Sabbath candles while weeping over the death of her daughter, a rabbi killed in a hate crime at the synagogue. A mother wails as she gets the news her son is pistol whipped and beaten for being gay. Mothers across the world mourn for their children lost to violence or disease.

Each mother bears the pain of her sons and daughters. Like Mary, she stands in solidarity with her children. She holds them in her heart as only a mother can.

Reflection Questions:

Whom are you invited to care for? How do you help bear their pain?

— Sr. Susan Kusz, SND, is the associate director of the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

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FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS

Simon, from the North African city of Cyrene, dressed in a yellow cloak, is taken from the crowd and forced to carry Jesus' Cross for a time. Jesus, nearly on the ground in pain, looks thankfully at Simon.

He's curious about all the commotion, the screaming. His name is Simon. He's from Cyrene, in northern Africa. He sees a man, bloodied and sinking under the weight of a cross, on his way to a horrible death.

The soldiers force him to help the condemned criminal. Imagine how close this brings Simon to Jesus. They are cheek to cheek. They look into each other's eyes. Simon will never forget that look, those eyes that communicate at a level much deeper than words: pain, but also gratitude.

Just like with Simon, crosses are sometimes forced upon us. They too are the cross of Jesus who continues to suffer wherever his beloved brothers and sisters suffer. When the cross is laid upon our shoulders, Jesus is very close to us, as he was to Simon. We, too, can look into the eyes of Jesus and share an intimacy that is only possible when suffering is shared.

Reflection Questions:

Who is someone in your life or in your community who is suffering right now?
How can you help share that individual's burden?

— Father Jim Kubicki, SJ, is the director of St. Francis Mission in South Dakota.

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SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Veronica, emerging from the shouting crowd, kneels in front of Jesus, the white cloth opened in her hands before her. Jesus, looking lovingly at her, reaches out to Veronica and the cloth.

We cherish the faces of those we love. I relate to Veronica and her desire to run to Jesus and ease his suffering. I imagine he has been her beloved teacher and friend. She knows he will die soon and cannot bear to see the pain, sweat, and blood on his face any longer. She ponders what she can do to ease his pain? She bravely pushes her way through the crowd, past the soldiers, to go to him and offer her caring presence and a gesture of tenderness. Her courage inspires me.

He pauses and offers her his gratitude with love in his eyes, accepting her kindness. As she wipes his face the gift becomes hers.

In this moment together, they find that connection provides consolation. With this they can go on.

Veronica teaches us that we are called to recognize suffering and reach out with compassion. Jesus shows us that when we seek him, no matter what the circumstance, he is fully present loving us.

Reflection Questions:

Who in your life may need their physical needs met? How can you extend compassion in a way that shows your love?

— Erin Maiorca is the executive director of Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Illinois.

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SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Exhausted from the heaviness of the Cross, Jesus stumbles and falls for the Second Time. The Roman Soldiers continue to whip and beat Jesus, while the crowd, even louder than before, deride Jesus.

Jesus' second fall is another reminder of his humility and humanity. Such physical fragility in his final hours harkens back to the fragility in which his life began – in an animal stall to a mother weathered by poverty, travel and delivery. Like his birth and death, so too were his years of ministry spent in the fragile margins of society.

From manger to crucifix, Jesus turned on its head the world's definition of power and strength, and gave us a new understanding of where and how to encounter God. His second fall urges us to let love repeatedly bring us to our knees. He invites us to continually engage in the pain, injustice and suffering of humanity, not to turn our backs or quit when we become weary. With each fall, he assures us that if we immerse ourselves in such humble fragility, we are certain to find Jesus there.

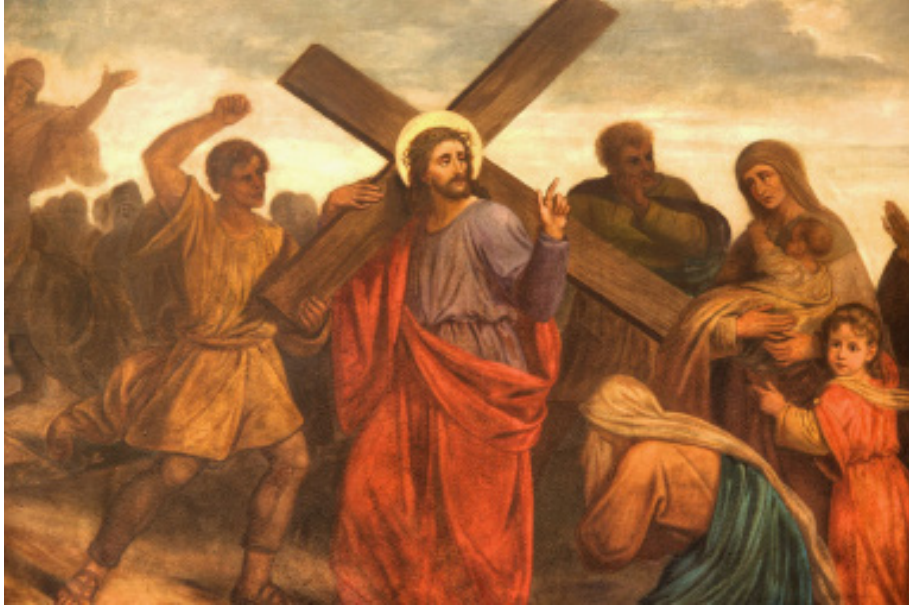
Reflection Questions:

What stirs in your heart upon contemplating a fragile Jesus on his knees? What personal fragility or pain can you ask Jesus to help you carry? Where might this fallen Jesus be asking you to encounter him in today's suffering humanity?

— Amy Ketner is the director of Hispanic/Latino ministry at St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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EIGHTH STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Continuing on the way to Calvary, Jesus encounters many of His women followers from Jerusalem, dressed in many colored robes and head scarves, crying and lamenting over the pain that He is suffering. Jesus turns to them, telling them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children.

Halfway through his painful journey, Jesus turns to the women who are crying and suffering with him and says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” He reminds them that people who love also experience suffering and worry.

These unnamed women of Jerusalem call to mind the many women who ministered with and supported Jesus. As we remember the challenges of the past year, we can see that hidden labor like theirs has sustained many people and families and that we have also had many reasons to worry and to weep.

There is a paradox here in the way Jesus asks us to weep while at the same time also giving us hope, just as Good Friday is meaningful to us because of the hope of Easter. In sadness and difficulty, we reach out to support each other, and we remember our ultimate hope in God’s enduring love.

Reflection Questions:

In times of suffering, when have you experienced hope? Who has reached out to you to offer hope? Who might need a message of hope from you?

— Beth Franzosa, religious studies department at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis.

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NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

Overwhelmed by the heavy weight of the Cross, Jesus Falls to the ground for the Third Time. Ridiculed by both the Roman Soldiers and the crowd, Jesus is yet again forced to His feet by the soldiers, while the crowd admonishes Jesus by pointing towards Calvary.

Some years ago, I knew a very successful businessman who was also a recovering alcoholic. When he told his doctor that he was becoming confused and sometimes lost his balance, the doctor – who had known him for years – presumed he was relapsing. A second opinion, however, diagnosed a brain tumor the size of a grapefruit.

The surgery to remove the tumor was necessary to relieve his distress. Unfortunately, it was malignant, and radiation could only slow, not stop, its growth. Between the effects of the radiation and the struggle with the infection, he was mentally and physically exhausted.

Finally, with very little time remaining, he regained himself and wanted to address his will. He had planned to leave everything to charity and the church, but he also had a good friend whom he wanted to care for as well. On one of his lucid days, he asked me what he should do. I replied that he was a good man and that he should do whatever he thought best. He marshalled what little energy he had, called his attorney and re-wrote his will to ensure the care of a loved one.

Did Jesus fall? Yes. Was he helpless? No. Despite the incredible physical and emotional pain, Jesus was able to rise again for those he loves.

Reflection Questions: When have I experienced suffering that seems to never end? How can I take comfort in knowing Jesus is there with me?

— Father Steven Hurd, SJ, is co-director of Ignatian formation at Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

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TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

While the Cross is being readied for the Crucifixion, Jesus is stripped of His outer robe and tunic, left standing in only His white loincloth before the crowd, who angrily continue to leer at Jesus.

Of all the Stations of the Cross, this one might be the most dehumanizing. It's not just that the soldiers strip Jesus of his clothes to reveal his naked, bloodied body. Or that the soldiers are laughing as they do it. The worst part is that it is being done in a public manner—and all anyone can do is watch.

Throughout history, people have been publicly stripped of their clothes and their dignity in plain sight--whether it be enslaved persons that were stripped of their clothes before being sold like cattle, Jews who were stripped of their clothes before being sent to the gas chamber, children stripped of their clothes for pornography, or the filmed lynchings and shootings of Black lives (to name a few). The greatest sin is not that people in power strip others of their humanity. The greatest sin is that so many of us watch these heinous acts happen and we let ourselves be fooled into believing that we have no power to make a difference.

Reflection Questions:

When have I witnessed an individual or group of people being dehumanized by society?
How is Jesus inviting me to stand up in solidarity with them?

— Jeff Sullivan, SJ, deacon serving as a campus minister at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

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ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Laying the Cross flat on the ground, Jesus is pushed down on top of it, His hands nailed to the crossbeam and His feet, one on top of the other, are nailed to the vertical post. Above His head is nailed the inscription “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

As iron pierces flesh, the son of God is vulnerable and alone. A man who lived life with open arms is readied for death, his welcoming and saving arms spread out onto the cross. Though his family and friends had walked with Jesus in life, they cannot join him on the cross. Those gathered at Calvary could be forgiven for losing hope as they witnessed soldiers driving nails through Jesus. This is the worst possible outcome that they could imagine for their beloved son, friend, teacher, and savior. Perhaps they think, “Where is God?”

This question echoes in our modern lives. When we experience tragedy and loss, doubt can shake our faith. But God is always found in the same place: on the cross. Jesus suffered for us and remains with us in our own suffering. When we find ourselves in ruin, we should know that we are not there alone.

Reflection Questions:

In times of suffering or loss, what has happened to your faith? How have you experienced Jesus there with you?

— Patrick Bittorf is the vice president of advancement at Christ the King Jesuit College Prep in Chicago

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TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

The soldiers hoist the Cross up in place. Jesus' final agony begins as He is crucified between two thieves. While the soldiers cast lots for His clothing and the crowd throws insults at Him, Jesus, suffering from pain, dehydration, and asphyxiation, breaths His last breath.

Jesus hung there. A couple of hours passed as he gasped for each new breath, numb, naked, bloody. The crowds looked on – isn't this the prophet? The wonderworker? The man who called disciples and gathered crowds?

He touched the sick and healed them; nails now fix his hands to a cross. His lips spoke challenge or comfort; they now groan and thirst. His eyes looked out with love; they now sag and flutter. He cast out demons; now the demons seem to have their way with him.

He opens his eyes and sees his mother and his beloved disciple. He manages a last word of comfort: "Take care of each other."

In his last, dying breaths, he gives himself back to his Father: "It's over; into your hands I entrust my spirit. Most of us don't end our days with such drama. We've done our job; we've lived our festive days and ordinary times.

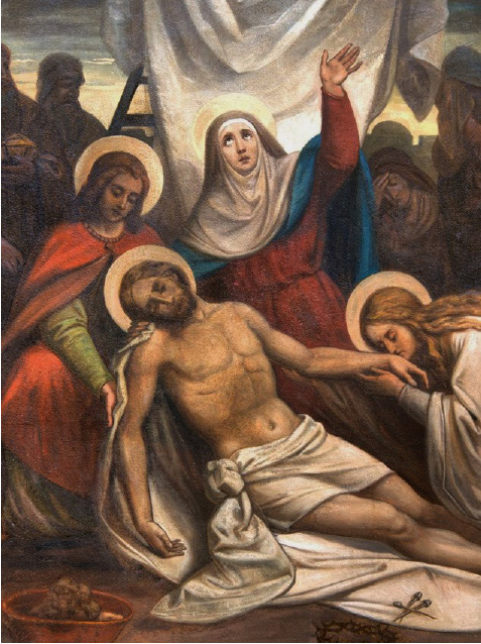
Reflection Questions:

What is the mission the Father has entrusted to you? Can you echo Jesus' words, "It's done"?

— Father Ed Schmidt, SJ, Center for Mission and Identity at Xavier University.

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**THIRTEENTH STATION:
JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE
CROSS AND PLACED IN THE ARMS
OF HIS MOTHER**

Jesus' lifeless body is taken down from the Cross and placed in the arms of Mary, His mother. Surrounded by Mary Magdalene and John the Apostle, all are sorrowful and weeping.

We turn our focus to the physical form of Jesus' body, slumped now, devoid of life, is taken down from the cross by those who must have been his followers. They had hoped in him, imagined him as their future king. We experience the taste of defeat and despair which they surely must have felt.

In that lifeless body which bears the marks of every indignity and shame, we can also see other bodies as well—the murdered victims of racial injustice, the bodies of refugees washed ashore in the Mediterranean, the victims of poverty and homelessness.

Below the cross, we contemplate Mary his mother as she receives the body of her son in her lap and see every mother who mourns the loss of a child, whether to crime, addiction, abuse, or violence.

Reflection Questions:

How can you ensure that you do not turn your eyes away from suffering in your midst?
How do you keep our hearts open to feel compassion for all the victims of our human cruelty and neglect?

— Father Gregory Hyde, SJ, pastoral ministry at Gesu Parish in University Heights, Ohio.

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FOURTEENTH STATION:

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Jesus' body, wrapped in the white ceremonial Jewish burial cloth, is placed in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and an attendant. The Blessed Mother and Mary Magdalene watch from outside the entrance to the tomb.

The lifeless body of Jesus now rests in the tomb. At the time, it must have seemed the end of a vision, of a dream, of hope. We, too, have often had to lay our dreams to rest. We have buried family members, friends, classmates, and loved ones. Unfulfilled expectations of success and unrealized accomplishments have left us asking where we went wrong. The current state of our country or Church can also resemble a tomb, with all confidence shattered. Yet, unlike those around Jesus, we know the tomb leads to something greater—to a transformation and a resurrection.

Help us, Jesus, to understand the significance of your time in the tomb, and to appreciate the sacrifice you made, which led us to the resurrection. Help us, as well, to unite our sacrifices to yours, with the understanding that in the end, as in the words of Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Reflection Questions:

When have you experienced a loss that seemed like an end? How might this time have been a preparation for something new?

— Brother Jim Boynton, SJ, University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy

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FIFTEENTH STATION: THE RESURRECTION

Jesus, triumphant and glorious, stands before the Empty Tomb; dressed in a long, bright, white & gold robe; holding the banner of The Resurrection (a white cross on a red background) in His Left Hand.

To Jesus' right is an attending Angel, with white wings and wearing a gold & pink robe. To Jesus' right are three Roman Soldiers, meant to guard the tomb; dressed in yellow tunics, blue capes, armor, helmets & holding swords; cowering in fear or overcome with anxiety, at the Risen Jesus.

FEAR AND GREAT JOY

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.'

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

MATTHEW 28: 1-8

All: As Christians, we know that Jesus' death is not the end of the story. We walk with Christ in his pain and death on the Cross, but then we wait in joyful hope for what we know comes next. On Easter, we celebrate his resurrection and his triumph over death. May we who are united with Jesus in his suffering be united with him in the promise of everlasting life.