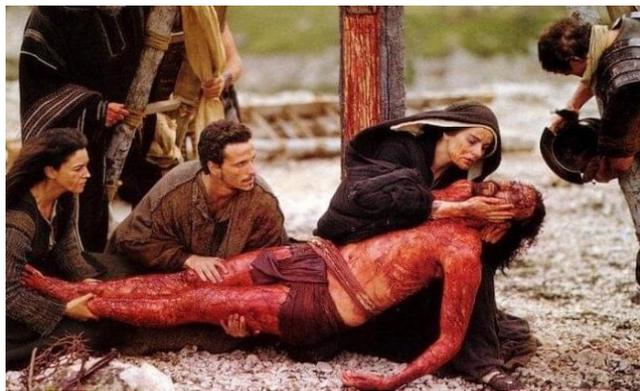


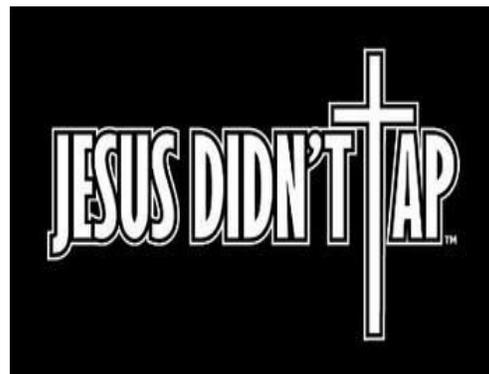
The movie *The Passion of the Christ* came out on Ash Wednesday, 2004. The next night all the seminarians and the priest faculty went to see the movie together. There were probably a couple of older priest faculty members who hadn't been to the movies since the 1945 premiere of *The Bells of Saint Mary's* 😊. That night I *may* have had to fight from crying during the movie. I'm not confirming or denying it. Afterwards, we all agreed it was a very powerful movie.



The next day, the first Friday of Lent, we celebrated The Stations of the Cross devotion as a house. It was so powerful. It was one of the most powerful religious experiences of my life and I've met a Pope. Once again, I *may* have had to fight the urge to cry. I was not alone. The movie had made the Stations real for us. We were all aware just how much the Lord suffered for us, before dying for our sins. We were all aware how the Blessed Mother had to watch her Son die an excruciating death.

Lent 2004 was a powerful Lent for me. I think I saw the movie five times. Each time I saw the movie, it touched me in a different way. Looking back, it was a graced-filled time in my spiritual life. The Stations of the Cross will probably never move me as it did in 2004. Regardless, nobody should forget for one second, what the Lord did for us that day.

Jesus took a horrible, disfiguring beating for the sins of all of humanity. Essentially, to make a wrestling analogy, Jesus was held in an agonizing submission hold for not three seconds or three minutes, but for three hours by men who wanted Him to die the most painful death possible. At any time He could have “tapped out,” which is when a wrestler taps the mat indicating he has quit. Jesus would not do it; He would not “tap out” because He knew our salvation was at stake. That is how much He loves us.



Saint Paul wrote, “...perhaps for a good person one might find the courage to die. But God proves His love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Roman 5:7b-8). On Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday, Catholics participate in the reading of the Gospel at Mass. It only happens on this day. The Good Friday liturgy is a commemoration, not a Mass. On Passion Sunday, all Catholics participate in the reading of the Gospel to be reminded that we each had a role in the death of Jesus through our sins, through our selfish choices. It's okay not to cry when the Passion narrative is read. It's not all right not to feel some responsibility for His death. What is the best answer to the question: Who killed Jesus? We did.