

# STATIONS OF CROSS

## JUSTICE FOR ALL WOMEN



FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2021

**FOR THOSE IN THE CHURCH: IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIAL DISTANCING, PLEASE REMAIN SEATED FOR THE DURATION OF THE STATIONS. THE CROSS BEARER WILL WALK THE STATIONS FOR EVERYONE IN THE CHURCH.**

*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.

# INTRODUCTION

**The Stations of the Cross offer us a tremendous privilege: to be with Jesus along his journey as he carried his Cross to Calvary. However, to stay in those events of two thousand years ago is to miss the greatest privilege and opportunity of all—to witness the critical moments of the life, suffering, and death of Jesus in the here and now.**

**These stations were designed to accompany mindfully in solidarity with all women. We live in a rapidly changing world. Yet the challenges of women worldwide remain startling. These challenges awaken all of us, giving great pause to consider the suffering that exists in our midst and calling us to the pursuit of justice.**



## THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Wearing a purple tunic and red robe, Jesus is lead / 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.

**LEADER:** Innocence and yet condemnation. What a paradox. To discover meaning amid feeling hopeless and fearful is an enormous challenge. Hopelessness and fear surely have arrested us at one point or another in our lives. Externally, Jesus appeared to be a helpless victim of those in power. Yet deep within, he was compelled by the Spirit to love his own to the very end. Like Jesus, we are invited to take the journey of the unknown with faith in the God who loves us unconditionally.

*Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

### REFLECTION FOR STATION 1 BY ANNE DUQUETTE:

When my family moved to North Carolina from New Hampshire, when I was a child, we were told that there were more churches than gas stations in our new Southern city. This made good destinations for bike riding in our neighborhood. We rode to a nearby Presbyterian Church to shoot baskets in the car park. My favorite church destination was technically a synagogue—the vast car park perfect for bike riding.

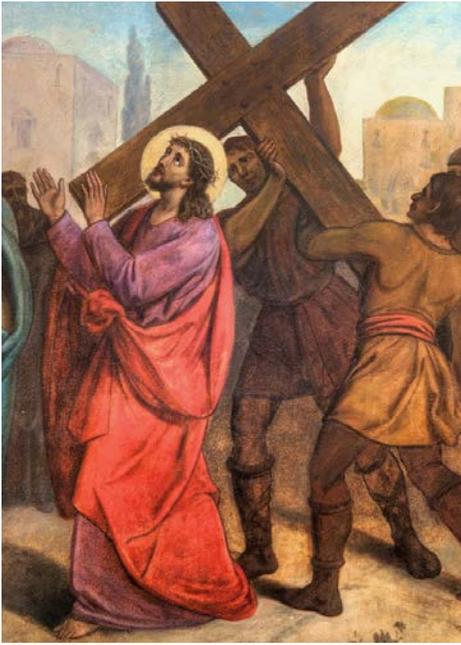
One late summer morning before being dismissed from a recreational art class, at age eleven, I planned out loud, with my sister and neighbor (my partners in crime), “After lunch, we’ll ride our bikes to the synagogue.” My neighbor frantically looked around and blurted out to the other students standing in our vicinity, “We’re not Jewish!” She said it in the same tone she may use if she said, “We’re not terrorists!” I was taken aback by her apparent embarrassment. When I asked her why she found that disclaimer necessary, she said, “They killed Jesus!” I knew that this was wrong. My family had friends who were Jewish, friends whom I knew did not kill Jesus.

I would learn that this label, “Christ Killer,” has been attached to Jewish people throughout history. Falsely accused of killing Christ, Jewish people were murdered during pogroms in the middle ages as well as the late 1800s in Russia; many of these pogroms took place during Holy Week and Easter. Until the second Vatican, the official stance of the Catholic Church was that the Jews killed Jesus. Today, the very New Testament that we use in our church explicitly says that the Jews killed Jesus, both in the Gospels and in the letters. If anyone knows what it is to be falsely accused and condemned to a brutal death, it is Yeshua.

Every time I go to church or pray the rosary, I behold our Messiah on the Crucifix, condemned to the most torturous of deaths. In meditating before his dead body, I see my sisters and brothers from the past and present who have been condemned to painful deaths: people murdered for being Jewish, for being Black, for being queer, for having a disability. I see people whose condemnation to death means being deported only to be killed. I see whose condemnation to death means not having access to quality healthcare and dying of COVID. I see the saints in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. I see the saints in the Tree of Life synagogue. I see the saints in the mosque in Christchurch. I see the saints in the church in Sri Lanka celebrating Easter. I see Breonna Taylor. I see Ahmaud Arbery. I see George Floyd.

I realize that in a different period of history or even part of the world, as a queer woman with a mental illness, I may have been condemned to death. I may have qualified as a witch in Salem, Massachusetts, for example, in the seventeenth century. As a person with white privilege and, in this country, Christian privilege, I am challenged to NOT do what those nuns used to say that we would do: go along with the crowd and condemn Jesus to death. May Christ on the Cross make me uncomfortable enough to do what I can to resist participating in injustice, from adapting the words in the readings that I do as a lector to not being anti-Semitic, using the Jewish New Testament as a guide, to educating other whites when they make statements rooted in racism, to marching for Black Lives Matter. May Christ on the Cross, and the thousands of faces that I see in Christ on the Cross, continue to challenge me.

**LEADER:** O Christ, we pray you open our hearts to be instruments of life in our world today. Give us the mindfulness and courage to restore dignity to all whose lives we touch and to serve as voices of justice for all who are condemned unjustly.



## SECOND STATION: JESUS ACCEPTS 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.

**LEADER:** To accept the challenges of life and seek the will of God demand trust. Challenges are rarely anticipated but are rather part of the fabric of our daily lives. In accepting “what is,” we are invited to consider life through a new perspective. Sometimes it is merely a matter of changing the perspective we are using as those challenges confront us. Jesus appreciates God’s greater plan through the perspective of the Spirit rather than the narrowed perspective of the flesh. He reminds us that trust is often a decision—one made from the very core of our being, even when the outcome remains questionable or unknown.

**Chant:** *Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 2 BY DR. KATHLEEN FRIEL:

Here in our journey, we stop to reflect on Jesus's acceptance of his Cross. Although he was not guilty of a crime, he accepts the Cross generously. Jesus may have felt frightened, confused, and hesitant, but his love for us drives him to take up the Cross.

Ever since the pandemic began, we have seen the generosity of essential workers who have risked their own lives for the good of us, their neighbors. While we've rightfully celebrated medical professionals and first responders, others have not been as visible. There are many others—who tend to be women and people of color—who have kept our world turning during this paralyzing pandemic. People who keep our hospitals and stores clean, people who drive buses and trains, people who make deliveries. These people are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 because of their workplace exposure, and they are often at increased risk of becoming gravely ill due to comorbidities. And now, these truly essential people are being left behind in the vaccination process. Even so, they keep working. They keep serving. They carry crosses for the well-being of all. Tonight, let us pray for their safety, for their ability to access excellent medical care and vaccines. We pray in gratitude for their service.

**LEADER:** O Christ, as we accept the daily crosses of our lives, give us your insight to recognize the cross in the lives of those around us. Give us your wisdom as we accompany those who travel along with us on our journey of faith and life.



### **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.

**LEADER:** Despite our best efforts, we often discover that life is not always in our control. Jesus's fall reminds us of our own vulnerability to the unforeseen struggles of life. Our challenge is to continue the journey, even when we do not understand.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 3 BY MARY HURSON:

“I [ Sammie Werkheiser] speak today . . . the practice of solitary confinement itself is inhumane and unfair, and constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, a violation of our constitutional rights.

“Three women I am friends with from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility were diagnosed with COVID-19. Darlene Benson-Seay, also known as ‘Lulu,’ was diagnosed with COVID-19.

“Lulu and I both entered prison in 2013. It was the other women on 113 C/D that got the officers’ attention to ensure that Lulu got to the hospital. Lulu passed away while serving her sentence. She was a woman of color and an elder. She was a friend, mother, sister, daughter, aunt, and grandmother. She applied for clemency last year but was denied, even after a heart operation.

“When I was in solitary confinement while serving a twelve-years-to-life prison sentence, my water broke while I was only five months pregnant with twins. My son, Julius Kingston, survived, and his twin sister, Jacinta Rain, was born alive but lived only twenty two minutes on my chest.

“The effects of solitary confinement are real. Thousands of women and men incarcerated in New York have been placed in solitary as a means of medical quarantine. Other reasons for solitary can be protective custody, temporary custody, or for disciplinary reasons. There is no good reason to throw a woman or man, and certainly not a pregnant mother, in solitary.

“Consider what it is truly like to live like us, human beings just like you. . . . Think about those inside who have had to grow a human being, while also serving jail time or a prison sentence.

“I am calling for the immediate end to solitary confinement being used for medical quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic of the thousands of men and women, specifically pregnant women, in protective custody just as I was. Think of the unborn babies squirming in utero dealing with their mother’s daily stressors from jail life and just surviving on the inside. It is unspeakable.

“Darlene ‘Lulu’ Benson-Seay and Jacinta Rain Werkheiser, who were not as lucky, would want me to plead with you to end solitary confinement for all people of New York City and across the State of New York. It is especially despicable and harmful to human life as a means for medical quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Benson-Seay died alone in the hospital. One of her best friends, Vanessa Santiago, relayed that Benson-Seay’s family, along with her doctors, had asked for a video call to say goodbye. The officer on duty denied the request but ultimately allowed them to pray over the phone.

“So not only are they letting her die, they’re not even letting her have her last wish,’ Santiago said.”

**LEADER:** O Christ, giver of life, give us the power to rise and face each day again so that we might support those who are suffering here in our midst. When we are vulnerable, help us to rely on you.



### **FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED 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.

**LEADER:** To see another person suffer deeply because of our pain is unimaginably difficult and often adds to our struggles. As Jesus meets his mother, we are reminded that our journey of life is one that is deeply connected to the lives of others.

**Chant:** *Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 4 BY DR. CHRISTINE SANTISTEBAN:

Barbara Jean Franks of Juneau, Alaska, only knows too well the toll trauma takes on her people: “When my son died by suicide at age twenty-three, I didn’t even know how to think. I couldn’t imagine that hope existed.” There are scores of other invisible tragedies like Barbara’s happening every day in our country, many of which are preventable. And yet, they continue to happen. *“Yet, still, we are waiting, and sometimes even fighting, just to be seen.”*

“Approximately 60 percent of Native Americans rely on the IHS to provide for their health care needs, yet funding for IHS has not kept pace with medication cost inflation and population growth. As a result, IHS services are underfunded, and patients are routinely denied care.

“Growing up . . . I always just thought that white people were healthy and Indian people were drunk and violent. The real reason that there are no services is because of racism and discrimination. The state has money, but it never has given any of that money to people who need services. There are no underserved or unserved populations here, [just] populations that are discriminated against.” —Native American Provider

One Native American community leader interviewed for a University of California Davis research project talked about the collision of history and community: “I am dealing with people who have been disenfranchised, and their mental illness originates in the system around them, the environment, the surrounding historical trauma. They are not crazy. They are people responding to trauma in their life.”

Jesus meets his mother in Barbara Jean Franks. You see your mother. She can’t make the hurting stop, and she is suffering with you. She does understand and cares.

Sacred One, teach us love, compassion, and honor. That we may heal the earth and heal each other. (Ojibway Prayer) We pray.

We pray for furthering health equity, that those who have never had the privilege of mental health are able to access it, especially vulnerable communities. That all systemic barriers to care may be dismantled. We pray.

**LEADER:** O Christ, it is you who have offered your life—bread broken, wine that is poured out. Continue to nourish us so that others might dare to live in hope through pain.



## **FIFTH STATION: SIMON 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.

**LEADER:** Both Simon and Jesus teach us about discipleship. As an embodied Christian community, we are individually and collectively called to care and serve the good of others for the sake of the Gospel.

Life often presents unexpected opportunities to act on behalf of another. Like Jesus, we also may find ourselves in need of another along the journey of life. Let us pray that we are alert to the opportunities to act on the behalf of another and awaken to the signs of the kingdom of God breaking forth in and around us.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 5 BY STEPHANIE CASTILLO SAMOY:

Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores (March 4, 1971–March 2, 2016)

Five years ago, Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores died two days before her forty-fifth birthday. She was assassinated, killed by men hired by the construction company Desarrollos Energéticos, SA (DESA); its owners, the Atala Zablah family; military personnel trained in Fort Benning's Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the School of the Americas; the Chinese company Sinohydro; and financial institutions Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Netherlands Development Finance Institution (FMO), the Finnfund, and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation.

Cáceres, a mother of four to Olivia, Berta, Laura, and Salvador, answered the call of the Lenca people, an indigenous community from Río Blanco, in La Esperanza in the southwestern part of Honduras. Multiple land-grabs and forty-nine megaprojects, including Agua Zarca (four hydroelectric dams in the Río Gualcarque), were happening without consulting the local people, a breach of international law. The Lenca people said the dams would compromise access to water, food, medicinal materials, and their way of life.

Cáceres led a ten-year grassroots campaign to stop the project and brought international attention to the fight. In 2013, she told Al Jazeera: "The army has an assassination list of eighteen wanted human rights fighters, with my name at the top. I want to live, there are many things I still want to do in this world, but I have never once considered giving up fighting for our territory, for a life with dignity, because our fight is legitimate. I take lots of care, but in the end, in this country where there is total impunity, I am vulnerable. . . . When they want to kill me, they will do it."

Seven men were convicted for Cáceres's murder on November 29, 2018, two-and-a-half years after the crime, and DESA's president is facing a separate trial. The location for Agua Zarca has been moved on the opposite side of the river, no longer on the lands of the Lenca village, a major portion of funding from foreign investors has been withdrawn, and the project is on hold . . . for now. Berta Zúñiga continues the fight for her mother, Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores.

**LEADER:** O Christ, keep us ever mindful of you in the presence of those around us. Spare us from indifference and complacency, so we might bring hope to their doubt, courage to their weakness, comfort to their suffering.



## **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.

**LEADER:** Like Veronica and Jesus, we are sometimes confronted with situations that require us to stray from our comfort zones. Veronica is said to have wiped the face of Jesus—she dared to show care and compassion to someone assaulted, rejected, and condemned to die—understanding she was witnessing the presence of God embodied. Like Veronica, we are invited to go beyond a cover story to the real story—to be a place of safety and freedom for those in pain to let their truth be known. We thus become catalysts of freedom, agents of change, wiping away shame and pain—always mindful that we are responding to each person we meet the presence of God in humanity.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 6 BY MOIRA EGAN:

The social sins of ableism, racism, and sexism we confront tonight can overwhelm us. One way to challenge systemic oppression is to put aside our privilege, and for this, we have an excellent role model in Veronica. She could have remained but one in the crowd, neither supporting nor opposing Jesus's execution. Yet through her act of kindness and compassion, she expressed opposition to injustice and solidarity with its victim. We, too, can set aside our privilege in the midst of our daily lives. We can all thank delivery workers for their hard, dangerous work, and when we can, tip them a bit extra. We can advocate for the equitable distribution of the COVID vaccine and reflect seriously on our eligibility. We can rethink aspects of liturgies that make us comfortable while excluding others. Let us pray for the discernment and courage to follow Veronica's example of compassion and solidarity. May we work to lessen the burden of oppression for others, whether or not our actions seem to end the unjust system.

**LEADER:** O Christ, help us break through our barriers—our tears—to know you in those we meet. Make us as bold as Veronica in our solidarity, compassion, and care for others. Help us to reach out to those in pain, all in memory of you.



## SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

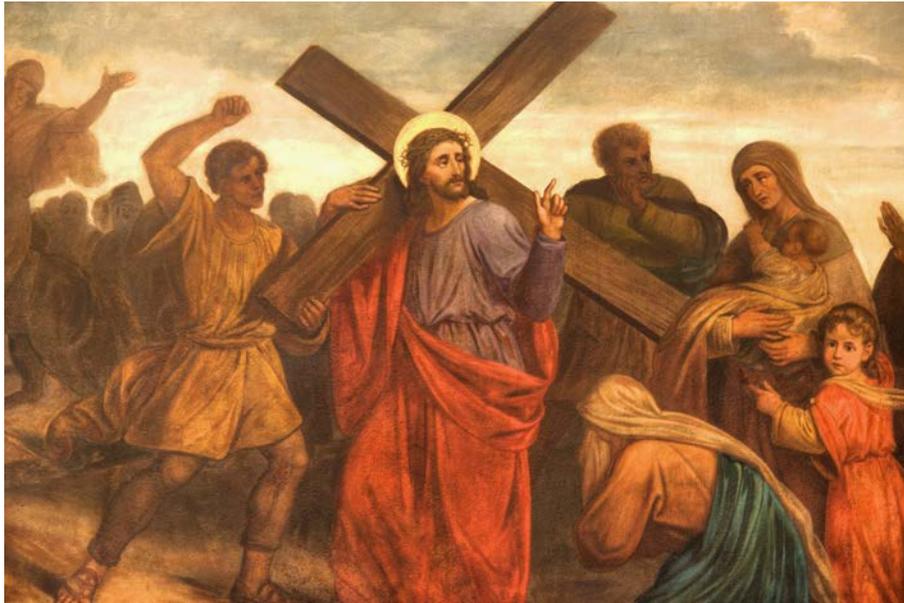
Exhausted from the heaviness of the Cross, Jesus stumbles and falls for the Second Time. The Roman Soldiers continue to whip and beat Jesus, while the crowd, even louder than before, deride Jesus.

**LEADER:** The hardships of life can be overwhelming at times, even devastating for some. Jesus reminds us that we are called to struggle onward, trusting in God's unconditional presence. Sometimes we fall, even a second time. Yet we are each encouraged to a confidence that provides us enough energy to persevere yet again—moving forward while placing our total trust in that Sacred Presence who companions us even in the most gut-wrenching experiences of life. It is God who provides us with all that is needed—including continued strength and resilient faith to all who suffer the great disappointments of life.

**Chant:** *Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

**REFLECTION FOR STATION 7 BY DR. KATHLEEN FRIEL:** Here in our journey, we accompany Jesus as he falls a second time. We reflect on the times we have fallen. At this station, we remember those who cannot be with us in person this evening. COVID19 remains a high threat to us all, especially the very people we remember tonight: women, people of color, people with disabilities, and people with underlying health issues. We acknowledge their absence. We pray for the grace of hospitality. May our parish be a beacon of welcome to the marginalized and disenfranchised. Tonight, we miss them. Let us hold them close during a moment of silence. [Hold SILENCE.]

**LEADER:** O Christ, help us to trust that even when we do not feel your presence, you are indeed holding us in our journey. Keep us ever mindful that you command us to be the healing and physical presence of your love for others. Restore those, we pray, who have lost the eagerness of life.



## **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.

**LEADER:** Jesus reminds the compassionate women of Jerusalem, and all who follow them, to create a kingdom where there will be no more tears, no more injustice, no more pain, no more war, and to work together toward that end. Jesus tells the women not to weep for him, but to weep for themselves and their children. The fruits of authentic weeping compel us to work for the kingdom of God and to change for the sake of a world, so we may become who God has invited us to be.

**Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.**

**REFLECTION FOR STATION 8 BY MELINDA SPATARO:** A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children.” (Luke 23:27-28)

According to a March 2020 UNICEF report, twelve million girls are forced into marriage in childhood every year. When a girl is forced to marry as a child, she faces immediate and lifelong consequences. Her odds of finishing school decreases. She is more likely to die of complications in pregnancy and childbirth. There are also huge societal consequences, such as a higher risk of perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty. Other impacts include marital rape, heightened risk of domestic violence, poor access to decent work, exploitation of labor, risk of HIV transmission, and a range of health problems due to early childbearing. In Bangladesh, one of every three girls is married before age fifteen, often due to financial hardship or social pressure. Human Rights Watch claims the childhood marriage largest offenders are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Malawi, Nepal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

## PRAYER FOR OUR CHILDHOOD BRIDES

**READER 1:** My name is Ghulam, and I live in a small rural village in Afghanistan. I am eleven years old. Soon I will be wed to Mr. Faiz. He is forty years old. My father said I have no choice in the matter.

*All: Ghulam, we love you and pray for you.*

**READER 2:** Akhi of Bangladesh is fifteen and preparing for her upcoming marriage. Her mother was married at eleven and gave birth to Akhi at age twelve.

All: Akhi, we love you and pray for you.

**READER 3:** My name is Elina, and I live in Malawi. I was forced to get married when I was fifteen. I faced a lot of problems in marriage. I was young and did not know how to be a wife. I was pregnant, had to look after my husband, do housework, deal with in-laws, and work on the farm. My worst time was when I was pregnant. I had to do all this and deal with a pregnancy while I was just a child myself.

All: Elina, we love you and pray for you.

**READER 4:** Belkis is fifteen years old and has a one-year-old son. She was married at thirteen. After fourteen months of marriage, her husband left her. She is back home with her very large family. Her ex-husband no longer supports her or her son.

All: Belkis, we love you and pray for you.

**READER 5:** Sharon's marriage at age fourteen in Tanzania dashed her hopes for the future: "My dream was to study to be a journalist. Until today, when I watch news or listen to the radio and someone is reading news, it causes me a lot of pain because I wish it were me."

All: Sharon, we love you and pray for you.

*All: God of Compassion, we pray for every girl who is at risk of early marriage, or already in a union, across South Asia, Africa, and beyond. We pray for her protection, both physically and emotionally. God of Justice, show us how we can take action, so no girl is ever robbed of her education, well-being, or childhood by early marriage.*

**LEADER:** O Christ, as we weep for you and all who suffer in our human race, may our tears move us to action, so that we might respond with love and be instruments of your compassion and healing.



### **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.

**LEADER:** Sometimes suffering in silence is the only option. Like Jesus, we may be called to submit to that which is no longer in our control, trusting that God will prevail over evil. While it is never easy to admit our human struggles, it is in falling—or failing—that we most often come to recognize our dependency and our need. These moments of pain and suffering, however, may serve as hidden gifts in our journey. In this suffering, we may become aware that we are in communion with all our sisters and brothers who suffer. Suffering becomes our common ground, and as a community, we are all invited to healing.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 9 BY KATHLEEN CAGNINA:

When picking a station to offer a reflection on, the ninth, Jesus falls the third time, is never anyone's first choice. The first fall maybe, the second perhaps, but what is left to be said by the third time? However, the reality is that in our human lives, we rarely fall just once, and the third time is usually NOT the charm.

Those who have dealt with addiction know this reality all too well. Constantly asking, "Will this be the time it sticks?" Those working toward racial justice see this too. One step forward, two steps back. "Are we really back here again?" Knocked down again?

This is a very familiar place to find ourselves. To quote Oscar Wilde, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." So I suggest we focus on not just where we are, but who is with us and where we are looking.

Jesus is with us when we find ourselves knocked down again. Not looking from above, but down in the trenches with us.

But sometimes we ask why we should even get up. Jesus was heading toward even more suffering than he had already experienced; he was heading toward the wood and nails. If that is where we are going, why not stay down for the count.

There is a Japanese proverb: "Fall down seven times, stand up eight." It means focusing not on the reality in front of you, but on a greater vision that may not be reality yet.

Because the stations don't end on the Cross or in the tomb. That is not where Jesus's journey ended, and it is not where ours will end either .

Dante calls God the "Love that Moves the Sun and Other Stars." When we have fallen in the gutters of life for what seems like the millionth time, may we remember Jesus has been there, too, and is there with us in those moments. And may we look to the stars and keep our eyes on God.

**LEADER:** O Christ, give us your strength to continue to be a refuge of dignity and hope in the midst of chaos. Increase our sensitivity to the suffering of others, and help us to be hope to those without hope, who have failed repeatedly.



## **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.

**LEADER:** In his nakedness, Jesus is left vulnerable, stripped of the last remnants of dignity and protection. Yet in this vulnerability, he continues his approach to the greatest act of love ever accomplished. So, too, we pray that we can let go of all that holds us from giving that same love in the world today.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 10 BY DR. CHRISTINE SANTISTEBAN:

A 2018 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study shows 19.6 million experience high-impact chronic pain. The study found that women, older adults, adults living in poverty, and adults without health insurance were more likely to have chronic pain.

One such story is that of Jaime Sanders, who writes the Migraine Diva blog. Every time Jaime visits an urgent care clinic, she makes sure she brings the three-ring binder that details her comprehensive medical care plan, including lists of medications, allergies, and records of past doctors' visits.

Jaime knows she's never guaranteed to find doctors who will take her migraine pain seriously and carries the binder as proof of her diagnosis. Still, Jaime remembers how one doctor she saw regularly groaned and said, "Oh, it's the binder," when she saw Jaime. The doctor followed by asking if Jaime was doing everything she could for her migraine pain.

"These situations keep me from wanting to seek the treatment I need," Jaime said. "It's traumatizing, and who wants to keep being retraumatized? Sometimes I feel like turning around and just going home. It seems like it offends some people that I know so much about my illness.

"Some instances, I feel like I'm dismissed because I'm a woman, and a Black woman in particular, or it can just be a lack of compassion that doctor or nurse has in general." This is the fine line Black women have to walk when managing pain and accessing the care they need.

Like Jesus, Jaime and all women of color, who live with chronic pain and lack access to health care, are stripped of their dignity, shamed, and left defenseless, and vulnerable. Jesus holds their chronic pain and hears the cries of those without healthcare.

We pray for all women, especially women of color, who live with chronic pain and lack access to healthcare. May we lift these women in their suffering and stand by them and be more attentive to ways to listen, heal, and help them better access the care they need.

May we lovingly commit with more empathy and compassion to helping dismantle racist institutional barriers that deny the healthcare that women need.

**LEADER:** O Christ, sustain us in our nakedness. Help us to let go of all that must be left behind so that we might clothe others in dignity and truth. Clothe us with patience and perseverance as we reach out to those in need.



## **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.”

**LEADER:** Jesus’s response of forgiveness for his torturers seems irrational and impossible. It is at this moment, however, that Jesus exercises his greatest power. He reminds us that love is always stronger than hatred, suffering, or even death. John tells us of the steadfast human love of women faithful to the end: “Standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.”

This powerful witness of the women continues as a template for all humanity: what sustained Jesus in these final moments was not bitterness and anger—it was the support and care of those who loved him. That love radiated through even in the midst of hatred and violence.

***Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.***

## REFLECTION FOR STATION 11 BY STEPHANIE CASTILLO SAMOY:

On Monday, December 9, 2019, the body of a young woman was found at Gross Reservoir in Boulder County, Colorado. The coroner's office declared death by suicide. Alana Chen, twenty-four, had come out as a lesbian in her early teens to a parish priest, who became her spiritual adviser, unbeknownst to her parents. Father David Nix advised her to keep her sexuality a secret from her family, because he thought they would accept and approve of her just the way she was. Alana also was spiritually accompanied by the Sisters of Life, who encouraged and taught her about the beauty of chastity.

Alana struggled for many years with her sexuality and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which led to serious mental health problems and, finally, death by suicide. However, she wasn't alone in the snuffing out of her young life. Alana's sister, Charissa, said, "I think the church played a huge role in the years of trauma and treatment that she went through and ultimately her suicide, and they're just going to have to live with that. We all will now."

**LEADER:** O Christ, be our strength as we hear the cries of all in need of your generous mercy. Make us instruments of your peace. Give us your strength that we might support others in their times of pain or weakness. Bring us wholeness that we may reach out to the broken as heralds of your love and mercy.



## TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Hoisting the Cross up in place, Jesus' final agony begins, crucified in 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.

**LEADER:** In Jesus's death, we are reminded how to live: act justly, love tenderly, and travel humbly with God—even in the face of death. Jesus's work was completed, and those who remained at the Cross were now entrusted with his mission. In Jesus's death and through our baptism, we take on that responsibility: one for the other. We are reminded that the greatest healing gift is the gift of ourselves for others.

**Chant:** *Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

## **REFLECTION FOR STATION 12 BY DEB VERHOFF:**

Jamillah Nabunjo was a mother of two, a beloved daughter and sister. Targeted for her political beliefs and because she owned a small business, Jamillah fled her home in Uganda and made a long journey to Juarez, Mexico, to the US port of entry in order to start an asylum request.

She put her name on a list and waited patiently, with faith. Her number was 12,636. She waited for five months to be processed by the US Customs and Border Protection. A practice known as “metering limits” those allowed to enter at the Juarez ports to only a few people each day. Jamillah lived at El Buen Pastor shelter, which has an official capacity of sixty people, but regularly holds more than 130. As a minority African, she only felt relatively safe there.

While in Juarez, Jamillah accumulated friends and supporters, drawn by her contagious smile and unceasing hope and optimism. This despite the fact that she was plagued by health problems. Her supporters in the immigrant aid community tried to advocate for her to enter the United States earlier than her designated number, but were unsuccessful. By September, she was hospitalized. One week later she lost consciousness. Ironically, it was the same week her number was called. Jamillah died alone on September 29, in an ICU room far from home.

Jamillah had a serenity that inspired those around her. Even when sad, she never seemed to lose her positive attitude and faith. She was just thirty-three, but her face betrayed the suffering that led her to her long journey to the US. border. Her family describes her as their hope and their hero. She is grieved by a community of migrants and locals in Juarez.

We are called to be united with those who suffer injustice. As we witness the death of Jesus, we also bear witness to Jamillah. Lord, give us the courage to hear your final words, “Take care of one other.” Open our eyes to the injustice at our borders, and let us reach out to all women who seek refuge.

[Tapia, Edith. “A Migrant’s Tale: Ugandan Woman Waited for the System, Then Died Just as It Became Her Chance to Ask for Asylum.” Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), 24 Oct. 2019, [cliniclegal.org/stories/migrants-tale-ugandan-woman-waited-system-then-died-just-it-became-her-chance-ask-asylum](https://www.cliniclegal.org/stories/migrants-tale-ugandan-woman-waited-system-then-died-just-it-became-her-chance-ask-asylum).]

**LEADER:** O Christ, deliver us from all that is evil and brings death. Continue to use us as bearers of your life-giving Word. May we act justly, love tenderly, and travel humbly with our God, that we might be life-giving to all who long for new life in you.



## THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

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.

**LEADER:** Those who stayed until the painful end are examples of courage, mercy, and faithfulness. May we be faithful companions for those who seek freedom from their crosses in life.

*Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

**REFLECTION FOR STATION 13 BY TESS THOMPSON:** Autoimmune disorders affect at least twenty-four million people in the United States, the majority of who are women, transgender, and nonbinary individuals. Despite their prevalence, these conditions are understudied and underdiagnosed, leading those who suffer to be disbelieved by doctors, experience delays in getting treatment, and find that the remedies offered often provide only partial relief. This continues a long tradition in Western medicine of women's reports of their knowledge of their bodies, of their experiences with sickness and pain, being ignored. Consider how the word hysteria, a synonym for excess emotion and irrationality, comes from the Greek term for "uterus." For Black and brown women, this invalidation is magnified by implicit bias in the medical system, where echoes of the pseudoscientific belief that people of color are less capable of feeling pain than white people remain.

We do believe, Lord: help our unbelief. Help us to believe women and transgender and nonbinary people. Help us to believe their knowledge of their bodies, and their experiences of illness and pain. Help us find more treatments for conditions that chronically cause so much fatigue, pain, disruption, and disconnection from life. Help us be better at providing care for those who shoulder this bodily struggle throughout their lives. Help us believe that neither gender, nor disability, nor race, nor money should be a barrier to anyone's right to live well in their body. And even if we cannot master all the imperfections of the physical world, even if all the pains and challenges of the body cannot be eliminated, grant us freedom from the discriminations that cause so many to suffer unnecessarily.

**LEADER:** O Christ, help us in our unbelief and discouragement, that we might continue the journey of faith with our entire being. Give us the gift of hope renewed, and the gift of courage restored, that we might reach out to others in your name.



## FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS BURIED 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.

**LEADER:** To be placed in the tomb is the final loss in this world: separation from all we know and love—or so it would seem. In this tomb, there is more than a body. Jesus's death has destroyed death. Tomb becomes womb. The world is turned upside down. The end is only the beginning.

*Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*

**REFLECTION FOR STATION 14 BY MARY HURSON:** The oppression of minority women is historically rooted. According to a two-year review from Bureau of Justice Statistics, 64 percent of sex trafficking victims are from minority populations (40 percent Black, 24 percent Latina). Conversely, sex buyers are disproportionately white men. "Sex trafficking is truly one of the oldest forms of oppression in our country that began with the trafficking of native women and girls during colonization and the trafficking of Black women and girls during slavery," notes Cherice Hopkins, Senior Counsel for Rights4Girls (and a LifeWay Network Board member) and Tina Frundt, Founder and Executive Director of Courtney's House. Traffickers are aware of racial perceptions, with some admitting to specifically trafficking Black girls as they know they are less likely to be held accountable. Moreover, Black girls are more likely to experience risk factors associated with trafficking, including family instability, poverty, neglect, and abuse.

The cycle of racial injustice is not limited to the trafficking experience. Survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, particularly those of color, are often not acknowledged as victims of crime and are instead arrested for prostitution-related offenses. According to Pennsylvania arrest data, Black adults represent over one-third of adult prostitution arrests (38 percent)—more than any other racial group. Black children comprise 57 percent of all juvenile prostitution arrests (also more than any other racial group).

**LEADER:** O Christ, help us to rest in you, and you alone, that we may be given new life. Let us be life-giving agents to those whom we meet on their way to the Cross. Fill us with the delight of your grace, that we might shatter despair and accompany others along their way.

# CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, help us to follow in your example, to love and serve in a world that often seems empty of your presence. We ask that you shower us with the gifts of wisdom, strength, and compassion. As we leave this space and time in contemplation, keep us ever mindful of the suffering you endured for our salvation. Give us the strength to bring others the comfort, hope, and healing that you have secured for us. And remind us always of the great truth: that no matter how vast our brokenness is, love will prevail.

*Chant: Amen, amen. Amen, amen.*