

# AN INTER MINISTRY STATIONS OF THE CROSS



FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022

**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.

## OPENING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, today we join you in your Passion, accompanying you through your greatest trial. Grant us the courage to keep our eyes open, our ears listening, and our senses aware of what you experience. May we recognize how your Passion continues in the plight of those who seek refuge during these unsettling times, fleeing violence, conflict, persecution, and environmental destruction. May we stay by your side, even if we fall with you. Animate our steps with your love and hope, although we may not be certain where the journey will end. Remove all fear and help us to become aware of your presence in all things. Amen

*Adapted from Jesuit Refugee Service Stations of the Cross 2022*

*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.

In 2021 over 20,700 people died from gunfire in the US. This excludes suicides but includes “justifiable homicide” - a term that especially in the season in Lent sounds eerie. We are a society that loves freedom and is allergic to compromise. As a result we have failed to enact meaningful gun laws to protect ourselves. This has resulted in gun trade, both legal and illegal, that has put loaded weapons in the hands of the shooters those 20,700 condemned “unjustifiable homicide” victims. We pray that our leaders find a way to protect ourselves from gun violence and reduce the amount of deadly weapons in the hands of those willing to harm us.

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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.

The rights of transgender and gender non-conforming people across the country are being systematically threatened and undermined by national anti-LGBTQ groups coordinating with anti-equality lawmakers to lay a cross on the shoulders of the community.

The intersections of racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and unchecked access to guns conspire to deprive these people of employment, housing, healthcare and life itself. In 2021, record 57 transgender or gender non-conforming people were the victims of violent fatalities. There are five fatalities on record already in 2022. The majority of these people were Black and Latinx transgender women.

These victims, like all of us, are loving partners, parents, family members, friends and community members. They worked, went to school and attended houses of worship. They were real people — people who did not deserve to have their lives taken from them.

Anti-transgender stigma is fueled by legal oppression. 25 states have anti-trans laws at some stage of review for the 2022 legislative session. These range from making it a felony to provide transgender youth with life saving health care to banning transgender girls from participating in sports to erasing LGBTQ people from school curriculum.

These bills are not only harmful and discriminatory, but also represent a failure to love as Jesus taught us. Lord, as you choose your cross, you remind us that oppression leads to death. We pray you will convert the hearts and minds of those who have the power to make our society a safer place for transgender and gender non-conforming people.

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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.

Late Last December, the manslaughter conviction of ex-cop Kim Porter in the murder of 20-year-old Duante Wright was celebrated, albeit with some surprise: partially since officers are so rarely convicted and partially because the shooting seemed to be the result of mistaking her gun with a “non-lethal” taser. The verdict seemed to say that we even have to hold officers responsible when they are so unbelievably negligent. It was seen as a woman outside the courthouse said “proof that the world can change and do better for us Black people.” A little less than two months later, that hope was crush by the sentencing of Porter to only 16 months instead of the 7 years requested by the prosecution. Leading Duante’s mother to say, “White woman tears , trump justice.”

Jesus help us to understand that remorse is not repentance and that true accountability is a critical, necessary step on the road to justice for us all.

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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.

As of February 2022, 1,200 families separated at the US/Mexico border remain separated. Approximately 130 families have been reunited since President Biden took office and 400 or more reunifications are in progress.

When we think of the loving gaze from one's mother, the embrace that only a mother's arms can give, we must remember that this was the very thing that Jesus longed for on that dry, violent road to Calvary. This embrace was torn from his reach, just as it is still torn from a frightened child's grasp today. We feel that pain in the very core of our being.

Holy Mary, mother of us all, pray for us that we might lend that needed gaze and unconditional embrace to those in need. Jesus, loving son, pray for our leaders and public servants that they will find the compassion and tools available to them to bring all families back together as God intended.

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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.

The pandemic has required all of us to find new, frustrating, or hopefully creative ways of doing things. For people with disabilities, "making it work" is nothing new. Covid has been more a question of degree than a new experience as people with disabilities increasingly have had to adapt to spaces and events not designed with us in mind.

Just as Simon helped Jesus, those with disabilities help us be our full potential as a community of faith. Rather than thinking of accommodations for people with disabilities as burdensome, universal design principles help us understand how they benefit everyone. Curb cuts assist people in wheelchairs and people with baby strollers. Zoom captions may be designed for those who are deaf, but others use them when the traffic gets loud, or to learn a new term or new language. Inspired by Simon, Let us work to create, not a return to normal, but a new, better community, founded on universal welcome.

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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.

Julia Greeley was born into slavery and lost sight in one eye after being whipped by her owner. One of the “saintly six”, stories of her numerous, often anonymous deeds of charity and kindness have long been shared in Denver’s African-American community and are now becoming more widely known. Like Veronica, her deep commitment to community came at great risk. After the Civil War, Greeley walked the streets after long days of caring for white people’s houses and children to distribute food and coal to those in need, both black and white. Like Saints Veronica and Julia, may we too find ways to do what we can, where we can to work for justice.

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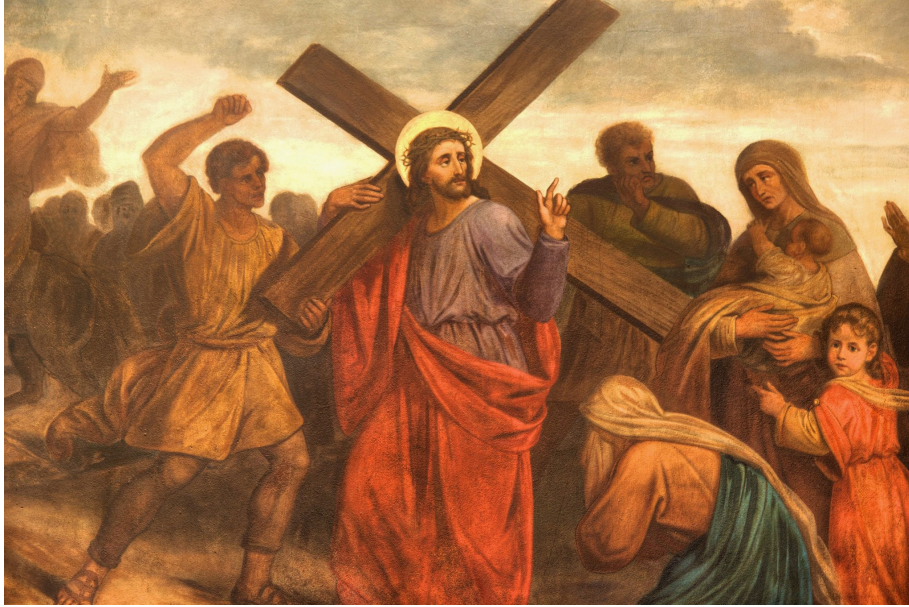
## **SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME**

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.

Every night over 49,000 people sleep in New York City's homeless shelters, and unnumbered more seek peace, rest, and safety in MTA stations and subway cars. Those who are homeless and sheltering on the subway are often people who have fallen many, many times in life – leaving them with no money, little family, few friends, inadequate social services, too often the victims of the violence and ruined health that these circumstances entail. Mayor Adams' administration has announced a new priority to remove homeless people from the city's subway system, to make stations and trains more "appealing" and "safe" – but the question is, appealing and safe for WHOM? Lord, forgive us for clamoring to save our own skins while letting the most vulnerable fall again and again. Help us realize that while some of your children still carry your cross – exposed, in need, and hurting – none of us can be truly safe. Please help us to find a better solution to help each other and to find God in our discomfort.

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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.

Presently, youths worldwide organize strikes under the banner Fridays for the Future. They join together to defy the indifference and apathy felt by many toward the cataclysmic progression of climate change.

Already, clean water, air, biodiversity and food security are at risk.

During COP26 in Glasgow last November, they watched on the sidelines as hundreds of executives from the fossil fuel industry lobbied inside for policies that value profit over life. This motivated them to flood the streets in protest to raise their voices for their future, for the natural world, the marginalized, and for those who will follow them. Throughout the world, the youth are experiencing high degrees of anxiety for the future world they will inherit.

Dear God, help us support these young adults and follow their example of respect for this world and the natural gifts You have bestowed.

Note: the next climate strike is Friday, March 25.

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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.

Jesus falls the third time and needed assistance to reach the cross from this moment. In recent years, LGBTQ people have again become targets of discrimination in Dioceses and parishes within the United States, so much so that it is suggested that we be banned from ministry and even the sacraments.

Imposing such conditions not only contradicts the unconditional love of God, but is also harmful. We believe that we are called by God's love and that we all are truly created in God's image and likeness.

The pastoral care and welcoming of LGBTQ people in the Catholic Church should not be made conditional on the renunciation of our sexuality nor of our right to fully love.

LGBTQ people need our Catholic allies' assistance when we fall; speak out regarding the injustice and oppression. God help us when we fall, so we too shall rise.

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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.

Here Jesus is dehumanized by the soldiers who strip Him and cast dice for His clothes. Sadly, we in the United States have also been stripped bare: the state of our public discourse is bleak with little room for the “person”, flaggerant self-interest abounds in many interactions, and the evils of racism and prejudice persist outwardly, all of which are shocking and heartbreaking. While it is true these brazen and hateful divisions and dehumanizing tendencies playing out in almost every aspect of American life did not just suddenly come about, we must ask ourselves: how can we overcome the indignity we feel and experience in our divided nation? How are we contributing to its persistence?

For parents trying to protect children from hate, war, and division while encouraging them to be and bring forth the multitude of their humanness despite the obstacles...

For those championing our environment, protecting the air we breathe and the food we eat even while both are literally in threat and in spite of the corporate and self interests challenging sustainable practices...

For those with disabilities that are apparent and all of us who bear the weight of differences know only to ourselves and our God...

...May there be Hope in our vulnerability that we might build bridges with others who feel vulnerable and restore our human relationships.

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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.”

Earlier this year, the defense cases in the federal trial of the three former Minneapolis police officers accused of crimes in the death of George Floyd concluded with a common theme: that they were not guilty because their training led them to trust the senior officer at the scene who pressed his knee to the neck of Mr. Floyd for more than nine minutes until he stopped breathing.

Though the result of the trial was that of guilty, their claims of innocence constitute a modern day Banality of Evil? The men claimed to be doing their job controlling the crowd surrounding the crime scene, and claimed that they did not intervene or attempt to save Floyd’s life because Floyd’s murderer was their superior. They claimed to be inexperienced, improperly trained, and that they did not willfully violate Floyd’s civil rights.

God help us to exercise the freedom and responsibility that you have granted us. Help us all to intercede in your name in the places where we see your children abused and suffering. Help us to summon the courage to step out of line when we know the line is opposed to your wishes. We pray for justice for those who are harmed by racial violence, healing for those who seek it, and somehow forgiveness for those who abuse your children. However impossible that may seem.

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## **TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

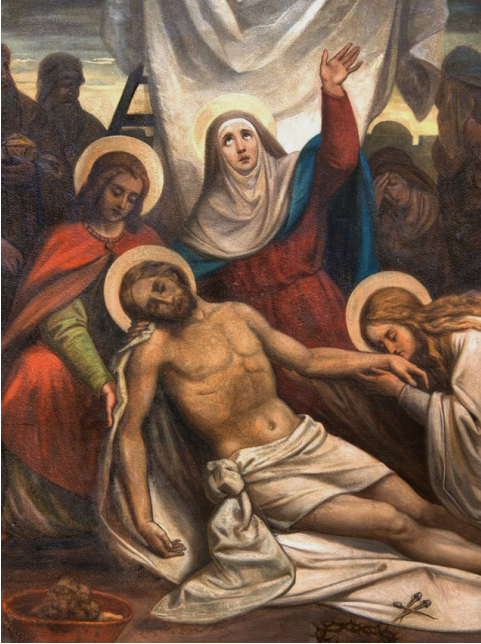
The soldiers hoist the Cross up in place. Jesus' final agony begins as He is crucified between two thieves. While the soldiers cast lots for His clothing and the crowd throws insults at Him, Jesus, suffering from pain, dehydration, and asphyxiation, breaths His last breath.

In the recent federal hate crime trial of the three men who killed Ahmaud Arbery, we heard the shocking racist declarations of his killers. To be filled with this kind of racist hatred is in itself a kind of death. How do we pray for these people?

As Jesus was crucified and killed unjustly, so too was Ahmaud by pure hatred. May we as a community be transformed in mind and heart so that we better understand, listen and aide those who suffer the injustices of racism, disturb our peace of mind and heart for a moment God, so that we can pray for and become better allies to our all friends and family of color (Black, Asian, Latinx, Native American).

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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 seem to be reaching a plateau in crisis of Covid 19. As we feel an end to one kind of struggle, what do we feel and what do we pray for as we start to rebuild? How might we continue to reflect and learn lessons from these past two years? Did you or those you love display a resilience to be proud of? How do we celebrate our relief, while also remembering the injustices of unequal care? What do we learn from the outrageous spike in hate crimes and anti-Asian violence? With 10,370 "hate incidents" from March 2020 through September 2021- an 11 fold increase, We recall stories of those like Denny Kim, a 27-year-old Korean American veteran of the U.S. Air Force, who was beaten by two men who shouted anti-Asian slurs at him and called him "Chinese virus." In New York City, there were nearly 200 anti-Asian hate crimes over the course of the pandemic. The deaths of Maria Ambrocio, Michelle Alyssa Go, Christina Yuna Lee, Yao Pan Ma, and GuiYing Ma have left many broken hearted and despairing.

"We are at a breaking point right now. Everyone is horrified."

How do we hold this suffering and injustice, knowing the promise of eternal life?

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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.

This poetic reflection was offered to us by a fellow parishioner.

I am Ukraine and I sit here in this darkened tomb, in the shadows, with my people. No one sees me as they enter for my deep sadness covers me, covers my people.

They bring in the body, gently lay it on the slab.

They leave and I am left alone with this corpse, with the hope that has died, and I cry. All my dreams, all my hopes shattered. And yet, I can smell the sweet fragrance from the linens and oils with which they have anointed the body. I reach and hold the cold wounded hand of this man, waiting for him to wake from sleep. But it seems so impossible, so very impossible, that one should rise from the dead. And yet.

The day seems so far off; the coldness has seeped through my body, and I sit and mourn, eyes turned to the dirt at my feet, tears mixing with it making mud.

There is a small crack in the ceiling and I can glimpse the morning star; and still I sit waiting, waiting for the first glimpse of sunlight. None comes through. And I shout, "Lord, Lord, what have you done to my people?"

No one responds; and I wait.

Let us all pray in the silence of our hearts for the people of Ukraine and all people suffering the impact of war.

*All: Te adoramos, Cristo, y te bendecimos*

# CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus' friends are afraid that this is the end of Jesus. But as surely as spring follows winter and daylight follows the dark night, Jesus proves that death has no power over him, nor subsequently over us. New life always follows after death.

Jesus once said: "Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a seed." And so it must be with us. We pray for courage to take a stance and intervene if we witness racial injustice. We pray for all victims of violence, grant them eternal rest with Christ. We pray for peace and comfort for the families who have lost loved ones.

Let us leave our fractured and broken humanity at the foot of His cross.

Let us put down our racism, our prejudices and unfair judgments, our hearts of stone, our chains of apathy and complacency. Here we lay them down. May we now go forward in the hope that we shall be released from these burdens; released into the freedom to love, to see others as God sees them, to craft our earthly purposes more in line with God's purposes for us and for all creation.

We make these prayers in the name of Jesus, the beloved Son of God. Here in His torturous death as a criminal, He is still God's beloved. And so are we.

All: Amen.