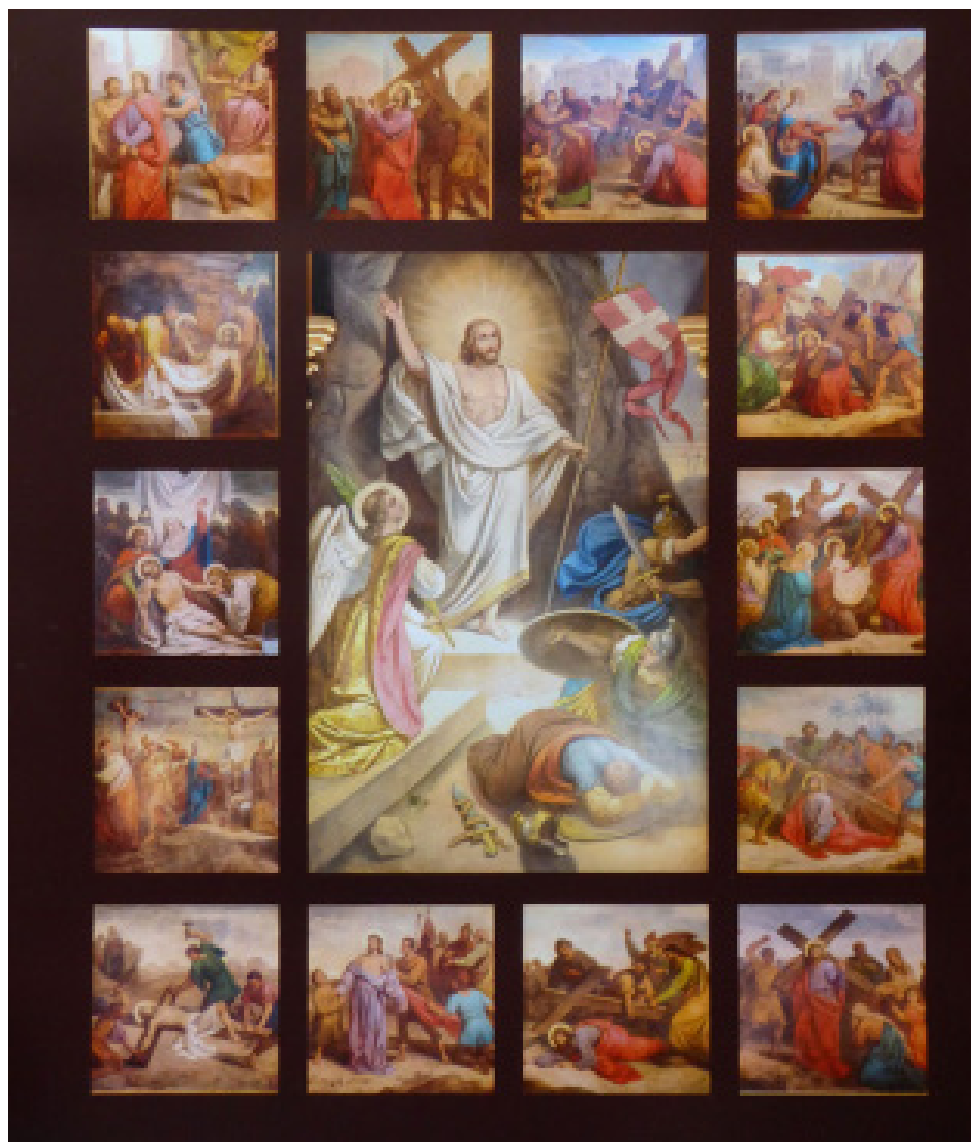


# STATIONS OF CROSS: ABILITY XAVIER & RACIAL JUSTICE



FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024

## **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.

# STATIONS OF THE CROSS: OVERCOMING RACISM

**People in our day suffer unjustly simply because of the color of their skin or their disability. Let us acknowledge the sin of racism and work to combat it in our social structures, our institutions, and our hearts.**

Opening Prayer: [condensed from the USCCB Prayer to Address the Sin of Racism]

**ALL: Lord of all, we pray for healing to address the persistent sin of racism, which is the rejection of the full humanity of some of your children, and the talents and potential you have given them. We pray for the grace to recognize the systems that do not support the dignity of every person, that do not promote respect for those who are seen as other, who bear the legacy of centuries of discrimination, fear, and violence. Give us eyes to see how the past has shaped the complex present.**

**We pray for social structures in which children of color, and those with disabilities, can grow up without fear, in security and dignity, with access to health care and quality education that will allow them to develop their gifts.**

**Empower us to create a new way forward, with a new sense of community that embraces and celebrates the rich diversity of all. Help us to live out your call to combat racism and hatred. Show us how to live in a compassionate solidarity, supported by your grace and your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.**

**We adore you O Christ and we praise you.**  
**All: Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.**  
**All: Te adoramos, Cristo, y te bendecimos.**



## **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.

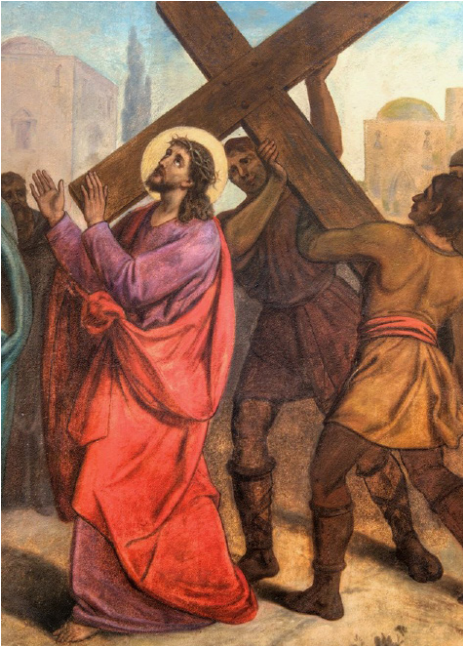
Jesus stands alone before Pilate. Nobody speaks up. Nobody defends Jesus, who devoted his entire life to helping others, listening to the smallest ones, caring for those who were ignored by others. Now, Jesus stands in silence as He is unfairly sentenced to death.

Judgment without reason is the cornerstone of racism, ableism, and the many other unfair, superficial ways we separate ourselves from others. In the Book of Genesis, Noah cursed the descendants of his son, Ham, to be slaves – especially those of Ham's youngest son, Canaan. Throughout history, many have considered this Biblical story to serve as justification for slavery, particularly of people from Africa - Canaan's homeland.

We know that slavery and judgment without reason have no place in our lives or our communities. At this station, we pray for an end to all forms of slavery and discrimination.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**

**We adore you O Christ and we praise you.  
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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.

Jesus takes up His cross, a heavy, awkwardly shaped, splintering cross. Just last night, He was eating dinner with His friends. He showed them how to serve, how to carry on His legacy, which none of them realized would be necessary so quickly. And then, one friend betrayed Him for a bit of coins, and His “rock” denied even knowing Jesus. Jesus carried all this weight.

In a single phone call, families are thrown an unfairly heavy cross. We pray for them. We pray for an end to violence in all its forms. We pray for wisdom and empathy, so that we may help people in our communities carry their cross.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**



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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.

Laboring under the weight of the Cross, Jesus slowly sets forth on the way to Calvary. His agony in the garden has exhausted His Body; He is sore with blows and wounds; His strength fails Him; He falls to the ground under the cross.

Let us pray. We have fallen as a nation under the weight of racial and religious profiling; may we have the strength of Jesus to stand up against intolerance. For this we pray.

**All: God of justice, hear our prayer.**

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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.

They just wanted their mother – dark skinned men being murdered by authorities. At this station, Jesus meets His mom. The woman whose “yes” made His life possible. The woman who taught Him kindness, parables, and the infinite love of God. The woman who spent three days looking for tween Jesus, and spent many nights worrying about her traveling adult Son. Jesus cares for his mom even as He died, entrusting her to John’s care. He just wanted His mom to be safe. He just wanted His mom.

At this station, we sit with the agony and beauty of Mary and Jesus’ encounter. We know that this scene plays out daily around our nation. We pray for mothers who have done the unthinkable – buried their children. We pray for all who grieve, for all who long for one more encounter with their mother. Mary, be with us.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**

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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.

Simon likely felt powerless to protest either Jesus' execution or his own involvement. Like him, many people with disabilities are not employed in self-affirming ways. Two thirds of people with disabilities in the United States are either unemployed or under-employed. Many so-called "sheltered workshops," which often employ people with intellectual disabilities to do jobs many others would find boring or demeaning, pay these workers far less than the minimum wage. Perhaps Simon was pressed into service based on one aspect of his identity: his presumed strength. What other skills, needs or vocation did he have?

Let us pray that all people have work that sustains them financially, provides a sense of community, and fosters the satisfaction that comes from a job well done.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**



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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 too 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.

Recall how Jesus' struggle to go on increased His pain and cost Him a constantly greater loss of blood until his strength failed a second time, and He fell upon the ground again.

Let us pray. We have fallen as a nation; when our police shoot down little Black and brown boys without consequence, may we have the strength to hold the police accountable. For this we pray.

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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.

Jesus looks up and sees women crying for him as he carried his cross along the road to Calvary. All they can give him are their tears of anguish and despair. Jesus reminds them that they must care for themselves and their children. As they mourn and lament, their sorrow and dismay over injustice fill their hearts. They observe first-hand the sheer brutality, the violence, the injustice... far from the message of mercy Jesus spoke everywhere he went.

Many women of color are often employed at relatively low wages taking care of elderly white people, white babies and children, and cleaning the homes of white people. They struggle to find time for their own families. Such is the situation of many women of color who are forced into racially unjust economic labor. In addition, most of the victims of human trafficking are women and children of color. We must consistently be aware of the tragic connections between trafficking, migration, poverty, racism, and gender to destroy the roots of racial oppression and human trafficking.

Let us pray that God watch over all women and children of color and protect them from human trafficking. For this we pray,

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**



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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, arriving exhausted at the foot of Calvary, falls for the third time. His weakness was extreme and the cruelty of His executioners was excessive; they tried to hasten His steps when He hardly had the strength to move.

Let us pray. We have fallen as a nation; when our elected officials will not uphold the Constitution of our country, may we find the strength to elect representatives that will. For this we pray.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**



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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.

We remember the enslaved people in our own American history when entire families of men, women and children were sold on a block. Their bodies touched, groped and explored in front of crowds and prospective owners of human beings, considered to be only 3/5 human. Did they feel Jesus' presence amongst them during this degradation and torment?

Let us pray. Jesus, our brother and our friend, you and your mother knew the ultimate vulnerability and humiliation of being exposed and powerless, as you both stood up to oppression and injustice. Give us the courage to work together in solidarity to attack the political, economic, social and religious structures that refuse to hear and to listen to your people and thus perpetuate their torment. For this we pray.

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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.”

Every year on March 1st, the disability community comes together to remember the hundreds of victims of filicide each year.

In the disability community, “filicide” is used when talking about a parent or other relative or household member killing a child or adult relative with a disability, by action or inaction. People with disabilities are often judged to be burden to their families, so a homicide can be seen as a balm to an overburdened family. This profoundly minimizes the inherent worth of people with disabilities, who become victims of horrific crimes simply because of who they are.

As we meet Jesus at this painful station, we pray for people with disabilities, whose own families put them on a cross to die. We pray for an end to filicide. We pray for greater appreciation of the lives of people with disabilities.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer**

<https://disability-memorial.org>

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

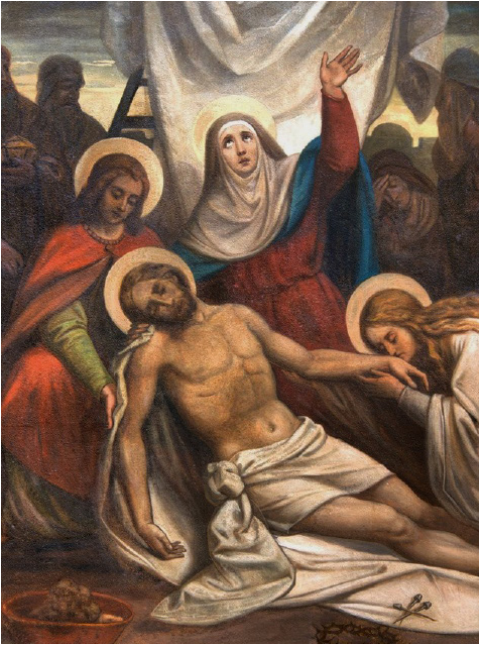
The soldiers hoist the Cross up in place. Jesus' final agony begins as He is crucified between two thieves. While the soldiers cast lots for His clothing and the crowd throws insults at Him, Jesus, suffering from pain, dehydration, and asphyxiation, breaths His last breath.

We remember those who have been unfairly killed, especially those killed by authority figures and family members. We take a moment of silence to remember the victims in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa.

We pray for their souls. We pray for all who mourn.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer**

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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.

The murder of fourteen-year-old, African-American Emmett Till by two white men in 1955 brought the horrors of U.S. racial segregation to national and world attention. His mother, Mamie Till-Mobley declined the mortician's offer to "touch up" her son's appearance and insisted on an open-casket funeral because, "I wanted the world to know what they'd done to my baby".

May we find ways to be in solidarity with those who mourn while still respecting their privacy. Let us pray for an end to violence and a deeper commitment to protecting the lives and dignity of all of God's children.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer**



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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 Manhattan Detention Complex, a prison in lower Manhattan, is nicknamed "the Tombs." The Tombs is where men who can't make bail, or committed a very serious crime, are sent before their trial. The Tombs has capacity for nearly 900 men, the vast majority of whom are African-American or Latino. Since money is needed for bail, the population of the Tombs is disproportionately poor, compared to the general population. Men in the Tombs have not yet been tried, which in America means a presumption of innocence. Yet men without financial resources can remain in the Tombs for months as they await their trials.

Jesus knew the experience of being treated profoundly unfairly, being an accused criminal without the dignity of a trial. At this station, we pray for those who have been placed in tombs of any kind. We pray for all who have died, especially those who have died by violence. We pray for prison reform, for an end to racist and ableist practices within the prison system.

**All: God of Justice, hear our prayer.**

# CLOSING PRAYER

We pledge to do God's work of eradicating ableism, racism, and all other forms of discrimination. The response is, "Nosotros estamos contigo," which means, "We stand with you," in Spanish.

As children of God, to children of God...

We acknowledge the existence, power, and sinfulness of racism and ableism.

**All: Nosotros estamos contigo.**

We support the dignity and worth of every human being as the Gospel demands and will work every day to treat each person as we want to be treated.

**All: Nosotros estamos contigo.**

We strive to understand and dismantle the injustice and suffering caused by ableism and white privilege.

**All: Nosotros estamos contigo.**

We commit ourselves to eliminating prejudice from our thoughts and actions.

**All: Nosotros estamos contigo.**

We commit ourselves to actions that will remove ableism, inaccessibility, racism, and all forms of discrimination from our Church, our city, our nation, and our world.

**All: Nosotros estamos contigo.**