

**RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION
AND
MUSIC MINISTRIES**

Good Friday, March 29, 2024

Noon

Welcoming

Opening Hymn

Were you There? (*African-American spiritual*)

Dancers: Ana Alarcon, Theresa Herron, Elizabeth Mills, Janeen Stevens

Choreographer: Luz Marina Díaz (adapted from Father Bob Vereckee, SJ choreography)

Singers: Marissa Hernandez-Suominen, soprano; Maggie Greene-Freeman, alto; Dugan McGinley, tenor; Darren Lougée, bass

Director of Music: John Uehlein

Were You There?

Text and Tune: AfricanAmerican Spiritual

Were you there when they cru-ci - fied my Lord? Were you there when they
cru - ci - fied my Lord? Oh! _____ Some-times it
caus - es me to trem - ble, trem - ble, trem - ble. _____ Were you
there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord. _____

2. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
3. Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
4. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Station 1 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader: Betrayed. Deserted. Alone. Jesus stands before Pilate. Palm branches preparing the way of the king are gone and forgotten. Soldiers pummel, whip, and crown him with thorns. Jesus is condemned to die. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

In the first Station of the Cross, Jesus is condemned to die. Pilate, appeasing the mob who demanded the blood of Jesus, orders His crucifixion. Following His sentencing, the soldiers of Pontius Pilate mock Jesus; they spit on Him and beat Him. But look closely at the image in our church of the First Station. Despite his suffering, Jesus does not dejectedly look downwards, nor does Jesus defiantly meet the eyes of his torturers. He calmly looks upwards. He does this because he knows that all this is the plan of His Father. Jesus does not fear death, nor does He fear the evil

of people because, even as the soldiers lead Him to His crucifixion, He knows that He is walking with God, and thus there is nothing to fear.

While I have no trials that compare to the sufferings of Jesus, Jesus' actions, calmness, and faith at the time of his death sentence serve as a model for me in times of struggle. There have been many moments when I have been in pain, when I have been disappointed, or when I have failed. Without faith, I would be lost in moments like these. I would fear that there is no point to my struggles, and I would worry that perhaps I would be trapped in the darkness of my despair forever, that things would never get better. But seeing Jesus' serenity in the time of his greatest adversity shows me that even in these lowest moments, I am not alone. He is with me. And He will always guide me back to the light.

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Station 2 Jesus takes up the 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader: Heavy, rough wood. A beam laid on the back of a carpenter. The crowd jeers. The procession to the place of the skull begins. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

This second station of the cross captures the physical and emotional weight burdened on Jesus as he made his way to Calvary. The cross is not only a physical manifestation but also represents the emotional and mental challenges. Reflecting on this station evokes themes of acceptance, sacrifice, and perseverance.

As Jesus bears the cross, we witness an embodiment of selflessness and love. His willingness to carry the burdens of humanity symbolizes his desire to redeem us all. In this act, Jesus gives the ultimate sacrifice, offering himself for the salvation of humanity.

Moreover, Jesus' journey with the cross serves as a powerful reminder of the perseverance required in the face of adversity. Despite the excruciating pain and humiliation, Jesus presses forward, steadfast in his commitment to fulfill God's will. This act of perseverance inspires others to confront their own trials with courage and faith, trusting in God even amidst the darkest moments of life.

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Station 3 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader:

Stumble. Fall. Collapse. Jesus' sweat mingles with dust as he falls to the earth. Barely able to stand. He cannot carry the cross without falling. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

Before His first fall, did the people in the crowd know that Jesus was capable of falling? Imagining myself as one of the crowd, they must have had no idea what to expect. It must have come as a shock and a horror to witness.

Jesus had performed miraculous acts before – might He still be ready to enact another miracle to help Him withstand the physical labor, to retain composure and posture to carry the cross gracefully

through the crowd? After all, just several days before, Jesus was making His way through another large crowd of people, who welcomed and waved Him through with palm branches.

He instead defies both the crowd's expectations and my own, falling to the ground just as any of us would, and no one rushes to help Him... not yet. Where are Jesus' loyal followers now, and where would you and I be among the crowd? How does it feel to see Jesus fall for the very first time?

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Station 4 Jesus meets his 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader:

Mother and child. Madonna. There is no angel messenger, no heavenly choir, no shepherds in the night, no wise men. Gone are the gifts and the pondering. Mary sees her battered son through a veil of tears. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

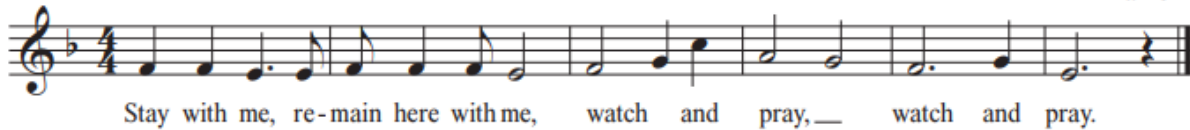
Luke Chapter 2, verses 34 - 35: Simon forewarned in the Gospel of Luke. [34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”].

Jesus, on the way to his crucifixion and in the midst of great pain, encounters his mother for an instant. Both share in the same pain: the pain he feels for his people; the pain she feels for her Son.

Jesus is about to fulfill his mission by sacrificing himself for the forgiveness of sins, while Mary remembers the words spoken to her: "and you yourself a sword will pierce." However, that pain reflects the greatest love and hope at the same time. God gives us the opportunity to encounter Christ and his mother and feel the love and comfort only he can offer. He, Jesus, feels the pain of his mother and his people (us as his people) even as he marches to his death. How do we look at Jesus and Mary when we encounter them in our daily lives? Do we rejoice in the pain of others? Or do we show compassion, love and hope? How many times have we felt immense pain? To whom do we plea? Do we let ourselves be consumed by troubles? Or do we trust in God's will and what was, is and shall be done? It is up to us to answer "yes," in the same way Mary and Jesus did. In their final moments, they felt extreme pain for themselves and for each other and yet knew this was the will of God. It Shall be Done. Let us remember that even in the greatest pain we may be comforted by an expression of love for others.

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Station 5 Simon of Cyrene is forced to 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Stranger. Neighbor. Cross bearer. Simon takes up your cross, and another innocent man joins the procession to Calvary. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

The fifth station of the cross is a scene of contradiction. Carrying the cross is by design to make the process of crucifixion in its entirety to be as long, humiliating, and painful as possible. But God

made flesh needs to be helped by a mortal man to carry his cross because the Romans are growing impatient.

It's also a scene of transformation. In this moment, a randomly chosen man physically becomes the person closest to Jesus. Right behind him, I wouldn't be surprised if people in the crowd from certain angles mistook one for the other. Simon of Cyrene, likely a foreigner and most definitely a stranger, becomes a neighbor and a friend. Simon is literally the first cross-bearer.

What a relief, however momentary, Simon's help must have been to Jesus. Let us be encouraged by this scene of transformation. Wherever we may be in our discipleship as Christians, if we take up our cross and follow our Lord to help build God's Kingdom on Earth, we will be transformed and grow closer to the Son of Man.

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Station 6 Veronica wipes the sweat from Jesus' Face



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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Comfort. Courage. Image of Christ impressed on a Cloth. Tradition. Woman. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

In the sixth station of the cross, Veronica, a woman from Jerusalem, witnesses Jesus' suffering as He carries the heavy cross. Moved by compassion, she reflexively steps forward and uses her veil to wipe the blood and sweat from Jesus' face. Her small act of kindness demonstrates love and empathy amidst the crowd's hostility and criticism. Veronica is one of the women who had followed Jesus, understood His identity, and loved Him deeply.

She suffers as she sees His face, which touched her soul on many occasions. Despite the danger in hostile crowds, she courageously approaches Jesus to offer solace. She can't do much, but she offers what little help and comfort she can. Her selfless act leaves an indelible mark, symbolizing compassion, courage, and recognition of Jesus' dignity.

Veronica's gesture invites me to consider my own acts of compassion and empathy in everyday life. How can I reach out to help and wipe away the suffering of others, such as my colleagues, friends, and family members, even in small ways? As I journey through Lent, Veronica's example strongly inspires me to recognize the face of Christ in those we encounter. May Veronica's act of love and courage resonate within my heart throughout life.

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Station 7 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Meditation

Oppressed. Afflicted. Suffering. Even though Simon carries the cross, Jesus can not continue. He bears our infirmities and carries our sorrows. Crushed under their weight, Jesus falls once more. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

He falls again. When it rains, it pours. The difficulties we run into in life, sometimes one after another, crush us with their weight and make us wonder why they have to happen and how we can carry on. I went through a period of darkness in college. Even though I got into the best university in Beijing and in China, where I grew up, I struggled in high school with the STEM track my family thought all boys should do instead of choosing the liberal arts path that I loved, that I should have

embarked on, but many people thought was for girls. A very Asian thinking. After failing a calculus class during my freshman year, I couldn't even switch majors to my favorite, Chinese literature. I was stuck with energy engineering, and I didn't see how I could go on for three more years. I thought about dropping out. I was also lonely because I did not hang out with my classmates. A bunch of STEM nerds that were so different from me. But somehow, I did find the strength to carry on, day by day, when hope was a luxury. It took my dad's yelling at me to give me that wake-up call to get myself together, and more importantly, it took a STEM genius friend in my class that I got to know by coincidence because we took the same gym class. He was my Veronica and Simon. He passed away two years ago, and I miss him every day. Looking back, I realize that my actions after the string of mistakes made me who I am today. If not for that suffering, maybe I would not have taken a gap year after college to figure out what I really wanted to do with my life; maybe I would not have befriended my patron saint, my best friend from college; maybe I would not have met my boyfriend who introduced me to catholicism. Maybe everything does happen for a reason, and there is salvation. Just that sometimes there are many dark hours before dawn, many times we will fall, and we cannot lose hope.

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Station 8 Jesus consoles 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Tears. Wailing. Grief. Women mourn openly for the Son of Man, but his concern is for them and their children in the days of woe yet to come. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

In the eighth station of the cross, we witness an encounter between Jesus and the women of Jerusalem. Amid his anguish and suffering, Jesus turns to these women, urging them not to weep for him but for themselves and their children.

This station of the cross forces us to zoom out from what is happening to why it is happening. Jesus uses this moment to turn the mirror back on us.

We, like these women, are naturally saddened as we reflect on Jesus' suffering. But Jesus directs us to reflect inward. Instead of focusing on his suffering, he calls us to reflect on the consequences and repercussions of rejecting God's grace. Jesus calls us to consider our hearts' spiritual condition.

Jesus also calls the woman to weep for their children. God's grace is not limited to individual change but also societal change. Jesus' words provide a bleak warning but also hope for the transformative power of God's love.

As we reflect on Jesus' interaction with the women, let us spend time reflecting inwards on where sin may be holding us back from living fully within God's grace.

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Station 9 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Meditation

Bruised Dazed. Weak beyond measure. Approaching nearer to Calvary, Jesus collapses. Jesus is pulled up and shoved inexorably toward his death. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

The 9th station of the cross, showing Jesus, exhausted, tortured, and overwhelmed by the weight of the cross, falls again. This fall symbolizes the physical and emotional toll of his journey, like the moments in our own lives when we feel overwhelmed by our own challenges with sin. Jesus again shows us a way to overcome our challenges, and like him, we must rise and never give up.

Praying over this station made me think of my own moments of weakness and how I can respond to feeling overwhelmed. It reminds me that this is not only a station of Jesus falling but Jesus responding. Just as Jesus rises after each fall, I, too, can find the strength to get back up and keep moving forward on my own challenges and journeys.

This station serves as a powerful example of Jesus' humanity. Even in his greatness, he experiences the always-present human struggle of failing multiple times. This deepens my connection with him and offers comfort in knowing that he understands our struggles intimately.

The 9th station invites us to find hope and inspiration in the midst of our own falls, trusting that, like Jesus, we can rise again with strength and purpose.

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Station 10 Jesus is stripped of his Garments



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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Roughly handled. Stripped. Humiliated. The crown of thorns is all that remains. Holding nothing back, Jesus offers up his life. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

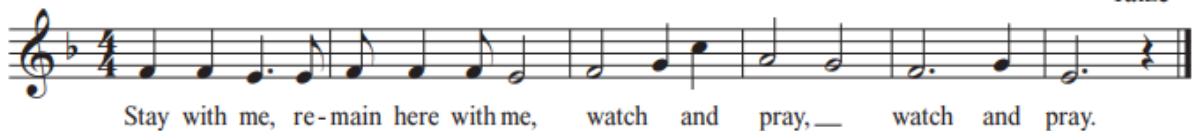
In this station, Jesus is ridiculed in front of his persecutors, as well as other bystanders who resent him and wish to mock him with a “crown” made of thorns. Even so, Jesus stands before the crowd, offering up his life. Despite the emotional and physical pain he must feel, he shows no hatred or frustration toward his persecutors and the jeering crowd.

When I was first assigned to this station, I felt that somehow, God had led me to consider this specific portion of Jesus' struggles for a reason. I reflected upon how the feeling of achievement, or being good at something, can sometimes make me feel as if I am a clown trying to impress everyone. When that happens, I have tried to defend myself by privately holding others in disdain, which meant that when someone else did very well I had trouble feeling genuine happiness for them.

But Jesus, who is perhaps more accomplished and exceptional than all others, remains humble and loving despite the extremely evident display of hate and jealousy from his detractors. And so, for me, the 10th station is an invitation from Jesus for us to remain humble and loving — for we, as children of God, must regard the gifts given to us as something to offer to society, not something for us to just feel like we are better than others.

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Station 11 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

Jesus surrendered and suffered immensely at the hands of those who persecuted Him. He endured excruciating pain, physically and mentally, and yet did not turn away from God. Instead, He embraced their wrongdoings and asked for their forgiveness. One of the criminals hanging next to

Jesus jeered at Him, challenged His sanctity, and asked why He simply did not save Himself and the others hanging with Him. The other criminal rebuked these insults and asked for Jesus to remember him in His Kingdom. Jesus replies, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43). Jesus chose to embrace His faith in God's plan in order for us to have Salvation and be with Him and God in Heaven.

I am humbled by this ultimate act of sacrifice. I think back to the times in my life when I was the prisoner who reviled Jesus. I did not believe. I had lost my faith. In my old church, I was surrounded by people who used God's word for personal gain to persecute others, and they thought that they were doing "God's work." Station 11 reminds me that if Jesus can ask for mercy and forgiveness for even those who nailed Him to the cross, we all can ask for mercy for those who may think they know but actually do not know what they do. Jesus shows us in this moment that love and forgiveness of others and the ability to surrender to God's plan – even in times of darkness and suffering – is truly what it means to be with Him. I know now I can never turn away from Him again, and I am thankful to have learned anew the meaning of being a Christian.

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Station 12 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.

PLEASE KNEEL - SILENCE

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader:

Loud Cry. Last Breath. "God into your hands I commend my spirit." What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:


At the twelfth station of the cross, Jesus willingly suffers an excruciating and agonizing death for us. It is a profound testament of our Lord's selflessness and love for us. Even as He was dying, Jesus forgave those who crucified Him – exemplifying Jesus's unconditional love and compassion. This act of mercy challenges us to reflect and consider whether we are living our life like Jesus. More specifically, it challenges us to reflect on our own ability to love and forgive others.

This image, one that is so central to the Catholic faith, moves me deeply. Many of us have likely been at a point in our lives where we looked at this image, or even the crucifix in our Churches, and asked, "why did You do this for me?" The answer is simple. It is because He loves us. His love is the only love we need.

While we may never experience the level of suffering Jesus did on this day, we know that we can overcome any hardship that life throws in our direction because He died on the cross for us. Who can be against us if He is for us? This image reminds me to live my life in a way that is pleasing to Him and to make sure that His death was not done in vain.

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Station 13 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: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Joseph. Nicodemus. Pilate, again. Spices and the body quickly wrapped together for a hasty burial. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection:

At the thirteenth station of the cross, Joseph of Arimathea retrieves Jesus' body from Pontius Pilate and, with Nicodemus, ensures that he is buried. John's gospel also gives us another detail of Jesus' descent from the cross. Before removing him from the crucifix, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear, with a sudden flow of blood and water.

Nicodemus is asked to do the funeral rites according to Jewish burial customs. We are reminded that these are human rites, a reminder that Jesus, a divine Son of God, is also wholly human. Like us, He lived and died, body and blood.

And still, with his death, blood and water pour forth. At the end of Jesus' human life, the water reminds us of the beginning—in His baptism. His death and sacrifice can be a grave and somber moment, but it is also one that promises redemption and new life. In fact, we are reminded of this in Joseph of Arimathea, "himself waiting for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43) and in the reminder that "These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled" (John 19:36).

I find this moment in Jesus' life as yet another paradox to grapple with. It holds so much grief and sadness but also hope and promise. It's conflicting, but at the same time—we are asked to hold that moment, to sit at that disjunction, and have faith that both—the darkness and the coming light—are not only true but inherently dependent on one another. And yet, for me, it is these moments that drew me back to Catholicism. Faith demands that we recognize the paradoxical task before us—in Jesus and the world around us.

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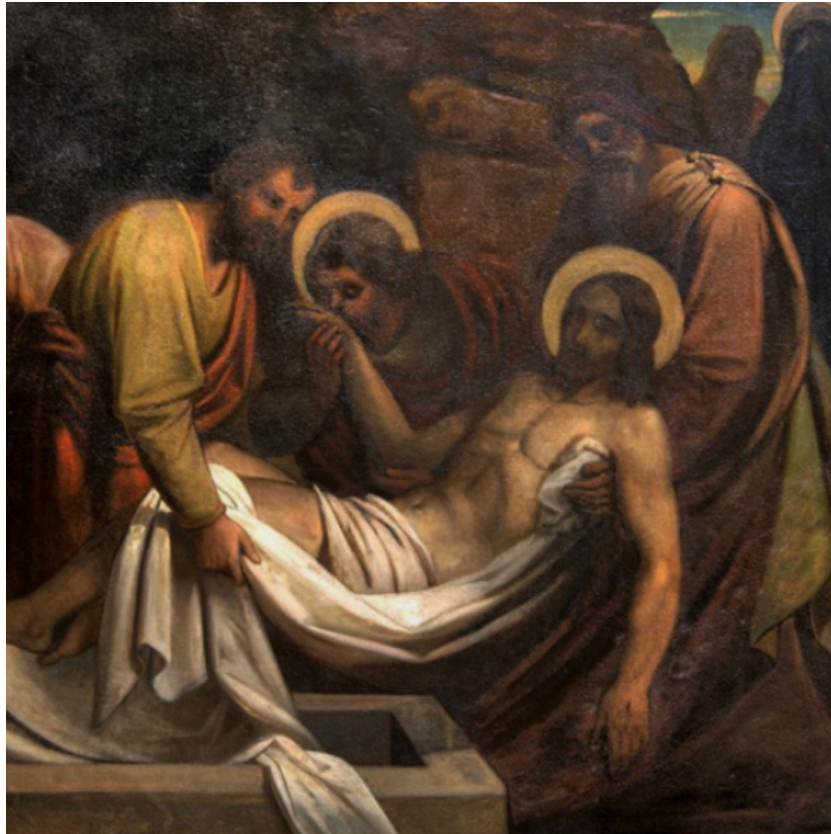
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Station 14 Jesus is laid in the Tomb



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.

Leader: We honor you, Jesus, and we thank you.

All: For by your life, ministry, death, and Resurrection you have set us free.

Leader

Stone Cold. Shrouded Darkness. The disciples gather in fear. The world lies in wait for the fullness of God. What personal or global story comes to mind upon hearing these words?

Silence

Reflection: "Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8)

Jesus experienced death and is with us in every death we experience: in the loss of someone we love, in every loss in our lives, in our final act of surrender.

In the hour of his death, Jesus' friends take the risk of asking his body to Pilate. It is an act of love. Even if Jesus' death seemed at that moment the end of their hopes. Jesus, the one who did not have a place to lay down his head, is laid in a borrowed tomb. Their hopes were laid with Jesus in that same tomb.

Jesus will always bear our hopes and will be at our side in the hour of our death. He will place our lives in the hands of God as our last offering, inviting us to share the hope that God will raise us from death, from all our deaths, from all that does not allow us to live in fullness.

Stabat Mater
Pergolesi (1710-1736)

Giovanni Battista

Maggie Greene, mezzo-soprano
Marissa Hernandez-Suominen, soprano