

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Way of the Cross: A Reflection on Social Justice - Written by Audrey Ferrer

Prayers for each station adapted from the "Native Stations of the Cross"

Office of Evangelization Catholic Native Ministry Kateri Circle, Archdiocese of Anchorage

Pictures taken from St. Jude Shrine Baltimore MD

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Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
for us did fast and pray.
Teach us with you to mourn our sins
and close by you to stay.
As you with Satan did contend,
and did the victory win,
O give us strength in you to fight,
in you to conquer sin.

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Opening:

Our Compassionate and Caring Lord, we are your children, living in this amazing world that You created. You inspire us to live joyfully, peacefully and in well-being but it is a world of beauty punctuated by sadness, poverty, hunger and violence, especially for those who live in the Global South.

It is all too easy to focus only on ourselves and to place our needs and desires above others. It is common for us to think: "I don't want to know about the people suffering. It only makes me sad." "I'm only one person and I can't change what is happening there." "I've already given enough money or time and I'm tired." Please remind us Lord, as we may feel exhausted emotionally, spiritually and financially, that Jesus walked a difficult path in choosing to give hope to others.

As we pray the Stations of the Cross, please help us to reflect on how we can follow in the footsteps of Jesus, in solidarity with those who are suffering. Empower us to aid our brothers and sisters with whatever privileged means we have. Help us to choose the way of love, compassion and generosity over greed, apathy and willful ignorance. You gave your only Son to redeem us and we humbly pray for your love, mercy and grace in forgiving our faults. Please grant us strength and courage to make life-giving choices.

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Station One: LEAD

LEAD: Jesus is Condemned

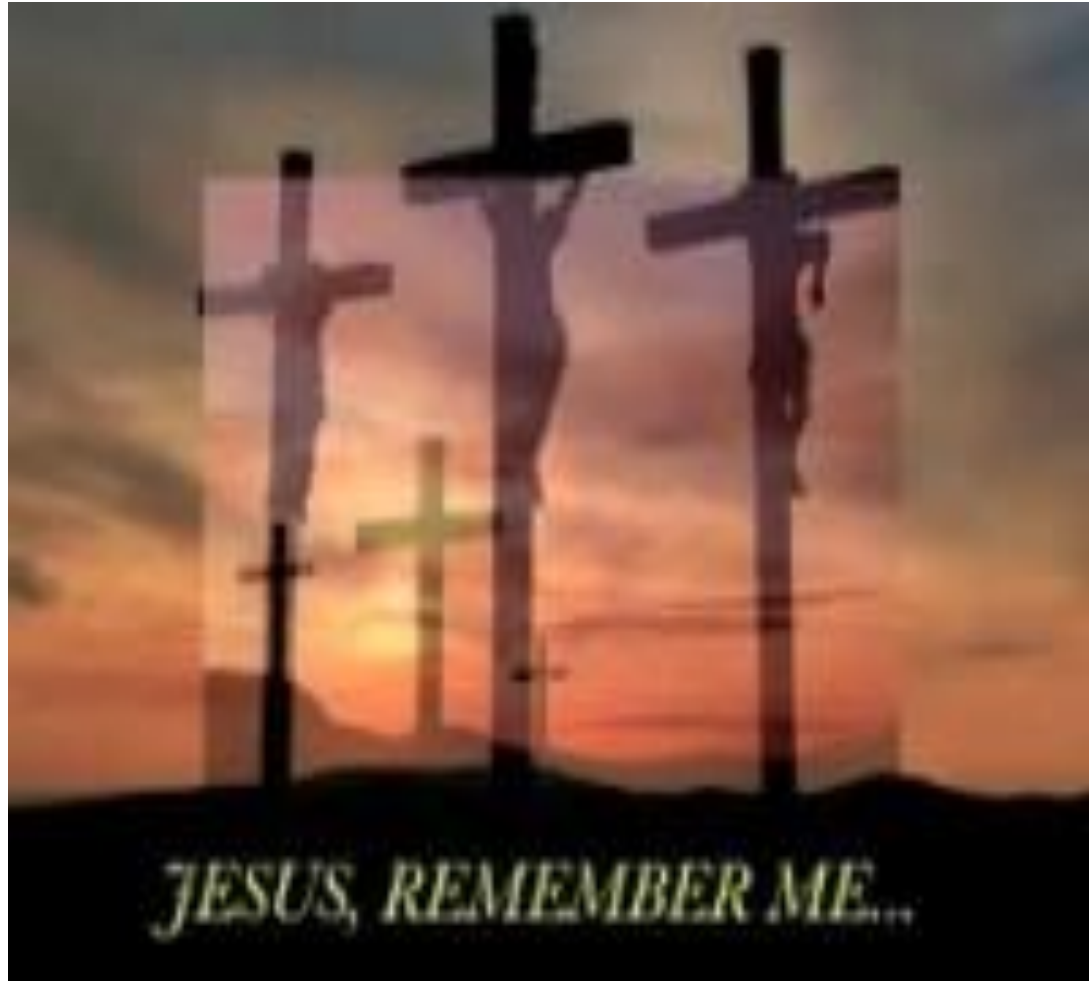
ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus begins his journey to the cross by being betrayed. Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent, but he does not want any trouble that day so he turns away from Jesus and does not help him.

Many people across the world speak out against injustice and fight for freedom and basic human rights. Some are arrested, beaten, injured or murdered.

Lord, how many times have we let something happen to others because we were afraid to speak out or didn't want to be bothered? How many times have we looked away when someone was being hurt or needed help? We pray for those souls who have died or are being persecuted because they had the courage to stand up for what is right. We pray for the time and energy to respond to any calls for action, whether it is to sign a petition or write letters to support the oppressed. We pray especially for those who live in countries of turmoil. May you help grant an end to the turmoil and the peace of liberation. Lord Jesus, never let us turn away from those in need and "sentence" them to die.

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Station Two:

LEAD: Jesus carries the cross

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

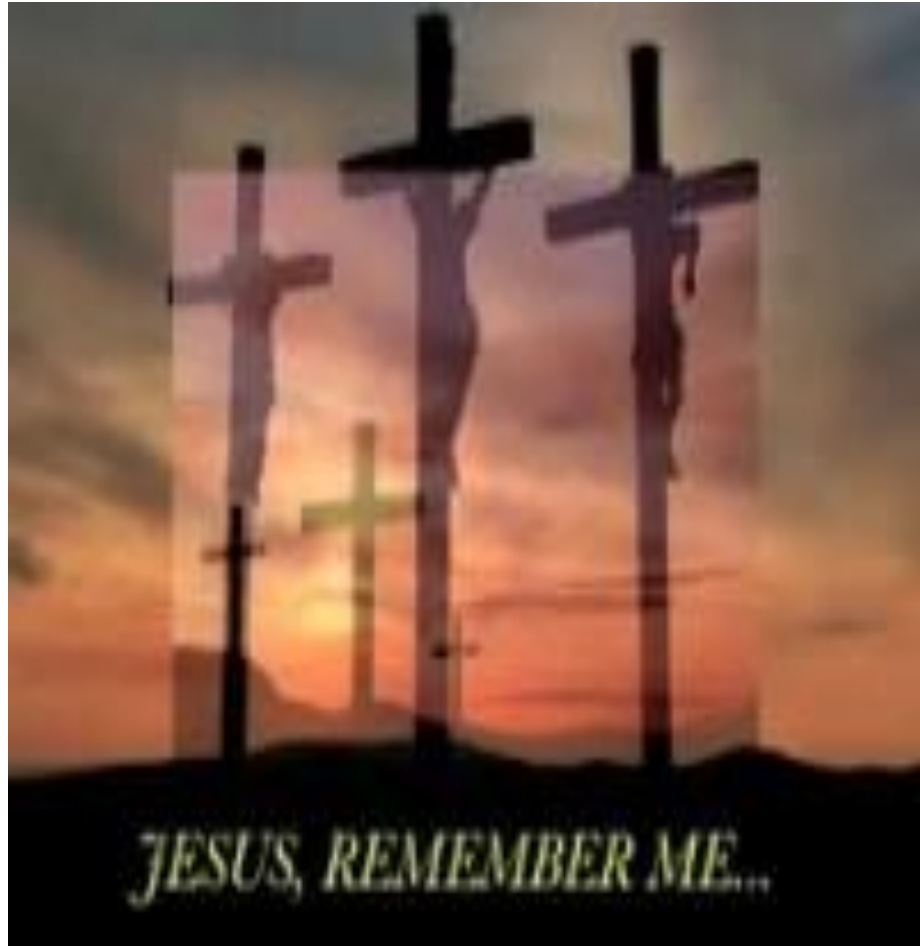
LEAD: Jesus is taken out to the street and a heavy wooden cross is placed on his shoulders. He is already weak from hunger and beatings, but he carries the cross because he wants to.

Many in the Global South have a difficult cross to carry, especially in lands devastated by war and violence. Even when we in the north, try to help, there is only so much that can be done to protect civilians—the greatest casualties are those who are innocent and helpless.

Each of us has something that is sad and hard to carry. Each of us has something we need courage to face. Jesus challenged us one time when he said: *“unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple.”*

Lord, give us the grace to face hard and difficult things so that our hearts and spirits can grow and be like yours. We pray you grant the same to our brothers and sisters in war-torn areas, and to the peace-keeping forces who risk their lives to help.

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Station Three:

LEAD: Jesus falls for the first time

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: The road to the place of execution is outside the city. It is long and steep at times. As Jesus carries his cross, he begins to feel weak and dizzy. Finally, he falls to the ground and has to be helped up again.

Christians in Iraq and in other countries are only one group of many that are persecuted because of their religious beliefs. Jews and Muslims face rising anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Each group has experienced violence and hatred that threaten to overwhelm.

Whenever we see someone who is of a different faith tradition, help us to remember that Jesus welcomed all with love.

We pray for greater understanding, respect and courage to grow in closer community with those of other faiths. Please give peace and comfort to our brothers and sisters who are persecuted because of their beliefs.

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Station Four:

LEAD: Jesus meets his mother

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus looks up and sees his mother, Mary, who is standing by the side of the road. They do not speak but they see all they need to know in one another's eyes. Both are filled with pain and love.

What mother can stand to see her child suffering? Like the homeless woman, we sometimes feel hopeless or a failure to stop those we love from getting hurt. Gandhi once said, "Poverty is the worst form of violence" and it is pervasive throughout the Global South where parents have difficulty feeding their children. There are over 925 million (or 1 out of every 7 people) in the world that are malnourished, primarily in developing countries. In Canada, the use of food banks has risen to the highest level on record, serving over 867,000—mainly families with children. Enough food is produced to feed everyone in the world, yet not all can feast at the table.

How often do we eat, taking food for granted? With the current economic crisis and the many factors that keep families poor and nourished, Lord, we pray that you provide for those in need. We pray for generous hearts that we may offer some of what we have to help those who are hungry here and abroad—whether it be donating to charities, food banks or buying fair trade goods. We pray for gratitude to appreciate all the blessings we have. Let us remember the words of Jesus, **"As long as you did it for one of these least ones, you did it for me!"**

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Station Five:

LEAD: Simon helps Jesus

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus seemed to be staggering a lot, and the soldiers were worried that Jesus wasn't going to make it. So they pulled a man out of the crowd and made him help Jesus carry the cross.

Children are precious in our lives and are considered a blessing. How often does a child's smile or laughter brighten our day? In some countries children have little time to play or study because they are taken from their homes and forced to become soldiers. Or children cannot attend school because they cannot afford an education. Instead they must work long hours laboring in unsafe conditions.

WE can take up the cross like Simon and help children overseas by supporting non-profit organizations like War Child Canada, Free the Children or Canadian Feed the Children. God our Teacher, we pray for the little ones who eke out a meager existence, that they may have an opportunity to learn and earn a safe and respectable livelihood while growing in the warmth of their loving family.

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Station Six:

LEAD: Veronica wipes Jesus' face

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Sometimes during a game, no one sees the person who brings the towels and water, but they are there helping the players just the same. In the same way, a woman stepped forward from the crowd at just the right moment and wiped the blood and sweat off Jesus' suffering face. Others saw a criminal but she saw the face of a good man and she gave him kindness and respect.

While women perform 66% of the world's work, they receive only 10% of the world's income, and own only 1% of the world's land. They are less likely to receive an education and are often oppressed in diverse ways. Yet despite this, some women find the courage and dare to help others even at risk of their own lives. Some rise above the restrictions placed on them by their society to demand fairness and justice for all.

Let us pray for the awareness and boldness that Veronica showed that we may look beyond our own concerns and see people in their true light- as sons and daughters of God. We pray for all women who are oppressed, that they may be as courageous as Veronica in fighting for respect and equal rights and in serving those in need.

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Station Seven:

LEAD: Jesus falls a second time

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: In spite of all the help, Jesus falls to the ground again. He has lost a lot of blood and he struggles hard to get up onto his feet. Finally he gets up and continues down the road. Jesus is determined to get to the top of the hill following his Father's holy plan.

We know what it means to fall down and have to pick ourselves up again. Sometimes we feel discouraged, or ashamed. It's hard to get up and start again and continue on. In countries like Somalia, the Sudan or other parts of Africa, people not only struggle with war and hunger, but with a myriad of diseases. AIDS has devastated communities leaving many orphans. Every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria. Meanwhile, many North Americans suffer from heart disease, cancer and other illnesses.

Compassionate God, we pray for your aid in helping us as we fall and stumble through whatever difficulties we face. We pray especially for those who suffer in health, where each moment is a struggle of pain or despair. We remember Jesus once said to a sick person: "Your faith has made you well." May the very sick and their families have faith in You to continue a hard journey knowing You love them.

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Station Eight:

LEAD: Jesus comforts the women

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus looks up and this time sees a group of women crying for him. All they can give him are their tears of anguish and despair. Jesus reminds them that they must care for themselves and their children; that there is hope.

Sometimes all we can do for others is to listen to them and cry with them while they go through a period of suffering. Our tears are all we can give to them to show that we care and that they are not alone. Such is the situation of many people who are forced into economic and sexual labor. Of the estimated 2.4 million people that are trafficked at any given time, approximately 1 in 5 victims are children and two thirds are women.

Jesus said: “Blessed are they who are mourning for they shall find comfort.” We pray that all whom need comfort shall also find hope, peace and serenity. We pray for those who are trafficked that You grant them freedom as well.

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Station Nine:

LEAD: Jesus falls for the third time

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus falls a third and last time. It seems as though he does not have the strength to go on, but the soldiers force him to his feet. This man must be executed on the cross. These are their orders. He must be made an example.

Sometimes we can be like those soldiers just following orders, never investing anything of ourselves in what we are doing, just going through the motions. We overlook the needs people have because we are too busy to get involved or because we fear. How many times have we walked by a homeless person trying to avoid making eye contact? Or in the Global South, when we hear about conflict or natural disasters, we often get tired hearing about long-term situation of the countless refugees who have lost their homes.

God our Provider, we pray for Your grace in helping the 150,000 or so Canadians that are homeless because of unaffordable housing, low income, mental health and/or substance abuse issues, family conflict, violence or job loss. We also pray for your providence in helping with shelter and food for the 15 million refugees around the world. May they find a home and refuge in You.

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Station Ten:

LEAD: Jesus is stripped

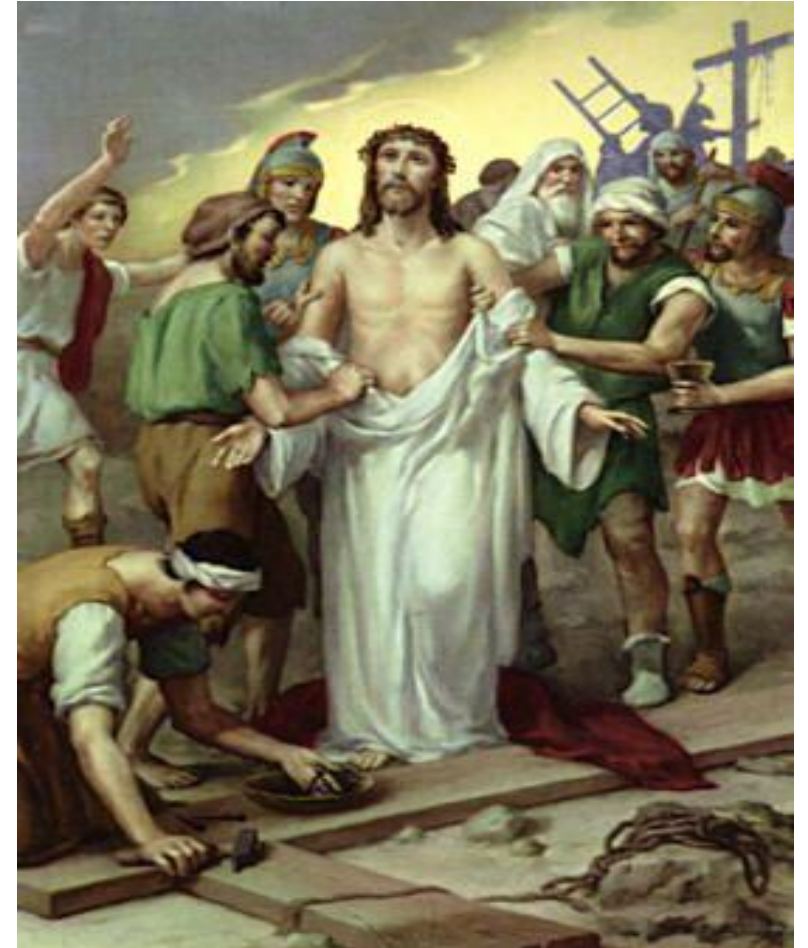
ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Exhausted, Jesus arrives at the top of the hill called Golgotha. He is brutally stripped of his clothing and his dignity and yet he stands proudly awaiting his fate. His vision of what he must do has led him here. He has come to do the will of the Father, and nothing will stop him now. His love for us is too strong. He wants to give himself up for us to show us that we are truly loved by God.

God sent Jesus out of love to do something extremely difficult. Sometimes when we think of those we love, we know we would do the same and meet any challenge. Those who are working in sweatshops do so out of desperation and love to care for their family. They may work extremely long hours in conditions with dangerous equipment, unsafe drinking water, unbearable temperatures and poor air circulation. They not only accept these health risks, but can also suffer from verbal, physical and sexual abuse. Those who speak up for their rights publicly, may be fired, beaten, or worse, murdered. But these workers have little choice. In this form of modern slavery, they accept their crucifix for the ones they love.

God, our Guardian, protect and uphold all workers who suffer in sweatshops. We pray that factories improve the conditions of laborers, treating them with greater dignity and respect. We also pray that we, as consumers, are more proactive in demanding companies to make sweatshop-free products.

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Station Eleven:

LEAD: Jesus is nailed to the cross

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: The sound of the hammer pounding the nails pierces everyone there and sends a shudder through the crowd. Nailed, he is raised high for all to see and mock. By many he is viewed as just another worthless criminal. By the Jewish leaders he is viewed as a necessary scapegoat to appease the Romans so they won't come after them. But the faithful present are stunned and sickened by the destruction of this innocent loving man.

God takes the cross that evil people have nailed him to and turns it into a tree of life. Jesus shows us the love that God has for us his children. Yet we find it difficult to love as Jesus and God did. We are ready to make choices and act in ways that lead to death, rather than life—whether it is a spiritual, emotional, economic or literal death, we are ready to drive the nails into the cross for lack of love. Such is the case of abortion or in cases where society accepts the murder of innocent citizens as in the Holocaust.

God of enlightenment, we pray for your revelation of love to transform our choices and actions into ones that offer Jesus' tree of life. We pray that you offer support to those who are considering abortion and reveal to them the hope and beauty of a new life.

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Station Twelve:

LEAD: Jesus dies on the cross.

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.



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Station 12 Cont'd

LEAD: To some, Jesus looks poor and weak on the cross when he dies. He is covered with blood and dirt. But for those who know how to really see, he is brave and victorious for he has captured the prize, the salvation of our lives at the price of his. When the end comes, he cries out in a loud voice: "Father, I place my life in your hands." It is finished. He has kept his promise.

Jesus once said, "Greater love than this no one has, that they lay down their life for their friends." Are we ready to make sacrifices as Jesus did? Many Indigenous communities are suffering because of greed and consumer demands. Nature is being destroyed at an overwhelming rate for the sake of development and resources, whether it is through tar sands, clear-cutting tropical rainforests for cattle or monoculture crops, or for destructive mining practices. We have devastated the lives of countless Indigenous communities whose land, water, and food continue to disappear.

God our Creator, we pray for the reverence to see Your presence in all nature so that we may respect and love it as family. Please help us to live a more simple life and that we use nature's resources more wisely—whether it is energy, food, water or land. May we cherish these as gifts and not entitlements. We also pray for aid in helping Indigenous communities recover their land, heritage and traditions and that we may uphold their rights

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Station Thirteen:

LEAD: The body of Jesus is taken down

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: The night before Jesus died, he took bread into his hands, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said: "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you." And he took the cup of wine and said: "This is my blood poured out for you."

There are no words to express how it feels when someone you love dies. So it was for the mother of Jesus and those of his followers who stayed to remove the body of their dear friend. They were not afraid to show they cared, or were associated with Jesus.

Take, eat and drink. Do this in remembrance of me. Sometimes it is difficult to "pour ourselves out" to help those who are marginalized. We may be afraid of associating with others who don't meet socially acceptable standards or who suffer from intolerance, discrimination, rejection and abuse. The incidences of suicide continue to grow.

Jesus, Lamb of God, may we take your words to heart so that we may "be broken and poured out", making a sacrifice when necessary. May we have the courage to risk shame, harassment, isolation and persecution when showing our support for the marginalized in society. May you give strength and perseverance to those who are differently abled, mentally ill, or any others who feel socially isolated, that they may cope with patience knowing your love.

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Station Fourteen:

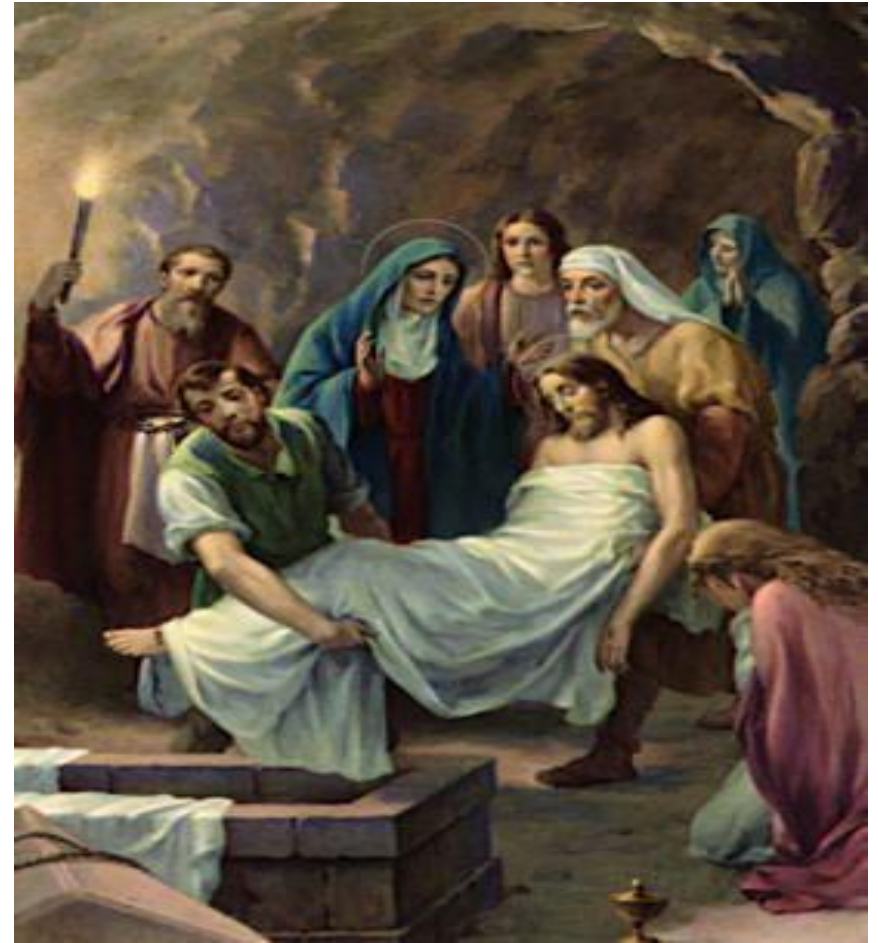
LEAD: Jesus is buried

ALL: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you—because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

LEAD: Jesus was a poor man who owned nothing so his friends have to borrow a grave. Joseph of Arimathea offers a tomb he had made for the day of his own death. He is honored to give it for the Master's burial. And we see once again that Jesus fulfills the words he spoke about himself: Even the foxes have holes, but I have nowhere to lay my head."

The same can be said for communities who have been murdered in the past and ongoing genocides—whether it was Armenia, Nazi Europe, Rwanda or Sudan. Many were buried in unmarked mass grave sites. In all these genocides there were perpetrators who committed murder, bystanders who allowed it to happen, and the victims who died. Many people in the affected communities or neighboring nations chose to be bystanders

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Closing:

Jesus' friends are afraid that this is the end of Jesus. But surely as spring follows winter and daylight follows the dark night, Jesus proves that death has no more power over us. New life always follows after death.

So we witness: **Jesus resurrects...from the tomb of injustice and gives us the power to follow Him with**

- The generous love of St. Mother Teresa
- The conviction of St. Bishop Oscar Romero inspiring solidarity in El Salvador
- The courage of St. Maximilian Kolbe as he risked and gave his life to save Jews
- The hospitality of the parishes who continue to welcome and support refugees
- The humility of St. Josephine Bakhita who served others with God's grace
- The perseverance of Dorothy Day, trying to aid the poor working class of America
- The spirit of stewardship shown by those working in conservation of God's beautiful creation
- The empathy of the CWL in partnering with CNEWA to build a water well in India at the House of Mercy
- The generosity shown for local and international needs through programs like "Out of the Cold", Caritas or Chalice
- Faith as dutifully lived by the saints among us and the multitude of Catholics expressing their faith at each celebration of the Eucharist

"Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies it produces much fruit. If anyone would serve me let him follow me."

Loving Jesus, let us die with you on the cross and resurrect with you in eternal hope, for it is by the cross that you have redeemed the world.

Amen.

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Closing Hymn

“Unbroken Family”

Sarah Kroger feat. Matt Maher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nRB8tta6J0>