

Good Friday — 7:30 pm — The Way of the Cross, A Journey of Hope — 2025

Introduction:

The Way of the Cross began in the earliest days of the Church as pilgrims to Jerusalem retraced Jesus' steps in his final journey to Calvary. Beginning in the 1500s, when it was not feasible for everyone to visit these holy sites in person, replica shrines were erected around Europe. Eventually, the practice developed into the set of fourteen stations that we know today, found in almost every church. The Stations of the Cross tend to take the form of paintings or reliefs on church walls. They are often prayed during Lent as a mini pilgrimage between stations in a church. The visual representation of these scenes helps people imagine the events of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. Often, as in our service tonight, a reflection accompanies the image, offering a new context or perspective.

Each station tonight includes a reflection written by a Jesuit or lay person from the ministries of the Midwestern Province of the Jesuits in the United States, inviting diverse perspectives of Jesus' experience on the day he died.

A printed copy of the reflection questions for each station is provided so that you might continue to pray about these questions after you leave tonight.

Our service will end with a candle ritual based on the Beatitudes and a Universal Prayer.

As Christians, we know that Jesus' death is not the end of the story. We walk with Christ in his pain and death on the Cross, but then we wait in joyful hope for what we know comes next. On Easter, we celebrate his resurrection and his triumph over death. May we who are united with Jesus in his suffering be united with him in the promise of everlasting life.

Song: Were You There

First Station

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

We've always been struck by the assassinations of people who stand up for what, in the eyes of God, is just, good, and holy: President Abraham Lincoln, condemned for daring to abolish slavery in this country; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., condemned for daring to dream of a colorblind world; St. Oscar Romero, condemned for daring to stand up for the poor and downtrodden. And before all of them, Jesus Christ, savior of us all, condemned for daring to include all whom this world would write off as unworthy.

Yet, even as religious and political authorities were condemning him to a shameful death to end his life on earth, God was stretching out his arms to welcome his son, the savior of us all, back to himself in the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection Questions: Who are those in your community who may be unjustly condemned, in large or small ways? How is Jesus inviting you to respond?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Second Station

Jesus Carries His Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Two thousand years of Christian faith train us to see the cross as a symbol of salvation or perhaps self-sacrificial love. But in Jesus' day, the cross signified a singular shame. It was the most humiliating and brutal way the Romans could execute someone they perceived as a threat to their empire. It was a punishment so inhumane that no Roman citizen could be crucified, no matter how grotesque or grave the offense.

Jesus' teaching and healing ministry—marked by inclusive, merciful love—is met with barbarism and revulsion. When Jesus takes up his cross, he exposes the cruelty that results from the human impulse toward fear, hatred, and violence. Jesus takes up his cross in fidelity to the God he called father. We also see Jesus' solidarity with us in the mystery of suffering and death. Where there is failure, a wound, or any kind of suffering, there he is.

Imagine the scene as Jesus embraces this tool used for his own degradation and execution. What thoughts and feelings arise in you? Looking into his eyes, what does Jesus say to you? What do you say to Jesus?

Reflection Questions: What cross seems heavy in your own life? What does it mean to imagine Jesus taking up his cross for you?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

What do you carry? They say that we shouldn't compare crosses – that everyone is carrying something particularly heavy for them. They also say the relics of Jesus' cross would fill a ship if they were all collected in one place. My cross may not always seem so big. It's made up of my griefs, my individual sufferings, my struggles to accept my own limited humanity. And yet I fall under it all the time. Jesus shares my experience even there, even in stumbling over uneven ground and falling. Even Jesus, who walked on water, healed the incurable, and brought life to the dead...fell. What was Jesus carrying that day? Was he carrying the weight of the world in that cross, the combined weight of everyone's crosses throughout history, or was the weight of his own very personal cross his focus in that moment?

Reflection Questions: What are the times in your life that you have stumbled under the weight of your burdens? How is Jesus inviting you to stand back up?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Mother

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Mary gazes on her son, covered in blood and sweat. Her heart breaks as she shares his pain. As a mother, she bears the sorrow with him.

A Black mother keens upon hearing her only son is riddled with bullets. A South American mother marches with the *Mothers of the Disappeared*. A Jewish mother lights Sabbath candles while weeping over the death of her daughter, a rabbi killed in a hate crime at the synagogue. A mother wails as she gets the news her son is pistol whipped and beaten for being gay. Mothers across the world mourn for their children lost to violence or disease.

Each mother bears the pain of her sons and daughters. Like Mary, she stands in solidarity with her children. She holds them in her heart as only a mother can.

Reflection Questions: Whom are you invited to care for? How do you help bear their pain?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Fifth Station

Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

He's curious about all the commotion, the screaming. His name is Simon. He's from Cyrene, in northern Africa. He sees a man, bloodied and sinking under the weight of a cross, on his way to a horrible death.

The soldiers force him to help the condemned criminal. Imagine how close this brings Simon to Jesus. They are cheek to cheek. They look into each other's eyes. Simon will never forget that look, those eyes that communicate at a level much deeper than words: pain, but also gratitude.

Just like with Simon, crosses are sometimes forced upon us. They too are the cross of Jesus who continues to suffer wherever his beloved brothers and sisters suffer. When the cross is laid upon our shoulders, Jesus is very close to us, as he was to Simon. We, too, can look into the eyes of Jesus and share an intimacy that is only possible when suffering is shared.

Reflection Questions: Who is someone in your life or in your community who is suffering right now? How can you help share that individual's burden?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Sixth Station

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

We cherish the faces of those we love. I relate to Veronica and her desire to run to Jesus and ease his suffering. I imagine he has been her beloved teacher and friend. She knows he will die soon and cannot bear to see the pain, sweat, and blood on his face any longer. She ponders what she can do to ease his pain? She bravely pushes her way through the crowd, past the soldiers, to go to him and offer her caring presence and a gesture of tenderness. Her courage inspires me.

He pauses and offers her his gratitude with love in his eyes, accepting her kindness. As she wipes his face the gift becomes hers.

In this moment together, they find that connection provides consolation. With this they can go on.

Veronica teaches us that we are called to recognize suffering and reach out with compassion. Jesus shows us that when we seek him, no matter what the circumstance, he is fully present loving us.

Reflection Questions: Who in your life may need their physical needs met?
How can you extend compassion in a way that shows your love?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Seventh Station

Jesus Falls a Second Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus' second fall is another reminder of his humility and humanity. Such physical fragility in his final hours harkens back to the fragility in which his life began – in an animal stall to a mother weathered by poverty, travel and delivery. Like his birth and death, so too were his years of ministry spent in the fragile margins of society.

From manger to crucifix, Jesus turned on its head the world's definition of power and strength, and gave us a new understanding of where and how to encounter God. His second fall urges us to let love repeatedly bring us to our knees. He invites us to continually engage in the pain, injustice and suffering of humanity, not to turn our backs or quit when we become weary. With each fall, he assures us that if we immerse ourselves in such humble fragility, we are certain to find Jesus there.

Reflection Questions: What stirs in your heart upon contemplating a fragile Jesus on his knees? What personal fragility or pain can you ask Jesus to help you carry? Where might this fallen Jesus be asking you to encounter him in today's suffering humanity?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Halfway through his painful journey, Jesus turns to the women who are crying and suffering with him and says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” He reminds them that people who love also experience suffering and worry.

These unnamed women of Jerusalem call to mind the many women who ministered with and supported Jesus. As we remember the challenges of the past year, we can see that hidden labor like theirs has sustained many people and families and that we have also had many reasons to worry and to weep.

There is a paradox here in the way Jesus asks us to weep while at the same time also giving us hope, just as Good Friday is meaningful to us because of the hope of Easter. In sadness and difficulty, we reach out to support each other, and we remember our ultimate hope in God’s enduring love.

Reflection Questions: In times of suffering, when have you experienced hope? Who has reached out to you to offer hope? Who might need a message of hope from you?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Some years ago, there was a very successful businessman who was also a recovering alcoholic. When he told his doctor that he was becoming confused and sometimes lost his balance, the doctor – who had known him for years – presumed he was relapsing. A second opinion, however, diagnosed a brain tumor the size of a grapefruit.

The surgery to remove the tumor was necessary to relieve his distress. Unfortunately, it was malignant, and radiation could only slow, not stop, its growth. His situation was compounded when the surgical site became infected. Between the effects of the radiation and the struggle with the infection, he was mentally and physically exhausted.

Finally, with very little time remaining, he regained himself and wanted to address his will. He had planned to leave everything to charity and the church, and that remained largely unchanged, but he also had a good friend whom he wanted to care for as well. On one of his lucid days, he asked another trusted friend what he should do. He replied that he was a good man and that he should do whatever he thought best. He marshalled what little energy he had, called his attorney and re-wrote his will to ensure the care of a loved one. Did Jesus fall? Yes. Was he helpless? No. Despite the incredible physical and emotional pain, Jesus was able to rise again for those he loves.

Reflection Questions: When have I experienced suffering that seems to never end? How can I take comfort in knowing Jesus is there with me?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Tenth Station

Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Of all the Stations of the Cross, this one might be the most dehumanizing. It's not just that the soldiers strip Jesus of his clothes to reveal his naked, bloodied body. Or that the soldiers are laughing as they do it. The worst part is that it is being done in a public manner--and all anyone can do is watch.

Throughout history, people have been publicly stripped of their clothes and their dignity in plain sight--whether it be enslaved persons that were stripped of their clothes before being sold like cattle, Jews who were stripped of their clothes before being sent to the gas chamber, children stripped of their clothes for pornography, or the filmed lynchings and shootings of Black lives (to name a few). The greatest sin is not that people in power strip others of their humanity. The greatest sin is that so many of us watch these heinous acts happen and we let ourselves be fooled into believing that we have no power to make a difference.

Reflection Questions: When have I witnessed an individual or group of people being dehumanized by society? How is Jesus inviting me to stand up in solidarity with them?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Eleventh Station

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

As iron pierces flesh, the son of God is vulnerable and alone. A man who lived life with open arms is readied for death, his welcoming and saving arms spread out onto the cross. Though his family and friends had walked with Jesus in life, they cannot join him on the cross. Those gathered at Calvary could be forgiven for losing hope as they witnessed soldiers driving nails through Jesus. This is the worst possible outcome that they could imagine for their beloved son, friend, teacher, and savior. Perhaps they think, “Where is God?”

This question echoes in our modern lives. When we experience tragedy and loss, doubt can shake our faith. But God is always found in the same place: on the cross. Jesus suffered for us and remains with us in our own suffering. When we find ourselves in ruin, we should know that we are not there alone.

Reflection Questions: In times of suffering or loss, what has happened to your faith? How have you experienced Jesus there with you?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus hung there. A couple of hours passed as he gasped for each new breath, numb, naked, bloody. The crowds looked on – isn't this the prophet? The wonderworker? The man who called disciples and gathered crowds?

He touched the sick and healed them; nails now fix his hands to a cross. His lips spoke challenge or comfort; they now groan and thirst. His eyes looked out with love; they now sag and flutter. He cast out demons; now the demons seem to have their way with him.

He opens his eyes and sees his mother and his beloved disciple. He manages a last word of comfort: "Take care of each other."

In his last, dying breaths, he gives himself back to his Father: "It's over; into your hands I entrust my spirit."

Most of us don't end our days with such drama. We've done our job; we've lived our festive days and ordinary times.

Reflection Questions: What is the mission the Father has entrusted to you? Can you echo Jesus' words, "It's done"?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Thirteen Station

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

We turn our focus to the physical form of Jesus' body, slumped now, devoid of life, is taken down from the cross by those who must have been his followers. They had hoped in him, imagined him as their future king. We experience the taste of defeat and despair which they surely must have felt.

In that lifeless body which bears the marks of every indignity and shame, we can also see other bodies as well—the murdered victims of racial injustice, the bodies of refugees washed ashore in the Mediterranean, the victims of poverty and homelessness.

Below the cross, we contemplate Mary his mother as she receives the body of her son in her lap and see every mother who mourns the loss of a child, whether to crime, addiction, abuse, or violence.

Reflection Questions: How can you ensure that you do not turn your eyes away from suffering in your midst? How do you keep our hearts open to feel compassion for all the victims of our human cruelty and neglect?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Fourteenth Station

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

The lifeless body of Jesus now rests in the tomb. At the time, it must have seemed the end of a vision, of a dream, of hope. We, too, have often had to lay our dreams to rest. We have buried family members, friends, classmates, and loved ones. Unfulfilled expectations of success and unrealized accomplishments have left us asking where we went wrong. The current state of our country or Church can also resemble a tomb, with all confidence shattered. Yet, unlike those around Jesus, we know the tomb leads to something greater—to a transformation and a resurrection.

Help us, Jesus, to understand the significance of your time in the tomb, and to appreciate the sacrifice you made, which led us to the resurrection. Help us, as well, to unite our sacrifices to yours, with the understanding that in the end, as in the words of Julian of Norwich, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

Reflection Questions: When have you experienced a loss that seemed like an end? How might this time have been a preparation for something new?

Leader: We pray...

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

Sing: Adoramus te Christe...

Darkness to Light

Holy One, only You know fully the darkness in which we dwell on this Good Friday evening. While we are blessed with much, we also carry trials and troubles of our own, and deep worries about the well-being of others. We have come here tonight to receive from You, sacred light for our Holy Week journey of hope. Source of all Light, may we experience Your presence tonight, in the dance of candlelight, in the beauty of music, in the sincerity of our prayers, and in the grace of this community. Come Holy One, shine among us. Amen.

Praying the Beatitudes with Light (a responsive reading and candle-lighting ritual based upon Matthew 5:3-11)

Leader: May God bless the poor in spirit. (light one candle)

All: Ours is the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: God bless all who mourn. (light one candle)

All: We will be comforted.

Leader: May God bless the meek. (light one candle)

All: We will inherit the earth.

Leader: May God bless those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. (light one candle)

All: We will be filled.

Leader: May God bless the merciful. (light one candle)

All: We will receive mercy.

Leader: May God bless the pure in heart. (light one candle)

All: We will see God.

Leader: May God bless the peacemakers. (light one candle)

All: We are called children of God.

Leader: May God bless those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (light one candle)

All: Ours is the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: May God bless us when people revile us and persecute us and utter all kinds of evil against us falsely on account of Jesus Christ. (light one candle)

All: Let us rejoice and be glad, for our reward is great in heaven, for in the same way, the prophets before us were persecuted.

Leader: May God bless us as we call upon the Light of Christ. (light one candle)

All: Illuminate our Good Friday shadows, O Holy Light. Amen.

After each petition---

Leader: “We place our prayers...” Response by all: “Into Your Light, O Lord.”

Let us pray: O God of all Life, Light, and Love, on this Good Friday we gather in sacred community to be comforted by faith and to tend the promise of new hope. Yet, we are disturbed by the long shadows around us. We ask Your blessing upon all gathered here tonight, in body and soul, be with us this night. We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

Holy God, You know so well that we are equally capable of noble acts and terrible sins, so on this night, remembering Jesus’ betrayals and suffering, we pray for the innocent ones who have experienced pain. May they be granted deep healing. We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

As we recall Jesus’ deep compassion and his infallible integrity, during caustic times of betrayal and corruption, we ask a blessing upon those who have done likewise -- who have risen in character at times of great challenge. We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

We gather as a people who are hurting. You know the exact burdens we each carry, as well as which sorrows are our heaviest. Grateful for Your eternal care and companionship, We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

This night, near the tomb where the Beloved lays, we are awakened to the reality of human mortality, and of physical illnesses and challenges which harm our bodies. We ask for healing and ask well-being for all who are sick. We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

And now, we offer to You, Holy One, our private, silent prayers, already grateful for Your tender attention. (silent prayer) We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.” Amen.

Our service is ended. We invite you to stay and pray a while and then venerate the cross before you leave. Good evening. Good Friday.

Songs and reflective instrumentals by Music Ministry