

INTRODUCTION

Each time we go to Mass, we find ourselves praying for mercy. “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.” Again in the *Gloria*, we repeat this familiar appeal: “You are seated at the right hand of the Father: *have mercy on us*” (italics mine). And later again, we return to this theme: “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us*” (italics mine). What’s going on here?

We do not pray for mercy because we believe that God has failed to be merciful to us already. We know that God has a tender and merciful heart. We do not pray for mercy because we believe that, by doing so, we can change God from being angry at us for our sins to being kind. The wonder of our faith is that, while we are still sinners, God watches as the father did for his prodigal son, watches for us to come home to his loving arms. No; we pray for mercy because in our prayer we open our hearts to receive this amazing gift, this powerful and life-changing and generous gift of God’s endless mercy.

We must receive God’s mercy. That’s the secret to the Stations of the Cross. We retell this story of Jesus’ self-giving love in order to open our hearts to what is already given to us: mercy. We do not earn it; we don’t even deserve it; *but we have it.* That’s the miracle.

As we reflect and pray, bear in mind that even though this is a story about Jesus’ way of the cross, it is also a story about us. May these moments of prayer open our eyes to see this grace in our lives. May we be moved to recognize those who are being crucified in our society today—by hate, prejudice, illness, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. May we leave here determined to have the same mercy on all others that God has on us.

OPENING PRAYER

(As the ministers enter the sanctuary, all rise. Facing the cross, all pray together.)

All ✠ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving Jesus,

you took up your cross
in order to have mercy on us.

You walked the way to your death

in order to give us the freedom of new life.

We willingly take up our own crosses today

and follow you on your journey,

walking with you on this pathway of love.

Stir up within us the desire to forgive our enemies,

to love our friends more deeply,

and to have mercy on others

in the same way you have mercy on us.

Dear Mary, Mother of Mercy,

be our example of courage now

as we face this way of the cross.

Pray for us as we journey here

that our lives might be filled with grace.

Give us clean hearts, Holy Spirit,

and kindle within us the fire of your love.

Let us be thankful for the merciful love of Christ

that led him to embrace the cross.

And lead us now to the loving arms of God our Father,

with whom we hope to live

forever and ever. Amen.

The First Station

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

LEADER The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER "Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:12-13, 15).

Jesus had just celebrated Passover with his closest friends. In the warm intimacy of their shared meal, Jesus had washed their feet, fed them with the bread of life, and loved them with mercy and tenderness. But their joy turned to bitter disappointment when he was betrayed, arrested, and condemned. How could Judas have led the soldiers to Jesus? How could he have used that fateful kiss, a sign of love, to betray him? How could Judas have had no mercy on Jesus, his beloved friend?

We too betray Jesus when we put ourselves first, allowing others to fend for themselves. We abandon him when we ignore the poor, choosing instead to feed, clothe, and house ourselves first while the poor sit at our gates suffering. We condemn others like Judas did Jesus when we follow the pathway of selfishness and sin rather than self-giving love.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[FEBRUARY 15, 2015, HOMILY]

ALL: "The way of the church is not to condemn anyone for eternity"

but to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart. We in the church must leave behind her four walls and go out in search of those who are distant, those who are on the "outskirts" of life.

We must adopt fully God's own approach, which is that of mercy.

The church must feel the impetus to become like Jesus for all of humanity.

LEADER Jesus, like your disciples, we are weak in faith. May your grace empower us to be like you in our daily lives. May we empty ourselves of selfishness so that we may be filled with mercy for others, especially those who suffer most. Move our hearts, we pray, to engage in the works of mercy that can heal the world.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*At the cross her station keeping,
stood the mournful Mother weeping,
near her Son until the end.*

The Second Station

JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

LEADER The Second Station: Jesus takes up his cross.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him” (Mark 15:20).

The soldiers who now mocked and humiliated Jesus treated him as less than human. To them, he was something to be tossed about, laughed at, and spit upon. Isaiah had written about the Servant of the Lord, saying he would be despised, a man of sorrows, a lamb being led to slaughter (Isaiah 52:13—53:12).

After Jesus’ death, many of his followers were also condemned, and some were imprisoned or killed. In our own day, men and women speak up for justice in the face of governments or corporations who seek only profit while destroying the environment or using people as pawns. Those who seek such justice for the poor are often condemned, mocked, and imprisoned; some are killed in the streets or at the altar. They are Christ for us today.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[JULY 2013, RIO DE JANEIRO]

ALL “The cross of Christ invites us also to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love, teaching us always to look upon others with mercy and tenderness.”

This is especially true of those who suffer, those who need help and are vulnerable, those who are waiting for us to do something, to take a concrete action on their behalf.

No one can think of the cross

without giving something of him or herself to Christ.

LEADER Jesus, give us the courage to take your place in this trial, to take up our own cross and follow in your footsteps. May we be a voice for the poor and oppressed. May we offer our lives for the sake of peace and justice. We open our hearts to receive your grace, the grace that empowers us to love with tenderness in the face of violence and hatred. May that grace be all we need to become your hands and voice in today’s world.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
all his bitter anguish bearing,
now at length the sword has passed.*

The Third Station

JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

LEADER The Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER "He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Many people in the crowds around Jesus may have turned their back on his suffering. Some may have watched with horror but did not step forward. But from that crowd did come forth someone to help Jesus up, to touch him with mercy and tenderness.

Who among us has not fallen under the weight of the cross we are given to carry? Some days the burden may be too much for us, the call to self-giving love may be only a distant cry, or we simply fold beneath the work, pain, or loneliness of life. And sometimes we fall beneath the weight of our own sins.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[AUGUST 3, 2015, AT THE PARISH OF SANTA MARIA MADRE DEL REDENTORE]

ALL Christians can't fool Jesus, acting like saints in church but living like pagans the rest of the week. Jesus knows what is in our hearts. He knows we are sinners, but we need not fear his wrath or judgment. Jesus looks upon us only with mercy and tenderness. We too, therefore, must go to people with the same love. With the caress that Jesus taught us, we go to those whose burdens weigh them down.

LEADER Jesus, let us turn our hearts to you now and likewise look with love upon ourselves and those around us. Give us the strength to get up from our sinfulness and the burdens of life and move onward, knowing you walk with us in all things.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*O how sad and sore distressed
was that Mother, highly blest,
of the sole-begotten One.*

The Fourth Station

JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

LEADER The Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too’... His mother treasured all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:34–35, 51).

Mary’s faithfulness to Jesus is the model for our own lives. It’s one thing to accompany people whose lives are going along smoothly and who never face an obstacle. But when times get tough, staying with them as Mary did with Jesus is more difficult to do. We are called to accompany each other in good times and in bad, in times of sickness and in times of good health. When our neighbors get divorced, fall into hard financial situations, or have a child who is delinquent—those are the times they most need our mercy.

Mary taught Jesus tenderness and mercy, and she teaches us all that when we remain with each other we also remain with Christ.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[JANUARY 1, 2015, IN THE BASILICA OF ST. PETER, ROME]

ALL The church is like a mother to us,
one who tenderly holds Jesus
and gives him to us with love.
Mary and Jesus remained together
from the time of his conception
to his birth in Bethlehem,
to his first public ministry at Cana,
and throughout his life all the way to the cross.
Mary is the first disciple of Jesus,
and now she opens the pathway for us
to follow Jesus as disciples too.

LEADER O dear Mary, Mother of Mercy, send your blessing upon us now and draw us closer to your Son. May we stand with each other at times of pain, suffering, and violence just as you stood with Jesus. Pray for us, O dear Mother Mary, that we may always be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Christ above in torment hangs,
she beneath beholds the pangs
of her dying glorious Son.*

The Fifth Station

JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON OF CYRENE
TO CARRY HIS CROSS

LEADER The Fifth Station: Jesus is helped to carry his cross
by Simon of Cyrene.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene,
who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross
on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus” (Luke 23:26).

It seems likely that this man who carried Jesus’ cross
was very surprised to be chosen from the crowd. Our
encounters with Christ are often unexpected. We
have to look closely to see him sometimes, but lo!
there he is in that homeless man on the corner. There
is Christ in that woman with cancer who lives down
the block and carries her cross alone. There he is
again in the neighbor who is caring at home for her
dying mother, autistic son, or ailing spouse.

It’s easy to look right past Christ when we see him,
especially when he is suffering and burdened by the crosses
of life. Let us be motivated by love to step forward willingly,
to risk ridicule or danger to ourselves, and to reach out to
our sisters and brothers. When we do that, we are reaching
out to Christ.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER.]

In the words of Pope Francis

[SEPTEMBER 26, 2014, HOMILY]

ALL One cannot really understand who Christ is
until he or she takes up the cross
as Simon of Cyrene did.

Christ himself prepares us to be the one who steps forth
to help carry the crosses of others.
This is the mystery of dying and rising
and it is the pathway to a true Christian life.

LEADER Lord Jesus, give us hearts full of love to pick up and carry
the crosses of others. Let us not be blind to the pain with
which some people live; but let us pick up their crosses and
carry them with the joyful knowledge that, in doing so, we
carry it for Christ.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Is there one who would not weep,
whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ’s dear Mother to behold?*

The Sixth Station

VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

LEADER The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “[Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources” (Luke 8:1–3).

Jesus had a close relationship with many women. He dined in their homes. He allowed them to pay for his ministry, as we just heard in this passage from Luke. Mary and the other women stood with him at the foot of the cross, even after the men had run off to hide. And it was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus made his first appearance after his resurrection.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[JANUARY 25, 2014, GENERAL AUDIENCE]

ALL Women have a special sensitivity toward society’s weak.

Like Veronica, their ministry is often to care for the sick, reach out to the poor,

and lead prayer groups for other parishioners.

The gift of tenderness and love is especially important today, and women have a crucial role in helping build up the church.

Likewise their presence in the home is essential as they pass on both life and faith; their role in the family is irreplaceable.

LEADER Lord Jesus, the proclamation of your word in today’s world is largely sustained by women just as it was during the time of your ministry in Palestine. Protect today’s women as witnesses of your love and tenderness. May they be our teachers as we all learn how to live a full life in your presence.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Can the human heart refrain
from partaking in her pain,
in that Mother’s pain untold?*

The Seventh Station

JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

LEADER The Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane... He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them: ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and stay awake with me.... [He] prayed: ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want’” (Matthew 26:36–39).

Jesus prayed throughout the night that he might be relieved of this suffering. He wanted to be freed from carrying his cross! And yet, in the end, because of his relationship to his Father, he knew he would do what needed to be done. The text of Luke tells us that just at the moment of this prayer, an angel came to minister to him with tenderness and love (Luke 22:43).

The human heart is filled with longing. We long to be free of our illness, our financial stress, our painful relationships with family members, or the “thorn in the flesh” that is the pain of our own repeated sinfulness. But in the end, the human heart truly longs only for the presence of God, even if that means we must carry our cross as Jesus did.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[MAY 3, 2015]

ALL The hallmark of the Christian life is not whether or not you will fall. We all fall. We’re all sinners. The hallmark is whether, after falling you have the humility and courage to get up again. We get up with the grace of God; this is our witness.

“Yes, I am a sinner, I did wrong but I go ahead because the Lord is with me.”

LEADER Help us to get up when we have fallen, O Lord of all grace. Help us believe that you love us even while we lay on the ground, struck down by sin and failure. Take our hand and raise us up with you, for you live now in love forever.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*O our Mother, fount of love,
touch my spirit from above;
help us love as you have done.*

The Eighth Station

JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

LEADER The Eighth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children’” (Luke 23:27–28).

These women who followed Jesus showed great courage. They risked being named among his followers, a risk that caused Peter, only a few hours before this, to deny that he knew Jesus. They risked the ridicule of the townspeople and the soldiers. But they seemed to understand the larger risk, which is in abandoning Jesus. They loved him so much that they simply could not walk away. They could not wash their hands as Pilate had done.

And where are we in this regard? Following Jesus means being the big one, forgiving our enemies, sharing our cloak, tending the sick, and defending sinners with mercy and tenderness. These were all the actions of Jesus. If we are his followers, then we will not be able to turn our face away from violence, abuse, loneliness, abortion, or injustice.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[THE FACE OF MERCY, ANNOUNCING THE JUBILEE YEAR, NOS. 8-9]

ALL Jesus reveals to us that God is our Father, a Father who will never give up on us until he has forgiven our wrongs and offered us his mercy and compassion. God is full of joy when we return to him, ready with open arms to embrace us and watching even now for us to trust him.

When he passed by Matthew’s tax collecting office, Jesus looked at him as no one else had, for he looked at Matthew with mercy.

He forgave the sins of that man with merciful love, and he treats us the same way.

LEADER Fill our hearts, O God, with mercy and tender compassion. With your grace, empower us to be like these women, standing with Jesus Christ through thick and thin. Give us the insight to see where the world needs healing, and then give us the courage to reach out. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Make me feel as you have felt;
make my soul to glow and melt
with the love of Christ my Lord.*

The Ninth Station

JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

LEADER The Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.
“And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:11).

These words of Jesus were spoken before he began his way of the cross. He was assuring his disciples that God loves them with the same tender mercy and love that Jesus had shown them. In God, regardless of how many times we fall, we are one family, one community. We offer each other the tender mercy that Jesus shows to us. Let us forgive those among us who have fallen—and we know that includes us all. We hold no law against each other, and we place no obstacle before anyone who wishes to come to Christ. We are one as Jesus and the Father are one.

We are a church of mercy especially toward those who fall. Our mission is to help people encounter the Lord and open their hearts to him. Let us now open our own hearts to Christ and allow him to enter our lives and to gaze upon us with the love he desires for each of us. As Pope Francis has said, we get many offers from the world around us, but let’s accept God’s offer instead, a caress of love.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[JUNE 7, 2013, TO STUDENTS IN JESUIT SCHOOLS]

ALL We must learn to be on a journey of faith that involves taking the time to savor God’s presence but not stopping so long that we miss our goal. There will be dark days on this journey, days when we fall, even days when we fail. But don’t be afraid of failure; get up right away and keep moving forward. We cannot make this journey alone so we walk together in community with friends, with those who love us, and with those who help us along the way.

LEADER We open our hearts to you here today, Jesus, and we welcome you into our daily lives. Thank you for loving us even when we’re selfish and strong-willed, even when we do not pray as we should or when we doubt your presence. Create in us a clean heart, O Lord, and renew your Spirit within us.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Holy Mother! pierce me through,
in my heart each wound renew
of my Savior crucified.*

The Tenth Station

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

LEADER The Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his garments.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.
LEADER “They divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Psalm 22:18).

This violation of Jesus’ human dignity foreshadows the inhumane ways we have treated others throughout the world. Instead of offering the poor comfort, food, and homes, we continue to consume more than our share, leaving only scraps for the hungry. Instead of defending women and children, we allow them to live in poverty, even in wealthy nations. Instead of welcoming the immigrant, refugee, and stranger, we ban them and accuse them of seeking what we ourselves take for granted.

When we behave like this, we strip Jesus of his dignity. Each of the least ones among us bears the face of Christ. Whatever we do to one of them, to any of them, we do to Christ himself. When the prodigal son returned home, the first act of the waiting father was to dress him in clean and respectable clothing. “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him,” the father said (Luke 15:22).

May our consciences be awakened as we travel this way of the cross so that we will be among those who bring peace to the world and who overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, NO. 3]

ALL How good it feels to come back to Christ whenever we are lost!
God does not grow weary in forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of asking for mercy. Christ teaches us to forgive each other seventy times seven times but he has forgiven us much more often!
“No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unending love.”
With a tenderness that never disappoints, we can start anew once again.

LEADER Lord, we return to you now with all our hearts. Stripped of your dignity and humiliated on your way of the cross, you now assure us that we will never lose your love. May the garment of our baptism never be stripped from us by arrogance, indifference to you, or selfishness.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Let me share with you his pain,
who for all my sins was slain,
who for me in torments died.*

The Eleventh Station

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

LEADER The Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them” (John 19:18).

Jesus was given the death penalty. For Jesus, not even this final element of torture and pain could stop him from loving us. His thoughts were with the two men crucified beside him. Were they also innocent? Had society failed to have mercy and tenderness on these men? When one of them turned to Jesus to ask for mercy, his response was stunning.

Can Jesus’ example here be a model for us? Can we learn to have mercy, to forgive even our enemies?

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER.]

In the words of Pope Francis

[MARCH 20, 2015, TO MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY]

ALL The death penalty cannot be justified today
no matter how serious the crime committed.
Capital punishment fosters vengeance;
it allows victims to get revenge
but it does not lead them to forgive their enemies.
This cannot be justified by Christians.
Furthermore, the death penalty is wrong
because of the potential for errors in the courts
which often come to light many years later.
And beyond even that,
there is no humane way to kill another human being.

LEADER O God, you are the father of mercy. Open our hearts to
mercy even on those who seem most heinous to us. Give
us the insight to see your will for the human family, and we
shall not kill one another for any reason. Make us people of
mercy; we pray through Christ, our Lord.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*Let me mingle all my tears
mourning him through all these years,
all the days that I may live.*

The Twelfth Station

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

LEADER The Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER "It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last" (Luke 23:44-46).

This final prayer of Jesus now becomes the prayer on our own lips as we dedicate ourselves anew to being his disciples. We place ourselves in the tender and loving hands of God. "I commend my spirit." Let us now commend our own spirits to God.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[MARCH 6, 2014, HOMILY]

ALL We Christians must follow the pathway set for us by Jesus.

We must accept our cross and carry it even when that means denying ourselves.

This is the style of the Christian

because it is the style of Jesus, and it requires of us a strong humility, a desire to serve, and self-giving love.

"If the grain of wheat does not die," the Scriptures tell us, "it can't bear fruit."

LEADER By your death, you teach us to embrace death and so to live a full life. May we have solidarity with those who suffer, mercy toward our enemies, and generosity to the poor. We pray through Christ, our Lord.

ALL Amen.

Stabat Mater

*By the Cross with you to stay,
there with you to weep and pray,
is all I ask of you to give.*

*Virgin of all virgins blest!
Listen to my fond request:
let me share your grief divine.*

*Help me, with my last breath,
in my body bear the death
of that dying Son of yours.*

The Thirteenth Station

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

LEADER The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

LEADER “Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place [when Jesus died], they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’ Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (Matthew 27:54–56).

Here are those women again, constantly at Jesus’ side, even as he suffered and finally died on the cross. They are waiting to care for his body now. According to custom, Jesus will be anointed and laid in a tomb. But for the moment, they simply await that moment when Jesus will be removed from the shackles of the cross and placed in the arms of his mother, Mary.

We are also called by this holy moment to care for the body of Christ, but today that body takes the form of the homeless you see on the streets. When you tend to their needs, you tend to Christ. Today, Jesus is found in the sick and dying, in the starving children and the eager immigrant. Where do you find Jesus?

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[JUNE 1, 2015, HOMILY IN THE CASA SANTA MARTA]

ALL Let us not forget the cross because it is here that the logic of “failure” is turned upside down. Jesus reminds us all that although we can expect trials and rejection, in the end we will see triumph. The stone rejected by the builders becomes the cornerstone. The story we tell is one that begins with a dream of love. It is a true love story. It ends up looking like a story of failure when Jesus dies, but with the great love of God Jesus’ self-giving love saves us all.

LEADER We ask you, Mary, to hold us as you held your dear Son when he was taken down from the cross. With the same tenderness and love, pray for us and lead us to greater intimacy with Jesus. We pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ALL

Stabat Mater

*Christ, when you shall call me hence,
be your Mother my defense,
be your Cross my victory.*

The Fourteenth Station

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

- LEADER** The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
- ALL** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.
- LEADER** “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb” (Matthew 27:57–61).
- To one without faith, this is the end of the story. But to us, we know it is only the beginning. For the moment here, let us pause with Jesus in the tomb. Think back over the many years of his ministry, the many people whom he touched, the healing, teaching, and loving that were his ministry. Rest here in the tomb with Jesus now. Easter is only a short time away.

[A BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER]

In the words of Pope Francis

[EASTER, 2015]

- ALL** Love is stronger than hatred.
Life conquers death.
Light chases away the darkness.
Jesus has shown us the way to happiness
and that pathway is humility.
By our dying and rising
we Christians become the seed of love in the world.
Love will grow when we live in service of each other
and when we show the love and tenderness of God.
- LEADER** Thank you, O God of Mercy, for this journey of faith as we walked the way of the cross. May these moments so move our hearts that we become agents of your mercy and spirit-filled witnesses to your everlasting love. We pray through Christ, the Lord.
- ALL** Amen.

Stabat Mater

*While my body here decays,
may my soul your goodness praise,
safe in paradise with you.*