

A Scriptural Way of the Cross for Lent



JUSTICE,
PEACE AND
HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

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found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand.”

Group Reflection:

When Jesus felt sorrow and distress he sought out a place where he found solace and turned to God for strength and guidance. Jesus’s place of solace was the Garden of Gethsemane, in the Holy Land. Today in the Holy Land and throughout the world too many of our brothers and sisters feel sorrow and distress because of the lack of peace in our world. They face the everyday realities of war and conflict. It can be far too easy to be like Jesus’ disciples and fall asleep in the face of these realities on the other side of the world. Instead, Jesus calls us to stay awake – to stay with him and our brothers and sisters around the world and support them in their struggle for peace. He calls us to keep watch with him and pray, to be persistent in our calls and prayers for peace as a way to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters experiencing the sorrow and devastation of war.

- Where is a place where you find solace? Where you can turn to God for strength and guidance just as Jesus did?
- How can you best keep watch with those suffering in the Holy Land and around the world?

1st Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

We pray for peace in the Holy Land.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture: Matthew 26: 36-46

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.” He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.” When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, “My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!” Then he returned once more and

2nd Station: Jesus is betrayed by Judas and is arrested

We pray for restorative justice for all prisoners.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: John 18:1-9

When he had said this, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. Judas his betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees and went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered him, "Jesus the Nazorean." He said to them, "I AM." Judas his betrayer was also with them. When he said to them, "I AM," they turned away and fell to the ground. So he again asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the Nazorean." Jesus answered, "I told you that I AM. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill what he had said, "I have not lost any of those you gave me."

Group Reflection:

Betrayal hurts all of us. Crime is a betrayal of a communities' desire to live in safety. Our Christian faith tells us that no matter what awful things we do in our lives, we can always reconcile our relationships with God—we are always able to seek forgiveness. Restorative justice works to repair the harm when a crime is committed. The approach is to focus on the community and view the crime as a violation against the people and relationships—not just a violation of the law.

- How involved should communities be in helping people who commit crimes?
- Why is it so hard to forgive people who hurt us?





3rd Station: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

We pray for those who are unjustly persecuted.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Luke 22: 66-71

When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us," but he replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth."

Group Reflection:

There are times in every person's life where we have been wrongly accused of behaving unjustly. What happens though, when the unjustly accused are sent to prison, or even sentenced to death? We know this happened to Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

- What are the ways that we are called to ensure that this doesn't continue to happen to people in our world today?

4th Station: Jesus is denied by Peter

We pray for the refugees in our world.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 26: 69-75

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

Group Reflection:

Peter denied being a follower of Jesus; he denied knowing Jesus. Despite the years Peter spent with Jesus following his teachings, in the moment when his support was most needed and when it was most challenging to give, he denied Jesus. Just like Peter, we can too easily deny our connections, our shared humanity, with those who are most in need of our support. In the United States, our society regularly rejects refugees who flee for their lives and are hoping to build a new life here with us. Instead of offering support, acceptance and an emphasis on our connection as one human family, we deny them. When we deny our brothers and sisters in Christ, when we fail to welcome them in their time of suffering and to offer them equal rights as children of God, we deny Jesus.

- How can we learn from Peter's denial of Jesus to be compassionate and loving towards those most in need?
- How can we be more supporting and accepting of refugees and immigrants?





5th Station: Jesus is judged by Pilate.

We pray for our elected officials.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Mark 15:1-5

As soon as morning came, the chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." The chief priests accused him of many things. Again Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of." Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Group Reflection:

Every couple of years, we in the United States of America elect people to guide and direct our nation. This is an enormous responsibility and an amazing process to take part in. Many people in our nation's history have been denied this fundamental right. When we elect officials to an office, whether it is as President of the United States or as Mayor of a small town in Nebraska, we are taking responsibility to claim what our priorities are for our communities. Our democratically elected officials are speaking to others and advocating on our behalf.

- What are the issues that influence you as you prepare to vote for elected officials?
- Do you see your action to vote as a part of your Catholic identity? Why or why not?

6th Station: Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns

We pray for the care and protection of God's creation.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: John 19:1-5

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly. Once more Pilate went out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, "Behold, the man!"

Group Reflection:

Pilate and the soldiers demonstrate a lack of concern in the care of Jesus. The mistreatment is evident as Jesus is mocked and struck repeatedly. Just as Jesus was mistreated, those who are poor and vulnerable are also abused as a result of a lack of concern for them and for God's creation. As seen through the environmental justice work of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, those who are poor and vulnerable often live in areas with greater pollution and are disproportionately impacted by others' choices that harm the environment. Respecting God also means respecting and protecting all of God's creation and children.

- How does my daily routine protect God's creation? Are there ways that my routine negatively impacts the environment?
- How do the choices I make that affect the environment impact vulnerable communities? What are ways that I can protect those who are living in poverty from environmental injustice?





7th Station: Jesus takes up his cross

We pray for those who are unemployed, underemployed and not paid a living wage.

***Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)*

***All:** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)*

Scripture Reflection: John 19:16-17

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

Group Reflection:

Jesus, the son of a carpenter, the son of God, labored to build the reign of God here on Earth. He willingly took up the cross because he knew his final labor would bring him closer to God and grant salvation for all. Jesus is our teacher and model in understanding the inherent dignity of our own labor, and recognizing that dignified work brings us closer to God and Jesus. Our labor calls us to participate in the ongoing work of creation. There are many places in our world where people are not paid a fair wage for their work. Some companies exploit children and also have slaves working for them. Jesus calls us to stand up to those companies and say that this is not right. One way we do this is by supporting Fair Trade products. Fair Trade products ensure that children are not making the goods, that the producers are paid a good wage, and that the work environment is safe for those who labor.

- How, in the ways that I labor, do I help to build the reign of God and serve God's people, especially those who live in poverty?
- Are there decisions and choices I make in my daily life that fail to respect the dignity of workers? How can I affirm and promote the dignity of work and see Jesus in the face of the laborer?

8th Station: Jesus is helped by Simon to carry his cross

We pray for those who are victims of human trafficking and slavery.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Mark 15: 21

They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

Group Reflection:

Jesus carried our sins when he took up the cross. It was heavy and he was weakened because of the torture he endured from the soldiers. He needed help. Simon was forced from the crowd by the soldiers to help Jesus. One piece of the cross that people bear today is human trafficking or slavery. Slavery was a part of human history in Jesus' day and it continues into our world today. Twenty million people in our world today are being forced into slavery and are victims of human trafficking.

- How can you become aware of people who are trafficked, in local hotels, restaurants and agriculture? What can your parish do to help people who are trafficked?
- What are two ways you can learn more about how to end human trafficking?





9th Station: Jesus meets the Women of Jerusalem

We pray that the dignity of all women will be upheld.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Luke 23:27-31

A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.'" At that time people will say to the mountains, "Fall upon us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?"

Group Reflection:

The women in the crowd showed deep concern and support for Jesus in his suffering. It's likely these women were able to empathize with Jesus's pain because of the ways they had been mistreated by society. In today's world, women and girls are disproportionately affected by war and conflict. Just like the women who reached out to Jesus, women who suffer because of war and conflict can also offer us a sign of hope with examples of how they've turned their own suffering into something life-giving. Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo know the reality of rape being used as a weapon of war. Many women who have been victims of sexual violence have proven they are more than victims. They have begun to heal, empower themselves and better their society by participating in programs of trauma healing, learning new skills to support their families and taking leadership roles in grassroots peace movements.

- How can we support women who suffer the effects of violence and conflict?
- What are some ways we can become our own advocates?

10th Station: Jesus is crucified.

We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

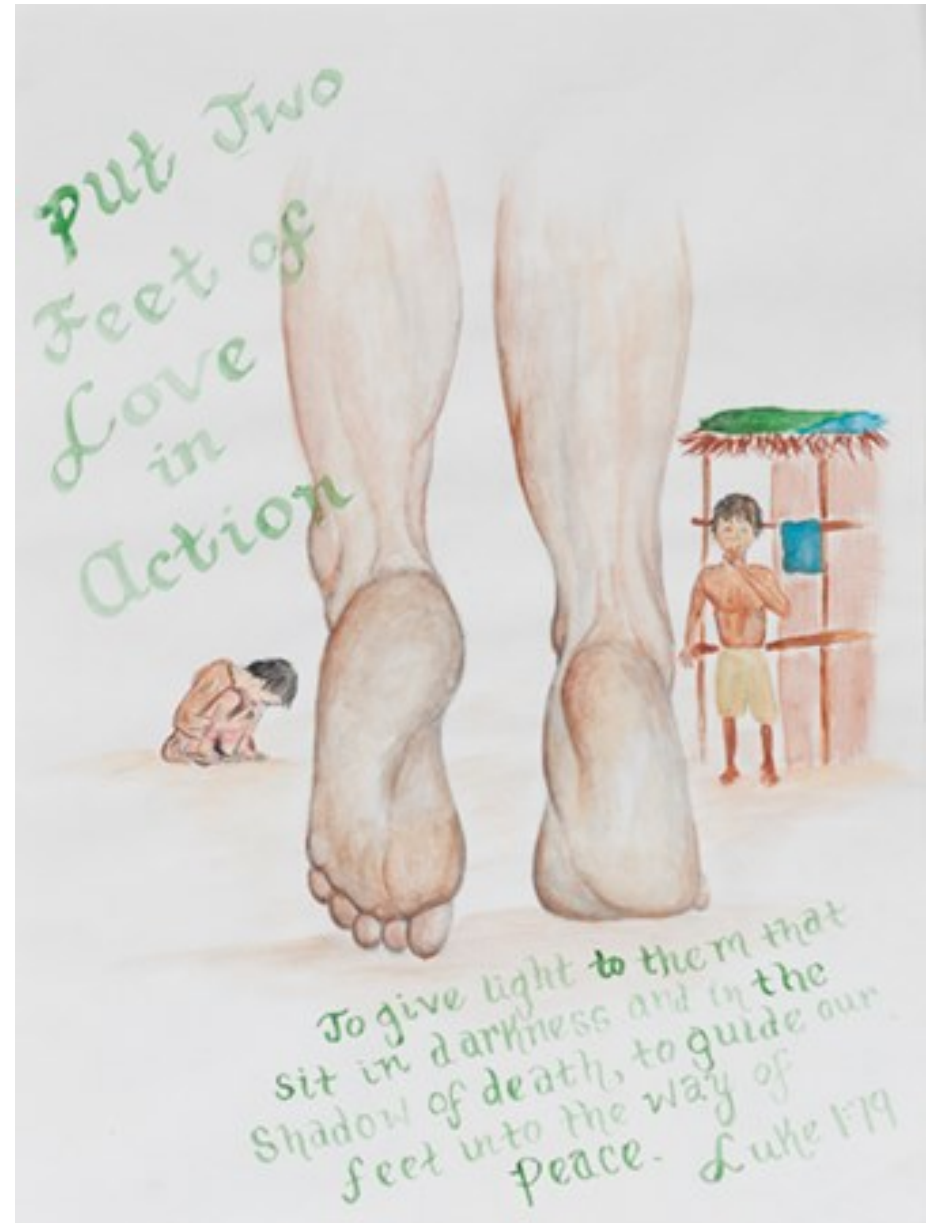
Scripture Reflection: Mark 15: 22-32

They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull). They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.

Group Reflection:

Jesus was put to death. Both society and the state judged that his words and actions didn't fit with their belief system and they sentenced him to death because of it. It's shocking that in today's world people are still persecuted and even killed because of their faith. In fact, restrictions on religion around the world have been on the rise in recent years. Blasphemy laws in Pakistan, mob violence in Indonesia and sectarian violence in Burma offer just a few devastating examples of how restrictions on religious freedom can take a deadly toll. Jesus's suffering and death offers us reminder that we must continue to promote religious freedom for all.

- How can we safeguard the freedom of religion for all people?
- Who are the crucified people in our world?





11th Station: Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief
We pray for those who are seeking forgiveness from others and God.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Luke 23:39-43

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Group Reflection:

The criminal confesses his sins and Jesus offers him forgiveness and acceptance. He promises to include him in his kingdom. Forgiveness is not easy. Neither is admitting when we do wrong and asking for forgiveness. Jesus and the criminal give us a wonderful example. Just as Jesus welcomes the criminal into his kingdom, in countries like Rwanda and South Africa those affected by war and conflict are working to accept and reintegrate perpetrators of violence back into their communities in order to restore right relationship. Repentance and forgiveness can sometimes seem overwhelmingly difficult, but the relationship between Jesus and the criminal and restored relationships in communities around the world that have faced horrendous crimes give us hope that reconciliation is possible.

- How can we promote peace and reconciliation in the case of violent conflict?
- Who do we need to forgive in our lives? Who do we need to ask forgiveness from?

12th Station: Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other

We pray for those who suffer from the loss of a child, parent, or brother or sister.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: John 19: 25-27

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

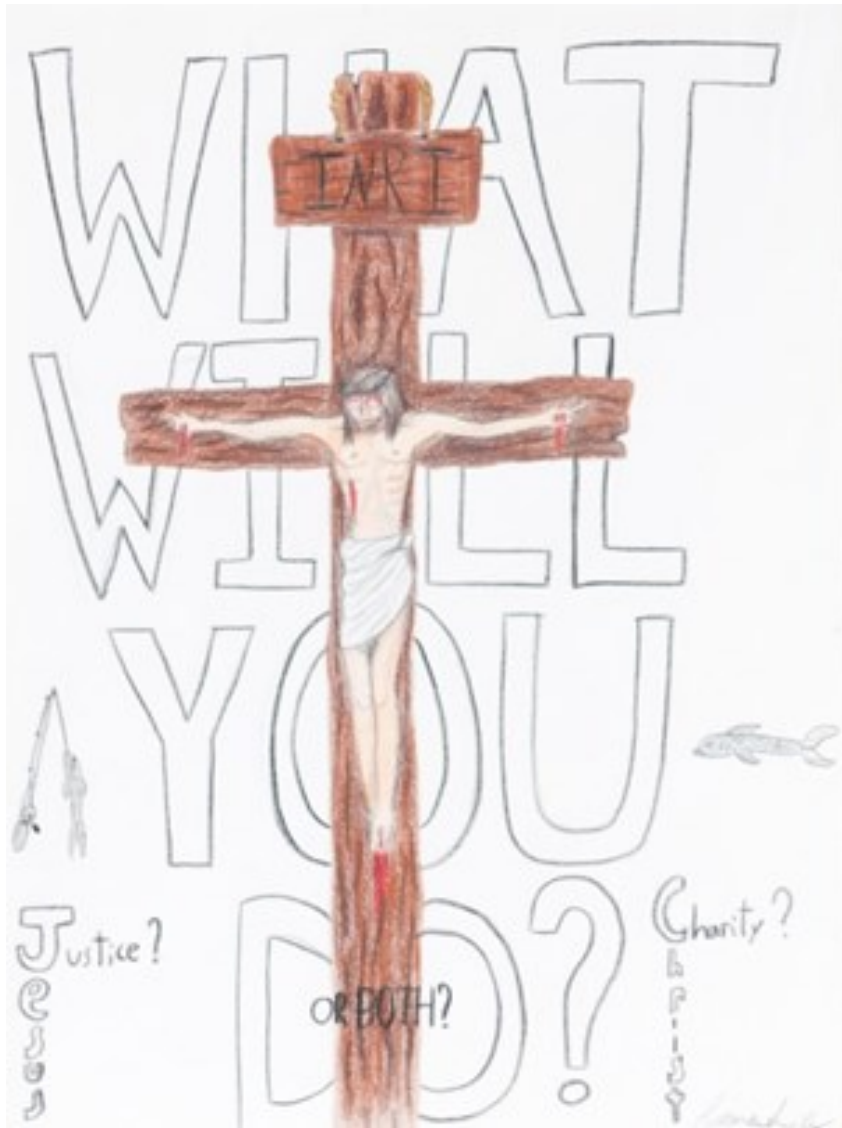
Group Reflection:

At the time of his death, those who loved Jesus were present to him in his suffering, "*standing by the cross.*" By their participation in his death, Jesus continued to show his disciples how to persist in building a loving community that cares for each other. Faith and love were active, "*from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*"

Those who are poor and vulnerable are pushed to the fringes of society, isolated, and left out of decisions that affect them and their families. The Church understands that community is built on relationships, loving our neighbors as our God loves, forming families with new brothers and sisters and, ultimately, working together to end suffering, isolation and poverty.

- Where are the poor, the vulnerable and the isolated people in your community?
- Are they empowered to participate in the decisions that affect their lives?
- How will you stand in solidarity with them during this Lent and other times?





13th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

We pray for those who will die today.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 27:45-54

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

Group Reflection:

Often at vigils gathered outside state prisons when an execution is scheduled to take place, a similar experience happens. Those present gather kneeling in prayer hoping for a stay of execution but more often, pray for the recently executed, for the conversion of souls and the healing of those impacted by crime.

It is right that we prayerfully reflect on the seriousness of crimes that may have been committed and the need for healing. But as a people committed to building a culture that supports all life— from conception to natural death, we must also take time to kneel and pray. We must remember all the lives that have not been protected or cared for and contemplate our place in the crowd.

- As a member of civil society, how does my faith help me reflect on the value of human life in a society that continues to support the use of the death penalty?
- Where do I see myself in the crowd today?

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

We pray for those who are without shelter today.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. (All genuflect.)

All: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world. (All rise.)

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 27: 57-61

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 handed over him. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

Group Reflection:

Joseph's care for Jesus in death, ensuring he was cleansed, clothed, and sheltered, affirms the basic human right to shelter and security from life into death. Adequate shelter for ourselves and our loved ones affirms that we are made in the image of God. Our dignity, which is a gift from God, allows us to fulfill our potential. Too many people cannot find stable and affordable housing, which wounds their dignity and contributes to other personal and societal problems.

- How do I treat people experiencing homelessness? Imagine how you might feel if you had no stable home and were forced to sleep in unsafe conditions.
- What can I (and my community) do to support those experiencing homelessness and unsafe housing? What are ways that I can work with them to ensure all basic needs are met?

