

Way of the Cross 2024

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Welcome

Welcome and thank you for joining us today. My name is Susan Gunn and I am the director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Before we begin, I wish to thank our co-sponsors who have joined in preparing the script and who will serve as readers today. They are:

1. Catholic Climate Covenant
2. Churches for Middle East Peace
3. Father McKenna Center
4. Franciscan Action Network
5. Jubilee USA Network
6. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
7. Little Friends for Peace
8. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
9. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
10. Pax Christi International
11. Pax Christi USA
12. Quixote Center
13. Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team
14. Society of the Sacred Heart
15. Stuart Center for Mission

Today is Good Friday. On this day, Christian communities around the world recall the story of Jesus' Passion.

For more than 20 years we have gathered on this day in Washington, D.C to cast the story of Jesus's final days in a contemporary context, to apply the message of the Sacred Story to our own lives, times, and places.

Here in Washington, D.C. we are surrounded by powerful political and economic forces that mirror Jesus' journey to the Cross, forces that deal in death and destruction by war and benefit a privileged few. We also see signs of hope – dedicated staff at each of the institutions we will name during our Way of the Cross today, and grassroots and community leaders – all who share a love for neighbor and care for the Earth but are stuck in structures that perpetuate violence and injustice. Because we are a global church, we are compelled to be in solidarity and to respond.

Before we begin, I want to let you know our plan. We will have speakers for each of the 15 stations. Each station has a topic and focus on a particular institution in Washington, D.C. At the end of each station there will be two lines for us all to say together. The text will be on the screen so just look at your screen and we can all say it together. OK, let's begin.

Let's take a moment to center ourselves.

Together, let us pray.

All: We put on the sackcloth of repentance. We acknowledge our complicity in structures of sin and we mourn the suffering it causes. We call for justice in the global economy and an end to environmental destruction. We proclaim hope and turn our minds and hearts to praying for peace and the fullness of life for all of creation. Amen.

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death. Our focus is political privilege and corruption. We are standing before the U.S. Capitol Building.

From the Gospel of Mark: *Beware of the scribes who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a severe condemnation* (Mk 12:38).

By condemning Jesus to death, the powers of his day believed they could sustain extraordinary privilege for themselves by silencing a leader who reached out to the poor, marginalized, and excluded. We stand before the Capitol Building where Members of Congress write and enact laws. In our times, we lament that lawmakers are often more beholden to powerful interests that fund their campaigns than the ideals of human dignity and equality in our founding documents.

A great majority of people in the United States no longer participate in the decisions that daily affect their lives. Pushed by special interests, politicians ignore the needs of both people and planet, enacting laws and promoting regulations that further pollute the Earth while eroding assistance for the most vulnerable.

We also see that Black and Brown communities are underrepresented in Congress. It is no accident that the needs of those communities are also underrepresented.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

We pray that Congress will be a place of honest debate and discernment about the common good, a servant to the impoverished, and a beacon of hope in the world.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Second Station: Jesus is made to bear his cross.

The Second Station: Jesus is made to bear his cross. Our focus is justice for workers. We are standing before the Department of Labor.

From the letter of St. James: *Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.*

Jesus was given the heavy burden of carrying his own cross, the means of his death. Too often, today's workers, especially Black and Brown women, fall under the weight of callous employers who fail to pay a living wage, who withhold wages or deny them a voice in the workplace. This year, even as inflation is slowing down, many workers are still struggling in our economy. From health care to housing to childcare, life in the United States is more unaffordable than ever.

The U.S. minimum wage remains fixed at \$7.25 per hour, coming to barely \$15,000 a year for a full-time worker, leaving millions of workers and their families in poverty—and without benefits such as health insurance and paid sick leave—in the richest nation on Earth. Meanwhile, the CEOs of the top 100 companies paying the lowest wages, including Dollar Tree, Lowe's, and LiveNation, made an average of \$601 for every \$1 earned by the average worker last year as executive compensation continued to climb to record highs.

Millions of workers also suffer wage theft by employers who withhold legally required wages for work performed, especially when workers are people of color, women, undocumented, or lack union protections.

Workers treated unjustly often try to exercise their right to organize in unions, but each year thousands of these workers are disciplined or fired for exercising their legal rights to organize.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we pray that our elected representatives support workers in their demands for justice. We look for ways of being in solidarity with these workers ourselves through our advocacy.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time. Our focus is systemic racism and voting rights. We are at the Department of Justice.

From the Prophet Jeremiah: *Thus, says the Lord, "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place."*

Jesus fell under the weight of the cross because he had been given a burden too heavy to bear. Because of systemic racism and systemic poverty, people of color in the United States also have a burden too heavy to bear.

Throughout our nation's history, people of color have always borne a greater weight of oppression due to systemic poverty and unemployment; poorly funded schools and neighborhoods; lack of access to health care, clean air and clean water; greater police violence and higher rates of incarceration.

We know that Black Lives Matter, but they have been consistently undervalued by the American public and by our institutions. When Black communities suffer from violence and systemic racism, their plight receives little attention.

Today, state legislators and special interest groups are limiting voting access by restricting the primary ways which people of color and other marginalized peoples most often vote – through limiting weekend voting and polling hours, requiring multiple forms of ID which are difficult to obtain, and removing easy access to ballot boxes. People with a felony conviction and the incarcerated – who are disproportionately people of color – do not have the right to vote in many states.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we confess that we, too, have supported racist institutions. We have been blind to the ways that racism leads to and worsens poverty, heightens incarceration rates, and intensifies the harms of voting restrictions. Empower us to see injustice. Remind us that we are called to love and support one another, especially those who are oppressed and marginalized. Help us to live in true solidarity, listening humbly to one another, and working for a society where human dignity is cherished.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother. Our focus is the need for community-led development. We are at USAID, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

From the Book of Lamentations: *All you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering, which has been dealt me.*

On the way of the cross, Mary's heart is pierced by the suffering of her beloved Son. Today, around the world, millions of parents see the lives of their children diminished by the lack of access to basic needs, such as clean water, electricity, health care, education, and regular, healthy meals. Like Mary, our hearts are pierced by their suffering.

Often efforts to promote integral, human development collide with the dominant paradigm of corporate-led business development based on mega-projects and corporate profits. We see this in some USAID initiatives, which follow the lead of corporations or NGOs, not communities, and promise jobs and income, but pay wages too low to sustain a family. These projects benefit government or corporate partners more than communities and keep people living in a state of poverty and need.

Local communities and leaders know what they need to better their situation, and often this does not include outside intervention by NGOs, governments, and corporations seeking to fundamentally alter their way of life. Too often development relief fails to consider the voices of impacted communities, and excludes local cultures, traditions, and dreams. This failed model of development has contributed to a global crisis of violence and migration.

The head of USAID acknowledged these failings three years ago and promised that half of its programs would be community-led by the year 2030. This means local communities will be in the lead to either co-design a project, set priorities, drive implementation, or evaluate the impact of USAID-funded programs. We pray that USAID remains focused on taking the steps to make this happen because the ultimate goal of diminishing instability and violence around the world is too important, and only genuine community-led development will enable all people to live lives of dignity and fulfillment. Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

We pray that our development policies always consider first the voices of those who are poor, vulnerable, and oppressed. May we listen to their wisdom and together offer programs that truly reflect their needs and aspirations.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Fifth Station: Simon Carries the Cross

The Fifth Station: Simon Carries the Cross. The right to asylum for people fleeing for their lives. We are at US Customs and Border Patrol.

From the Gospel of Luke: *As the soldiers led Jesus away, they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus* (Luke 23:26).

At this station, we remember those who are carrying crosses in their life and are in need of a companion, especially migrants and refugees, asylum seekers, and all people on the move. May we all be like Simon who—when Jesus is too weak to carry His cross—is given the cross to carry for a while. May we lighten the load of those whose journeys are made difficult, dangerous, and traumatic by detainment and arrest; by removing laws that treat them as criminals or threats to national security; and by ending torturous policies that violate their dignity and separate them from those they love.

We pray particularly, this spring, for a swift rejection of the president's new proposal to prevent people from seeking asylum at our southern border, a legal right that has already been significantly restricted by this and previous administrations. Instead, we pray our government and our communities, when encountering asylum seekers, that we can be like Simon, who, when he had the cross thrust upon him, does not react with bitterness toward Jesus or ask why me. We pray that we may become a people open to lifting the burden of suffering from those seeking asylum at our borders, today's crucified people, crying out for relief from violence and persecution.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

Leader: We pray for an end to policies that turn away and punish asylum seekers. We pray for a world where all communities welcome the stranger and the migrant. We pray for a new vision of community where no one is forced to flee their home because of violence or poverty.

Together we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

The Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Our focus is solidarity and peace. We are at the Russian Embassy.

From the Gospel of Mark: *A leper came to [Jesus] and, kneeling down, begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, [Jesus] stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean (Mark 1:40-42).*

As we contemplate Veronica braving soldiers and the mob to wipe the sweat and blood from Jesus' brow, her closeness and care in the face of danger and division recalls Christ's own healing works of mercy. We are reminded of scenes of compassion and solidarity in war-torn Ukraine, over its borders where refugees flee, and in courageous acts of defiance throughout Russia.

In times of war and division, these acts of closeness and care give radical witness to the power of solidarity and nonviolence. But not all of us are physically near to the victims of foreign wars, or those who stand against war. And too often, those who represent us on the global stage follow what Pope Francis calls "the perverse and diabolical logic of weapons," seeking safety in threats and armed deterrence.

We call instead for investment in integral human security that prioritizes nonviolence: investment in humanitarian support for the victims and survivors of war in Ukraine and around the world; training and resources for nonviolent civilian protectors and resisters; and solidarity toward Russians who say "no" to war. We call for investment in diplomacy and dialogue. Investment in human rights and integral human development.

We seek peace and security strategies that promote solidarity, draw us closer to the other, and heal division.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

Leader A: O God, we pray you send your Spirit of Wisdom to teach us the path of nonviolence, through greater solidarity with the victims of war, with those who build peace, and with the Christ who accompanies them on the Way of the Cross.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time

Seventh Station: Jesus falls the second time. Our focus is the need to prioritize human rights in foreign policy. We are at the State Department.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew: *Then the Lord will say, 'For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.'*

The authorities witnessed Jesus falling the first time, but continued to watch him struggle under unbearable weight. Here, he falls again, as soldiers and authorities look on without mercy. So, too, U.S. officials often watch the people of other countries suffer unbearable violations of human rights, and fail to stop the violence. Vague and politically defined national security interests supersede human rights concerns in our government's relationships with other countries.

Philippine security forces slander, threaten, and attack labor organizers, faith leaders, land defenders, and peace advocates. But the United States continues to provide military aid, and U.S. lawmakers resist conditioning such aid on respect for human rights, because the Philippines is seen as a key ally in countering China in the region.

In Guatemala, corrupt politicians dismantle democratic institutions while state and private armed forces intimidate and attack indigenous communities for standing up to mining companies that destroy their land and water. Guatemalan church and human rights leaders urge the United States to apply more rigorous sanctions on such officials, and stop funneling aid money into large-scale infrastructure projects that only create more occasions for corruption and abuse, but the patterns continue.

When Perú's president was removed from office in controversial fashion, protests erupted across the country. The military cracked down violently, wounding over 1,200 people, mostly Indigenous, and killing at least 49 protesters. Internationally recognized journalists and human rights organizations condemned the military's actions, and exposed efforts by high-ranking officials to cover up the unjustified violence. Maryknoll and Mercy Sisters in the region have urged the United States to stop supporting the officials involved, but the United States continues to hold joint exercises with the Peruvian Army, and even brought one of the officers responsible for human rights violations and impunity to serve with the U.S. Southern Command in Texas.

We are called to see Christ in the victims of human rights abuses wherever they occur, but too often, our government protects and collaborates with the perpetrators and fails to protect the most vulnerable, who continue to fall under the weight of violence, corruption, and impunity.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we confess our indifference to massive destruction of human life and the integrity of creation. We pray for sustainable, people-and-Earth-centered development that meets the needs of the impoverished majority of humanity.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

The Eighth Station. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem. Our focus is on the war in Israel and Palestine. We are at the White House.

From the Gospel of Luke: *Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children."*

We do weep for the men, women and children killed in the conflict between Israel and Palestine over the last 75 years, the 1,200 killed by Hamas on Oct. 7 and the more than 30,000 killed by Israel in Gaza since then. We weep for those forced to flee their homes, hungry and scared, with no safe place to lay their heads. We weep over the failed promises of this Administration to work toward an end of the violence while at the same time sending more weapons that kill civilians in Gaza.

We pray for our president to lead with compassion and mercy as Jesus did when he met the women of Jerusalem. For even in the midst of his own ordeal, Jesus takes the time to address others in distress.

Today it is the people of Gaza who are weeping, crying out for compassion and mercy. We pray for our president to hear their cries and exercise the moral courage needed to reject plans for more death and destruction and, instead, use all the tools at his disposal to move Hamas and Israel to a ceasefire, including stopping the flow of additional weapons to Israel, securing the release of hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held without charge by Israel, and ending the occupation and blockade that perpetuate this conflict.

We sense the transforming energy stirring in our hearts, including the 425 Jewish American rabbis and cantors who signed a recent letter to the president urging him to use the full force of America's leverage and global leadership to end the war and address the issues that have kept this conflict going for 75 years. "As this horrifying war continues," the Jewish leaders said, "it is clearer than ever that the safety of the Jewish people and the Palestinian people are bound up in each other. We long to see a truly democratic Jewish state, one that protects the human rights of every citizen, alongside an independent Palestine."

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we confess our complicity in the death and destruction in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and the broader Middle East region. We pray for President Biden to exercise the moral courage to respond to the weeping of the Palestinian people and be a peacemaker in the Holy Land.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time. Our focus is moving toward ecological conversion, and authentic climate solutions. We are at the Office of the Special Envoy on Climate.

From the Book of Deuteronomy: *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live* (Dt 30:19).

Jesus fell for the third time, suffering for our sins. Many times we cause him to suffer, falling on the road toward ecological conversion, within ourselves, with our neighbors, for our nation, and our world. We often fail to make changes to our lifestyles, to reduce our consumerism, waste and carbon footprints. We fail to understand the gravity of major planetary crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. We all fall when we fail to persuade our local, national, and global leaders to enact authentic systemic solutions to the climate crisis, toxic pollution and ecological degradation.

Our vulnerable brothers and sisters, and the Earth, our common home, all cry out, when we fall. Our Earth weeps. In too many places, the land is either desperate for rain, or flooded with water, causing failed harvests, hunger, poverty, mass migrations, and conflict, and most of all, too much suffering upon our sisters and brothers in vulnerable nations and communities across the world.

Present and future generations cry out, facing unabated ecological and climate crises, and systems and self-interests which so far refuse to change, and fail to place love of our Creator, and our neighbors, as the lodestar for our moral compass. We pray for ecological conversion, within ourselves and our leaders, so that together, we may envision and realize a sustainable and thriving future for all people and our Earth.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God of all, you gave us your only begotten son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins. Through His ineffable sacrifice and love, may you open our hearts, so that we may place you, and our vulnerable sisters and brothers as the lodestar for our moral compass, and together, care for your creation, so that all can thrive.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments. Our focus is on environmental degradation and resource extraction. We are at the Environmental Protection Agency.

From the Gospel of Matthew: *The soldiers stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head.*

As Jesus reached Golgotha, he was stripped by the soldiers of his clothing, left naked and vulnerable. Today, our economic structures and environmental policies strip the Earth, our home, of its beauty and abundance, leaving it to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. Symptoms of sickness are evident in the soil, water, air and the Black, brown, Indigenous and low-income communities disproportionately located near petrochemical plants, polluting highways and oil, gas and mining sites. Pope Francis tells us in *Laudate Deum* that we aren't reacting enough to the cries of the Earth, and we're close to the breaking point. We need a strong EPA to advance environmental justice, regulate toxic emissions from industry and vehicles, restore contaminated land, protect us from harmful chemicals and pesticides, and reduce lead in drinking water. We need an EPA empowered to limit carbon and methane emissions that are contributing to the climate crisis..

We pray for the historical memory of life in the United States before the EPA: Our rivers caught on fire, our air was full of smog, and we all breathed in secondhand smoke. We pray for our elected leaders to uphold the mission of EPA to protect human health and the environment.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we confess that we often forget that soil, water, mountains—everything—is, as Pope Francis says, a caress from You. The entire material universe speaks of Your love, Your boundless affection for us. We pray that we can grow in our care for the Earth, our common home.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross. Our focus is fair trade not free trade. We are at the U.S. Trade Representative's Office.

The Lord says, *"The people of Israel have sinned again and again. So I will punish them. They sell into slavery those who do what is right. They trade needy people for a mere pair of sandals. They grind the heads of the poor into the dust of the ground. They refuse to be fair to those who are crushed."* (Amos 2:6-7)

Jesus Christ was unjustly tortured and killed by the powers and authorities of his day. He identified with all whose human rights are denied. In the mystery of redemption, the nails of his oppression become the linchpins of a just new order.

Transnational corporations and U.S. trade negotiators, like the Israelites condemned by Amos, systematically place profits over human beings. They move production between nations, forcing workers in developed nations and the developing world to compete with one another for jobs. They enrich themselves and their shareholders by undermining their employees' wages and working conditions. Trade agreements not only destroy local industries and rural livelihoods, but also overrule nations' own laws of environmental protection. All of us, producers and consumers, as well as our blessed Earth, are harmed by this injustice.

Any trading system should serve the common good and benefit ordinary people, especially those struggling against poverty. It should preserve natural resources, be democratically accountable and respect human rights. The right of each person, as a bearer of God's image, to participate in decisions that shape society is especially sacred.

Fair trade systems can help redress the injustices of the global economic system. Buying fair trade products supports living wages for producers and higher social and environmental standards.

By choosing fair trade products we help ensure that the wealth garnered by the products be distributed fairly, thus alleviating the cycle of economic inequality.

Our export-based model of trade makes us further complicit in climate change. By shifting our focus to strengthening local and regional economies, we can support families, farmers, and small businesses, and a just economy for all.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

We confess that we too try to dominate others and violate their human dignity. We pray today for the global trading system to become open to popular participation and democratic accountability. We pray for agreements that prioritize human rights and God's creation – supporting food security, sustainable agriculture and the right to life-saving medications.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross. Our focus is the need for debt forgiveness for impoverished nations. We are at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

From the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: *Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God* (Rm 8:21).

Jesus died on the cross, giving his life to free all of creation from the bondage of sin. Created by God as “very good,” the whole community of life has borne the cross of human sin and misuse. Here in front of the World Bank, we lament how impoverished people suffer and die as low-and middle-income nations sink deeper into debt while struggling to recover from the pandemic.

As developing countries lost years of poverty reduction and development gains due to pandemic and war crises, we desperately need new approaches to resolve debt crises so funds can go to human development and climate investments. One of the most straightforward actions the IMF’s richest members can take right now to help countries on the brink of default is to approve speedy, broad-based debt reduction and pass legislation to compel all creditors, including private ones, to participate in it. As countries emerge from these crises, new resources going to them should be non-debt-creating, to avoid re-creating a debt problem. This requires the imagination and bold leadership to try new solutions. An example was the IMF 2021 creation of emergency rainy-day funds, Special Drawing Rights.

Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and my burden, light,” but the yoke of IMF and World Bank conditions has been an intolerable burden and contributed to deep injustices.

All countries that desperately need a more just economic system to care for their people will benefit most from debt relief and affordable finance. For instance, places like Zambia, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nigeria.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

Leader A: O God, we confess our indifference to massive destruction of human life and the integrity of creation. We pray for sustainable, people-and-Earth-centered development that meets the needs of the impoverished majority of humanity.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross. Our focus is militarism and nonviolence. We are at the Pentagon, headquarters of the United States military.

From the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians: *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross (Eph 2:14,16).*

The wars in Gaza and Ukraine have highlighted all that war and vicious violence have wrought – in Yemen and Afghanistan, Syria and Colombia, Myanmar and Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan, Israel and Palestine, the DR Congo, and beyond.

Yet, massive expenditures on preparations for war by the United States and many other countries; the pursuit of national security rather than inclusive human security; continued reliance on and development of nuclear weapons; and companies and communities that profit from marketing the tools of war have helped to create a “perfect storm” of suffering. Millions of people lack access to the basic necessities of life, while nonviolent tools and strategies for addressing serious threats to peace are consistently undervalued.

In the midst of war, enormous suffering, and upheaval, a global course correction to authentic, inclusive security for humans and the Earth is urgent.

Slowly emerging from the heartbreak of death, destruction and massive displacement in Gaza and Ukraine are inspiring demonstrations of diverse nonviolent strategies that are upending the logic of war. Nonviolence is a path to the fullness of life for all. Inclusive security for the whole Earth community relies not on weapons and military force, but on solidarity and hope. Rooted in the Gospel, nonviolence is a spirituality, a way of life and a proven-effective strategy for achieving durable social change. It is a force for good that can help create a world where the infinite worth of every person is prized and where our common home is honored and protected.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

Leader A: O God, we recognize the need for deep transformation of the global economic system. No longer can we spend billions on the military while the safety net is slashed and nonviolent options for inclusive security are ignored. We commit ourselves to learning nonviolence, to living more justly, to seeking just peace.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb

Leader: The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb. Our focus is on the Care for the Common Good. We are at the Treasury Department.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew: *“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. 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.”*

The disciples must have believed that this was the end of Jesus’ journey with them. Jesus had been detained, arrested and tortured at the word of Pilate and others in power who believed he was a threat to national security. His broken body was now entombed behind a great stone, a final barrier separating him from those he loved.

At this station, we remember all who cry out for peace and justice. We stand in solidarity with all those who defend respect for the person, the well-being of communities, and a just peace for all.

We pray today for our elected officials, that like Joseph of Arimathea, they may find the courage to prepare a safe place for all who need it, by embracing policies that honor human dignity as well as the dignity of the Earth.

We pray today for our own discipleship communities, that like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, we may remain faithful, present, and watchful in our witness to the humanity of those victimized by our systems. May we be ever present to the needs of those on the margins. We pray that we may become a people of ever more generous mercy, compassion, and love.

Together, we say:

All: We long for a moral economy that promotes and protects the whole Earth community.

O God, we confess our sins of selfishness and greed. We pray for a new vision of community and solidarity where we recognise one another as one human family, and share the abundant gifts of the Earth for the common good.

Together, we say:

All: We pray for the coming of the New Creation; we believe that another world is possible.

Fifteenth Station: The Resurrection of Jesus

Fifteenth Station: The Resurrection of Jesus Our focus is on seeds of hope.

A reading from the Book of Revelation: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among human beings. God will dwell with them and be their God; and they will be God's people." ... And the One who was seated on the throne said, "See I am making all things new."

We now reflect on our lives and choices, mindful of our own complicity in the global crises of our time but proclaiming the hope that is rooted in the Resurrection. We believe God invites us to work to effect meaningful change and to name the signs of the coming Kingdom of God that we see even in our broken world.

Pause for a moment to reflect in silence on your own lifestyle. Where are there opportunities for me to live more sustainably? How can I give of myself more generously? How can I see the suffering of Jesus in the cry of the Earth and of the poor?

Please repeat the response "Open our eyes" after each admission.

To the paths of nonviolence in front of us... Open our eyes.

To ways we can live more sustainably... Open our eyes.

To the opportunities to welcome the stranger... Open our eyes.

To the witness of saints and prophets in our midst... Open our eyes.

Let us pray: Loving God, open our eyes as well to signs of hope in our world. Help us to believe that a better world is possible, and to act on that belief.

Together, we pray:

All: Loving God, who provides for all people in all times, we commit ourselves to the works of repentance as we await your Resurrection. We commit to an inward and outward journey – a life of prayer, study, and action – as followers of Jesus and his Gospel message. Amen.

For more information about the Economic and Ecological Way of the Cross, contact:

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

T: +1 202-832-1780

200 New York Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20001

 ogc@maryknollogc.org  www.maryknollogc.org 

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