

15 Stations of the Cross

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Interpretation

Loose translation from: ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools (University of Notre Dame) was used with interpretations from the author.

Station 1

The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death



Mark 15:12-14: *[Pilate brought Jesus outside and said to the people], “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” “Crucify him!” they shouted. “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”*

He mutely accepted the blame, even if without sin. Let us trust and be guided just like He accepted his task with humility and trust.

Author’s interpretation:

Those who followed Jesus, admired him and respected, now turn their eyes away from him.

Station 2

Jesus is made to carry the cross



John 19:16-17: *The soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).*

Jesus carried the horizontal beam of the cross, which weighed about 125 pounds. We can only imagine the pain he endured as he walked. His pain and suffering with which he carried his cross on his flesh-torn back gives us an example of the acceptance of burdens which accompany often life.

Author’s interpretation:

Let us try to carry our burdens with the same grace and courage.

Station 3

Jesus falls the first time



Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Physical suffering which others impose on us, was carried by Jesus with humility and self-giving love.

Author's interpretation:

Syrian father with his small son in his arms, as he tried to cross the borders of Hungary to safety, was stopped by a cruel tripping caused by a leg stretched in his way by a Hungarian woman news reporter.

Station 4

Jesus meets his Mother



Face to face, Jesus and the Blessed Mother meet. Jesus is covered in blood, sweat, and spit, bent under the weight of the cross, subjected to angry shouts of hate.

Author's interpretation:

At the time of the greatest humiliation of her son, his mother is present. Jesus does not console her. He does not deepen her pain. Their dialogue is not pathetic, nor dramatic. Mother offers her son the little she can: the comfort of her presence. Let us be present at places where we are mostly needed.

The minimal treatment of this image is based on a mutual dialogue and reflection of words: MOTHER LOOK AT YOUR SON.

Station 5

Simon helps Jesus carry his cross



Luke 23:26: As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Simon from Cyrene is pressed into service "on his way in from the country"; it's an unexpected detour from his plan for the day.

Author's interpretation:

An abstract map leads from all directions to the center of the cross. We don't know from where and to

where we are going. Let's use our eyes to see when, where and to whom we can offer our service, even if it means a detour for us.

Station 6

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



As Jesus stumbles down the road to Golgotha, Veronica takes her veil to gently wipe the sweat and blood from his face.

Author's interpretation:

Let us keep our eyes open for others and offer them our kindness.

An offer of the disposable cloth "veils" moves the story to our time. It presents us with a chance to take one and offer some comfort to the needed.

Station 7

Jesus falls the second time



Psalm 22:6-7: But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

Earlier in the Gospels, we see images of Jesus as the center of attention: some ascended trees to see him; others reached out simply to touch his garments; still others dismantled a roof to lower their sick friend down to Jesus. Jesus had once been surrounded with love and acclaim; now he is rejected and scorned.

Let us try to identify with those who are rejected. Inspire in us compassion for those who are cast aside and the marginalized.

Author's interpretation:

In connection with the physical suffering of Jesus, it is not often remembered that women around the world have been enduring an injustice and cruelty. With their self-giving love they are close to Jesus.

The symbol of a spool of threads is a transposition of the story to our times. It is a metaphor, just like Jesus used metaphors for a better understanding of his words. The basic shape of the spool reminds us of a human body, the wound up thread is a symbol of fabric.

In the traditional sense we focus always on the suffering of Jesus, a man. Through the abstraction of the image and by using a spool with thread we can sense also the presence of women who are marginalized and mutely carry their cross.

Station 8

Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem



Luke 23:27-28 *[As Jesus walked toward Golgotha], a large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him; and he turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me...for behold, the days are coming..."*

Author's interpretation:

The message of Jesus is about hope. Death is not the end of the story.

Using a symbol of the threads wound up around a spool transposes the iconography of the image to a rather feminine level.

Station 9

Jesus falls the third time



Why would Jesus get up? Why would he summon his last ounce of energy to deliver himself to the pain of the cross? Falling three times; getting up three times. Christ shows us that he can transform weakness, failings, and death.

Author's interpretation:

The process of untying of many meters of thread is a symbol of an agony and pain.

Station 10

Jesus is stripped of his garments



Mark 15:19 : *Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. They stripped off his clothes and began to mock him, saying: "All hail, King of the Jews."*

The soldiers tossed with a dice over the garment of Jesus.

Crucified people in Jesus' time were stripped of all of their clothes. It was one more step in the process of ultimate humiliation. When we are subjected to humiliation, we can be confident of this: Jesus knows how we feel.

Author's interpretation:

An empty spool of thread is a symbol which helps to evoke a feeling of nakedness.

Station 11

Jesus is nailed to the cross

John 17:19: They crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle.



Jesus suffered the excruciating pain as soldiers pounded thick nails through his hands and feet. Christ bore this pain – *our* pain – as a supreme sign of his overwhelming love for God’s people.

Author’s interpretation:

Innocent people die every day due to the cruelty of others. Through his sacrifice, Jesus gives hope to all who were killed pointlessly by fanatics and hired murderers.

Statistics of victims of the terrorist attacks over one year are the testimony of the useless cruelty against innocent victims.

Station 12

Jesus dies on the cross



Jesus dead. His disciples are confused. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Just the contrary. Jesus’ closest friends affirm for us that doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is part of it.

Author’s interpretation:

The mystery of death and resurrection is not a rational act. If we accept that we are not all-knowing and open up to what is beyond our understanding, we open also to a chance of listening and hearing.

Simplification of the story into a symbol allows for a greater imagination.

Station 13

Jesus is taken down from the cross



John 19:33-34: When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

Author’s interpretation:

Let us accept the challenges which we cannot change.

White is a color of purity and hope. The Pieta can be interpreted even though the spools of thread, if we understand it as an image behind which we can see the depth of torment of a mother with her dead son.

Mother is depicted here as a strong personality who must endure the loss of her son and move on.

Station 14

Jesus is placed in the tomb



John 19:38-41 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

The story seems to be at the end. They rolled up a large stone to cover the entrance to the grave.

Author's interpretation:

The horizontal composition of the white cloth is self-explanatory. To show the details of the actual grave was not necessary in my interpretation.

Station 15

The Resurrection



Corinthians 15:4: Christ was raised on the third day.

All of our crosses, our pain, our sin, are healed, forgiven and transformed. Christ is risen! Although his risen body bears the marks of his suffering, his pain is gone. Mourning turns into dancing, grief turns into joy, despair turns to hope and fear turns to love. The eternal dance of new life begins anew.

Author's interpretation:

Surface of the glittering stones is rhythmically arranged around the "body" of the spool. They should evoke a sense of victory and transformation into the light.