

THE WAY OF THE CROSS 2006

The First Station: *Jesus is Condemned to Death*

Theme: Restorative Justice

Place: Courthouse

“When he was abused, He did not return abuse. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but He entrusted Himself to the one who judges justly.

1Peter 2: 23-24

Reflection:

Today, we begin a walk, not just an ordinary walk downtown. It is the *Via Dolorosa* – The Way of the Cross. We stand together as a community in front of this courthouse. It is a place where judgments, convictions, and sentences are handed down. It represents a place of both justice and injustice. Jesus once stood before a courthouse of His day. He knows what it means to be sentenced, as this is the station where Jesus is Condemned to Die. Jesus also knew the pain of REJECTION, JUDGMENT, SHAME, HUMILIATION, ABANDONMENT and POVERTY. As Aboriginal people we too, know this pain – the pain of having judgments made here at the courthouse, as well as by society in general. We know the pain of injustice.

The CROSS is a symbol of Restorative Justice. We gather here in a prayerful vigil for Restorative Justice. We are asking for healing and reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals – both in the justice system and in our culture. May the two meet, just as Heaven and Earth meet on the CROSS!

Let Us Pray:

Father, forgive us for the times we have rejected your son in the people around us – Aboriginals, non-Aboriginals and our inmates. Help us to recognize your son – Your work – in them. Give us the courage of Jesus to take a stand for the value and dignity for all persons. We pray especially for First Nations, for all who those feel incarcerated in some way, and for all our prison inmates. We pray that your kingdom come and that restorative justice be done. Lord Jesus, by the grace of this station, help us to know our goodness. Break the shackles amongst us, and open the bars to our hearts to those “justly and unjustly condemned”. Amen

The Second Station: *Jesus Carries His Cross*

Theme: Health Care

Place: Medical Arts Building

Though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

Philippians 2:6-7

Reflection:

Jesus of Nazareth took up the Cross in order to carry it to Calvary. This event was a turning point in the history of the cross. Through Christ's acceptance of the Cross, the instrument of his own self-emptying, as Christians we come to know and experience the love of God as we each embrace our Cross in daily life. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to die on the Cross, and his Son offered his life on the Cross. God loved his Son, and the Cross is the sign of a love without limits.

Health care in Canada is our Cross. We need to consider how to keep health care accessible to all. Do you know Alberta's government plan is to overhaul the health care system and create a two-tiered system? "There would be one tier for those who have the financial means to pay for care to avoid waiting times; and a second tier for those who cannot afford such services or insurance, or who are judged ineligible for insurance."

The Catholic Health Association of Canada has taken up this concern and has challenged the federal government to defend the Canada Health Act. In a letter to the Prime Minister, "CHAC shares the concern for justice and fairness in health care. If Alberta chooses THE THIRD WAY, they would move us as a society away from a stance of interdependence and caring for one another in times of illness, toward a stance of individualism and self-interest. Those who can afford to pay for their care will pay from their own pockets."

In the introduction of the Health Ethics Guide published by CHAC, the call for all Christians in health and social organizations is to welcome people. The Vision and Values of the Christian tradition is a call to care for all who come to us.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, who accepted the Cross as a sign of God's saving love for humanity. Help us to embrace the Cross we carry as health care providers and users of the health care system, so that we come to know how we can best preserve health care in Canada. "Show the government in each of our provinces how to address the underlying problems of health care costs and waiting lists. Together help us to find innovative practices to ensure that the world's only fully publicly funded health care delivery system continues to serve all Canadians in an equitable and just way." (CHAC Letter to Prime Minister 2006)

Lord Jesus Christ,

Guide all of us to promote health and to work to overcome injustice.

Help us to respect the dignity and rights of persons and communities.

Show us how to care for the most vulnerable and abandoned, to love the poor, not excluding anyone to health care services.

Enlighten our actions to promote justice to attend to all dimensions of health: physiological, psychological, spiritual, social, economical and ecological dimensions.

Encourage us to provide health and social services to promote social justice so that all persons will be given equality of care and service.

Help us to foster the common good as we commit ourselves to serve the well-being of each person.

(Health Ethics Guide CHAC p. 4)

Jesus we are all your care providers in your healing mission, be for us the strength, the courage and the compassion to foster an environment that is marked by dignity, justice and trust.

In your name we pray. Amen

The Third Station: *Jesus Falls for the First Time Under the Weight of the Cross*

Theme: Truth in the Media

Place: Star Phoenix

*“He was despised and rejected by others;
A man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
And as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised,
And we held him of no account.”*

Isaiah 53:3

As we stand at this station and recall the first fall of Jesus under the weight of the cross, we reflect on truth in the media.

We reflect on how often the truth about justice and the dignity of the human person is overpowered in the media. Too often truth is overpowered by:

- the weight of greed,
- the weight of corporate interests,
- the weight of political agendas
- and the weight of a shallow lust for leisure, distraction and entertainment.

Technological advances in the media have conquered time and space, giving us instantaneous news, global access, facts galore and distractions of every kind. But what about truth?

One of the mass media’s popular creations, Spiderman, says to the world: “with great power comes great responsibility”.

What is the responsibility of the media in the world? Is it not to provide accurate reporting, full explanations and fair coverage? Yet how often is that lost to manipulation, to shallowness, or to agendas controlled by those in power or those with the most money, the best propaganda machine, or the most powerful corporate interest.

And what is our responsibility when it comes to using the media? Is it not to be informed, to seek out many sources, to hunt for the truth, to battle injustices and to speak

up? Yet how often is that lost to laziness, over-consumption, and a fascination for mindless trash, titillation, and easy platitudes?

We are *all* called to be watchdogs for the truth:

- Those working in the media must live up to a higher calling of seeking the truth, and promoting the common good.
- We as consumers of the media are also challenged to seek out errors, abuses and distortions in the media and use what resources we have – whether it be letters to the editor, petitions, information campaigns or the Internet – to promote the truth.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

You told us, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”.

When we seek the truth, we seek you.

Lord Jesus,

May we always seek you in the news stories and entertainment fed to us in such massive amounts by media of every kind.

Lord Jesus,

Help us to seek you in the faces of those who are downtrodden, ignored and exploited.

Lord Jesus,

May those who are entrusted to work in the media also have the strength and the integrity to seek you and to seek truth, rather than to turn their faces away.

Send your Spirit to help our world shake off the burden of selfishness and greed that so often distorts truth.

Send your Spirit to help us build a world where truth, compassion and justice are more important than profit, power and leisure.

AMEN

The Fourth Station: *Jesus Meets His Mother*

Theme: Peacekeeping

Place: HMS Unicorn

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal on your arm;
for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.*

Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.

Relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire.

Song of Solomon: 8:6

Reflection:

Consider: How is it that we have troops in Afghanistan without debate in parliament. How has our role changed? Are we true peacekeepers?

Let Us Pray:

Mary, Mother of peace. You stood by the cross of Jesus in silent suffering. We ask you to help us to be peacekeepers in our hearts, in our families, in our communities and in the world. O God, in the many sufferings we have to endure in our lives, help us to be like Mary who stood by the cross of Jesus with courage and love. Fill us with love so that we may be examples of peace in our troubled and war torn world. AMEN

Fifth Station: *Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus Carry His Cross*

Theme: Celebrating our Faith

Place: Third Avenue United Church

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

Reflection:

Just as Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry His cross, so we too must help share the struggles and crosses of all our brothers and sisters.

As we thirst for peace: we must work to remove the burden of the crosses of intolerance and hatred.

Let us always keep in mind the command of Jesus: to "love your neighbour as yourself".

As we thirst for understanding: we must show respect for one another, especially when we don't agree.

Let us always be quick to listen to each other, to think carefully before we speak and be slow to anger.

As we thirst for justice: we must remember to put the needs of others before our own wants.

Let us always thirst to be strong advocates: for peace, for understanding and for justice.

Let us Pray:

O generous and loving God, we praise and thank you for your gifts.

We acknowledge our failure to heal the divisions that exist among the followers of your Son, Jesus Christ.

We pray for your help and guidance to overcome the barriers that continue to separate Christians.

We ask that the power of your Holy Spirit be fully alive within us; and for Your love to give us the strength to mend the hurts that separate the followers of Jesus.

Help us build bridges of love and understanding with all humanity.

May the love and forgiveness of Jesus guide us each day, as we journey with all our sisters and brothers in Christ's name. Amen

Sixth Station: *Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus*

Theme: Addictions and Family

Place: Liquor Board Store

Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me.

Psalm 27:8-9

Reflection:

Many families in Saskatoon and across the world are suffering. The suffering comes in many forms, but one of the most difficult crosses to bear is that of addiction.

Sometimes it is alcohol, drugs, or gambling. Last year alone, Internet gambling made three men billionaires; money that should have gone to feeding families has built up an empire of disgrace and greed.

Sometimes the addiction is of one or both of the parents. Sometimes it is one or more of the children. Addiction is a cancer that destroys a family from within. Addiction destroys trust, and replaces it with fear, anger and hopelessness. But each of us in little ways can help by spending even a moment with someone who is afflicted, as Veronica did with Jesus.

Prayer:

Lord God, King of the Universe, thank you for the gift of families.

Send down your Holy Spirit into all people, especially those whose addictions are tearing apart their family.

Give them the courage of Veronica, who in the face of seeing love crucified had the strength to reach out in a little, but meaningful way.

Give them courage in the face of fear; faith in the face of surrender, and hope in the face of despair.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Seventh Station: *Jesus Falls the Second Time*

Reflection:

As we stand in front of the CFQC building today, we are called to reflect on truth in the media.

We live in an age of information overload. We need historical and current information to help us interpret what is going on in our community, our nation and our world.

We used to rely on the media to provide us with unbiased and accurate information. But, in the age of information, truth has become a commodity that belongs to the highest bidder. The corporations that control the media can determine how and when information is released, and how it can be manipulated, and how to present a certain image -- an image that is often of interest of political parties, government agencies and corporate interests.

The media has become a medium that encourages us to become better consumers. Our wants are turned into needs by the slick images and messages that constantly bombard us to buy more without counting the cost. Violence, sex, pornography and scandal have become the new entertainment to take our minds off the problems of the world, and the interrelationship problems in our own lives.

Prayer:

Help us to understand the powerful role the media can play in our lives and the lives of our families. Jesus, you told us "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life". Just as you were despised, rejected and held of no account by those in power, so even now those who control information hide their faces from truth or hide the truth from us. We ask those entrusted to work in the media, to be given the strength of the Holy Spirit to pick themselves up and to speak the truth, just as you did, Lord Jesus, after you fell under the weight of your cross. Lord Jesus, may we also be enabled to discern the truth in what we see, hear and read in the media.

Eighth Station: *Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem Who Weep for Him*

Theme: Concern for People in the Third World

Place: Canada Employment Building

When they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first born.

Zechariah 12:10

Reflection:

We, in the so-called 'developed' part of the world, have built our economies on the backs of poorer countries. Instead of sharing the wealth that is accumulating in North America, we are protecting our own interests and neglecting the needs of the global community. Our governments are so concerned with winning elections, and pandering to the electorate that they have next to nothing left over to help those in the 'third world'.

Canada gives only .33% of our Gross National Product to foreign aid. That is less than half of the United Nations of .7%. Canada is not doing its share. To make matters worse, our governments often attach conditions to the aid we give. We must continue to raise these issues with government leaders, and be prepared to give more as individuals.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as you consoled the women who followed you even to your death, console those around the world who have want of food, shelter and safety this day.

Prod the rest of us who have much to give. Help us to be voices that are raised on behalf of those who have no voice. Make of us instruments of your peace and workers for justice, so that all will be fed and safe. AMEN

Ninth Station: *Thirsting for Justice*

(Not only the thirst of our sisters and brothers for water, but for an equitable distribution of the goods of the earth. People also thirst for literacy, education, health care, and even the right to vote. **Share lent 2004-2006**)

Theme: Concern for the People in the Third World

Place: Midtown Plaza

I am now rejoicing in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church.

Col. 1:24

Reflection:

As we stand before this monument to consumerism, we recall how our society too often marginalizes people by economic status. We also remember that the ways we spend money may not only exclude those in our own communities, but can create division between all peoples of the earth. Our world is broken into groups that are isolated from each other, and continue to grow more isolated, putting up walls of separation. We also recognize the many other forms of isolation in our communities; people are divided and lonely, whether we are alienated because of economics, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, ancestry or ethnicity, faith, gender, as the victims of bullying or violence, or because of the way we look or dress. We remember that just because we are not all the same, does not mean that we are not all human. Despite our feelings of isolation, we know that we are never alone, for we live in God's world.

Prayer:

Creating and Sustaining God,
you break down all barriers between people,
ending the loneliness and isolation that we create,
the walls and barricades that we build.

Grant us the strength to reach out to those in our community who are isolated,
even as Jesus showed us by example and word, to love and accept those
whom others would reject.

Remind us that even in living in a nation of abundance,
there are many who are ostracized and excluded,
both in our country, and millions more around the earth.

Be with us as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus,
creating wholeness in our community and bringing healing to the world.

Amen.

Tenth Station: *Jesus is Stripped of his Garments*

Theme: Family Farm in Crisis

Place: CIBC Bank

*They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots. **Psalm 22: 17-19***

Reflection:

Some people, like Jesus, suffer indignities through no fault of their own. Farmers are one example.

Just a generation ago, they were well respected as food growers for the world, and well paid in the bargain. Now they must try to put off creditors, try to get off-farm jobs to top up their income, and go to Regina and Ottawa to beg government to support and save their industry.

Perhaps Canadians are not prepared to subsidize their farmers, long term, like the Americans and Europeans. However, unless some real assistance is put into place so that value-added farming can be established, the industry that built this province will cease to exist.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, in a world where many are starving, we have plenty. Give us a grateful heart that we may value the gift of bountiful harvests. May we realize the importance of paying a fair price to those who grow our food, so that they may continue to feed the world. Amen

Station Eleven: *Jesus is Nailed to the Cross*

Theme: Poverty

Place: Downtown Bingo

Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Luke 23:43

Reflection:

As we stand before this Bingo Hall, let us reflect on the impact of gambling on our society. One of the comments that strikes me most is, "Let him/her be, they aren't harming anyone!" Let us think about the neglected children and families. The money spent on gambling that should be used for every day basic needs: rent, food and clothing. How about the businesses that have to close due to the lack of sales, or the employers that lose business due to the addicted person's absenteeism?

Prayer:

Let us pray. Lord, grant us the ability and the knowledge to help those addicted to gambling. May we continue to provide financial support to the agencies that provide counseling to those affected by gambling.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

Twelfth Station: *Jesus Dies on the Cross*

Theme: Box Store Syndrome

Place: Closed Extra Food Store

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Mark 15:34

Reflection:

- 1) As our journey of sorrow with Jesus come to a close, we stop here to contemplate the journeys that people today are forced to make in search for one of the basics of life – food. And not just in the starving countries of the less developed world.
- 2) Here in the developed world, the trend is to more and more bigger stores – the big box syndrome. These are built not for the convenience of many residents, but for the profits of the few.

- 3) And at what a price! Minimum wages, no pay for overtime, inconvenient shift work, exploitation of workers, both by those who produce and those who sell. Mass production of goods, even of food of dubious quality – possibly hazardous to health.
- 4) Equally insidious is the need for transportation that is not available to the disadvantaged and forsaken: the old, the weak, the poor and the physically challenged.

Prayer:

Our Lord and Saviour, who died that all may live, show by your example of service and love and care for all, that those who have so much control over our everyday economic well being, should develop a concern for the common good.

Remind them through your cross and death, that the controllers of Big Box complexes will go to their death in the smallest of boxes – without any material riches.

Help the disadvantaged have a fair share in the blessings, which your Father has given to the world when He created it.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide those groups, especially the religious, who are working so effectively to counter the avarice of trans-world Big Box servers.

Station 13: *Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross and Laid in the Arms of His Mother*

Reflection:

Mary provides us with a glorious example of what it means to embrace the will of God. From her very first “Yes” to the news that she would bear the Son of God to this heart-wrenching moment when she received the body of her son after his death on the cross. Mary reveals that it is possible to accept God’s word throughout all of life’s ups and downs.

Jesus is the ultimate word of God’s will for us. Through study of the Scripture, through participation in life-long faith education, we come to more deeply understand and live God’s will: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” and “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Embracing God’s will means both learning and teaching; we are always student of our Lord Jesus, and yet as parents, guardians, friends and teachers, we are called to pass along God’s Word to our sisters and brothers.

Prayer:

Lord, help us embrace your will for us through the Good News and presence of Jesus. Help us bring open eyes and listening ears to the lived reality of our sisters and brothers in need. May our openness compel us to work for real solutions to the inequities that plague our world: inadequate housing, water and food; lack of access to public education and health care; lack of meaningful participation in the governance of their local communities and countries.

Bless those who work so hard in the field of Christian education: parents, teachers, administrators and support staff. May they work in, with and through your Holy Spirit to bring the power of the Good News to the children they serve. May their faithfulness to your will result in the transformation of our world.

May we follow Mary’s example by saying “Yes” to your will in whatever stage of life and vocation we find ourselves. May her words, “Here and I, the servant of the Lord” be the chorus of our lives. Amen.

Station 14: *Jesus is Placed in the Tomb*

Theme: Education

Place: Catholic School Division

*For if we have been unified with Him in a death like His,
we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.*

Romans: 8 – 5

Reflection:

Jesus' body is laid in the tomb. Your death, Lord and now your burial, have silenced your enemies. You spoke out against all forms of oppression. You healed the broken. Heal our broken environment. Make us mindful of the impact of our consumer choices as they relate to water, goods and services. May we grow in wisdom and knowledge in order to choose that which honours You. May our choices be deliberate stewardship so that we might meet our needs without jeopardizing the needs of those who come after us. Let us learn to live in harmony with Your earth, and with each other.

Prayer:

Lord, our environment is crying out in anguish with the threats to air, water and food quality, with the lack of concern by business and the indifference of society at large. Grant us the faith to keep our focus on you, and the courage to cry out against all forms of injustices that crucify your environment. May the efforts we take to sustain mother earth bring forth a rich harvest, and nourish the world to do the will of God.