

Opening Reflection



At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you."

The Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer II

Jesus lived these words; his whole life was a "eucharist," a thanksgiving offering to God. As I look upon the suffering Christ in this Way of the Cross, I remember these words that he spoke at the Last Supper, words that are repeated at every Mass. I ask him to make my heart like his so that I can become a eucharist for the world.

Jesus gives up his body, his heart, his very life for my love. He is extreme in his desire for me. He wants me to know how much he loves me, and he goes to such great

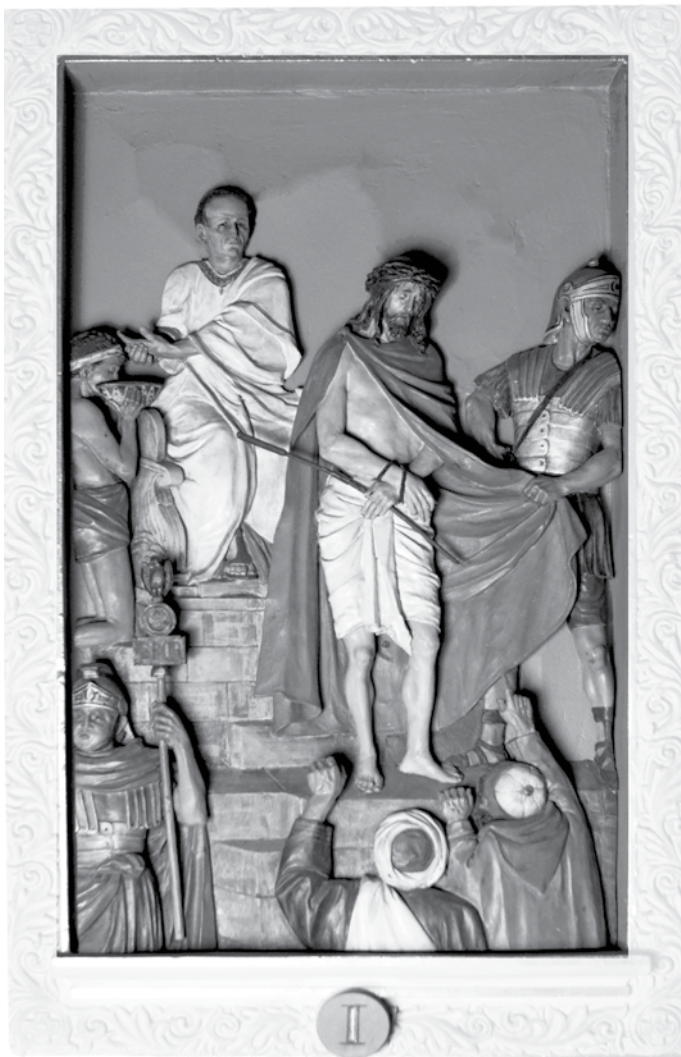
lengths to communicate his love to me. But this extreme offer of love is frightening. I know I do not deserve it, and I falsely think I must do something to measure up to it. I despair in my ability to properly receive our Lord's abundant love for me, so I follow from a safe distance. I easily become indifferent and ungrateful for the gift he offers to me in the Blessed Sacrament.

Just as the serpent was lifted up in the desert to heal all who looked upon it from the serpent's bite, so too all who look upon the Crucified One in faith are cured of the "bite" of sin (see Nm 21:9, Jn 3:14). I will pray this Way of the Cross looking upon the Crucified One once again, calling to mind and heart the dramatic events of Christ's passion and death. I do this so I can enter more fully into the celebration of the Holy Mass, which makes present in a real way these saving events.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for every moment of your passion, offered for the salvation of the world. Increase my awareness and appreciation of the wounds you suffered for love of me, and help me to gratefully offer myself back to you. Amen.



FIRST STATION



Jesus Is Condemned to Death



Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Mark 10:51

I adore you, O Christ, and I bless you,
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed
the world.

The enemies of Jesus want to kill him because they do not understand his teachings. Jesus' friends abandon him because they are afraid of those in power. Jesus is alone in his suffering. Being misunderstood causes conflict among people every day. Misunderstandings can lead to judgment, separation, condemnation, violence, and even death. Even very good people experience the frustration of misunderstanding and its effects. Good communication is the only answer.

Pride and selfishness stifle good communication. An open, gentle, and humble heart facilitates good communication. Jesus, personally unaffected by original sin, communicates his truest self perfectly. He never hides his thoughts and feelings. He freely yet prudently communicates his identity and mission by word and action. Jesus so perfectly communicates himself that millions have come to know and love him over the centuries.

In addition to communicating himself perfectly, Jesus also perfectly receives communication from others, making dialogue real. Practicing the art of listening, he listens attentively to his Father in prolonged periods of prayer. He listens humbly to the needs of others, giving them what they most need. Jesus is not a mere dispenser of divine grace; through human faculties, he discovers the deepest needs of the person before him, and then he responds accordingly.

Jesus wants me to be an expert in dialogue with God and others. Being open and humble enables me to hear God's Word and obey it. In my petitions to God, I express my deepest needs as I know them to a God who knows me perfectly. By suffering the indignities of the Cross, Jesus proves his desire to communicate his love to me. He desires no less from me in return so that I may enter into an authentic dialogue that leads to our communion.

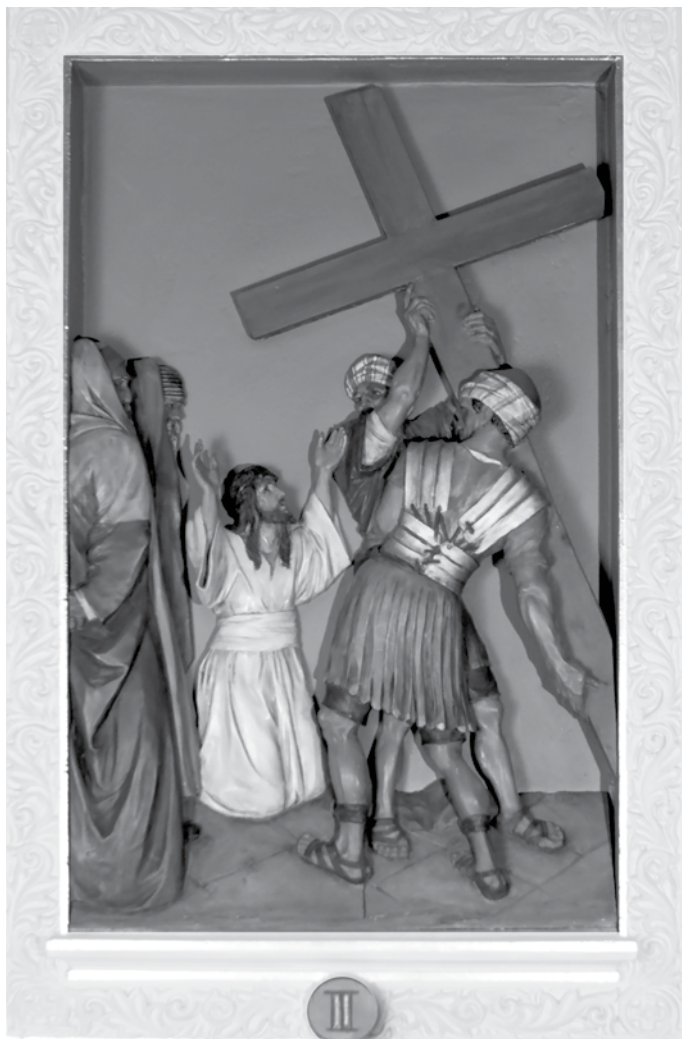
In the first part of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Word, Jesus speaks to me. Then I share my desires and needs with him in the Prayers of the Faithful.

Prayer: Jesus, meek and humble of heart, help me to invest myself in the art of good communication, understanding that bad communication can condemn innocent people. Help me to improve my communication by listening and responding to your Word and the words of others. As you so freely communicate yourself to me in the Eucharist, help me to freely give myself back to you, strengthening the bonds of love made present by Holy Communion.

Heart of Jesus, present in the Most Blessed
Sacrament,

I offer myself with you for the salvation of all.

SECOND STATION



Jesus Carries His Cross



He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain ...

Isaiah 53:3

I adore you, O Christ, and I bless you,
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed
the world.

Many experiences formed the heart of Jesus. The sacred scriptures found a home in his heart as he prayed them alone, with his family, in the synagogue and the Temple, and among friends. However, nothing formed the Sacred Heart of Jesus more than his experiences of suffering: his struggles to accept the limitation of his own humanity as evidenced by forty days of temptation in the desert, the indifference and ingratitude for his works of mercy, the rejection and misunderstanding of the Good News that he proclaimed, and the lack of visible “success” in his ministry. Jesus was a man of great joy bringing the Good News to all, yet he was also a man of suffering, acquainted with infirmity.

When Jesus accepted the Cross, he was well acquainted with it. It fit well on his shoulders. The cross symbolizes the sin of the world that Jesus lovingly takes upon himself. Each step weakens Jesus’ body but strengthens the resolve in his heart. Jesus willingly accepts this suffering because he is obedient to the Father’s request that he show how much he wants to forgive our sins and reveal love.

Jesus wants to share his saving mission with me: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24). Only through the cross can I share in Jesus’ saving mission. The cross is the way God forms my stony heart to be like his. The more stone on my heart, the more deeply must the cross