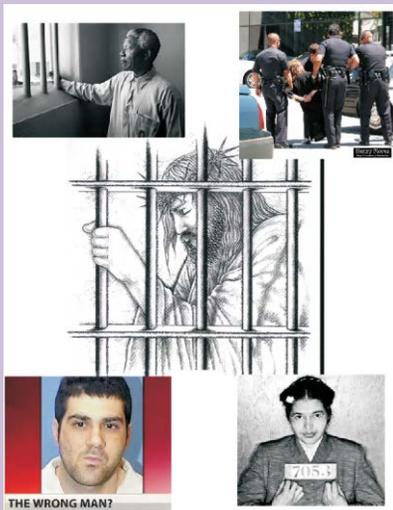


The Stations of the Cross- 2016

Christ Episcopal Church and Living Beatitudes Community



I Jesus is Condemned to Death

Pilate condemns Jesus to death-death on a cross, the death of slaves, the poor, of traitors. Even today, too many are convicted as criminals unjustly.

Some who are convicted are innocent, the victims of poor police work, prosecutors more interested in convictions than justice, failures in eyewitness identification, or bad forensic science. Many others are convicted of real crimes that are “on the books” because we have criminalized poverty, crimes such as vagrancy, trespassing and petty crimes of theft, while the same crimes of the rich are left unpunished, uncharged, or not prosecuted. And the modern-day prophets are convicted of the crimes they intentionally committed, like sitting down on a Birmingham bus, trying to vote in the deep South, or speaking out against unjust war. Jesus was convicted for being the Son of God. The real crime was not recognizing Him.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

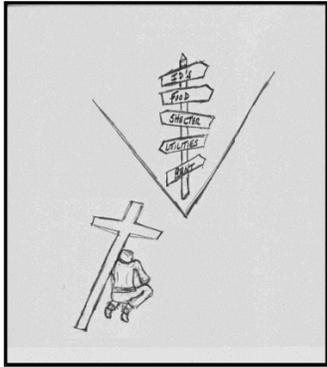
II Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Help us to understand others taking up their cross.

Does the weight of that heavy, rough wooden cross bring the reality closer of a single mom struggling to improve the life of her son by going to Sinclair College to get training for a better job? I saw a young woman walking across the Peace Bridge on a cold February morning, and thought to myself as I drove past “welfare queen”. Later, as I was teaching my class at Sinclair I saw the same woman dressed in old clothes walking down the hall and I thought about the crosses she might be bearing; Did she have to make last minute calls to take care of her son because her mother was ill? Was she walking because her car would not start? Is her landlord harassing her for past due rent but won’t fix the heating? Will she and her son become homeless? How will she feed her son tonight? Did her boyfriend hit her last night? What might the weight of her cross be like to bear?

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.





III Jesus Falls the First Time

The burden of the unexpected crisis.

The burden that overwhelms Jesus compares to the burdens carried by those in our city who are in need for the first time in their lives - the burden of traversing an unfamiliar and scattered network of agencies, the countless telling of one's story, the pride and humility which makes it difficult to ask help from a stranger.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

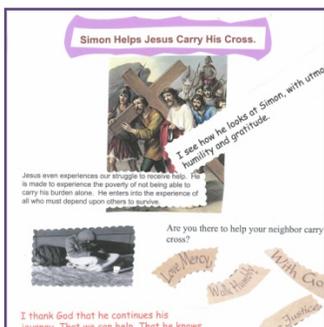


IV Jesus Meets His Mother

How do we care for each other in the hard times?

It happens to all of us if we live long enough. That role reversal where the caregiver needs care. Mothers care for their children. That is a given, but children also care for their parents. When I broke my foot, all my children pitched in to make sure things got done. When my parents were no longer able to care for themselves, my siblings and I made sure they were cared for both physically and emotionally. It is what families do. Who knows why Mary was in Jerusalem that day...It was the worst day of her life to see her son suffer, but she was there for him, and in his agony he cared for her by entrusting her to another.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



V Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

Are you there to help your neighbor carry their cross?

Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. I see how he looks at Simon, with utmost humility and gratitude. I thank God that he can continue his journey. That we can help. That he knows my inability to carry my cross alone.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



VI Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

We are called to heal others and ourselves through compassion, forgiveness, and love.

Veronica encounters Jesus, Son of God and the Embodiment of Unconditional Love, Compassion, and Forgiveness; she looks into his eyes and knows God. She gently and compassionately wipes the blood and sweat from Jesus' face with her precious new scarf. She recalls his love for and healing of people he encountered. She witnesses and embraces his suffering, helplessness, and agony. Let us find the courage and wisdom to meaningfully encounter and open ourselves to minister to all people that suffer in any way. Be it from misunderstanding, abuse, oppression, hunger, illness, rejection, slavery, injustice, prejudice, ignorance, persecution and more. The list is endless. Let us respond with openness, compassion, understanding, forgiveness and willingness to serve. Let us look into the eyes of each person we encounter to witness their unique suffering.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



VII Jesus Falls the Second Time

Jesus falls under the crushing weight of the cross of greed.

At least eight of the top 10 drug makers have paid off their competition to block generic drugs from being made, causing \$ 3.5 billion in higher drug prices every year. Jesus, we see you in the patients with Multiple Sclerosis who needed a certain drug scheduled to become generic but pay-for -delay deals kept the generic off the market for six years. During those six years the MS patients had to pay over \$1200 per month for the drug or manage without it. The CEO of the drug company said that the deal gave them "six more years of patent protection, \$4 billion in sales that no one expected. Jesus, open our hearts to see what our greed does to others.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

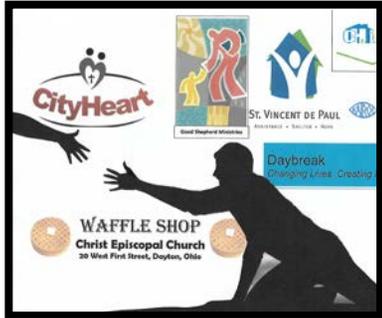


VIII Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

The Source of Life speaks to the women of Faith.

Do not concern yourselves with the hope and promise of eternity, for in every nation and in every generation, truth and justice will be over shadowed by the sins of power and corruption. Therefore, prayerfully consider the days to come....and through the Spirit of Wisdom know that you can do all things and renew all things from one end of the Earth to the other.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



IX Jesus Falls the Third Time

We see people falling just as Jesus did. Sometimes we pass the fallen person by.

Sometimes we pass right by these fallen people. But sometimes we do stop and help and care. We help the fallen Jesus to get up again through the help extended to our fallen friends. We work through organizations like Good Shepherd Ministries, Gateway, Daybreak, Kairos, Care House and CityHeart, and we care through our personal contacts and love. Jesus does rise after his third fall, and we can too. Even when the forces of evil seem to prevail, they do not. After he fell three times Jesus got up only to be crucified. But that's not the end of the story. He did rise and we will rise with him. O Lord, forgive us for our indifference. Keep us mindful that we cannot love you without loving others as well. Help us always to remember that to follow you means that we share in the burdens others carry.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

X Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Is our society stripping someone today? Do I participate in this by doing nothing?



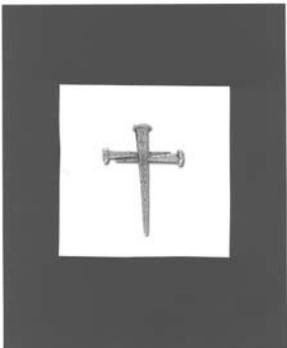
Jesus, how must it have felt for you, to be stripped of your clothes in public? You had to feel incredibly alone, defenseless, embarrassed and in agony. Reduced to a common criminal, Divinity? Child of God? You were no longer even being treated as a human being.

How is it that the richest, most powerful country in the world, with just 5% of the population, has fully one quarter of the world's prisoners? The majority of these are poor and people of color. And after they have served their time they are among the least likely to be hired or welcomed in our communities. Talk about being alone, defenseless, embarrassed and in agony. Jesus, I promise to remember the words of the parable, "Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me."

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

XI Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Who have you nailed to the cross today with your contempt or neglect?



Was it the homeless man who smelled so badly that you crossed the street to avoid him? Was it the mother with the screaming child you glared at in the grocery store? Was it the coworker who is supporting the "other candidate" in the upcoming election that you rolled your eyes at?

Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, we kneel at the foot of your cross to watch with you. Help us to see the cost of our forgiveness so that we may be made new through your love.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



XII Jesus Dies on the Cross

Hope opens our heart to accept a love that transcends both death and life.

As a witness to another's death, we are in the presence of transformation. Our own life force feels drained as we watch another life slip away. There are no words to describe the feelings and the tongue is silent. Helpless and brokenhearted, we know that there is nothing else we can do but bear witness. However, because hope does not abandon us, the heart carries the memory of this life and the belief that resurrection and new life are possible.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



XIII Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Help us to mend the brokenness brought on by senseless acts of cruelty and violence.

Jesus praised those who could enter into solidarity with the pain of the world, and not extract themselves from it. We can empathize with his loyal followers at the base of the cross, who undoubtedly struggled to come to grips with this baseless act of violence.

Today we grapple with gun violence as a growing source of senseless cruelty. While the United States has only 5% of the world's population, it has 31% of the public mass shootings. Every day, nearly 300 Americans are shot in murders, assaults, unintentional shootings, and police intervention, including about 50 children and teens. We pray for guidance in confronting cruel and senseless violent crimes. Help us to deal with the anger, sorrow, numbness and grief and to take action by speaking out against discrimination, stereotyping, bullying, and by working to address the causes of gun violence.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.



XIV Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Lord, grant us your compassion that we may always love fully all the days of our lives.

Until Death Do Us Part; an ode to Ruth and Gordon Price

Ruth, I saw you across the room and knew you were the one for me. My passions flared and I wanted to be with you Until Death Do Us Part.

Gordon, the first time you held my hand, I knew you were the one for me, the man with whom I could spend my life Until Death Do Us Part.

Ruth, as you walked down the aisle in your beautiful white gown, I loved you with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my soul Until Death Do Us Part.

Gordon, as I said my vows to you, I knew I had found my soul mate. I loved you with all my strength. We were meant to be as one Until Death Do Us Part.

Ruth, I paced the floor in the hospital waiting room until the doctor arrived to announce a new baby boy. The tears flowed from my eyes at the perfection of us. One more reason to be with you Until Death Do Us Part.

Gordon, I watched our three children grow and change. I am so proud of the family we raised. They are the true product of our love we will keep Until Death Do Us Part.

Ruth, the years are passing faster now but as I look at you across the table, I realize my love for the girl I met grows stronger and stronger Until Death Do Us Part.

Gordon, the lines on your face show your life as if written there by God. Each crinkle a laugh, each crease a tear. They remind me you are mine Until Death Do Us Part.

Ruth, I am old and feeble and must leave this Earth. My spirit will watch over you as you breathe your last. My body still waits for yours Until Death Do Us Part.

Gordon, I have joined you in our journey home. Our family gathers to say goodbye to us both. Our bodies interred together in one last gesture of love, for even Death Did Not Part Us.

Jesus, remind me that in you, I am light and I am meant to shine in darkness.

*Peace Be With You-
Please Exit in Silence*