**SOLIDARITY WITH SISTERS’ COMMUNAL PRAYER**

**APRIL 7, 2023**

**GOOD FRIDAY STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

**A picture containing text, old, posing

Description automatically generatedWELCOME:**

* Introduction of people who are here for the first time:
* Jennie and Jo’Ann, with an abundance of technical assistance from Cecilia Estrada, and the usual help from Suzie and Betty, prepared our Stations today.
* We are grateful to those of you who will read: Mary Dolmage, Kathleen Cross, George Fulk, Sr. Marie McCarthy, Debra Street, Kathy Heller, and Sr. Jacqueline Quinn.

Readers: There is a slide which will be shown before you begin reading.

Give people enough time to see the slide before you start reading.

Read the number of the Station and the Scripture citation as well as the commentary.

**The Way of the Cross / The Way of Asylum:   
A Community Experience of Compassion and Empathy**

* INTRODUCTION: Jennie and Jo’Ann

Good afternoon/evening on this Good Friday, 2023.

For our time together today, we will view “The Way of Asylum” as interpreted by Artist Michelina Nicotera-Taxiera in pen and pencil.

In the artist’s own words: “I was compelled to start this artwork when I first heard about the separation of children at the border and saw them held in concentration camps in the U.S. I felt helpless. I knew I couldn’t feel despair or immobilized, and from that struggle this artwork came.

My art is based on the 14 Stations of the Cross embodied in the people seeking asylum in the US. When I finished the drawings, I connected them with a border of barbed wire.”

In collaboration with many others in the border community, a devotional experience was developed. We have adapted the words that accompany the slides to reflect the current and continuing situation at the border between Mexico and the US. In some Stations we have included testimony from actual migrants and/or memorials of people who have died in their migration attempt.

We invite you to expand your understanding of migrants beyond ~~our~~ US borders. Consider Ukraine – Afghanistan - Somalia – Syria – and all the other places in our world where people are seeking to move out of fear, famine, war, lack of water and/or to escape unjust governments. Be aware of Canada and other countries with policies of intentional openness to refugees. The Way of Asylum is global – and also close by. This evening we open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts.

1. **SLIDE of 1st Station**

* **Mary Dolmage**: The First Station: Matthew 25:37-40

Creator God, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink…a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you…ill or in prison?

And the Holy One will say in reply:

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me.”

Migrants are ensnared by the same unjust system that oppresses all poor people. Our conscience calls us to stand up for justice.

1. SLIDE of 1st Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

**ALL: Creator God, make us to be the people you have called us to be, people who bring hope and life to an unjust world.**

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1. **SLIDE of 2nd Station**

* **Kathleen Cross**: The Second Station: Exodus 23:9

“You shall not oppress a stranger, since you were once strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt.”

Our Creator accompanies those fleeing countries where their lives are in peril. Let us walk alongside them as they cross through unbearable dangers to seek a better, safer life.

TESTIMONY: As the mother of three children, I was working at a community center, weighing children and visiting mothers who had just given birth. That was my job, to check on their condition. I worked for 5 years in a center for people in need. We gave out food: rice, flour, vegetable oil. I also worked in the Catholic Church, and that’s what I really miss: the work, the service – it saddens me that I left all my work behind.

When I could no longer afford to pay extortion fees, gang violence tore me away from the community I loved. They jumped me; beat me up, and beat up my daughters. They took all my money. Then I received a call saying that if I was still there when they returned, they would kill me and kidnap my daughters. I was determined to reach the border and to make my asylum court hearing in El Paso no matter what. If we don’t make our court hearing, everything we’ve lost, everything we’ve spent will be for nothing. I don’t know how to read or write, but thanks be to God who gives me the strength to continue.

1. SLIDE of 2nd Station: shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

**ALL: Creator God, make us to be the people you have called us to be, people who bring hope and life to an unjust world.**

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1. **SLIDE of 3rd Station**

* **George Fulk**: The Third Station: Proverbs 22: 22-23

“Injure not poor people because they are poor, nor crush needy people at the gate; for the Holy One will defend their cause.”

Migrants are knocked down by the weight of poverty, violence and lack of hope.

Exhausted and spent, they wait at our borders hoping for the due process mandated by asylum laws.

1. SLIDE of 3rd Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

**ALL: Creator God, make us to be the people you have called us to be, people who bring hope and life to an unjust world.**

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1. **SLIDE of 4th Station**

* **Sr. Marie McCarthy**:\_The Fourth Station: Isaiah 61:1-2

“God has anointed me; The Creator has sent me to bring good news to poor people…to comfort all who mourn.”

We all understand the instinct of parents to want to provide security for their children and protect them from harm.

1. SLIDE of 4th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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**SLIDE of 5th Station**

* **Debra Street**:\_ The Fifth Station - Proverbs 31:8-9

“Open your mouth for people who are mute, for the rights of all needy people. Open your mouth, decree what is just; defend those people who are poor and needy.”

Our political systems actively are perpetrating harm by separating families and criminalizing asylum seekers. Our silence makes us accomplices to these inhumane policies, and so we must speak up and demand change.

1. SLIDE of 5th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 6th Station**

* **Richard McGinnis**:\_ The Sixth Station: 1 John 3:17

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a sister or brother in need and yet refuses to help?”

People seeking asylum suffer many injustices and abuses on their journeys. They are forced to depend on other people to survive their ordeal.

What are the barriers for you to show compassions and to provide aid?

1. SLIDE of 6th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 7th Station**

* **Sr. Jacqueline Quinn**: The Seventh Station: Matthew 18:5-6

“Whoever welcomes one child like this in my name, welcomes me.”

The suffering that children are experiencing from our policies is unimaginable. These children are imprisoned like criminals in a country whose language they do not speak. They are often scared and sometimes separated from their parents. What are we doing to ensure the most fragile children in our midst are safe?

IN MEMORIAM:

Wilmer Josue Ramirez Vasquez, a 2-year-old Guatemalan, died May 14, 2019. In Wilmer’s village there was extreme drought; no work; food was scarce, and there was no medical care. Wilmer’s mother left with him from their home in March. It took them 22 days to make the journey. He died of multiple intestinal and respiratory infections in the custody of the Border Patrol.

1. SLIDE of 7th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 8th Station**

* **Mary Dolmage**:\_ The Eighth Station: Zechariah 7: 9-10

“Thus says the God of hosts: Render true judgment and show kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress widows or orphans, strangers or poor people.”

Migrant families are exploited the most by cruel and unjust systems.

What are we doing to stand against this inequality and in solidarity with the marginalized?

1. SLIDE of 8th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 9th Station**

* **Kathleen Cross**:\_The Ninth Station: Jeremiah 9:22

“Know that I, your God, bring about kindness, justice, and uprightness on the earth.”

Migrant families walk endless miles through many dangers. It takes everything for them to keep going. They are bone-tired; but there is no turning back. Today these determined people have given up home and possessions, left family and country, crossed rivers and deserts to reach safety and refuge.

1. SLIDE of 9th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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**10. SLIDE of 10th Station**

* **George Fulk**: The Tenth Station: Isaiah 3:15

“What do you mean by crushing my people, and grinding down poor people when they look to you?”

Vulnerability resonates in the lives of all poor people. Oppressive forces often strip them of their land, violate their rights, and seek to silence their voices. Migrants are vulnerable to sexual assault, violence and exploitation. They are marginalized and criminalized. Our nation’s “zero tolerance” policy has gone so far as to tear children from their parents’ arms, causing unimaginable harm.

TESTIMONY: Another Mom with two daughters (11 and 4 years old):

We left Guatemala because the gangs were targeting my daughter. She is only 11, but she is tall for her age and looks older. They followed her everywhere. When this happens, the girls become property of the gangs; they are raped and disappeared. They said my daughter was asking for it because she left the house. She only left the house to go to school. I reported this to the police, but nothing happened. I had proof that her life was in danger when I got to the border. I showed it to the agent, but he didn’t care.

He said I either had to return to Mexico and wait there or return to Guatemala. I said I didn’t want to do either. He said I had to, and if I didn’t sign the papers, he would sign them for me, and no one would know it wasn’t me. I never did sign any papers but here I am in Mexico. He signed my name for me.

Here, we are staying at a shelter. It’s not safe. There is the mafia here. There is a man who is about 35 who keeps following my daughter around. It is scary for her and for me, and the shelter doesn’t do anything.

We have our court date on March 31st. I don’t know how we will survive until then. I don’t know how we will find the money to get to Juarez.

1. SLIDE of 10th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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**11. SLIDE of 11th Station**

* **Sr. Marie McCarthy**:\_ The Eleventh Station: Amos 5:12-13

“Yes, I know how many are your crimes…oppressing the just…repelling the needy at the gate…It is an evil time. Seek good and not evil that you may live.”

Our Creator wants us to advocate for the children who bravely take the journey north to escape gang membership or death, and to understand the trauma they experience as they are separated from their families, and made to sleep on cement floors in cages. Though the news doesn’t talk about them much, we must not allow them to be forgotten.

1. SLIDE of 11th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 12th Station**

* **Debra Street**: The Twelfth Station: Psalm 72: 12-14

“For God delivers those people who are needy when they call, poor people, and those who are helpless. God has pity on weak and needy people and saves their lives. From oppression and violence God redeems their lives; and precious is their blood in God’s sight.”

We must question the moral compass of anyone who perpetuates this humanitarian crisis through policies, actions or words. We cannot permit children to be mistreated, imprisoned or die while seeking asylum in our country. All people of conscience must come together to seek justice for migrants to the U.S.

1. SLIDE of 12th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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1. **SLIDE of 13th Station**

* **Richard McGinnis**: The Thirteenth Station: Micah 6:8

“The Holy One has told you what is good, and what God requires of you: To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

In order to better understand the plight of asylum seekers, we must strive to be informed about the policies that drive them from their home countries, as well as those that are currently denying them refuge in our communities.

1. SLIDE of 13th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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**14. SLIDE of 14th Station**

* **Sr. Jacqueline Quinn**:\_The Fourteenth Station: Isaiah 57:15

“I live in a high and holy place and also with the crushed and dejected in spirit – to revive the spirits of the dejected and to revive the hearts of those who are crushed.”

* Policies that result in the death of any asylum seeker must be halted immediately. Too many children have died in custody as a result of cruel and inhumane policies. We mourn the senseless and preventable loss of life, and pledge that these deaths will not be in vain as we seek justice.

IN MEMORIAM:

Carlos Hernandez Vasquez, a 16-year-old, Guatemalan, died May 20, 2019. Carlos was an outstanding student and leader. He was captain of the soccer team and excelled at playing musical instruments. In early May he left his village with his older sister to seek work in the north to help support his family financially.

While in Border Patrol custody, he contracted influenza. With a fever of 104 degrees, he was put in an isolation cell where he died. More than 2,000 people attended the funeral of Carlos in his home village.

1. SLIDE of 14th Station shown again with somber music playing for 60 seconds. When the music stops, reader please lead the participants in response:

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**REFLECTION/SHARING:**

**What are some opportunities, in your geographical area, to act in support of refugees?**

When participants finish sharing on the question, somber music will play again and host will close the ZOOM session.

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**Good and gracious God, on this night we are deeply aware that Jesus died within the rules of unjust, unloving human systems. We turn to you to pray for those who are trapped in unjust, unloving systems today. Systems that put people at risk instead of protecting them.**

**We especially ask your protection for all people who face hardships as they move in search of better lives. For those who travel in danger, shelter them with safety and peace. For those who are alone and afraid, comfort them with good companions. May all migrants be reunited with their loved ones and find the meaningful work they seek. Give us wisdom and courage to welcome them through personal actions and through advocacy for grace-filled policies and practices. We ask this with trust that you are among us as we commit to do our part. Blessed be.**

**RESOURCE: thewayofasylum.com**