

LITURGICAL LIVING

Series 26: February 18-24

Some Tips for Making the Lenten Season More Meaningful

Slow Down – Set aside at least 10 minutes a day for silent prayer or meditation. Pray especially for people that are difficult for you to love. Who are the lepers in your life?

Quiet – Turn off the television, put down the phone and spend quality time with those you are with. Or just be in the silence.

Read a good book – You could choose the life of a saint, a spiritual how-to, an inspirational book, etc.

Get involved – Attend a Lenten lecture or spiritual program. Our AFC is hosting a National Eucharistic Preacher on Friday, February 23rd. The talk begins at 6:30 and followed by adoration and confession. Additionally, small groups are forming. More information in the Narthex of St. Peter.

Volunteer at your parish or school – See a need, fill a need!.

Reach out – Invite an inactive Catholic to come with you to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, or come to Stations of the Cross, Confession or Mass with you anytime during Lent.

Donate – Clean out closets and donate gently used items. Pick a Catholic mission and decide how you can help by sending money, clothing or supplies.

Pray– Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross or Via Crucis, commemorate Jesus's passion and death on the cross. There are 14 stations that each depict a moment on his journey to Calvary, usually through sacred art, prayers, and reflections.

The Stations of the Cross has its origins with the Franciscans who helped rebuild the Christian sites of the Holy Land following the medieval Crusades. They encouraged pilgrims in Jerusalem to journey along Christ's way to Calvary. Over time, the devotion spread and today, it is hard to find a parish that does not have the Stations of the Cross.

Lent is often when Stations of the Cross are prayed but it is important to note that they need not be limited to this time of year. Meditation on the passion and death of Jesus can be helpful throughout the year. Additionally during Stations of the Cross, we faithful can enter into the experience of Christ and others — such as Pilate, Mary, Simon, Veronica, the women of Jerusalem or those who crucified the Lord.

Stations of the Cross is a devotion that I encourage you to pray this Lent. You can pray at home using online images, pray in the church on your own time or join for communal prayer. There is a time and a place for each. Our AFC is offering Stations of the Cross on Wednesdays in Nicollet and on Fridays in St. Peter beginning at 6:30pm.



How can we make sense of suffering?

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). Christ did not promise that the life of a Christian would be easy but rather he was direct about how the life of a disciple would include suffering.



So how do we as Christians make sense of the crosses we bear? Why does suffering exist? These are frequent questions surrounding suffering that are rooted in often sensitive and difficult places. We truly can only find their answer in Christ. In His transformation of suffering through love. Christ’s cross can help make sense of our own cross, and this is where the Stations of the Cross comes in.

Suffering’s Purpose

We who have “put on Christ,” becoming members of his body through baptism — a bond renewed and strengthened in each reception of holy Communion — should expect nothing less than a share in Christ’s own passion and cross. In light of Christ’s passion, makes sense to understand suffering’s purpose as rooted in love. “If you really want to love Jesus,” St. Gemma Galgani said, “first learn to suffer, because suffering teaches you to love.”

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). God is love, and love is the source of all that is. Out of love, Christ gave of himself completely, even unto death — handing over his spirit out of obedience to the Father’s will (see Lk 23:46).



Christ’s own suffering and death has untold value and immense purpose — whereby God bought us back from the slavery of sin and death. So, too, does ours, because, as St. John Paul II described it, “each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ” (Salvifici Doloris, No. 19). The Stations of the Cross make real every imaginable aspect of human suffering that was on full display at Christ’s passion. And they teach us to see the fruit of suffering.

Suffering with Christ

On his way to Calvary, Christ experienced the sufferings ordinary people experience every day throughout the world. He showed us how to deal with them and how to transform suffering destructive power into something life-giving through love.

Meditating on the Stations of the Cross exposes Christ’s suffering heart — “sorrowful even to death” (Mk 14:34). In his condemnation to death, Christ teaches that we have the freedom to accept life’s sorrows. He does not let condemnation be imposed upon him, but rather chosen out of love. Christ models how to accept suffering through taking up His cross as an act of love, in obedience to God’s will.



Christ falls three times on the way to Calvary. In falling, Christ shows that, despite suffering’s tendency to bring us down, discouragement can be overcome by dependence on God’s grace. Christ teaches us how to persevere through the failure and exhaustion through which our suffering inevitably leads and be of one heart and mind in pursuit of the Father’s will.

How can we make sense of suffering?

Christ's way to Calvary illustrates, too, how God graces us with models of love in the midst of our suffering. But like Christ, we must be attentive and receptive to them. The compassion, cooperation and generosity of others — such as Christ experienced in the fourth, fifth and sixth stations — are examples of how love is returned to love. And when unburdened by our own sufferings, through love, each of us can be channels of God's love through service, like Mary, Simon and Veronica. "In the face of evil, suffering and sin, the only response possible for a disciple of Jesus is the gift of self, even of one's own life, in imitation of Christ; it is the attitude of service," Pope Francis said during World Youth Day in Poland in 2016.

Since life's road must pass by way of Calvary, this journey of love ultimately entails that we strip ourselves of all that keeps us from God and his will. At the end of his road to Calvary, Christ shows that abandoning ourselves to the hands of providence comes with detachment from all earthly power, pleasure, wealth and honor. The Christian must be unhesitant to cast aside anything necessary to advance the kingdom of God. In this way suffering is a gift that enables us to focus on the new life in Christ that awaits believers. Through the pain of suffering we gain the joy of heaven itself — eternal happiness with God — the gates to which Christ opened for "the many."

Rooted in Love

In meditating on Christ's passion and death comes the realization that life's sufferings can be joined to Christ's — by which one learns that love forms suffering's foundation. "The road is narrow," St. John of the Cross said. "He who wishes to travel it more easily must cast off all things and use the cross as his cane. In other words, he must be truly resolved to suffer willingly for the love of God in all things."

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), said that Jesus not only taught us how to pray the Stations of the Cross, but also their meaning. "The Way of the Cross is the path of losing ourselves," he said, "the path of true love." Suffering expresses love's total self-emptying required of the disciple. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:24)

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