



Stations of the Cross

Many Migrants' Challenges Mirror Christ's Journey to the Cross

Reenacting the Stations of the Cross during Lent is an ancient and powerful way to contemplate and enter into Christ's passion and death. An imaginative form of prayer, it employs one's senses, memories and emotions.

We created the following Stations of the Cross especially for you. They are written by members of our province and others who work with immigrants and asylum-seekers on the U.S.-Mexico border and beyond. They tell the stories of real people who have dealt with challenges and pain that reflect the suffering of our Lord. Note that in some instances a pseudonym is used for the safety of the migrant.

This Lent, we encourage you to keep in your heart and prayers our brothers and sisters who have had to flee their homes in search of a better life.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*



The First Station:

Jesus is Condemned to Death *(with False Charges)*

Daniela, a woman in her 40s, worked successfully as a lawyer for the government of Venezuela for many years. When a new government took over the country, her cases were controlled by the new government officials. She was told to go against the laws and falsify or outright lie to win the cases against the government or face serious consequences, even death. This went against her conscience and all she believed. Being threatened, she knew she would have to leave everything: family, home, country and profession.

*By Sr. Judy Flowers, DC, on behalf of the
Daughters of Charity of El Paso, Texas*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

~ Elie Weisel



The Second Station: Jesus Carries the Cross

Geraldine and her family – her husband and two small children – escaped a life of poverty and violence, arriving in the

United States in October 2023. Their lives were in danger multiple times on their journey, especially in the Darién Gap and while crossing Mexico. A family member had promised to take them in when they arrived in the U.S., but once they arrived, that person stopped responding to their calls and messages. Currently, Geraldine and her small family live in a one-room apartment with no heat, sharing a single mattress they found in the trash. Yet, every time I see Geraldine, she’s smiling, and her words are filled with hope. I ask her where that joy comes from, since her life isn’t easy. She responds that she doesn’t lose hope, because she knows her life is in God’s hands. Geraldine’s certainty of this stems from the ways God has helped her throughout her journey as a migrant.

By Fr. Daniel Mora, SJ

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

He will never let the trial surpass the strength He gives you, and at the very moment you think yourself overwhelmed by sorrow, He will lift you up and give you peace.

~ St. Rose Philippine Duchesne



The Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

Walk with Jesus. *Vaya con Dios.*

Maria tells me about her dangerous journey through the jungle. Snakes and mud were everywhere. Fast-flowing rivers swept away the weak. Bone tired, she hadn’t eaten in two days. Dirt caked her pants from the many times she had fallen. “How did you get through?” I asked. “*Dios estaba conmigo,*” she replied without hesitation. God was with me.

Gustavo tells me about the kidnapping. Men in uniforms snatched him off the bus. He was handed off to some gang members who took him to a grimy shed with 40 others. A gun pointed at his face. “Call someone who can pay to get you released.” How did he get through? “*Dios,*” he said. “*Dios estaba conmigo.*”

By Christine Siegwarth

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

It is not the actual physical exertion that counts toward one’s progress, nor the nature of the task, but by the spirit of faith with which it is undertaken. ~ St. Francis Xavier



Migrants line up to receive blessings at the Pumarejo Shelter in Matamoros, Mexico. For many, their faith is their primary consolation during the darkest moments of their difficult journeys.

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

At the Pumarejo shelter in Matamoros, Mexico, many of the newly arrived migrants were sitting on the metal benches in front of the altar table we use for Mass. Marisol held a worn and slightly torn backpack in her arms, as though it held her most precious treasure.

After Mass, Marisol began crying inconsolably. She placed the backpack in my hands. “These are my daughter’s ashes,” she choked out. “This is all I have left.” Marisol kept holding her backpack out to me while she shared her story. “We were on a small fishing boat crossing the ocean to the shore close to Nicaragua, when the boat began to sink. My daughter and others on the boat drowned. I am now hoping to enter the USA with my CBP One* appointment. I cannot return to my country. I am taking my daughter with me.”

There were no words I could say or anything I could do to console Marisol. I hugged her and cried with her. We placed the backpack with her daughter’s ashes on the altar. I blessed the urn and said a prayer. Like Mary in the gospel, encountering Christ along the way, we keep all these things, reflecting on them in our hearts.

By Fr. Flavio Bravo, SJ
Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries

PRAYER:

Holy Mother, help me to bear the burdens of this life until we may share eternal life and peace with God forever.



The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

Jose was so poor growing up in Honduras that he did not own a pair of shoes until he was 14. He fled Honduras when he was 17 and 30 years later is married to another undocumented immigrant. They are the parents of two children born in the U.S. Jose is beloved in his New Orleans-area community for always being willing to lend a helping hand. For example, a few years ago, his new next-door neighbor, an Anglo, insisted on collecting and storing his dog's waste in a garbage can near the back door of Jose's home. Jose's wife asked the neighbor to store it someplace else because of its offensive order, but the neighbor refused. When Hurricane Ida struck the New Orleans area in 2021, the power went out in most neighborhoods, including Jose's. When Jose heard his new neighbor was without electricity, he immediately provided the neighbor with a power line to Jose's generator.

*By Sue Weishar, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Cafe con Ingles
and former JSRI Fellow, 2010-2024*

PRAYER:

*Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor
and not to ask for reward, save that of
knowing that I do your will.*

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

In the migrant camps of Reynosa, Mexico, there are many "Veronicas" who risk their comfort, security and even lives to wipe the face of Jesus in their neighbor who struggles as they carry the heavy cross of their migrant journey. I recall:

- Camila, who wept as she washed the feet of her companions during Holy Thursday Mass because she truly felt as though she were washing the feet of Jesus.



- Countless women who console one another and wipe the tears of their fellow migrants when they feel as though they just can't bear the wait in the camp any longer, struggling under the weight of the harsh conditions there.
- The women who rejoice with others who have been able to present themselves to Border Patrol and yet sob as they wonder if their time will ever come now.
- The women who share some little extra morsel of food "because we all need a little extra."
- The risk and love of the women and men who wiped the face and body of the little girl who lost her legs last week as she tried to jump onto "la Bestia," the train that many migrants risk life and limb to board to get closer to that border that means new life to them.

So many Veronicas ... so many who bear the face of Jesus on the way of the cross.

*By Sr. Patricia Mulderick, RSM,
Reynosa Migrant Ministry Team*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.

Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears.

Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless.

Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human. ~ Henri Nouwen

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls a Second Time

Juan and Francy and their three teenage kids traveled from Venezuela to the United States seeking safety. Shortly after arriving in Mexico, they received an appointment through the CBP One app* to enter the U.S. legally. As their bus neared the city of Reynosa, it pulled over and anyone with an appointment was instructed to get off. It was a ruse. The family was kidnapped and taken to a hidden location. Their family was asked to pay a ransom which took weeks for them to gather. By the time the family was freed, they had missed their appointment to enter the United States. They were robbed, humiliated, forced to pay a ransom, and then had to begin the whole process again. It took seven more months for them to get another appointment.

*By Fr. Brian Strassburger, SJ
Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

Hear me and understand well that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. ... Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? ... Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything.

~ Our Lady of Guadalupe to San Juan Diego



The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Jesus looks with compassion on the steadfast women who stand with His people at great personal risk:

- Hadia, who stood with the women of Afghanistan, fighting for the right to education and self-determination, even as her fellow movement leaders were murdered by the Taliban.
- Bernadette, who withstood prison and torture when she spoke up about political infanticide in Gabon.
- Jeymy, who never wavered in her search for her nine-year-old daughter, Yajaira, separated from her at the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Hakima, who never lost faith as she traveled through 13 countries, seeking medical care, safety and education for her disabled three-year-old, Aslihan.

~ By The Holy Trinity Migrant Familia, in Washington, D.C.

SCRIPTURE TO CONTEMPLATE: Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)



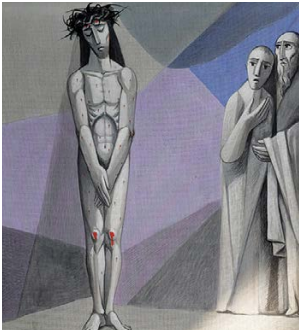
The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls a Third Time

From December 2022 through October 2024, Sacred Heart Parish in El Paso turned their gymnasium into a shelter to house the

flood of immigrants who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border just a few blocks away from the parish. Each night, the parish housed up to 200 men, women, children and babies, providing pallets and blankets on the floor, hot meals, bathrooms, showers and respite from the streets. Immigrants from many different countries had persevered through horrific conditions to arrive at the U.S. and had to summon courage and hope to continue their journeys. They were strangers to each other, but they shared one thing – a hunger for the word of God. Every night, Fr. Rafael Garcia, SJ, Sacred Heart pastor, entered the crowded gym. The lights were turned down, and everybody settled onto their mats to hear Fr. Garcia read scripture and say a prayer. Some closed their eyes; others clasped their hands; many wept. They became a community, bound together by their faith and hope.

By Mary Baudouin, provincial assistant for justice and ecology

SCRIPTURE TO CONTEMPLATE: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Mt 18:20)



The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

Yusbey and Ibsen and their two sons arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border with a CBP One* appointment to enter the U.S. legally. They called for a taxi

at the airport. Before it arrived, another car pulled up and three armed men forced them into their vehicle. The family was taken to a fortified location where they had all their belongings taken from them. They were stripped naked to humiliate them and to make sure they had nothing to hide. Ibsen's sister had to collect \$8,000 for their release.

*By Fr. Brian Strassburger, SJ
Director, Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

Let us not forget that Jesus not only suffered, but also rose in glory; so, too, we go to the glory of the resurrection by the way of suffering and the Cross. ~ St. Maximilian Kolbe

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to The Cross

**From the Cross, Jesus sees
the suffering children**

How do we minister to migrant children who share:

- "I was kidnapped twice."
- "They took everything except these clothes."
- "I have no life."
- "I am scared."

From the Cross, Jesus sees the suffering children

How do we minister to migrant children who:

- Are afraid to get into a taxi for fear of being kidnapped?
- Are devoid of emotion?
- Say the street is their home?

From the Cross, Jesus sees the suffering children

How do we heal the wounds of a precious migrant child's heart?

By Sister Rose Patrice Kuhn, IHM

SCRIPTURE TO CONTEMPLATE: Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me." (Mark 9:36-37)



The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on The Cross

Maryenis and Walbes, Venezuelan migrants, waited their turn in a migrant camp in Juarez, Mexico, before turning themselves in to Border Patrol at the border fence. Walbes was turned away. Maryenis, eight months pregnant, was processed, but the weeks in harsh conditions, days of detention in El Paso, and the emotional pain of separation all culminated in the tragic delivery of a stillborn baby. Maryenis came to our parish shelter, *Casa del Sagrado Corazon*, in anguish. Her husband in Juarez was also distraught at the news. Their separation during this time of loss added to their pain. Some weeks later, they reunited at our shelter. Though not Catholic, they welcomed a religious service at our parish, Sacred Heart. The little box with baby Arelis's remains was placed in front of the altar during a Mass, and the ashes were blessed. In the midst of their compounded suffering, they expressed faith and continued their struggle for a dignified life. Undoubtedly, Jesus' passion and death on the Cross express God's solidarity with our suffering world.

*By Fr. Rafael Garcia, SJ
Pastor, Sacred Heart Church in El Paso, Texas*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

And the greatest grace God can give ... is to send him a trial he cannot bear with his own powers - and then sustain him with his grace so he may endure to the end and be saved. ~ Walter J. Ciszek, SJ



Border Search and Rescue group members bear witness to the lives of migrants who have died in the desert while seeking a better life.

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus' Body is Removed from The Cross

Each month, the Border Search and Rescue (BSAR) group journeys into the New Mexican desert at the Mexico border. Almost every month, we encounter migrants' remains. We call in the location, mark it with tape, and spend a moment to reverence the life and death. We also find backpacks, tennis shoes, makeup and wallets, all once significant to the individual who carried them.

We want peace and closure for migrants who, like Jesus, walked a path of hope and resistance to violence. Their journeys were left unfinished. We also demand a change in policies that make asking for asylum at the border impossible, and force people into choosing between risking the desert or suffering violence in their country of origin.

By Heidi Cerneka, Maryknoll Lay Missioner

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

"Christ cannot be understood and loved without seeing the ongoing crucifixion done to his sisters and brothers."

*~ Dorothee Soelle,
The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance, (p. 149)*



The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Sonet was a young Haitian asylum-seeker suffering from pancreatic cancer. He lived in a migrant shelter in northern Mexico. With adequate treatment unavailable in Mexico, humanitarian organizations urged him to present himself at the port of entry, where Customs and Border Protection officers would decide whether to let him into the United States for treatment. The officers denied him entry, and Sonet died in the shelter that evening. Sonet's death and the injustice of it hurt the migrants in the shelter, especially the other Haitians. When our team arrived at the shelter, we offered Mass for Sonet and for all the migrants who had died along the way. To offer hope and to show solidarity with the Haitian migrants, we prayed Psalm 23 in Haitian Creole, reminding them that the Lord is their shepherd - and that Sonet has been led to still waters, where he will finally be received, not rejected.

*By Joseph Nolla, SJ
Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries*

WORDS TO CONTEMPLATE:

"A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just." ~ Pope Francis

*Note: These stories occurred before the CBP One app was eliminated by the new presidential administration and appointments were canceled.



To hear more stories of our migrant brothers and sisters, consider subscribing to the Jesuit Border Podcast, available wherever you get your podcasts.

Support migrants at bit.ly/support-migrants

“Having doubts and fears is not a sin ... The sin is to allow these fears to determine our responses, to limit our choices, to compromise respect and generosity, to feed hostility and rejection ... The sin is to refuse to encounter the other, the different, the neighbor, when this is in fact a privileged opportunity to encounter the Lord ... to overcome our fears so as to encounter the other, to welcome, to know and to acknowledge him or her.”

~ Pope Francis