**A green and white cover with a cross and crown of thorns

Description automatically generated**

**First Station - Jesus is Condemned to Death**

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**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. There he stands, the young Galilean prophet, beside Pilate in the balcony of the praetorian. In the night just past, he has suffered betrayal. He has been dragged from one tribunal to another. He has been insulted, slapped, and spit upon.

Most recently, he has been stripped, bound to a column, and flogged by two legionnaires, each wielding a set of tongs weighted at the ends with pieces of lead. Now, nearly flayed alive, his blood soaking through the purple cloak they’ve put on him, the long thorns of the crown of mockery digging into his head, his face streaming with blood, he stands. Pilate has evidently hoped to arouse the pity of the people: Gesturing toward his prisoner, he says ‘Behold the man!” But the mob, incited by the chief priests and their henchmen, are howling, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him! May his blood be upon us and our children!” Pilate is washing his hands. Now he nods to his lieutenant to give the order to remove the prisoner. It is the death sentence.

**Meditation on the First Station**

**Second Voice:** Condemned? To death? But Pilate said he could find no fault in him. What a useless miscarriage of justice! Why should he die? Why? And he hasn’t opened his mouth. He just stands there, looking out over the crowd. Oh, God, he’s looking at me! He’s looking through me, seeing me as a I really am. What deep sorrow is in his eyes! Oh, yes, meek and silent man of sorrows, how far I am from you! I, who gloat over every chance to get even for the slightest reasons. I, who have a heart that all too often seethes with jealousy and anger. I, who burn with thoughts of revenge and retribution for the slightest provocation. I cannot face your deep and silent look of love and forgiveness. I understand now. Have mercy on me, Lord, and heal me of my sin by your love and obedience.

**Artwork at Station I –** **Jesus is Condemned** artwork by Liz Edge

I used metal in creating this cross to represent the coldness and hardness of the sentence of death, handed down by Pilate and the mob of people, unjustly condemning an innocent Man. The intertwining pattern within the cross symbolizes how Jesus’ life is intertwine with the Scriptures, fulfilling the Scriptures of His life, and now, death. Black Indian Ink is rubbed over the metal and then partially buffed away to give a darker and more solemn look to the cross. The field of red behind the cross depicts the blood that Pilate washes from his hands, and the blood that is to “be upon us and our children”.

**Second Station - Jesus Takes His Cross**

A wooden cross on a red background

Description automatically generated**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. The Roman centurion gives his orders and the legionnaires assigned to the task begin. They tear off the purple cloak. He shudders deeply. The blood begins to flow again. The soldiers replace his own clothing, which quickly becomes stained with blood. Two men come with the cross-piece of the infamous instrument of brutal Roman justice, the cross. As they place it on the shoulder of the Condemned, he staggers under its weight and takes hold of the rough timber to steady the burden. Two legionnaires take the ends of the long rope bound around his waist. Should he show any sign of falling back, they will drag him on. But this prisoner seems determined to proceed.   
Led by the mounted centurion, the column comes out of the praetorian and the death march begins.

**Meditation on the Second Station**

**Second Voice:** Yes, Jesus, in your love for sinners like me, you clasp the cross almost passionately. All through your life on earth, you took the hard way out of love for others. In your public life you walked the roads, sweating through the desert summer, shivering in winter, with no place to lay your head. And now you go willingly to meet this hard death for love of me. And I? O God, for love of self, I treat myself to the best, always concerned with my own comfort, filling my belly like an animal with the finest food. And all the while, around the world, you, my Christ, are starving in my brothers and sisters in Africa, in India, and here in my own land of freedom. Forgive me, Lord, and heal me of my sin by the merits of your pain and anguish.

**Artwork for Station II – Jesus Takes Up His Cross** artwork by Drew Edge

The inspiration for Station II came from both the readings for the Stations of the Cross, and from the cross in Saint Stephen’s sanctuary – wooden and rough-hewn. For the cross, I found a piece of old and weathered cedar board at our Swamp House in rural Shelby County. I then used antique tools which I inherited from my father, which he had in turn inherited from his father, to cut and chisel the wood to add more texture. I wanted the size of the cross to emphasize its weight and the tremendous burden it was for Jesus to carry. To accomplish this I made several crosses, including a very large one that would have utilized only a small section of the cross on the banner, before settling on the size that it is – too big for the 16” x 20” area assigned to me. The angle shows how the cross is carried in many depictions of Jesus’ walk to Golgotha. The mirrors bursting from the heart of the cross signifies the light of Christ reflected throughout this ordeal – concluding with the ultimate forgiving of his crucifers. It also represents the light that we as Christians can shine on the world with our Savior’s message. And if you happen to catch your own reflection in a piece of mirror, remember that Christ did this for you.

**Third Station - Jesus Falls the First Time**

A painting of a person in a red room

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. Even though it is late in the morning by now, only patches of sunlight fall into this narrow road between tall houses with their overhanging second stories. The stink of the place is almost overpowering. It is a good thing the way to Golgotha is not long, or this man in his pitiful condition would die before he got there. His back and shoulders are a mass of raw wounds from the flogging. The rough wood of the cross bites deep into the flesh. A large patch of bright fresh blood flowing from his shoulder stains the back of his robe. He stumbles on the uneven paving, and without strength to regain his balance, he goes down on his knees in the filthy roadway under the weight of the cross.

**Meditation on the Third Station**

**Second Voice:** You, my Lord and my God, in this bloody weakness and blur of pain, fall in the filth and garbage of the road to ransom me from my own filth. How often have I muddied the mind you created! How many times have I desecrated this body of mine which you made clean and sacred to your service! Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! Rescue me! Save me, my God, save me!

**Station III – Christ Falls For The First Time** artwork by Charles Elliott

How to put weeks of “agonizing” into 100 words? **Christ Falls The First Time:** Initially, the mental picture I had was framed by Picasso’s *Guernica*: Picasso’s huge mural portraying the outrage he had after learning that General DeFranco of Spain had allowed Hitler to unleash his war machine on a tiny village in the south of Spain (the villagers were somewhat of an irritant to the Spanish dictator). It depicted the horror of innocents suffering mightily. Then I thought of Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of the Christ*; its horror and the aloneness of Christ suffering in the face of scorn by the people of Jerusalem. In this banner, the “city” is an infinite string of sameness, fading into the horizon (and unto today); Christ is alone and fallen (aren’t we all at times?). The faces of the “crowd” are scornful, mocking, the people disgusted. They are us, we are they. The colors should reflect thoughts of blood, anger, disgust.

**Fourth Station - Jesus Meets His Mother**

A card with a cross and text

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. The soldiers in their red tunics and glittering helmets keep the crowd pressed back against the walls of the buildings along the way. Surely not all in the crowd are curious followers of public executions. Surely some are friends and secret sympathizers, silent out of fear of the chief priests and their spies. But now a woman steps out into the way, a woman of the poorer class, in her mid-forties, but a woman of such sweet dignity and such modest loveliness, even in her terrible grief, it is no wonder that the centurion pauses for her to greet the prisoner. The rumor goes through the crowd that she is his mother. As she gazes at the pain-wracked body, the bloodied nose, the swollen lips, the thorn-gashed brow, she turns white. These two look deeply into each other’s eyes, and their arms reach out, one for the other. But the centurion is anxious to finish the day’s work without incident, and, with rough courtesy, he hurries her away.

**Meditation on the Fourth Station**

**Second Voice:** In the midst of your anguish, your love still sustains her, while her mother’s love for you makes an agony of her longing to help. How different I am in my treatment of those closest to me, those dear people with whose help I should be shouldering my cross. How often do I think to say, “You look tired, let me help. Let me do it for you”? How often do the holy words of love well up in my heart to make themselves known to my beloved? And how do I respond to those holy words—all too often with coldness, with greedy self-seeking? Only the really strong can afford to be gentle, to be tender. It’s the weakling who has to shout and curse to cover up his weakness. Jesus, my Lord, true God and perfect man, teach me to be strong and gentle: with your strength, with your gentleness.

**Station IV – Christ Meets His Mother** artwork by Lucy Hollis

I depicted this moment in Christ’s journey using symbols: the cross and the crown representing Christ and the crucifixion, and the blue drape representing Mary. The faint image of Christ beyond the cross is a reflection on symbols as objects or images we look not *at*, but *through* to understand the truth they represent. These elements were created using discarded or recycled paper applied in the mosaic style. The use of ordinary materials is meant to express the humility of Christ’s journey to the cross. By using discarded material to create something beautiful, I tried to evoke the transformative power of Mary’s silent message: “I suffer with you.” The purity of love through sacrifice is the gift of grace.

**Fifth Station - The Cyrenian is Made to Help Jesus**

A painting of a person holding a cross

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. We are at the gate of the city now. The procession is moving more and more slowly. Each step this Jesus takes calls forth an agonizing effort, straining the battered muscles, wounding still more the cut and bleeding feet. The great timber with its rough-hewn surface has ground deeply on his shoulder. He slips in the filth of the street and sways, nearly fainting from pain and loss of blood. Afraid that he will lose his prisoner to death before he can be executed, the centurion orders a man going by to take the cross beam from the condemned and carry it for him. The people are saying the fellow’s name is Simon. Simon takes the cross without enthusiasm. His hands touch the hands of the prisoner, who is looking intently into Simon’s face. There is a slight pause and, in this moment of transfer, it appears something is happening to Simon.

**Meditation on the Fifth Station**

**Second Voice:** How well I recognize Simon’s resentment at his forced involvement! He’s probably a loner, with all the loner’s defenses against personal encroachments. They are my defenses, rooted in deep pride: “Every man for himself. If some guy gets into trouble, that’s just too bad. He wasn’t smart. Never give in. The other fellow is always wrong. And if he argues, reply with sarcasm. Talk about his poverty, his lack of family connections, his infirmities.” O, Christ, how often have I twisted the knife in you, in my brothers and my sisters? I didn’t know, I couldn’t see you in them. Give me the look you’re giving Simon. Help me by your look to see you everywhere.

**Station V – Simon Cyrene Helps Jesus** artwork by Frank Holden

Simon of Cyrene was from North Africa. He was an “out-of-towner” in every sense of the word. There was a large Jewish settlement of more than 100,000 Palestinian Jews in Libya, but it is just as likely that Simon was African born. I chose to depict Simon as African. He was in Jerusalem to conduct business or more likely to fulfill his temple obligations or a combination of the two. But, in any case, he was an “outsider”. He was not a participant in this Roman pageant by choice. He was conscripted, yet he was powerful. His obvious strength likely drew the Centurion’s attention when he looked in the crowd for a cross-carrier. So I painted him dark and strong; earthen and somber. The canvas is raw and unprimed. The crosspiece is from a weathered wood fence literally cast along the side of my road from its owner as useless and worn out.

**Sixth Station - A Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus**

**A framed picture of a person holding a person

Description automatically generated**

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. We are outside the city now, and the air is better. The day is getting warmer, but it is the sweat of extreme weakness that is running down the bloody dirty face of the condemned man. The salt sweat stings the open cuts and stings the eyes. Even though not burdened now by the timber of the cross, the man’s terrible exhaustion and the pain of his torn body threaten to bring him down. Suddenly now, another woman of courage comes forward from the crowd. She steps in front of Jesus, ignoring the ringing command of the centurion, the foul language of the legionnaires. Swiftly but with great tenderness, she takes a large handkerchief and wipes the blood and sweat and dirt from the Prisoner’s face. The soldiers push her out of the way, and the procession continues.

**Meditation on the Sixth Station**

**Second Voice:** The funny little woman with her blazing eyes and her gentle hands. That took courage. And when she gets home, what will the neighbors say, because some gossiper will have told them. They’ll say that a woman who’s a friend of a common criminal can’t live in their neighborhood. They are respectable people. They’ll make it rough for her. But she won’t care. She loves you enough, Lord, to be loyal no matter how tough things get. Not like me. I want everyone to know that I’m one of the regulars. That my so-called Christianity doesn’t keep me from joining the crowd. Jesus, my God, forgive me for being a moral coward! In your compassion, give me the courage to stand with you, to give you my loyalty in all things.

**Station VI – A Woman Wipes The Face Of Jesus** artwork by Billie James

In an instant, someone from the bystanders broke ranks. It was a woman. She came running to Jesus holding in her hands a piece of cloth. She wiped Jesus’ face from sweat and blood. She did not bother to look at the soldiers; she did not care about her own safety. She did it instinctively. An image of Jesus’ face appeared on her cloth. I began by thinking of the image that I would create to depict this station. What was my own emotional response to this scene? What did I hope for someone else to feel when looking at Station VI? I thought of the torn, raw, and ragged emotions – of the woman, of Jesus, the soldiers, the bystanders. Therefore, I chose to use only torn paper to create this scene. While working on this piece, tearing each small bit of paper, I remembered times when I have lent a caring hand to someone, made someone feel better. I thought of acts of kindness shown to me – something someone may have thought was small or unimportant. Maybe someone just smiled at me in passing or reached out to touch my arm as our paths crossed. I realized that in each instance, eye contact was important – an intimate second of recognition. Therefore, I chose to show the woman and Jesus looking into each other’s faces to create this very personal moment. Of tenderness, a sign of comfort.

**Seventh Station - Jesus Falls the Second Time**

**A cross on a red surface

Description automatically generated**

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:**  Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. How slowly he must go now! The prisoner is so weakened that each moment it seems impossible for him to take another step. The legionnaires urge him on, but they are not so brutal about it now. They are more and more afraid that he will die on the way. The curious press as close as they dare, like maggots fattening on the blood of others. Now, as the weak and bloody figure pauses and sways, there is an audible gasp from the mob. What little strength he has left is ebbing fast. He goes down on his knees, and the collective stinking breath of the crowd issues forth in a long sigh as they push and jostle for a better view. Two soldiers get him to his feet again. He straightens and—O, God!—tries to square those torn shoulders to go on.

**Meditation on the Seventh Station**

**Second Voice:** I take credit on all sides for the things I have—for the money I have, for my comfortable and cheerful home, for my talented children, for my friends. I am the center of it all, it all revolves around me. Lord, the thought of your pain and humiliation for my sake makes me ashamed! For what have I got that wasn’t given to me? And what have I got that I couldn’t lose tomorrow., completely and utterly, so that, like Job in the Old Testament—and he was a good man—I would be stripped of it all. Lord, teach me by your weakness how helpless a creature I am, depending on you for all the goodness in my life.

**Station VII – Jesus Falls For The Second Time** artwork by Liz Edge

The painting of the cross in Station VII is inspired by the cross that hangs above the entrance to Stough Lodge at Camp McDowell. It is a gathering place at camp, and usually pretty crowded at mealtime. I chose to paint this cross to represent the crowds of people who gathered in the streets to watch Jesus struggle past them, on His way to certain death. The painting was then cut into small pieces. This is to signify Jesus’ fall in the dirty street. The breaking of Himself for us, as Jesus journeys toward the cross.

**Eighth Station - Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem**

A cross and a person's face on a wood surface

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. We have almost reached the Place of the Skull and the finish. But here is a little knot of women, weeping and beating their breast in lamentation. Jesus pauses to speak to them. To speak to them! Where is he getting his strength? This man’s will is something unbelievable. What is he saying? He calls them daughters of Jerusalem, and he tells to weep for themselves and for their children, not for him. He sounds like one of the old visionary prophets, talking in broken phrases about times to come when men will cry to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them. He is incredible! Bone-weary—indeed, half-dead in his ordeal—and yet, still master of himself, still responsive to the sorrows of others.

**Meditation on the Eighth Station**

**Second Voice:** You are speaking to me, Lord, as you spoke to those weeping women. You are telling me to skip the tears of false piety. You are saying, “Pick up your cross and follow me.” Follow you, Lord? Where are you going? How your answer strikes home, “I am going to die.” I, too, Lord, am going to die. I don’t like to think about this truth. But it is the truth, just the same. And now, you offer me this choice: Will I go to die, following you to the end of my life, knowing your love and strength, or will I choose the other way, defiant, refusing your call and dying alone? O Christ, on your way to die, help me to live and die sustained by your love!

**Station VIII – Jesus Speaks To The Daughters Of Jerusalem** artwork by Lin Musgrove

I chose this station because of Jesus’ interaction with the women as they saw what was happening. They seemed to know that there was so much more to the story they were witnessing. Jesus’ response to their tears wasn’t too reassuring, either – don’t cry for me, cry for yourselves and your unborn babies – times are going to be tough… I wanted to capture the pain and bleakness of these women’s souls, but also the hope they (and we) have in the cross. Perhaps they didn’t at the time understand the hope of the cross, but something in them knew that life would never be the same. The cross is old, worn, and simple. Sometimes I feel that my faith is old and worn, but if it stays simple, I stay focused.

**Ninth Station - Jesus Falls the Third Time**

**A wooden cross on a wood surface

Description automatically generated**

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. We have finally reached the foot of the little hill of Golgotha. Some of the people have hurried on ahead to get the best perches among the tombs to see the final agony. They are no better than the vultures hovering up there, waiting for the twisting, tortured bodies to twitch into final stillness. The prisoner begins the little climb haltingly, painfully. Two legionnaires haul him along by means of the long rope-ends, but it is not enough. He falls again, this time full length, his face pressed into the dust and dirt of the road. Will he be able to get up this time? The soldiers lift the sagging, pitiable fellow to his feet. Again the tremendous effort to command the mass of searing wounds which is his body. How long can this continue?

**Meditation on the Ninth Station**

**Second Voice:** How I need your strength to sustain me! I get so tired of the struggle, so tired keeping track of the kids as they grow up, so tired of trying to be an honest citizen in a cutthroat world, so tired of always being the one to volunteer to take the children camping, or to give a day’s work on a parish project. It seems it takes all my effort to journey one step forward on the road with you, my brother Christ, only to discover that I have slipped back two steps while I wasn’t looking. Sometimes I am so tired that I just want to forget the whole thing. Yes, to forget you, Jesus, and just drift with the crowd. And then you look at me, and I can’t do it. Where else is there to go? Apart from you I am nothing. Keep me coming, Lord, please keep me coming.

**Station IX – Jesus Falls For A Third Time** artwork by Elizabeth & Brian Savage

*On Calvary’s height a third time see Him fall,*

*livid with bruises that our site appall.*

*O gracious Lord, this sufferest thou for me,*

*to save my soul from endless misery.*

We were inspired by Christ’s arduous journey to the foot of Mount Calvary. The materials chosen are rugged and sharp, representing the physical pain and immense sacrifice of His journey. Three small hills of dirt and rock call to mind the three times Jesus falls to the ground. The cross was made from a large branch that fell in a recent storm. It was split and finished with rudimentary tools as the actual cross might have been. The cross is bound with leather cord similar to the ones that tied His sandals. The flame behind the cross is an abstract representation of the sun and of the Son signifying the newness of life. The metal was cut from roofing tin used to construct St. Francis Chapel at Camp McDowell. For us, it calls to mind the glory and triumph that resulted from this darkest hour.

**Tenth Station - Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes**

A cross on a piece of paper

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. In spite of his terrible weakness and the dizziness that goes with excessive loss of blood, his man, Jesus, has climbed to the low summit of the hill. This is the beginning of the end. It is not very complicated really. These Romans know their work. First he must be stripped. Crucifixion, a fairly common punishment in these times, is intended to be degrading, humiliating in the extreme. The reactions of a body in the death agony are uncontrolled. The stripping itself now is a horrible business. The fabric of his robe has stuck to his wounds. The soldiers are in a hurry to finish now, and they handle him brutally. It is strange that their prisoner has not fainted at the sharp, enveloping pain which must be sweeping over him like fire. There he stands, stripped, clothed only in his own blood running down his broken body.

**Meditation on Tenth Station**

**Second Voice**: Yes, Lord, you stand, stripped of everything for my sake. Your friends have run away, your honor and your reputation have been made a laughing stock, and now even your clothes are torn off your body. Exposed to agony and shame, you have nothing. You are nothing. As the Psalmist said of you so long ago, “I am a worm, not a man, a bad joke among the people.” Do you accept all this, my Lord and God, to make up for my greed? My selfishness? My lack of love? My God, my God, forgive me for this pain I’ve worked upon you!

**Station X – Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments** artwork by Liz Edge

The cross on Station X is made of garments woven into the canvas. I used several different textures, such as soft yarns, strips of linen, and stiff canvas that was painted and then torn. These are symbolic of the garments that are roughly stripped from Jesus’ wounded and bloodied body. I fond some discarded, rusted barbed wire to make into a ‘crown of thorns’ that represent the suffering and humiliation Jesus endures.

**Eleventh Station - Jesus is Nailed to the Cross**

A cross on a wall

Description automatically generated**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:**  Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. They laid Jesus back at the foot of the upright beam of the cross which is permanently fixed in its place. His shoulders are on the cross beam. He has refused the drugged wine they would have given him. The executioner measures with his eye the arm’s length, and, setting the spike at the wrist, with one blow of the great hammer, drives the spike deeply into the wood. It needs only a few good taps to fix it firmly. Amazingly, Jesus has not cried out, but his face is so contorted it is terrible to look at. Pain must be blazing through that hand and up that arm. Most men faint at this juncture, but not this one. He seems to have willed to remain conscious. Now the other arm is stretched out, the procedure repeated. They lift the ends of the cross beam and make him rise and move backward against the stake. The ropes and pulleys are ready. With one dreadful cry from the Christ, he dangles in excruciating agony from the nails in his wrists. It is the work of a moment to bend the knees and, crossing the feet and avoiding the heels, to drive the third spike through the feet into the lower part of   
the stake. Having gone through so much already, he must now suffer the fullest torture.

**Meditation on the Eleventh Station**

**Second Voice:** O, Lord Jesus, I cannot imagine the magnitude of the pain you have undergone. You didn’t have to do it. You could have remained in the luxurious courts of heaven where you had everything. You didn’t want or need pain, suffering, and rejection. But you chose to become one of us, to be born, to live a human life. You became a poor man and then went to your death on the cross. You chose this for love of me. Dear Lord, make me less concerned about my own comfort and more concerned about your “little ones” who are suffering in the world.

**Station XI – Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross** artwork by Hilary Amaro

When I was asked to participate in the creation of a banner for one of the Stations of the Cross, I decided to use as many natural materials as possible to try to represent what Jesus might have encountered. The wood in the cross was cut from the limbs of a crepe myrtle, the strands of thorns wrapped around the cross symbolizes the cruelness of the crown of thorns and torn pieces of muslin represents the remnants of Christ’s tattered clothing. Rusted steel nails driven into the cross at the hands and feet reflect the brutality of His death. Finally, the faint words quietly tucked behind all of this hatred are those of forgiveness, gently spoken by Jesus as he breathed his final human breaths.

**Twelfth Station - Jesus Dies on the Cross**

A piece of art on a purple surface

Description automatically generated

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. It is almost the middle of the afternoon. It was around noon when they lifted him up. Very soon after that, the terrible thirst began. It continued and grew worse. He refused the sour wine offered in a sponge. The frightful cramping in the muscles began. His biceps became strained and distended, his fingers grotesquely angled. On his thighs and legs, the muscles formed monstrous rigid bulges. The horrible spasms became generalized. The stomach muscles tightened agonizingly, the sides, the chest, the neck, all were involved. His face turned blue, and it was clear that he was asphyxiating, that his lungs were loaded with air that he could not exhale. His eyes rolled back, and it appeared to be the end. But no. With a superhuman effort, he lifted his body by pressing against the nail through his feet. Gradually the chest muscles relaxed enough for him to get his breath. And then he spoke, praying for forgiveness for his executioners. Several times he has stayed this asphyxiating death with an effort of blazing agony. And each time he has spoken. His mother has been standing by his cross from the first, and he knew it. He has given her into the care of the only disciple to stand there with her. The sky was darkened, the air hangs with heaviness and foreboding. The crucified gasps, “It is completed.” And now, with a final struggle, the loud cry, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!”

**Meditation on the Twelfth Station**

**Second Voice:** Crucified lover of all men and women everywhere. Your suffering shines a bright light on my prejudices, my lusts, my greed, my pride, my selfishness, my grudges. O, God, my God. Have mercy and do not forsake me! Help me to make a fresh start. Reach out your nail-pierced hands and touch me. Cleanse me from my sins!

**Station XII – Jesus Dies** artwork by Carolyn Franklin

**PARADOX**

A great darkness fell over the land about the 6th hour, remaining at until the 9th hour when Jesus cried out his last words. That darkness was surely more than just a force of nature. It carries much symbolism – the forsakenness Jesus feels by His Father; the depth of inhumanity at work in the crucifixion; the death of the Light of the world. The crudeness of the cross, draped in jewel toned silk, is contradictory, as is a crown of thorns placed on His head as a mockery of the “King of the Jews”. Jesus began His life in a lowly stable manger, and His life ended on a primitive cross reserved for criminals. Yet we know Him to the Savior of us all. Where such contrasts exist, I am challenged to look beyond the surface for the greater meaning.

**Thirteenth Station - Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross**

**A painting of a person carrying a person on a cross

Description automatically generated**

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:**  Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. It is over. The sky is blacker than ever. The ground shudders and the rocks crack. The centurion looks around in wonder at these signs, and then at the tattered human remnant sagging on the cross in the grotesque attitude of death by crucifixion. And the sardonic Roman face is suddenly luminous with the light of faith, and he declares, “Truly this was the Son of God!” Another solider comes to plunge his lance into the dead man’s side. And now it is necessary to act with haste. The dead body may not hang longer, lest it defile the great sabbath which will soon begin. One Joseph of Arimathea, a man of consequence, has gone to Pilate to request the body. A few of Jesus’ followers have come to take him down. It is not hard. They remove the spike from the feet and unfasten the cross beam, to lower the body. They take the nails out of the wrists. Now they place the stiffening body in the arms of his mother, seated on a rock. She received it with profoundest grief, her silent tears falling like rain upon the lifeless face.

**Meditation on the Thirteenth Station**

**Second Voice:** As he gave his all, his everything, his everything, in total love for me, so goes his mother. O God, don’t let all this blood and pain and sorrow be for nothing! I heard the broken words, “Father, forgive them.” And in the stream of blood and water flowing from this holy rock, cleft for me in the desert of the world’s evil, I too can bathe and be cleansed. I, too, can drink and be strengthened. Jesus, teach me to carry my cross with love, willingly. Then will I find you, my brother Jesus, walking with me, carrying the load. Then will I never be alone in pain and sorrow again, even as I hang upon that cross.

**Station XIII – Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross** artwork by Nan Jacobs

This story is so typical of who I am and what I do. I was extremely flattered to be asked to participate in the Stations of the Cross project and readily accepted the mission. Then, the realization hit me. I’m no artist, and I’ve agreed to paint Jesus for a spiritual meditation? My first attempts mirrored my bewilderment and I wanted to give up. I was not worthy of being included in this very sacred mission. However, after much prayer and consternation, I realized that my contribution would be just like me…flawed, damaged, and inadequate. It was not a contest of ability. It was an opportunity to give of myself and become closer to the God who loves me and knows me by name. He doesn’t care that I know little about art forms or the process, and I remain humbled.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

*Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephesians 2: 8 – 9

**Fourteenth Station - Jesus is Laid in the Sepulchre**

**A painting of a person holding a person's shoulder

Description automatically generated**

**First Voice:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**First Voice:** This is the way it was. The final act is short. Joseph of Arimathea returns quickly with the governor’s permission, and with a very white large shroud. With him is Nicodemus, who is bringing myrrh and aloes for the wrapping of his body. Close at hand is Joseph’s brand new sepulchre, and he has given it for the burial of the crucified one. Wat little light is left is fading fast. They must hurry. These friends arrange the body and bind it in the linen shroud. Then, weeping and with every sign of reverence, they place Jesus’ body in the tomb. Someone removes the wedge that holds the heavy stone. The stone rolls forward and closes the tomb. Now they are all going away, and this place is left empty and silent.

**Meditation on the Fourteenth Station**

**Second Voice:** Empty and silent, Golgotha now. And empty and silent, and cold as the tomb, has my heart been, locked up in sin, and refusing to open to the quiet knocking of the love of Christ. I have been dead to love, and dead to life. O, Christ, beat down the door of my resistance! Melt the ice of my stubborn and hard heart. Raise me from this tomb of sin so that I might know and experience life in you—life in the kingdom of God. Make me, my brother Christ, the child you created me to be. Make me live in union with you and my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Agony, death, and burial. How final it sounds, like the triple toiling of the bell of doom. But you never mentioned these things during your life on earth, Lord, without speaking of a fourth: Your resurrection in glory. And you promised us resurrection, too, if we believed in you and took up the cross and followed you along the road to Golgotha. This is your mystery, your paschal mystery, Lord Jesus, which you hold out to us, which you want to share with us, if we will only follow in faith, and hope, and love. We believe, Lord, that you are the way, the truth, and the life. We trust in your love for us because you proved it on the cross, and we trust in your Word because you are God’s Word made flesh. And because we want to begin to love you, we want to give you the only thing that is truly ours to give, the total gift of self, a gift that can only be given in love. We understand that the road is hard, and we know that we are not very brave. And so we ask you, humbly, please be with us on the road, Lord, and help us. Bring us at last to the dawn of resurrection. Amen.

**Station XIV – Jesus Is Buried** artwork by Michael Swann

It was thrilling to be asked to participate in this project. I spent a lot of time thinking about how to best represent the station to which I was assigned. We know the burial was hurried…but what kind of shape would the body be in? What about other faces and clothing? I chose to portray the scene from the perspective of a participant in the burial. Most importantly, I decided that it should exude a sense of extreme intimacy and serenity. At that point I could clearly envision the scene in my head…all that was left was to paint it.

