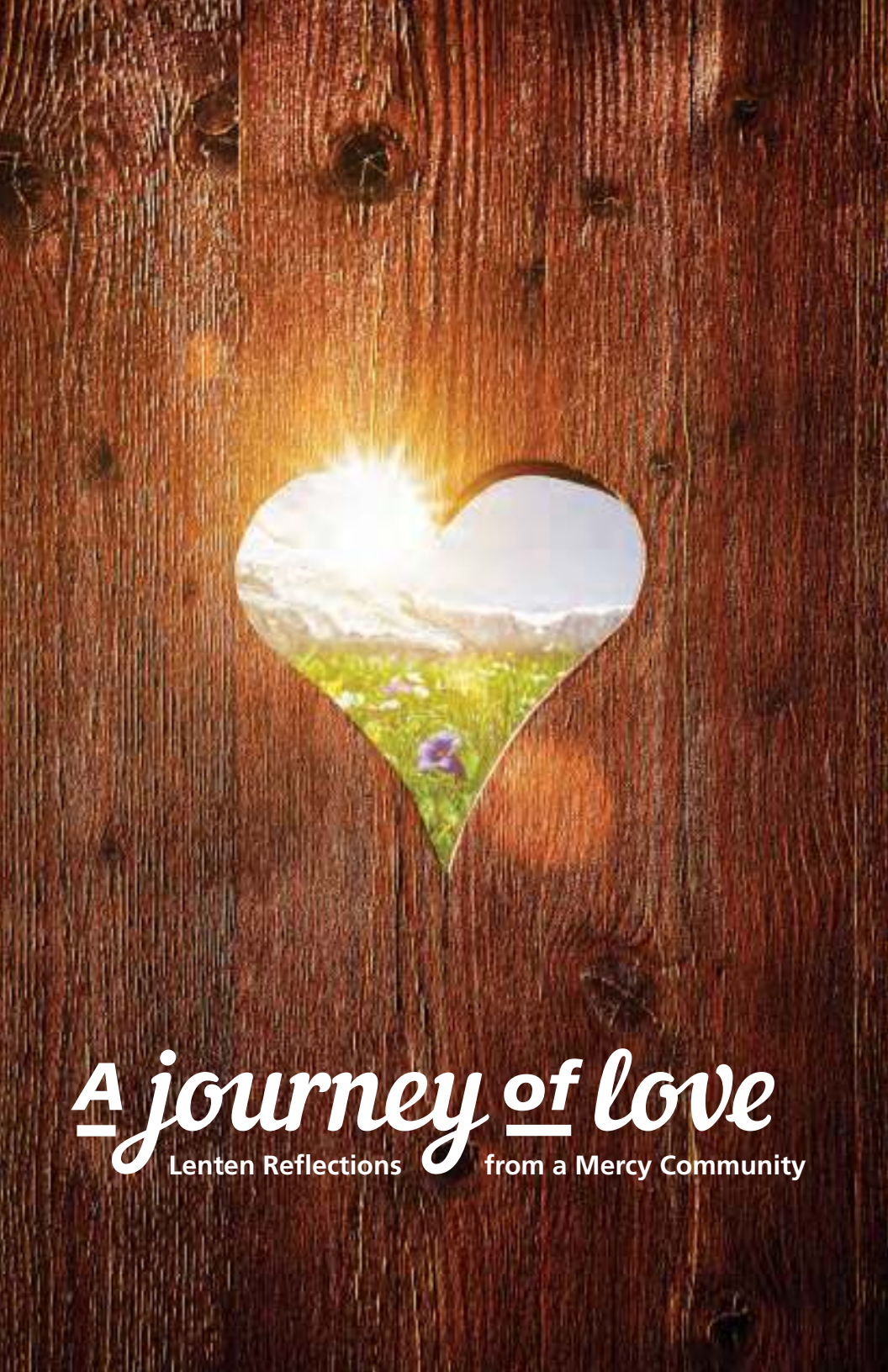

A journey of love
Lenten Reflections from a Mercy Community

MARIA CONFRONTS THE PASSION

This document contains reflections inspired by the Stations of the Cross and penned by members of the Maria College community. The "Stations" occur along the *via dolorosa*, the path of suffering, that Jesus walked from His conviction and sentencing at Pilate's palace to Golgotha and the tomb.

To redeem humanity, Jesus had to fully enter into humanity, to be one with us in our suffering, despair and death, as he was one with us in our joy and pleasure. ("Does the bridal party fast, while the Groom is still with them?") Jesus did not want to drink from the bitter cup that awaited him, no more than we do, but there is no path through life that does not include it.

Befitting the theme of the Passion, our sisters and brothers meditate upon suffering, loss, parting, despair and death. What is most affirming in these pages is that the people of Maria enter authentically and fully into the suffering, the loss, the fear, the humiliation, the heartbreak and the despair of His path of suffering. After doing so, what they come away with are messages of hope, love, compassion, peace and service.

The mystery of this reconciliation is at the heart of our faith. We encounter it during every Mass, at the time when the Eucharistic gifts—the two elements that will become the body and blood of Christ—are brought to the altar and the priest makes offertory prayers. The priest pours wine and water into the chalice, saying "By the mystery of this water." And we recognize that the water added to the chalice represents the water that flowed from Christ's side during the crucifixion and the wine represents his blood; the body and blood that will be given up for the forgiveness of sins and which we celebrate whenever we are in communion at Mass.

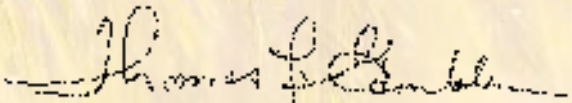
I was brought to a profound awareness of this reconciliation of suffering and hope very recently when Sr. Gail Waring offered as a prayer to bless a meeting of the Maria Executive Committee, a quote penned by the Catholic priest and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. When circumstances prevented him from saying Mass in the usual manner, he said this:

> "Since today, Lord, I your priest have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I shall spread my hands over the whole universe and take its immensity as the substance of my sacrifice. Is not the infinite circle of things the one final Host that it is your will to transmute? The seething cauldron in which all living and cosmic substance are brewed together—is this not that the bitter cup that you seek to sanctify?"

Jesus reconciles all things in Himself and in Love, and in doing so saves us from the irreconcilability we fear. We fear we will not be able to reconcile suffering and love, life and death, plenty and loss, despair and hope, but He showed us the path from Golgotha to His risen encounter, first to Mary Magdalene, and then to the others. In these readings we find a glimpse of how our sisters and brothers at Maria are trying to walk the path that Jesus offered us.

In reading these reflections you will see why it is my honor to work alongside of and in solidarity with the Maria community.

He is Risen…



Thomas J. Gamble, PhD
President of Maria College



STATION 1

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Reflection by David Hoffman

Each station of the cross offers us two opportunities. In this First Station, we can connect with Jesus in his humanity in these tortuous moments. His humanity is a gift that offers us that connection. Secondly, we can connect with Jesus in his divinity and see part of the call to each of us to look outside ourselves and see our responsibility for our sisters and brothers – and that all those who share life with us fall into that category – sisters and brothers.

At the First Station we see Jesus standing before Pilate in front of a crowd; the imagery is familiar. I recall as a child wanting Jesus to defend himself and win the day like in an old TV movie. What I didn't understand at the time was that Jesus' actions did win the day, just not the way I had expected. This interaction with Pilate we all know so well. Pilate asks questions and Jesus is silent, the classic example of the sacrificial lamb we hear of often in Hebrew scripture. Jesus knows he takes on responsibility of others and sets the ultimate example of what we can do for those we love. I think of the human thoughts and emotions that would be normal in that setting. Where are my friends and followers? Why isn't anyone speaking up for me? Am I really alone in this?

Jesus was able to do what is often a challenge for us when we are in a difficult situation: he saw the bigger picture, he leaned in on his belief and faith, he looked inside and reminded himself of what is really important. We believe Jesus took on responsibility in that moment for the sins of his contemporaries and others all the way to today. No one asks us to do this, but in reflection we can ask ourselves a few questions.

When have I carried a burden for someone else? Have I turned away from a burden? Can people in my life count on me the way people counted on Jesus? Am I a positive addition in the lives of those I meet? Do I understand my responsibility to others that Jesus exemplified so well at the First Station?

For me the challenge of the First Station is to remember Jesus' example and incorporate these questions into my daily life. Importantly, being thankful to Jesus requires both thought and action.



SCRIPTURE

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him.

Luke 23: 13

QUESTION

How much do I lean on my faith in difficult moments?



STATION 2

Jesus Carries His Cross

Reflection by Meagan Masti

Born into the world, a broken earth.
Both son of man and Son of God.
He crossed the barrier, into humanity, and felt our pain.
More deeply than anyone ever has or ever will.
He never wavered on his mission.
He looked at creation and said, "it is good."

The weight of the world's sin was unbearable.
From above, he tried to hold it all together.
But we chose hate over love, pride over humility.
So he came, as a baby swaddled by his mother, Mary.
He came to lead by example and conquer death.
He taught us how to press on, even under pressure.

Born into a trade, a skillful craft.
He was taught carpentry by his father-figure, Joseph.
Many hours of observation, many splinters pierced his hands.
He was familiar with the grain of wood and its knots.
Like any craftsman, he was proud of his work.
He looked at the completed project and said, "it is good."

The weight of the cross was unbearable.
His hands gripped the wood to hold on; the edge was sharp.
Familiar with the texture, overwhelmed by its purpose.
Aware of his destiny and all that was about to unfold.
This was just the beginning of the pain he would endure.
Even so, he pressed on, but not lightly.

The day would soon end, as time always has its way.
He said, "it is finished," but those were not the last words.
Jesus commissioned us to show the world his love,
to take up our cross and carry the weight, but never alone.
Because he promised the burden is light and the load is easy,
and that he will never give us more than we can bear.



SCRIPTURE

Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Luke 9:23

QUESTIONS

What are the crosses in my life that I am carrying?

What do I need to be "lightened" so I can continue on the journey?



STATIONS 3, 7 & 9

Jesus Falls Three Times

Reflection by Thomas J. Gamble

Pride goeth before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a Fall
-Proverbs

According to the Online etymology dictionary, the English word "fall" comes from the Old English feallan "to drop from a height; fail, decay, die,"

To many it seems straightforward to describe the Genesis account of what happened in Eden as "the fall of man" (humanity). Adam and Eve, the first of their kind, created in the image of God, given providence over all living creatures, fell from their great height and with their fall failure, decay and death entered into human history. They fell, as we all know, because of their prideful sense that they deserved to become equal to God.

The Fall, and pride, which gave rise to it, are not problems only for human persons, an angel, even an archangel, like Lucifer (the light bringer), could also fall because of the sin of pride, as attested in the Hebrew Scriptures, as in Isaiah (14:12) "How are you fallen

from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" as well as in the Greek Scriptures, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus states, "I saw Lucifer fall like lightening from heaven." These two narratives of pride and the fall, leave us faced then with a question: How is it possible, that pride, perhaps the greatest of sins, because it is the first sin, be redeemed?

One thing we know for certain is that God, the Creator of the Universe, the One who first said let there be light, the One who separated the waters from the earth, the unmoved mover, the uncaused cause, that God, does not fall. That God does not suffer, does not tire, does not weaken, that God certainly does not bear the humiliations of bullies. The very idea of God being bullied, humiliated, tortured, weakened, killed, beggars the mind. Isn't the whole point of God omnipotence and omniscience? Wouldn't God be the One to set the bullies straight, to put them in their place? As the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm.

Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.
"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!
Who stretched a measuring line across it?
…while the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?

Yet the faithful believe that Jesus, — at whose name every knee is bent in heaven and on earth — is God. The faithful also believe in the Passion of the Christ, depicted in the Stations of the Cross, which traditionally includes Stations 3, 7 and 9, in which Jesus fell the first, second and third time. Why would Jesus "fall" three times on the "path of sorrows," from the sentencing in Pilate's palace to Golgotha? This question is the very same question we asked at the end of our first paragraph: how is it possible, that pride, the greatest of sins, because the first sin, can be redeemed and how does the Passion enlighten us about it? Might we consider that the first and second

times Jesus falls symbolize the redemption of the Fall of Lucifer and the Fall of Humanity? What then are we to make of the third fall?

Recall that the first two falls, the Fall of Lucifer and the Fall of Humanity, occurred as the result of overweening pride. Pride is not only the first sin, but also in a sense, the source of sin. Pride demands we should have what we want when we want it, and from there sin follows. Humanity remains mired in pride and therefore in sin, to truly redeem all our prideful falls, and thereby redeem humanity, Jesus had to demonstrate that humility is stronger than pride. The Second Vatican Council, which professes the humanity of Jesus state that Jesus...worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart'' (Gaudium et Spes). God's love for humanity required Jesus to take on himself, from within His human heart, mind, and body the ultimate in human suffering and respond to it with humility and not with pride.

On the path of sorrows Jesus shows us that the way to salvation does not arise for us from acting out of pride. If even the Son of Man can suffer torture and humiliation and not resort to the proud and haughty demeanor of the victor, of one who seeks power or revenge, then it is possible for us as well. None of this is to say that even in his humility, Jesus failed to rail against injustice, we know he did, but at the end of his human ministry he showed us the path of humility is greater than the path of pride, and that love is stronger than death.



QUOTE

"I see you Jesus, as you grit your teeth and, in complete surrender to love, you get up and resume your journey."

Pope Francis

QUESTIONS

How can I relate to the falls of Jesus?

What have I learned from the times I have had to get up and resume my journey?

Where, in my life, do I show pride?

Can I be reassured that the God of the universe, who created me, loves me and will never let me "fall"? That love is stronger that death?



STATION 4

Jesus Meets His Mother

Reflection by Anne S. Jung

In the Fourth Station of the Cross, we see Jesus carrying the cross upon which he will be placed when he comes across Mary, his beloved Mother. It is a depiction that especially asks us to give pause and reflect on not only on our modern understanding of the sanctity of motherhood, and of the sanctity of the relationship between mother and son, but also it insists that we bear witness to a public exchange of a private nature between our most sacred mother and son.

Present in this reflection is our heightened anticipatory grief and anguish not only but also for ourselves, but on behalf of Mary because we know the next few parts of the story that she does not. When Jesus comes upon Mary, who has insisted upon finding her way to him due to what we know to be profound love for him and wanting to see him even in times of his great suffering, he greets her as another of his disciples, as "woman" and not "mother" perhaps as a way to comfort and protect her from further distress. In this moment, Jesus is seemingly already beyond this earthly relationship of mother and son. He greets her by introducing his disciple John to his mother as her new son as an example of how we must be in relationship with one another to bear our sorrows, the pain of injustices and to seek comfort in love, on our own journeys of love. Mary, as "Mother of God," or

God bearer, Theotokos, is called upon to witness the sacrifice her son for reasons she is not privy to understanding at this moment in time.

We imagine Mary's deeply mixed emotions of joy in seeing Jesus, not knowing what exactly his situation was, seeing him with her own eyes, and then what would be any mother's anxiety in thinking of what is about to happen to him. It is difficult to comprehend that moment for Mary as a caring and lifegiving mother bearing witness to harm about to come to her son, and yet as her role of disciple, mother, and teacher, she gives affirming witness to one who follow's in her master's footsteps, all the while teaching others to do so as well. Through our imagining Mary's immense sorrow comes signs of deep faith and hope and a belief in the power of love even in the face of great suffering.



SCRIPTURE

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Luke 2:34-35

QUESTIONS

Have I ever had to journey with one who suffers?

What are the deep and loving relationships in my life that help me along the road?



STATION 5

Simon Helps Jesus

Reflection by Jonathan Coller

When I reflect upon this station, I ask, "What would I do if I were Simon, the man compelled to carry Christ's cross?" This, of course, leaves me asking more questions. Why would I be there? Would I be jeering along with the crowd? Would I pause, even for a moment, to consider that this man may be innocent? Would I think of his suffering? His humanity? What would I say to the soldiers as I am plucked from the crowd — made to bear his burden? What would I utter to the man as I lifted the cross? Would I resent him in that moment? Would I be repelled by his tortured frame? Or, would I feel compassion? Would I choose to suffer with him? Even as I write this, I feel I cannot say for certain. I can only imagine this scenario as a distant moment in a world that no longer exists; I cannot live it. Or can I?

If I consider this scene as a model for daily living, I can recognize that we all have an opportunity to take up Christ's cross countless times in our lives if only we stay mindful of our connection to others. The distance we place between ourselves and another is always a choice. We can choose to see what makes another person different from us just as much as we can choose to see what makes them like us. In every encounter throughout the day, we decide who is a stranger

and who is not. And, unfortunately, it is often more convenient to treat people like strangers than to draw them close to us. This is because building a connection with another requires us to step away from ourselves and our individual experience of the world. To set aside our needs and desires to consider those of others. To expose ourselves to ideas and beliefs that may forever alter our sense of self. To accept burdens that were never ours simply to offer another person a momentary respite. To transform into something more than what we were in isolation.

So, to return to my original question, "What would I do if I were Simon, the man compelled to carry Christ's cross?" My answer: I still have no idea and it doesn't matter. What matters is what we do for the man or woman who is suffering now. In helping them, we take up Christ's cross, forget our selfish needs, and find our better selves.



SCRIPTURE

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Luke 23:26

QUESTION

What would I do if I were Simon, the one,
compelled to carry Christ's cross?



STATION 6

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Reflection by Jennifer Stabler

When I lived in New York City, I walked by people who were hungry, thirsty, and/or homeless every day: on my way to and from work, in the subways, or sitting in a park. It was just something I had gotten so used to seeing, like the Empire State Building or the bright lights of Broadway, that it no longer had an impact on me. It's a coping mechanism I had developed from living somewhere with so much overstimulation, and I didn't even realize it until one day I saw a man collecting soda bottles from a garbage can. Again, this was a typical sight so I didn't think anything of it, until I saw the man open one of the bottles and drink the little bit of soda that was left in it. That stopped me in my tracks: he didn't just need the five-cent deposit; he desperately needed something to drink. In that moment, I felt something inside me shift and the man's face and his suffering came into sharp focus. It made me realize just how desensitized I had become. I pulled out whatever cash I had in my wallet and asked the man if I could give it to him. He accepted and moved on, but the change in me was more permanent. I started to see the faces of the homeless people around me more clearly and made an effort not to let them become part of the city's buzz that I blocked out. When I reflect on this Sixth Station of the Cross, I think about how Veronica must have felt when she saw Jesus's suffering. She didn't consider

what others in the crowd thought of her, or if she might be arrested by the guards with Jesus. She felt moved by compassion for him and acted on it without care for herself. In our media saturated world, it can feel as if we are constantly being bombarded by news and images of the atrocities taking place in our towns, our countries, and our world. Sometimes we do need to block out some of it just to survive. But Veronica's simple act reminds me that we can't allow ourselves to become completely desensitized to the needs of those around us: particularly those in our own communities whom we can help directly. We need to let those around us who most need our mercy and generosity inspire our compassion and imprint their faces on our hearts, just as Jesus's face imprinted its image on Veronica's veil.



QUOTE

"We know nothing about that woman, Veronica, or her story.
She earns heaven with a simple gesture of charity.
She approaches you, sees your suffering face and loves it even more than before… She loves, unconditionally, a face that is unsightly, marred, unlovely and imperfect."

Pope Francis

QUESTIONS

Have I become desensitized to the needs of others?

Who are the suffering faces I need to see?



STATION 8

Jesus Meets the Women

Reflection by Wendy Trevor

In our minds, we all have our own vision of Jesus. For me it is, and will always be, as the Good Shepherd lovingly carrying his lamb, who is draped around his shoulders, back to the fold. This is the vision upon which I reflect as I approach this station of the cross, for it underscores this relationship with Christ built on compassion, forgiveness, love, and sacrifice. Some who read Luke 23: 27-31 read it as a stern admonition by Jesus to the women who weep and mourn for him, but my reading emphasizes the care with which Jesus, in the face of his own great suffering and impending death, stops to comfort and guide the women. As we read in John 10:16, Jesus cares, but also, registers responsibility, and looks toward action and change: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;" (King James Bible, 2020). He does the same here with the women in Luke 23: 28-29 when he turns to them and advises "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (King James Bible, 2020).

I find it particularly profound the way that Luke's narrative reminds us of the relationship between women and Jesus. Luke identifies two distinct groups in the crowd that follow Jesus as he bears his cross, namely, "people" and then, specifically, "women." As Soardes (1987) reminds us, "throughout Luke's Gospel women are depicted

as being supportive of Jesus in a special way, as he is also supportive of them "and so my meditation on this station contemplates this special bond and the deep connection between Jesus and women, these sheep for whom he cares deeply (p. 230). From these Daughters of Jerusalem who weep and mourn for Jesus and are comforted by his selfless empathy and direction to look inward for the future, to women today who seek and find comfort in his compassion and love, the relationship is a bond that sustains, guides, and calls us to act. Through Christ's actions we are encouraged to express compassion for those who suffer and mourn, but also, just as he directed the women, we are called to reflect, examine ourselves, and move towards doing rather than just feeling, as we care for others and our own spiritual lives remembering the cross he carried for us.



SCRIPTURE

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Luke 23: 27-28

QUESTIONS

What words of reassurance do I need to hear?

Who needs my compassion this day?



STATION 10

Jesus is Stripped

Reflection by Victoria L. Battell

Jesus has arrived at the place of finality; the journey he began is coming to an end, at least this part. With little more to give, other than what is left of his life, Jesus is made to endure another suffering – the removal of his garments. His journey of love to the cross, has been marked by many external sufferings, physical pain, and gradual diminishment. This is what people see, but his real journey of love is internal, made with the God he called, Father.

Just like the woman caught in adultery, Jesus was made to "stand before them all" (John 8:3), naked, afraid, and alone; subjected to the humiliation of their judgmental gaze, their taunts, and their call for what is 'just' in *their* sight. Jesus was able to save her, but who will save him? Focusing on someone else's downfall, or their faults and failings, can be falsely reassuring; if the attention and negativity is on them, then it can't be on me. This is the price of the public life, of standing for truth, of standing with the marginalized, for acting out of our values, and the desire for connection.

Even in our ordinary relationships and moments in life, we can reveal ourselves to others in faith and trust, creating a vulnerability in us, and placing us at their mercy. I am sure many of us have felt the

internal pain of the betrayal of trust; when we have given something of ourselves in good faith to another, or a group, and then are left exposed to their gaze and judgement, particularly if things don't work out as we had hoped. They can choose to share parts of us, of our lives, we hoped would remain *in trust.*

Jesus, and we, can turn to the God within us, to apply the balm of love and healing to our hearts and sprits, which are often weary from the journey. Without faith, it is hard to make sense of these difficult moments and to reclaim ourselves fully; we need silence and the darkness, to help us unravel our thoughts, to heal, and to be fully seen and loved by the God who knows us completely. With God, we are always held *in trust.*

At this moment in Jesus' journey, his next step will take him onto the cross, but we know in faith that the night will give way to eternal day.



SCRIPTURE

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top.

John 19:23

QUESTIONS

How have I felt the pain of betrayal?

Have I felt exposed to the judgement of others?



STATION 11

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Reflection by Mark Wahl

When I read about the crucifixion of Jesus, specifically being the act of being nailed to the cross, I am struck by the symbolic sacrifice that was made in the name of others. It struck me that there are so many people who have suffered and sacrificed for others.

I am reminded of a woman who was in an abusive relationship and made the decision to make a better life for herself and her four children. She convinced her abuser, her husband for over 10 years to allow her to take some college courses. He agreed but the caveat was that his life was not to change at all. She initially majored in English, but after just a few classes felt a calling to education and changed her major to elementary education. She attended classes during the day and studied at night after her husband went to bed.

She graduated a year early in 1970, packed the car and took her four children out of the area until he moved out of the house and they could return. While the physical abuse ended, the psychological abuse continued through the legal process and even after the divorce was finalized.

A few years later she met the most wonderful man and these soulmates were married and brought a fifth child into this loving home. This courageous woman overcame immense suffering and not only changed the lives of her five children, nine grandchildren, and many future generations, she became an elementary school teacher and principal. In her role as an educator, she has helped shape and change the lives of countless hundreds, possibly thousands of lives.

So use the example of Jesus being nailed to the cross to help sustain those suffering and sacrificing to better the lives of others, whether here on earth or for eternity lives in many people.

Oh and that woman, I got the high honor of calling her mom.



SCRIPTURE

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Luke 23:33-34

QUESTION

Where have you shown resilience and strength in life?



STATION 12

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Reflection by Andrew Ledoux

Upon the hour of Jesus's death, Our Holy Mother is left standing solemnly at the foot of the cross. Jesus displayed an unparalleled strength throughout his earthly life, particularly in those last, fleeting, moments. Strength influenced, perhaps, by the bond between mother and son.

Undoubtedly in a state of grief, Our Holy Mother's love never wavered during those agonizing moments; in all likelihood, it probably increased and deepened.

Though there was little she could have done to alleviate his pain, or hers, she trusted that light would follow darkness. She trusted that the loss of her son would be a gift for human kind. Oh, what a beautiful gift indeed.

Losing a loved one, a child, a friend…might shatter our hearts into a million pieces, but there is beauty in the promise that with loss comes new life. Though we may not respond to great sorrow with the grace Our Holy Mother embodied, there is benefit in giving way to the mystery of the Spirit.

"When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!'

Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." (John 19:26-27)

Just as Our Holy Mother gave us the gift of her son, as depicted in John's Gospel, Jesus gave us the gift of his mother. Pilgrims, from all over the world, seek her motherly protection when in need of healing of mind, body, and spirit.

Jesus's death leads me to believe that we are called to give the gift of self. He comes naturally, each day, when we give ourselves to loved ones, partners, ministries, and friends. By doing so, we are enabled to animate values rooted in Mercy.



SCRIPTURE

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

Luke 23:46-47

QUESTIONS

How can I embody Mercy?

How am I of gift to others?

What do I need to ask of Mary this Lent?



STATION 13

Jesus is Placed in the Arms of His Mother

Reflection by Laurie Gilmore

The 13th Station depicts Jesus pierced by the lance of a Roman soldier, blood and water flow from his side: but He is dead! This creates a mysterious image of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, by which we are continually reborn. How often do we contemplate this imagery and what it represents: our constant rebirth in Christ? How can we deepen our reflection of this mystery each day? Is Jesus calling us to an openness to rebirth in him and what that might be?

Under the cross, Mary and others remain with Jesus until Joseph of Arimathea takes Him to the tomb. The tomb symbolizes the dominion of death is about to end. Do we strive to remain faithful to Jesus, in good times and in our hours of darkness and despair? He is our Lord and Savior in all times, even when we may not feel his presence. Perhaps there have there been times when Christ seemed dead to us? Are we dead to Him? The 13th Station serves as a reminder that He is with us, ever faithful. Will I allow myself to be a more faithful disciple? Is He calling me to new challenges or to utilize gifts that I have not for His work?

It is difficult to embrace moments of confusion and times when we feel helpless. Can we allow ourselves to truly believe Jesus is present, the way Mary did by simply holding her son at the foot of the Cross? In the 13th Station, Mary accepts the events of the day, terrible as they are, but does not retreat in defeat. She remains.

Mary's grief is our grief. She stands with those who have lost children, those lost to suicide, addiction, violence, and those who have died suddenly or after an illness. She grieves with all who experience sorrow for the loss of a loved one. Each of us can identify someone who has experienced sorrow or perhaps we ourselves have experienced that sorrow. Do we allow ourselves to hold and trust in God's plan?

Most of us spend a great deal of time worrying about things beyond our control. Mary's example of holding tight to her Son and her faith, that He would lead, should calm and guide us in our daily struggles, not only in times of sorrow or grief.

Help us to accept the partings that must come. Partings can take many forms, not only death. Have we allowed Jesus to guide the partings we've experienced or will in our lives? Let us offer our departed back to you, as Mary did. Let us remain hopeful when faced with despair or death to understand that death is not the final act!



SCRIPTURE

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

John 19:40

QUESTION

Do we allow ourselves to hold and trust in God's plan?



STATION 14

Jesus Placed in the Tomb

Reflection by Paul McAvoy

We come to the end of the stations, when Our Lord is placed is in the tomb. To enter into that moment with the women and men of the early Church is to walk with them through a dark night of the soul. Their beloved teacher and rabbi, whom they had followed and believed in, lay broken and dead. Here was the Savior they had left everything to follow, whom they had seen perform countless miracles. Here was the leader that Peter, James, and John saw transfigured in all his glory on the mountain. Surely, if there was ever a time for his majesty and power to come through, it would have been at the moment of the Crucifixion. Why didn't he speak more forcefully at his trial? Why didn't he call down the heavens to set to right this injustice? The taunts of the crowd must have echoed in the ears of those disciples; they believed he was the true Son of God, so why didn't he save himself?

All of those questions would have to wait. The sun was setting, and the Sabbath soon upon them. Many had already scattered. They hastily arranged a borrowed tomb and wrapped Him in linen. Hardly a fitting ending for the one whom John the Baptist declared the Messiah. When they pushed the stone in place they must have felt they buried their hopes with Him.

How many of our hopes and dreams have died a sudden, shocking, and unexpected death? The life we wanted, the people we've loved, the future we were expecting — so much of it can be gone in an instant. We know what those first followers must have felt: The pain, the confusion, the unanswered questions. The feeling that this was not how it was supposed to end. The early Church, just a few dozen people at most, wept bitterly.

Today we weep with them. We know that Easter Sunday follows Good Friday, as surely as the dawn follows the night. But they did not know that, not in the moment. It is only with the passage of time that would be revealed. Likewise, when we come to those moments in our life when all seems lost and we don't know how it will turn out, we have to trust that God will make it right in the fullness of time. We have the Resurrection to look to as our faith and our hope; the stone rolled away, the man reborn anew. The cross, the symbol of defeat on Friday, would be the sign of triumph on Sunday. The wounds in the flesh remain, but the glory radiates from the new life created in God. The journey with Jesus to the tomb is about a love too powerful to be contained by a tomb — for at the end, even death has been defeated.



SCRIPTURE

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 19:41-42

QUESTIONS

What do you dream of and for?

Are those dreams still alive?

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Scripture, references, quotes and questions selected by Victoria Battell. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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Poem – Night

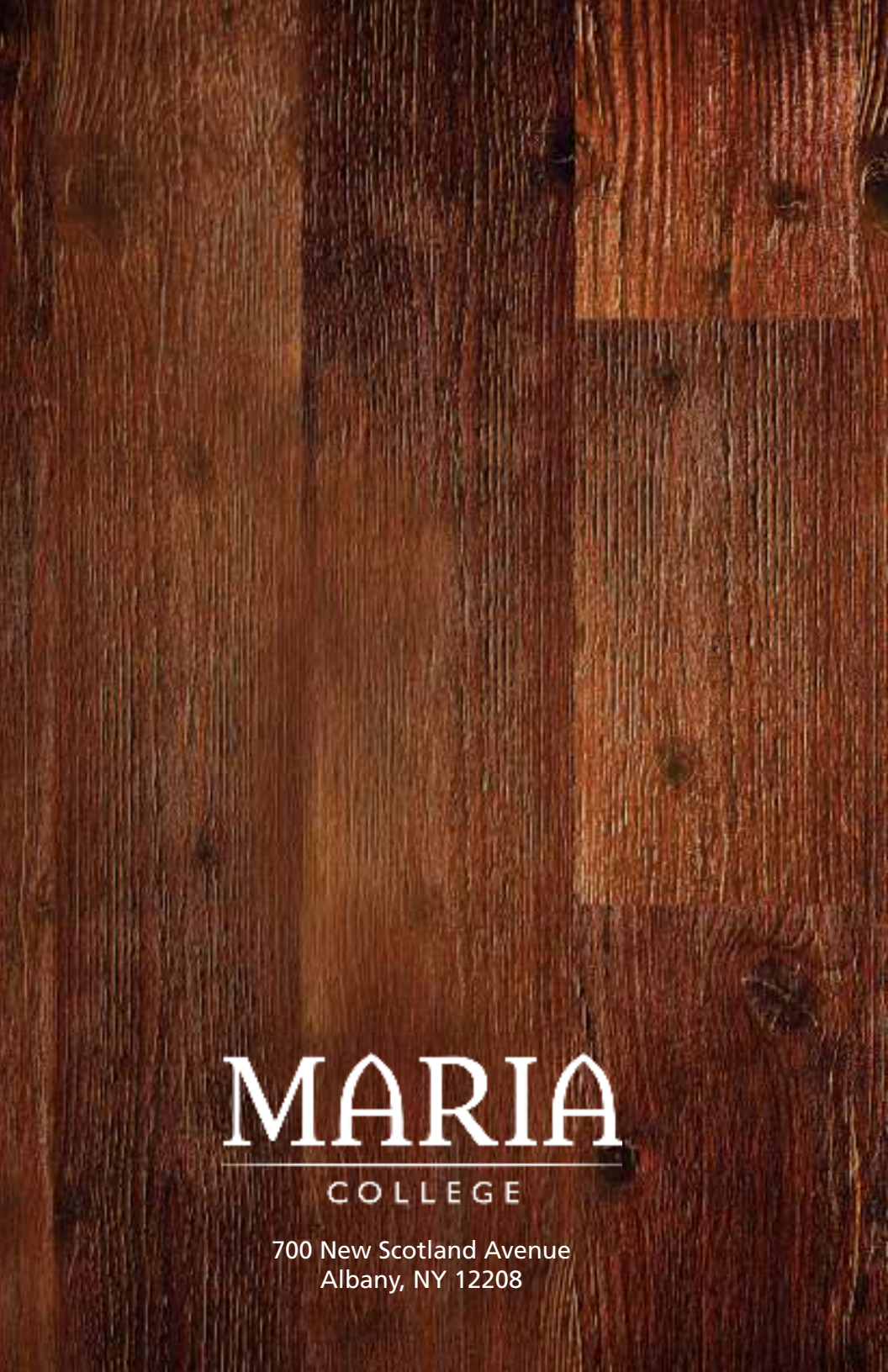
By Victoria Battell (2016)

God whispers to me
in the dark.
I hear him
but he speaks not
the words I want
to hear.

My own plastic desires
drive me away
from myself,
my true self
which in him
alone
finds meaning.

God tells me to
listen to how
my own heart
beats with
his rhythm,
calling me into
myself where
his desire
awaits
recognition.

When will
this darkness pass?
When I let God
open the door
to the light
within, or,
I just wait
for the dawn.



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