

The cross and the world

Teresa Malcolm | Apr. 9, 2009



Catholic women carry wooden crosses in Dili, East Timor. (CNS/Reuters)

(Editor's note: While this story appeared March 18, 2005, the parish in Evansville, Ind., continues its tradition of praying the Way of the Cross.)

The devastation of the tsunami in Asia at the end of 2004 and the worldwide outpouring of compassion that followed prompted the liturgy committee of an Indiana parish to imagine a way to highlight the suffering of Christ in the world today -- by connecting the past year's events with the Stations of the Cross.

As a group, members of the liturgy committee combed through magazines to find images that would capture each Station -- itself a "prayerful, powerful" experience, said Benedictine Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz, pastoral associate of St. Mary Parish in Evansville.

The result was "Christ Still Suffers in Our World Today: The Way of the Cross 2005," which was inaugurated on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 9. The photos they chose were hung under the traditional Stations around the church, each accompanied by a quote from scripture.

The Stations have attracted attention beyond the times formally set aside for the devotion. "We have people come into our church throughout the day," Schmitz told NCR. Through "quiet presence" with the photos, worshipers connect to the Way of the Cross "on a personal level." This is not distant from us in our lives. It's real and happening today," she said.

The photos will be displayed throughout Lent. Schmitz said the liturgy committee has discussed repeating the project next year.

The program printed for "Christ Still Suffers in Our World Today" ends with the Gospel of Matthew, 25:31-46: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink?"

"One of the important parts of doing this whole depiction of the Way of the Cross was to call us to action," Schmitz said. She noted that a concurrent parish collection of shoes for the homeless has exceeded expectations. "I think it has been inspired by their prayer" at the Stations, she said. "This has reached people on a different

level -- to move beyond my own personal suffering, to know there's a world beyond myself.?

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Christ Still Suffers in Our World Today

The Way of the Cross

The following are descriptions of the photos used in the Way of the Cross at St. Mary Catholic Church in Evansville, Ind., along with the scripture chosen to accompany each image.



I Jesus Is Condemned to Death

In April 2001, a woman convicted of murder hears the verdict before being taken away to be executed in Ghangzhou, China.

“Let his blood be on us and on our children.” (Matthew 27:25)

II Jesus Receives the Cross

Mary Bussie, an elderly victim of Hurricane Jeanne, sits outside her destroyed mobile home Sept. 27, 2004, in Jensen Beach, Fla.

“Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear.” (Psalm 27:3)



III Jesus Falls the First Time

An Indian woman mourns the death of her relative, who was killed in Cuddalore, India, by the Dec. 26 tsunami.

“I am bowed and brought to my knees. I go mourning all the day long.” (Psalm 38:7)

IV Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother

A man comforts a woman amid the devastation of the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

“Near the cross of Jesus, there stood his mother.” (John 19:25)

V Simon of Cyrene Helps With the Cross

Neighbors help build sandbag levees.

“Who will stand with me?” (Psalm 94:16)

VI Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Li Aihua weeps as she holds a photo of her son, who died at 29 from silicosis, a lung disease contracted in a gold mine in China's Jiangxi province.

Of you my heart speaks; seek his face. (Psalm 27:8)



VII Jesus Falls the Second Time

Victims sit on the tracks outside the Atocha train station as they await medical help after a series of deadly explosions in Madrid, Spain, March 11, 2004.

All my frame burns with fever; all my body is sick. (Psalm 38:8)

VIII Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Indonesian women displaced by the tsunami gather in a refugee camp in Banda Aceh.

Weep not for me but for yourselves and your children. (Luke 23:28)

IX Jesus Falls the Third Time

Homeless children sleep on the streets of Hanoi, Vietnam.

I have become abhorrent to them. (Psalm 88:9)

X Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Indonesian troops retrieve bodies in Sumatra a week after the tsunami.

All who see me deride me. (Psalm 22:8)

XI Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Sri Lankan tsunami survivors stand in the wreckage of buildings and boats in Kalmunai Dec. 29.

All my bones are crushed. (Psalm 22:15)

XII Jesus Is Crucified

A hooded and bound detainee is held near Balad Airfield in Iraq.

Father, forgive them; they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)



XIII Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross and Placed in the

Arms of His Mother

A mother in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, grieves over the body of her daughter, killed in the tsunami.
?Look and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.? (Lamentations 1:12)

XIV Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb

Rows of coffins await the bodies of tsunami victims in Phuket, Thailand.

?I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.? (Psalm 4:9)

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