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We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

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# Jesus Falls For The Second Time

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Today's Scripture

2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Joel 2:15-27

It breaks our heart when we see Jesus fall for the first time because his broken, beaten, battered body has to bear the burden of the cross. When he falls for a second time, it hurts again because at this point, he has met his mother, received help from Simon of Cyrene, and found a moment of relief with Veronica, who wiped his face clean. And yet, in spite of the support, he still falls for a second time.

There are many people out there who struggle with all sorts of addictions: drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc. One thing that many people do when they want to break free from addictions is get some kind of help through a support group. However, entering into rehabilitation doesn't guarantee that people will stay on the straight and narrow.

A few years ago, I met someone who loved making people laugh. Later on, I heard that this person ended up getting arrested multiple times for alcohol abuse and disturbing the peace. It turned out that he was suffering from depression. I had no idea of the struggles he carried inside of him because he had friends and a good relationship. He sought out help, but many people wrote him off as a lost cause and showed no compassion, which caused him to hurt others and himself in the process.

The good news is that in spite of his struggles with alcoholism and depression, this person has gone into treatment and thanks to the magic of social media, I know that he's been improving. I continue to pray for him, though, because these addictions and the issues he's been dealing with won't go away even after he finishes treatment. My constant prayer is that if I ever get to meet him again, I'll get to see him smile and make everyone laugh like the way he did when we first met.

Part of being daughters of Christ is helping people back up, no matter how far down they have fallen When you meditate on this particular station, I hope that you offer a prayer for all those who are struggling with addictions. It's really hard to have compassion for them sometimes, especially when they do bad things. However, part of being daughters of Christ is helping people back up, no matter how far down they have fallen. Even if it just means praying for them.

- Monique

Reflection:

1.) Why does having strong support in our struggles make a difference?

2.) Are there people out there that you consider a lost cause or sins that you consider unforgivable? Why?

### Peace from Within

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Today's Scripture

Romans 7:15-20, Matthew 18:1-5, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

St. Teresa of Avila is someone who knows the process of reforming oneself all too well. She grew up with a good Catholic family, but she fell into the sin of vanity. This self-centered attitude remained with her even when she entered the convent. At the time, the convent that she lived in allowed its nuns luxuries that defied the vow of poverty. For a while, Teresa centered her life on pleasing others and leading a "minimalist" spiritual lifestyle, making sure that she didn't commit any serious sins, but also avoiding any means of improving her virtues.

It wasn't until Teresa lost her father and encountered a wise mentor in the form of a Dominican priest that she started turning her life around. It took her a long time,

though, for her to finally acknowledge her vanity. In fact, what finally got Teresa to learn humility and completely devote her life to Jesus was when she saw a statue of Christ in his bloodied, beaten, battered form. To guote her autobiography:

"It was a representation of Christ most grievously wounded; and so devotional, that the very sight of it, when I saw it, moved me-

so well did it show forth that which He suffered for us. So keenly did I feel the evil return I had made for those wounds, that I thought my heart was breaking. I threw myself on the ground beside it, my tears flowing plenteously, and implored Him to strengthen me once for all, so that I might never offend Him any more."

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Saint Teresa of Avila spent the rest her life reforming the Carmelite order, even when the odds were against her and during times that people disapproved of her. Eventually, she would write works that centered on the reformation of the soul: The Way of Perfection and The Interior Castle. I highly recommend you read them, along with her autobiography.

We may not struggle with obvious addictions such as alcohol, drugs, or pornography, but there are other addictions that we may not be aware of. We can easily be addicted to our own vanity or our desire to please other people. We may be trying to live a minimalistic spirituality instead of giving ourselves completely to God. We may say that we are living holy lives, but our actions may contradict our words. In other words, we have a lot in common with how St. Teresa of Avila was during her youth and adulthood.

Thankfully, my dearest sisters in Christ, we can learn from St. Teresa of Avila by reforming our souls during this Lenten season. We can meditate on the crucified Christ the way that she did and understand the true meaning of humility. And even when we fall, these words from St. Teresa can be a good motivation for us to get back up again:

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.

- Monique

Reflection:

1.) What are some things that you struggle with? Do you identify with what Paul said in Romans 7:15-20? Do you feel like your constant struggles are beyond God's help?

2.) What parts of St. Teresa's life did you feel drawn to the most?

3.) How does the image of the Crucified Christ make you feel?

## lesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

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Today's Scripture

Luke 23:28-32, Isaiah 49:14-18

"Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed." Whenever I look at this verse, I can't help but think that Jesus knew about the ongoing battle to keep babies alive in the womb. It calls to mind how there are videos out there of people who work at abortion clinics negotiating prices for the body parts of aborted babies. It calls to mind how often large families get mocked and criticized. It calls to mind celebrities who promote a freewheeling, self-centered lifestyle at the expense of everyone else.

"Blessed are the barren. the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed."

We may not be at the time where people are outright saying that women who don't have children are better than mothers, but the implications are still there. We may not have a legal child limiting policy the way China does, but society still recommends "small families" and tries to paint couples who refuse to have children as being just as good a lifestyle as those who seek to have children through artificial means.

Too often the label "pro-life" is seen as a political platform or a soapbox for preachers to stand up on as one way of condemning the world. In reality, pro-life is just that: people who value life from conception until natural death. It's a movement that strives to help mothers in crisis situations and make sure that healthcare doesn't come at the expense of someone else. And it's not just a Christian movement or a

conservative political movement, either. There are people from all points of the political spectrum who support the pro-life movement. There are websites linking to atheists, Muslims, and even Pagans who also believe that life begins at conception.

Like the "daughters of Jerusalem," we need to approach the issue of abortion with compassion, not condemnation. While it's good to have a debate, you can't give into your anger or treat people as projects. Instead, pray before you bring up the issue. Or just start with prayer, period! Prayer is a powerful weapon, after all.

My prayer for this particular station is for an end to abortion and for people to be compassionate towards women who have crisis pregnancies. I also want to offer prayers for the souls of aborted children as well as for their families and the conversion of those who support abortion and work in the abortion industry. Abortion affects more people than just the woman who got one. It affects everyone.

Reflection:

-Monique

1.) What are your views on abortion? Why do you think it's such a hard thing to talk about?

2.) One popular pro-life catchphrase is "When a woman is in a crisis pregnancy, end the crisis, not the pregnancy." How do you think we can help women who are having crisis pregnancies?

### Love When there is Sorrow

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Today's Scripture

Matthew 25:35-40, Luke 10:21

One saint in this modern age who lived a life of compas- sion towards everyone, no matter what race, religion, or ethnicity they were, was Mother Teresa. She reached out to the poorest of the poor in Calcutta and devoted her life to treating them with dignity, no matter how the society she lived in disapproved. Of course, that didn't mean that she was a doormat, either. There's a story where she tried asking a baker for some charity for a hungry child, only for the baker to spit in her face. She responded thusly "Thank you for that gift to me. Do you have anything for the child?"

Mother Teresa also spoke out against abortion, calling it "the greatest destroyer of peace." Her speech at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC on February 5, 1994 is a shocking one in its brutal honesty. However, she advises people to approach those contemplating abortion with compassion. "How do we persuade a woman not to have an abortion? As always, we must persuade her with love and we remind ourselves that love means to be willing to give until it hurts. Jesus gave even His life to love us. So, the mother who is thinking of abortion, should be helped to love, that is, to give until it hurts her plans, or her free time, to respect the life of her child. The father of that child, whoever he is, must also give until it hurts."

Something that I love about Mother Teresa is that she always relied on the Lord to provide for her, even when she struggled with the darkness inside of herself. Like the daughters of Jerusalem, Mother Teresa was united with the Lord's despair, feeling God as being so distant from her, he felt nonexistent.

#### "Love until it hurts"

In spite of how she felt, though, she continued doing God's work. Her legacy continues on through the Missionaries of Charity. I'll admit that whenever I see a sister dressed in the blue and white habits indicative of the Missionaries of Charity, I smile and feel as if the presence of Mother Teresa is with them.

Out of the long list of saints that I admire, Mother Teresa is the saint that I want to emulate the most. How can we, as ordinary

women, follow Mother Teresa's example? Practice compassion on a daily basis. "Love until it hurts," as she said. Find ways to stand up for the unborn, but do so with love towards those involved as well. Trust that God will provide for what you need and stay faithful, even during times of spiritual dryness.

- Monique

Reflection:

1.) How do you identify with Mother Teresa? What parts of her life are you drawn to the most?

2.) How do you think we can apply Mother Teresa's philosophy of compassion and today's passage from Matthew into our lives? Who do you think is in need of the most love right now?

# Jesus Falls a Third Time

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Today's Scripture

Proverbs 24:16, Wisdom 3:1-9

"Fall seven times, get up eight." - Japanese Proverb

The hard part of living a Christian life isn't when we make mistakes or find ourselves struggling. It's regaining the will to try again. We live in a society that sells this illusion of unattainable perfection, that we can't let anyone see our problems or else end up being mocked and ridiculed or worse, written off as a lost cause. But this particular station shows us that as human beings, we are bound to fall down at one point or another. Sometimes, we fall constantly. But the important part is getting back up again.

Having perseverance and the conviction to press on in spite of the constant struggles and trials that we face isn't easy. It's especially hard for those who have anxiety, depression, or a disease that can't be cured overnight such as fibromyalgia or MS. People who have mental illnesses, neurological disorders, and chronic diseases are often looked down upon by society as being weak and not normal. This particular station, however, reminds us that like Jesus, these supposed outcasts are just as human as everyone else.

When I was in college, I started having anxiety attacks whenever I found myself in highly stressful situations. I struggled to understand my anxiety for years and I'm still trying to figure

#### "Though the just fall seven times, they rise again..." (Proverbs 24:16)

out how I can present myself as "normal" when everyone around me wants to define me by what many considered to be a "liability."

Whenever I have an anxiety attack, my mind becomes an ocean, creating wave after wave of negative thoughts, lies about myself, and temptations of having an attitude of self-pity. As much as society praises people who are supposed pictures of perfection, there's also a good portion of the world that loves to give attention to victims who thrive on self-pity. There are so many people who blame the world, blame society, blame people for putting them into

unfortunate circumstances. It's so easy to be a victim because it gets attention. But I didn't want to be a victim.

Instead of giving into my desire to nurse my self-pity, I found a group of friends of young adults who also had anxiety and learned a lot of good things from them. I learned more about what caused my anxiety. I learned ways to deal with my attacks by practicing some grounding exercises. There are a lot of grounding exercises out there, but my personal favorite is prayer. I always went into prayer whenever I had an anxiety attack. Even if my prayer was something as small as "Jesus, I need you right now," it made a big difference.

My prayer for this particular station is for all those who struggle with a mental disability or illness, neurological disorders such as autism, and chronic illnesses. I pray for people like me who struggle with anxiety. I also pray that the world will have more compassion towards those who don't obviously have everything altogether.

-Monique

Reflection:

1.) What kind of "chronic issues" are you dealing with? Are you constantly anxious? How do you think God can help you with these chronic issues?

2.) People with chronic illnesses often identify with the sufferings of Jesus, saying that it's their cross. While the sufferings from chronic illnesses are a great testimony of Christ Cruci-fied, how can they also represent strength?

### You are My King

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Today's Scripture

John 15:13, Galatians 2:20

I remember singing this song as part of my praise and worship sessions during retreats. Lyrically speaking, it's repetitive, but at the same time, I understand the sentiment. The salvation of the

Jesus, King of the Universe and all that is in it, chose to become human and lay down His life for me. world began when Jesus died on the Cross for us. The veil at the temple was torn in half and the gap that separated God from us is finally bridged. We were forgiven because He chose to take on our sins. We are welcomed into God's family because Jesus chose to be condemned.

It blows my mind that Jesus, King of the Universe and all that is in it, chose to become human and lay down His life for me, someone who would be born long after that sacrifice was made. He knew my life before it even began, and chose to endure being whipped, mocked, nailed, and pierced so that I may truly live. Indeed, it is an amazing love.

The reason that Christians devote themselves so much to doing good isn't to "earn" salvation or "buy" their way into Heaven. It's done out of love, out of gratitude, out of joy, to honor the King who became the lowest of the low, who died so that man will

never be separated from God again. I can't help but recall this Bible verse from the Gospel of John "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13) Part

of being a Christian is to have a personal relationship with Christ. He sees each and every one of us as his friends, friends that were worth dying for.

When we live a Christ-filled life, we live with the spirit of Christ dwelling in us. As it says in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) Christ lives within us. It doesn't get any more personal than that.

If possible, I highly recommend checking out retreats in your area. If you can't go on retreat, spend some time in Adoration. Meditate on this song, play this song in your head. How do you see Jesus? Is the image of Jesus as a king intimidating? Don't be afraid if you are intimidated by Jesus because this King of the Universe also wants to be your friend.

-Monique

Reflection:

1.) What comes to mind when you listen to this song?

2.) Do you think salvation is a one-time thing or is it more of a process? Why do you think that?

# Watching Suffering First Hand

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Today's Scripture

Luke 8:1-3, Matthew 27:45-56, Mark 15: 42-47, Mark 16:1-8, John 20:11-18

Who is Mary Magdalene? She's a saint that's shrouded in mystery. She's a woman who's been labeled as everything from a prostitute to Jesus's secret wife to a goddess. Let me tell you right now, no matter what you may have heard about Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles was none of those things.

First of all, Mary of Magdala is a woman, plain and simple. The passage from Luke introduces Mary Magdalene as a woman who was possessed by seven demons. It's almost impossible for me to imagine what life must've been like for Mary Magdalene before Christ came into her life. Thankfully for us, the Bible leaves out those nightmare-inducing details.

Instead, the passages about Mary Magdalene that are found in the Bible show what her life was like after she started serving Christ. She was a leader amongst the female disciples and that

When the darkness of Good **Friday and Holy** Saturday ended, Mary Magdalene was at the tomb.

she, along with the other female disciples, provided for Jesus and the apostles. It's never said if she was wealthy or married or widowed. What's important, though, is that she chose to give everything she had to help Jesus out with his ministry. In other words, she devoted her life to serving him.

There were three other important parts in the Bible that Mary Magdalene was witness to: Jesus being crucified, His burial, and his resurrection. At a time when almost all of Jesus's apostles had abandoned him (John being the exception), Mary Magdalene and the other female disciples were there with Jesus, watching his suffering firsthand. I can't even begin to imagine the pain she must've felt, watching one of her dearest friends, the man who saved her life, be tortured and suffer until he couldn't take it anymore. At the time that I am writing this, I have yet to attend a funeral. I never saw a dead body in real life. But I have lost people through death before. It's always hard. And always sudden.

When the darkness of Good Friday and Holy Saturday ended, Mary Magdalene was at the tomb with her friends, carrying spices and ointments for Jesus's body. Imagine the shock on their faces when they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Imagine their disappointment when they told the apostles, but the men didn't believe them.

Cut back to Mary Magdalene, who's at the tomb all by herself. She's crying in the presence of the angels when she sees someone nearby. Thinking he's the gardener, she asks him where Jesus's body is. Jesus reveals himself to his friend by simply saying her name. In that instance, she recognized her Savior and called him "Rabboni!" She embraces him, but he tells her to let go, to go to his apostles and tell them of his resurrection.

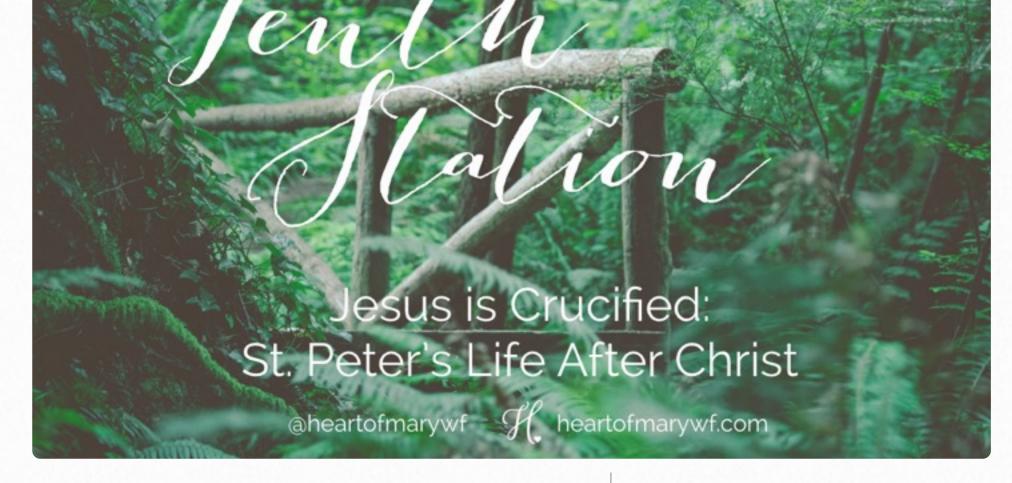
We don't know how long Mary Magdalene lived after she saw the Risen Christ and received the Holy Spirit. What we do know is that she spent her life going out and spreading the good news the way that all the other apostles did. While we may never really know who Mary Magdalene was as a person, we can imitate her by applying her actions in our own lives. We can devote our lives to Christ, giving all that we have to Him, share in his sufferings, rejoice in his resurrection, and go throughout the world to testify about Him.

-Monique

Reflection:

1.) What kind of woman do you imagine Mary Magdalene to be?

2.) Would you rather be defined as who you are as a person or by your actions? Why?



Today's Scripture

Luke 23:33-38, John 21:12-23

Today's sobering passage details how our Lord was crucified. Not only was he suffering the unimaginable pain of crucifixion, but he had to endure the mocking and hatred of all those surrounding him. He had very few people on his side near him (namely, his mother Mary and John the disciple), and not even Peter, the rock upon which the Lord had said He would build His church, was there for him.

Jesus foretold at the Last Supper that St. Peter would deny him three times the very night of His arrest. St. Peter couldn't fathom denying the Lord, and made it clear he thought that could never happen. St. Peter also likely couldn't, at the time, fathom Christ being arrested, tortured, and crucified to death.

#### Jesus said to him, "Tend my Lambs"

Despite Peter not being at Christ's side during the crucifixion, he was the first to enter the empty tomb of Christ on the day of the resurrection. Peter was also the first to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection. In John 21:12-18, Christ gives Peter the chance to admit his love for Jesus three separate times (which he does). There's a nice symmetry in Christ giving Peter the chance to admit his love for Him the same number of times that Peter denied Christ.

After Peter admits his love the third time, by which point Peter is a bit hurt because he feels as though Christ doubts his love, Christ seems to be leading Peter to a stronger affirmation of his love for Him. This seems to be done to prepare Peter for what Christ tells him next (John 23:18), "... 'Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your ands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go,' He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God..."

After Christ's resurrection, Peter was the head of the Church on Earth. Peter was our first pope, and was instrumental in bringing the gospel to the gentiles. At the Council of Jerusalem in around the year 50AD, Peter gave his support to the church to preach to Gentiles, something unusual in their culture.

According to Church tradition, Peter was crucified on Vatican Hill, upside down because he found himself unworthy to die in the same manner as the Lord. He was then buried in Rome, near the Vatican. In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine I honored Peter with a large basilica over the site of his burial.

- Mandi

Reflection:

1.) When have you ever had a hard time standing up for someone in an inferior situation? How did you feel afterwards? Pray that should the situation arise again, you have the courage to react as Mary and John did, rather than as scared as Peter did.

2.) Did you gain any insight or feel like you could relate with Peter when he was scared and denied knowing Christ? If so, have the consolation that even Peter, the first Pope, the man who Christ entrusted the keys to His kingdom with, made a mistake but still became a saint.



# Jesus is Crucified: St. Peter Teaches us Courage

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Today's Scripture

Luke 23:33-38, John 21:12-23

How HARD must it have been for any of Christ's supporters to remain at the foot of His cross during the crucifixion? And how EASY must it must have been for those in the surrounding mob to join in the mocking of and hatred towards Christ as they crucified him? To this day, it can be similarly easy to join in when coworkers or classmates are bulling or picking on a peer. That part of human nature hasn't changed much since Christ's time. You can see it in even the youngest groups of children at school.

Christ was crucified with a criminal at each side. He was, in the eyes of those crucifying Him, no better than the criminals hanging next to him. The soldiers jeered at Him, tormented and teased Him, and He still did His father's work. Not only that, but He asked the Lord to forgive the two thieves hanging by His side. It can be difficult to stand up for someone who is being picked on or bullied. Even harder would be for a victim to pray for their tormentors.

Christ's manner of death wasn't just a string of events, it was the plan of God. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Let us pray for the strength and courage to stand up for what is right, especially in the hardest times.

It must have been such a torment to Peter to know he lacked the courage to stand with Christ, physically and then later verbally when questioned on multiple occasions. It's lucky for us, however, that like Christ giving Peter the opportunity to make up for his denials by having Peter profess his love for Christ, we are given the opportunity to make up for our shortcomings through the sacrament of reconciliation.

It's difficult even in today's day to go against the grain and speak up when someone is doing something wrong, espe-

cially if you're in the minority. While we have the opportunity to ask for forgiveness, let us pray for the strength and courage to stand up for what is right, especially in the hardest times.

Reflection:

1.) Is there a recent time you can recall in which you should have spoken up for a friend, family member, or coworker? What could you have done or said differently to stand up for this person?

2.) Try to remember that God has a plan for everyone, and for everything. When life stresses get overwhelming or anxiety-inducing, what can you do to remind yourself to let God's love take over and trust in His plan?

Mandi

### Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief: Christ's Forgiveness Abounds

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Today's Scripture

Luke 23:34-43

"...Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," (23:34). HOLY MOLY. We have some POWERFUL and loving words to start today off. Even KNOWING what He is about to go through, Christ asks our Father to forgive. In the midst of the pain He's already going through, knowing how much pain is yet to come, and He's still caring for His flock.

The soldiers jeered at Christ, everyday people stood by watching and being hateful, even the rulers were talking smack. "He saved others, let Him save Himself..." they said about Him. How many times did the people have to dare Christ to prove Himself, even though time and time again they had His examples and miracles before them? Even despite the examples of love and righteousness He provided them for years, here they are now, mocking and crucifying Him.

The sign above Christ's cross read, "The King of the Jews," which was meant in an entirely mocking manner. Even one of the criminals hanging beside Christ (the last place you'd think would be an opportunity for insulting remarks), began to join in and mock Christ. The other thief hushed the first thief, and stood up for Christ. He made a point to say that at least they (the two thieves) had been judged according to their actions. They (according to the law) deserved to be getting crucified, but Christ did not deserve to be crucified. He then turns to Christ and begs Him to remember him when Christ goes into His kingdom.

#### Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Christ tells the man, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." This interaction is only presented in the gospel of Luke. According to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, this serves to show that Luke's understanding is that the ultimate destination of a Christian is to be with Jesus (in paradise).

Truly, the goal of every Christian should be to be with Christ in paradise! Christ, even in on the cross being physically, mentally, and emotionally tormented, cared

so much he comforted and promised paradise to the Good Thief.

-Mandi

Reflection:

1.) What parts of our faith give you the hardest time? When do you, yourself, think "God, prove yourself!" When these times come up, try to think more like the Good Thief, and less like going with the crowd. Be more thankful and grateful for everything that God HAS provided

2.) It's easy in these days to get overwhelmed with work, school, family, and more. It's easy to skimp on prayer and personal reflection with Christ. What can you do to make sure when you start to get overwhelmed, that you (like the good thief), say, "Jesus, remember me," and be more patient and appreciative of what we have?

## Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief: Working Hard for Faith

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Today's Scripture

Luke 23:34-43

How like the thieves can we humans be! Some choose to jeer and refuse to believe already-provided signs, some believe and follow Christ unquestioningly. It's easy to get frustrated with our faith when things are tough; it's easy to tell God to prove things to us. Prove that

these prayers are heard, prove that you care, if you're REALLY there, PROVE IT.

While some may have unshaken faith that comes naturally to them, others have to work hard at cultivating and nurturing our faith. It's easy to take part in the "mob mentality," and go along with whatever is easiest or least complicated. With work, school, kids, family, friends, and other stressors, there is so much pressure from every direction that can pile up and become so overwhelming. It's even more overwhelming when things aren't going the way you'd hoped or prayed. It's so easy to give up hope, or to forget that God has a plan for all of us, and would never give us a challenge just to see us sweat. Going against the grain is, by the very definition, never the easy way. In some situations, however, it's the path we should try our hardest to follow.

Christ, himself, tells us not to worry; He tells us to be at peace. "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be

afraid." John 14:27. Psalms is a great resource for scriptural reminders to give it up to the Lord and to not worry.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul." Psalm 94:19

The Good Thief, despite being surrounded by the mob mentality, and being going through torment and pain himself, still recognized Christ's love and His importance, and asked for Him to remember him when Christ came into His kingdom. Christ then extended his loving mercy to the good thief. Talk about, "Ask and it shall be given to you," right?? (Matthew 7:7).

Having faith is HARD. Asking for forgiveness is TOUGH. Going against the grain is, by the very definition, never the easy way. In some situations, however, it's the path we should try our hardest to follow.

Reflection:

- Mandi

When do you have the hardest time trusting in God's love and not wishing and hoping for more proof of it? What scripture passages can you remember to consult when it gets hard-est? Which spoke to your heart the most?



"You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst. You shall wander far in safety, though you do not know the way."

Today's hymns is one of my favorites. Not only do the melodies and music notes come across so peacefully and just...warm, but the words also remind us of where we, as Christ's church, have come from. The lyrics are a HUGE help for someone in my shoes: very type-A, sometimes prone to overthinking things (especially the things I know I cannot control).

The first verse is a nod to our Hebrew ancestors as Moses lead them out of Egypt at God's command. God's people, lead by Moses, wandered for FOURTY YEARS, and the whole time, God provided for them. They were safe under God's watchful eye and loving care the entire time.

> "Be not afraid, I go before you always, Come follow Me, and I shall give you rest"

The chorus is such a peaceful reminder to us: be NOT afraid! Christ is with us, ALWAYS! Even in our darkest hours, He is there to comfort us and give us rest, if we only turn to him.

"Blessed are your poor, for the Kingdom shall be theirs. Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh."

I love that there's a symmetry in this song, starting out with the Old Testament and including references to the New Testament. This verse comes from the Beatitudes, given to us from Christ at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-11). To me, the Beatitudes are a beautifully articulated list of reminders and goals. When I'm frustrated at work because of someone getting credit for

something I did, I try to remember that, "Blessed are the meek," and take a deep breath, and give it to Christ.

"Be not afraid, I go before you always, Come follow Me, and I shall give you rest."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy,"—helpful for when tempers start to flare.

The Beatitudes being referenced brings us full circle to the overall theme of this hymn. Don't be afraid, God is here for us! Let us follow Him, and receive peace!

Reflection:

Mandi

What Beatitude is hardest for you to keep in mind? Do you struggle more with keeping those in mind, or with "being not afraid," and giving your stresses and pain to the Lord? Pray for patience and peace from the Lord when things get tough. Remember to "be not afraid," and He will give you rest!



# Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple: Saint Mary, Our Perfect Example

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Today's Scripture

John 19: 25-27

"When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home."

This is where we, as Catholics, believe Christ gave us His mother for our Spiritual Mother. This is a fundamental difference between Catholic and Protestant churches. While most Protestant churches believe we "worship," Mary, the esteem in which we hold Mary is actually well-deserved veneration, not worship. Here, at the Crucifixion, Christ gives us the gift of His mother, and gives His mother His flock.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "...By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Thus she is a "preeminent and . . . wholly unique member of the Church"; indeed, she is the "exemplary realization" of the Church," (507-508).

This goes to explain to us that because of her absolutely perfect example of obedience of God's plan and her examples of faith and charity, Mary is the perfect example, aside from her son, for us to emulate. Mary is also the perfect person to intercede to her son for us.

When you were little and you asked your dad for something that he denied, did you ever go to your mom to ask her to change his mind? That's what I'm reminded of when I think of praying to Mary for her

intercession. She set something sort of like a precedent for others to ask her for intercession at the Wedding of Cana.

"...When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'\* [And] Jesus said to her, 'Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servers, 'Do whatever he tells you,'..." (John 2: 3-5).

#### Christ gives us the gift of His mother

Mary was asking her son to help the wedding party, and even though his words sounded like He wasn't going to do anything about it, He performed His first public miracle at the behest of his mother. This is believed to be a sign that we, too, are to ask Mary for her intercession.

According to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, "Mary embraces God's will and freely chooses to cooperate with God's grace, thereby fulfilling a crucial role in God's plan of salvation. Throughout the centuries, the Church has turned to the Blessed Virgin in order to come closer to Christ," (USCCB). Venerating Mary only magnifies our love and relationship with Christ, it doesn't take away from our relationship with God.

Reflection:

Spend some time in prayer with Mary, pray to Mary; practice loving Christ's mother as He did. Pray that we have the courage to always say YES to God, and have the courage to stand by those in need, as she and John did at the foot of the cross.

-Mandi

### Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple: Our Holy Mother, Given to Us by Christ

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Today's Scripture

John 19: 25-27

"When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother,'...".

With these words, Christ gave us a spiritual mother. While she has a special spot in God's eye because of her sinless state, she's one of us. It makes her more relatable to the rest of us. The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops says of Mary:

"...Redeemed by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth," (USCCB).

Our Protestant brothers and sisters are really missing out on a beautiful gift from Christ in not venerating her as we do. The early Christian church venerated her and treated her with honor from even the get go. It's a fundamental belief of Catholicism that Mary is one of us, yet set apart. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says in the section titled. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin:

"Through the **Rosary the** faithful receive abundant grace." - St. John Paul II

"...All generations will call me blessed": "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian

worship." The Church rightly honors "the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration."The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an "epitome of the whole Gospel," express this devotion to the Virgin Mary...."

We have such a gift in the Rosary. The prayers of the Rosary comes straight from the scriptures, the Apostles' Creed is the summary of our Catholic beliefs; the Our Father comes from the gospels, and the mysteries center around events during Christ's life. There are four sets of Mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and—added by Pope John Paul II in 2002—the Luminous.

The repetition involved in the rosary is said by the USCCB to be, "... meant to lead one into restful and contemplative prayer related to each Mystery. The gentle repetition of the words helps us to enter into the silence of our hearts, where Christ's spirit dwells..." (USCCB). Praying the Rosary is a peaceful time of thoughtful prayer, and can be a huge gift to us.

Pope John Paul II wrote in Rosarium Virginis Mariae in 2002, "The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium...With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer..."

So not only do we have a tranquil prayer and opportunity to learn more about Christ and Mary through the rosary, we receive abundant graces from it, as well!

The gift we've been given of the rosary is one often taken for granted or forgotten about. Sometimes it's hard to remember the mysteries, the order of the prayers, or to keep track of which Hail Mary you're on in a decade, but it's a prayer worth practicing! There are multiple apps one can download to help, and practice makes perfect!

- Mandi

Reflection:

When was the last time you prayed a full rosary? What rosary mysteries call to your heart the most? Try to make an effort to pray the rosary more often than you do. If you don't often pray it, start out small. Maybe once a month, or once every other week. Once you become accustomed to the prayers and how cathartic it can be to pray to our Holy Mother with this wonderful gift, it'll get easier and easier to make more time and pray it even more!

# Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

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Today's Scripture

Luke 23: 50-52, Matthew 14:27

In the thirteenth station, there is a lot of sorrow happening. Jesus' suffering has ended yet His loved one's are suffering all around as they take him down from the cross. But they didn't just turn their backs and leave their loved one behind... they did something about it.

Blessed Titus Brandsma, suddenly has a grip on my heart. His feast day is the same as our wedding anniversary and he seems like he was a top notch man. Father Titus didn't have it easy, he suffered from chronic illness and eventually suffered at the hands of the Nazi's. He was able to display mankind's portion of the suffering of the Cross. He showed those in the twenty-first century how to suffer, then forgive because of how deeply his life was rooted in prayer which displayed how much one needs to have faith and trust in God.

Blessed Titus didn't just go running out the gate preaching the Gospel. He had faith and trust in God but did not go out seeking martyrdom like some saints do/did. But when it came his time, he was able to accept God's will, just as Jesus did.

As the Nazi invasion was happening Father Brandsma was adamant to ensure that the Nazi propaganda was not printed in the Church papers or placed in the churches. He got the bishops

"He who wants to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come in conflict with it." - Blessed Titus Brandsma behind him and proceeded to go church to church making sure they knew what was the correct thing to do, and not conform to the Nazi government. He had the courage to go around, even though it was against the law, and preach what was the right thing to do. Courage. He had the courage, just like Joseph of Arimithea did to ask for his Lord's body. Courage. He had the courage, just like Jesus did to carry His cross to His death. Courage.

"Take Courage. For it is I, Do not be Afraid."

- Elizabeth

Reflection:

Today, I challenge you to look for the courage that Blessed Titus, St. Joseph of Arimithea and Jesus showed us in the thirteenth station. And I challenge you to see and reflect on where else we can blatantly see God's will throughout this station.

# The Courageous Heart

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Today's Scripture

Matthew 14:27, Psalm 31:24

"Take Courage. For it is I, Do not be Afraid."

We left off yesterday talking about courage and God's will. I think so many times we get mixed up with what is our will with what is God's will. I know for me, so many times I want to believe that what I want is

what God wants. But unfortunately, that is not always the case. Many times, I have heard, "I was praying for this.... but the Lord gave me this instead." In these moments, we can't always understand why he placed this different situation in our hands, but he did.

I have written many times about my Grandma passing. It was sudden, it was quick and it was unexpected. It wasn't at a good time and I would change it if I could. I think about this often, what if we didn't pick that wedding date, what if we had the wedding in Pennsylvania instead of California, what if, what if, what if. This is one of those situations, I sat in my parent's bedroom as they were board"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God of Christ Jesus for you."

ing their flight to say their last goodbyes, hoping and praying it wasn't true. I sat curled up, wiping tears from my eyes wondering why this was God's plan. Why this had to happen now... I truthfully cannot an-

swer these questions yet, but I do know that it happened for a reason, and I am still working through the reasoning and the lessons it is still teaching me.

The one thing I do know, is it took courage to wipe the tears and get up out of bed. It took courage to open the door and keep going. It took courage to see that this, although terrible and hard, was God's will.

"...who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." -Galatians 1:4

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, so that we could have Eternal life with him. By Jesus dying on the cross, it has allowed mankind the opportunity to obey God's will and choose Salvation.

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God of Christ Jesus for you."

Reflection:

Elizabeth

Just as Blessed Titus didn't intend to be a martyr, we don't 'plan' to die. But we need to have the courage to thank God and accept his will in whatever he may throw our way. So what are you struggling to accept this lenten season as it comes to a close? What do you need to find courage in so it can help you accept the will of the Father?



Today's Scripture

Mark 15:46, Matthew 27:57-61, Luke 23:53

The fourteenth station is the station where Jesus is laid in the tomb. Saint Father Damien, was a priest in the 1800's when the Hawaiian Islands were experiencing a leprosy epidemic. The Hawaiian government banned all those suffering from leprosy to the island of Molokai to suffer there and not infect others. While most hawaiians were avoiding those with leprosy as much as possibly, Father Damien did not. He dove in head first out of love for the people.

He worked with the Hawaiian people to restore dignity and show them the right to every person's life. He made sure to give funerals to those he could, he taught those of the island how to grow crops, and also assisted with bandaging and giving medical attention to those that could use the assistance.He then also started showing the people of the island Jesus' love, not just through his actions, but started to teach them of Christ's healing and saving power. And he began to teach them how to sing and pray and love each other through these examples of holiness and humility. He eventually died from leprosy just as those of the island continually did as well.

In Christ, we see courage, but most of all we see love.

Once again, we see courage, but most of all we see love. Just as Joseph took down the body of Jesus out of love and put it in a tomb, not out of obligation, but out of love. Jesus died for us on the cross, once again, not out of obligation, but out of love. He carried the cross for us, out of love.

Secondly, Jesus died on the cross for us and was laid in the tomb as an act of service and love. He is giving us the example of dying for us out of how much love he has for us. Just as Father Damien went and gave his life to the people of Molokai out of love for them. He served them, he showed them love, he showed them faith, he showed them Christ. He gave his life so that others would be led to Christ. Christ gave his life so that we could have life in him.

- Elizabeth

Reflection:

### Were you there?

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Today's Scripture

Matthew 27:31-56, Matthew 28:1-15

This hymn, I always associate to Lent, because of the words and the way it places you specifically into these moments. The moments of the Lord being crucified, being nailed to the cross, laying him in the tomb and piercing him in the side. Were you there?

Well, physically no, I was not there... and the first time I listened to it I thought it was dumb, I was constantly answering "NO, I was not there... No! NO! No!

But we were there, we were the man that was yelling, "Crucify him!" every time we sin. We are Simon of Arimathea every time we need help carrying our Cross and every time Jesus comes along and helps us carry our cross. We are there every time we turn our backs and deny our faith--it's another slash to Christ's side. Then we are the women weeping for our Lord, realizing our faults and how much we need him.

Yes we are there, at the foot of the cross as each nail drives into his skin. Yes, we are there at every cry and wail of pain that is sent out. Yes, we are there because he is on that cross to show and give us all his love. Yes, we are there.

1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

2. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

3. Were you there when they pierced him in the side?Were you there when they pierced him in the side?Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

4. Were you there when the sun refused to shine?Were you there when the sun refused to shine?Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

6. Were you there when he rose up from the dead? Were you there when he rose up from the dead? Sometimes I feel like shouting 'Glory, glory, glory!' Were you there when he rose up from the dead?

Reflection:

- Elizabeth

### The Greatest Love

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Today's Scripture

1 Corinthians 16:14, John 3:16, John 15: 13, Mark 12:30-31

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The love I have in my heart for my family is enormous. When I married Christopher, I thought that the love I had for him couldn't grow anymore than where it was. And the idea of having to share that love with children was something so incomprehensible to me at the time. Then our daughter came along and my heart nearly exploded. Yet, she grew a day older each day and my heart learned how to make room to love her more. Then, we got pregnant with our son, and the question arose again. How are we going to have enough love in our hearts for each other and for both our children? Yet, here he is and somehow my heart has made room to love him, and each day it keeps growing more. My love never stopped for my daughter, it kept growing right along side my love for my husband and son.

But this isn't where our love stops. Remember, we have life and the ability to love and the opportunity to share that love with others because Jesus died on the cross and was buried in the tomb. He did it out of love for us.

"Do everything in love."

We are called on the daily to love in all we do and show our neighbors love through our words and actions. We are called to say and do things out of love so that they can see the face of Christ in us.

When we do everything in love, just as Father Damien did for the people of Molokai and just as Jesus did when he died on the cross and was buried in the tomb for us, the rewards are great in heaven.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life."

We are to love without abandon, love without boundaries, love with all we have to the very last moment possible. Lastly, there is no greater example of love than to lay down your life for your friends. So I challenge you, are you laying down your life for your friends on the daily basis? Are you the one to stay by their side and lay them to rest when they have relentlessly loved as we are called to?

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

We are to love without abandon, love without boundaries, love with all we have to the very last moment possible. We are to love until we get laid to rest, until we get put in the tomb, till we have nothing else to give...just as Father Damien did with the people of Molokai and just as Jesus did for us.

Reflection:

Elizabeth



So here we stand on the cusp of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. You have been introduced to a plethora of saints and seen how their love, sacrifices, humility and examples can also be united through the stations.

At this point, I am hoping that there is at least one saint that has stood out to you. That one saint that as you read through that day's writings, in your head you are yelling and possibly fistbumping at the idea of this particular saint and the connection that was made. Maybe it was the station that really called to you because you never saw Christ that way, maybe it was the way the women wailed for Jesus as he passed them by.

Lent is a time for us to repent and truly dive into the sacrifice that the Lord did for us, and continues to do for us. Lent is a time for us to regather ourselves and allow ourselves to be ready for salvation with our Lord. Lent is a time for us to sacrifice, repent and be grateful for this opportunity for growth.

#### Don't give up, press on!

As hard as the end of Lent is, you are almost there. Even though the saints had it difficult, they didn't just peace out and give up because they were close to the end. Our ultimate goals should be heaven, the saints ultimate goal was heaven, Jesus' ultimate goal was to allow us heaven with him. How awful would it be if we just gave up right before the end. Don't give up, press on, wrap yourselves

in the beauty and sacrifice of the next few days. Open your hearts and let them humbly soak in the sacrifice.

Because that sacrifice... that sacrifice is our key to heaven.

- Elizabeth

Reflection:

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# Open My Eyes, Lord

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Today's Scripture

Mark 8: 22-25, Psalm 119

Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see Your face Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see

Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see Your face Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see

Open my ears, Lord Help me to hear Your voice Open my ears, Lord Help me to hear

Open my heart, Lord Help me to love like You Open my heart, Lord Help me to love

Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see Your face Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see

Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see Your face Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see

You know, this hymn is a very different hymn for Lent. Yet! It is so important and really forces us to take a look at Lent in a little bit of a different light.

Without Jesus' sacrifice on the cross; we are blinded by the sin, by our vanity,, by our pride, by our boastfulness and so on. Without the example of Jesus we aren't allowing ourselves to be hubmer, we aren't allowing ourselves to show others Jesus' face. We aren't allowing ourselves to be evangelist.

We first though, need to open our hearts to allow the Love that outpours from the ultimate sacrifice the Lord made for us so that it will allow us to Open our eyes and heart and allow us to Love others.

I know I have talked about this image before, but in one of my favorite chapels is the image of Mary at the side of her Son on the cross. From one of his wounds on his side outpours the lifegiving waters, which flows through Mary's hands and down to the Tabernacle.

I love this imagery, and whenever I am struggling, this image snaps me right back to where I need to be. Jesus' sacrificed his life on the cross for us, His love outpours through his mother's hands and out to the world. We receive life through the Eucharist... this outpouring allows for us to let the life-giving waters flow through us unto others. The life-giving waters allow us to be purified and see, it allows us to be purified and to love and it allows us to be purified and exude the love he displayed for us on the cross.

Elizabeth

Reflection: