

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

You Are There

Years ago, there was a popular series on CBS called “You Are There,” hosted by Walter Cronkite, where great moments of history were re-created to make viewers feel as though the action were unfolding before their eyes.

You might get a similar sensation if you drop by our church any Friday evening during Lent to participate in one of the most popular, and perennially moving, experiences we have in this parish: the Stations of the Cross. For the past few years, my wife and I have been leading a version of the Stations that offers a profoundly human interpretation of one of Christianity’s oldest devotions.

It is known as “Mary’s Way of the Cross” created by Fr. Richard Furey, CSSR. What began as an innovative way of praying the Stations has become a parish tradition—a unique custom that has particular resonance and meaning at a church dedicated to the Queen of Martyrs.

And it makes that very title of Our Lady have an even more powerful meaning. While we are praying the stations, we share intimately in a mother’s anguish, heartbreak and pain. It is palpable.

From the very first station, we realize that we are about to be taken someplace we’ve never been before.

Siobhain begins with the first reflection: “It was early Friday morning when I saw my son. That was the first glimpse I had of him since they took him away....”

And our journey begins. We’ve been plunged into another world. Forest Hills becomes Jerusalem. And we start to feel some small part of what Mary must have gone through.

Between each station we sing the “Stabat Mater” (“At the cross her station keeping...”) and work our way through the struggles, the falls, the tears and the torment.

Mary becomes our narrator and guide, gently leading us to the place we really don’t want to go, but always reminding us that there was a greater purpose behind every setback, every stumble, every stab of pain.

“I knew it had to be,” she says to us. “And so I walked on, silently.”

Adding to the experience—illuminating it—is our own involvement in Christ’s passion and death. Mary isn’t the only one reliving the climb to Calvary.

So are we.

“Lord,” we pray, “what pain you endured for me. And what pain your mother went through, seeing her only son die for love of me!”

The Stations of the Cross have resonated for hundreds of years—and one reason, I think, is that Christ’s journey is really our journey. His anguish is ours. And as we follow his agony, we are invited to meditate on all the crosses we carry. How we struggle under them. How we fall. How we rise. And how we go on.

As much as it is about our salvation, and Christ’s bottomless love for us, the road to Calvary is also an arduous path through all manner of human suffering and sacrifice. But we take heart in this: Good Friday isn’t the end of the journey. And that simple truth suffuses the Way of the Cross with consolation and hope.

Ultimately, “Mary’s Way of the Cross” is the way all of us must travel. And this interpretation of a timeless devotion helps us to realize that—and allows us to feel, for a short time on a cold Friday night, that we aren’t just reading about the passion, or watching it unfold from across the centuries. No. Far from it.

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS

“Praying the Stations with Mary, the Mother of Jesus”

Fridays during Lent, at 7:30 p.m., followed by Benediction