

Reflecting on  
**Good Friday**



Meditations on  
Scripture and Art

in conjunction with the exhibition

**Good Friday**

Museum of Contemporary Religious Art  
Saint Louis University

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## **Museum of Contemporary Religious Art Saint Louis University**

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Reflection texts by David Brinker with contributions from Rev. Terrence E. Dempsey, S.J.  
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Cover image: (No. 1) Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station XIII, The Deposition*

**MOCRA**  
**15<sup>th</sup>** anniversary  
exhibitions

*Good Friday* is part of the celebration of MOCRA's first fifteen years, a foundational legacy upon which we hope to build ever more expansive exhibitions and programming.

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# Introduction

Since the early centuries of the faith, Christians have observed the season of Lent as a time of preparation for Easter. Over time a rich body of devotional literature and practices has developed which believers can draw on to aid in their prayer and reflection.

Visual imagery holds a significant place in this repertoire of prayer aids. For instance, many Christians have made use of icons as a vehicle to communication with the divine. The worship spaces of many Christian traditions feature images carved in stone, set into stained glass, painted with oil, illuminated on paper, and stitched into fabric. These images play a role in worship, education and formation, and devotion.

The MOCRA exhibition *Good Friday* may serve in a similar way for some visitors. The artists in this exhibition have responded to the many powerful images, stories, and symbols of the suffering and death of Jesus. In this small booklet, we offer resources to help you approach these contemporary works of art in a spirit of prayerful reflection and devotion. Whether this is a familiar or unfamiliar way for you to pray, we hope that the *Good Friday* exhibition can help open new dimensions in your Lenten prayer and reflection.



(No. 5) Craig Antrim, *Icon Wall* (detail)



## How to use this booklet

Over the course of fifteen years of exhibitions at MOCRA, we have observed that in any encounter with a work of art there is a potential for “conversation” between the viewer, the artist, and the artwork. While this may not be a spoken dialogue, each participant brings to the conversation something that may be shared, and receives something back from the other participants. When approached in a spirit of prayer, such conversations with art provide opportunities for grace-filled insights to emerge.

In this booklet we draw partial inspiration from the traditional devotion called the “Stations of the Cross”—a method of prayer that helps the believer make a small pilgrimage, moving physically and spiritually through the various events of the Passion of Jesus.\*

We have identified six episodes which are reflected in the works in the *Good Friday* exhibition. For each of these episodes, we provide:

- a brief summary of the episode and its significance
- relevant passages from the Scriptures
- a list of artworks that relate to the episode
- a reflection on one or two of those artworks
- space for notes or journaling

To assist you in finding the artworks, you will find a diagram of the gallery on the back cover. In the lists of artworks relating to an episode, each work is numbered, and the corresponding number on the diagram shows the location of the work.

We hope that this resource will be an aid to you in your prayer and reflection as you enter into conversation with the artworks and, ultimately, with God.

\* Included in *Good Friday* is a set of Stations by St. Louis artist Edward Boccia that evocatively uses hands as the primary motif. Spending time with these Stations might also serve as a way of meditating with this exhibition.



## I. Agony in the Garden

The events of Good Friday—they all begin here. The Last Supper is concluded. Late in the evening Jesus and eleven of his apostles go out to the Garden of Gethsemane overlooking the city of Jerusalem. The apostles seem oblivious to how preoccupied their Master is tonight. As they sleep, he feels the full intensity of fear and agony, to the point of sweating blood. Great isolation, loneliness, and terror overwhelm him in this moment, yet these eventually yield to a trust in, and surrender to, God.

## Scripture

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” *Matthew 26:36 (NRSV)*

He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” *Luke 22:41–46 (NIV)*

I am wearied with sighing; all night long tears drench my bed; my couch is soaked with weeping. My eyes are dimmed with sorrow, worn out because of all my foes. *Psalms 6:7–8 (NAB)*

## Artworks

- 2 Adrian Kellard, *Prayer of the Faithful in Ordinary Time*
- 39 Thomas Skomski, *Cup*



## Reflection

(No. 2) Adrian Kellard, *Prayer of the Faithful in Ordinary Time*, 1988

Isolation, loneliness, terror: these are some of the feelings captured in this work by Adrian Kellard. Kellard uses one of the most popular and reproduced images of the Agony in the Garden, a painting by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German artist Heinrich Hoffman. But where Hoffman's painting employs muted colors, Kellard's version is boldly colorful. Kellard, in the advanced stages of AIDS at the time he made this work, had entered into his own Garden of pain, trial, and dreadful waiting. A clock has replaced the moon: time was quite literally running out for him. Yet in that most desolate of times Kellard found he was not alone. He experienced his brotherhood with Jesus, and like Jesus, he was able to say, "yet not what I will, but what you will."

*A reproduction of the Hoffman painting is found next to the label for Kellard's work.*



## Reflection questions

How do you respond to the Hoffman image? To the Kellard? Which one speaks more strongly to you?

Imagine yourself in the Garden, in the quiet still of the night. Perhaps a breeze rustles in the leaves and dew dampens the ground. With whom do you identify in this scene? Jesus at prayer? The disciples struggling to keep alert? The approaching crowd?

Have you experienced a moment of crisis in your life? How did God seem to be present or absent at that time? Looking back, do you see God in the situation?

Jesus felt himself to be alone during that moment in the Garden. When have you felt isolated? How have you been present to or absent from others in their times of trial?



## 2. Trial

In recent years a discomfiting number of guilty verdicts have been overturned on the basis of new evidence or recantations of testimony. Allegations are made of corrupt prosecutors and inept defense attorneys, and our court system seems to be biased based on race and economic status. Thankfully, more than one innocent person has been rescued from death row ... but we must wonder how many more remain unjustly imprisoned.

The gospel accounts of Jesus' trial suggest that the outcome was inevitable: false accusations, perjury by "witnesses," behind-the-doors dealing. Or was it? Would it have happened without Judas' betrayal? Or Pilate's acquiescence to political pressure?

We cannot easily untangle this web or confidently assign responsibility.

## Scripture

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me? ... My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over ... But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Pilate asked him, “What is truth?” *John 18:33–38 (NRSV)*

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”

*Matthew 27:24 (NRSV)*

## Artworks

- 16 Peter Ambrose, *First Death*
- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station I*
- 15 Michael David, *Crowning With Thorns*
- 18 Douglas DePice, *Jesus in Central America—The First Station of the Cross*
- 30 Georges Rouault, No. 3: *toujours flagellé ... (forever scourged ...)*
- 31 Georges Rouault, No. 18: *Le condamné s’en est allé ... (The prisoner is led away ...)*

## Reflection

(No. 18) Douglas DePice, *Jesus in Central America—  
The First Station of the Cross*, 1987

This work could be a photograph plucked from the newspaper. In fact, the artist tells us that this work is a response to his immersion in the struggle for social justice in South Africa, Central America, and the United States. The image is cropped to make us feel like we are right



there in the midst of the confusion. A number of writers have commented on the moral challenges faced by photographers and journalists. On the one hand, they serve as witnesses who alert us to what is happening. On the other, sometimes they remain detached as observers when perhaps they should act. Can anyone remain neutral in the face of injustice?

## Reflection questions

When in your life have you been able to identify with the prisoner here? With the officer? With the onlookers who turn away?

Consider your image of God. What would God say about this situation? Does God remain detached? Does God intervene to aid the “least of these”? When will God’s justice come?

Many artists have painted the *Ecce Homo*—Latin for “behold the man”—in which Jesus is shown after he has been beaten and scourged. When have you seen Jesus beaten and broken? Unfairly treated or a victim of a rigged system? How have you responded?



### 3. Veronica and Her Veil

The story of Veronica's veil is not found in the gospels, but nevertheless has had a long tradition in Christian imagery. Perhaps Veronica was among the women who met Jesus along the Way of the Cross, one of his followers from Galilee. Her name is popularly believed to come from Latin and Greek words meaning "true image," and stories from the tradition tell us that she tried to comfort Jesus as he carried his cross toward Golgotha. She stepped out of the crowd to wipe the sweat and blood from his face. As she did so, an image of his face miraculously appeared on the cloth.

The story of Veronica asserts the power of compassion, of the human touch of tenderness, especially in times of distress and suffering. Veronica risked her own safety to reach out to Jesus. In return, he gave her his image as a tangible expression of gratitude for her compassion. Compassion and gratitude—recognizable features of the true face of God.

## Scripture

As they led [Jesus] away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. *Luke 23:26–27 (NIV)*

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’

And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

*Matthew 25:37–40 (NRSV)*

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

*Colossians 1:15 (NAB)*

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

*2 Corinthians 3:18 (NRSV)*

## Artworks

- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station VI*
- 35 Daniel Goldstein, *Icarian XI/Leg Extension*
- 36 Luis González Palma, *El Santo Sudario*
- 34 Georges Rouault, No. 58: “*C’est par ses meurtrissures que nous sommes guéris.*” (“*And with his stripes we are healed.*”)



## Reflection

(No. 36) Luis González Palma, *El Santo Sudario*, 1989

The story of Veronica suggests the power of faces. As a child knows the face of its mother, we identify people through their features. It is a basic way of connecting with another person.



González Palma's work asserts an important link between the face and a person's dignity. There are so many faceless victims of violence, so many unmarked graves across the world. Veronica gave the simplest of care by wiping away sweat and blood and grime. In that moment she reached out from her basic humanity in compassionate response and so honored the fundamental dignity of Jesus.

## Reflection questions

Call to mind the face of someone who is close to you, whom you love deeply. Trace their features. What is this experience like?

How do you picture the face of Jesus? Are you moved to touch his face?

How many times do we pause to look at the face of a homeless person who approaches us for change? How many decisions in our government are based on statistics and not individuals? How do we contribute to de-humanizing forces in our society? How might we contribute to compassionate, humanizing forces in our society?

When in your life have you been beaten or broken, struggling under a cross? Who has reached out to you in those times? How have you experienced God as present or absent in those times?



## 4. Crucifixion

The earliest image of the crucifixion appears around 430 CE. Over the centuries the scene has been portrayed in numerous ways, often with graphic detail and with great pathos. How the scene is depicted may reveal something about the spirituality of the artist or culture from which the work comes. At times Jesus is serene, even regal, seemingly untouched by his suffering and already come into his glory. In other portrayals he is broken, vulnerable, utterly human.

At the core of this scene, though, is the truth that death must come in order to yield new life. It is the necessary pain of the Paschal Mystery, that is, the passing of Jesus through suffering and death to resurrection. What does it mean to say that God died? When an innocent Lamb goes willingly to the slaughter, what shifts in this world and in heaven?

What wonders might yet come?

## Scripture

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. *Mark 15:22–24 (NIV)*

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads ... “He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to.” ... The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. *Matthew 27:39–44 (NRSV)*

Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, / While we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. / But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, / Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. *Isaiah 53:4–5 (NAB)*

Many dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. So wasted are my hands and feet that I can count all my bones. They stare at me and gloat; they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots. But you, LORD, do not stay far off; my strength, come quickly to help me. *Psalms 22:17–20 (NAB)*

I hear the whispers of the crowd; terrors are all around me. They conspire against me; they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, LORD; I say, “You are my God.” *Psalms 31:14–15 (NAB)*

## Artworks

- 5 Craig Antrim, *Icon Wall*
- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station XI*
- 25 James Ensor, *Le Christ tourmenté (Christ tormented)*
- 22 Gerhard Knell, *Intra tua vulnera, absconde me! (Within Thy Wounds, Hide Me!)*
- 26 Horatio Hung-Yan Law, *Meditations on the Way of the Cross in the Time of AIDS: The Psalms for the Bridegroom's Widower*
- 19 Jim Morpheus, *Morpheus I*
- 37 Michael Tracy, *Stations of the Cross for Latin America (La Pasión): 11<sup>th</sup> Station – Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross*

## Reflection

(No. 19) Jim Morphesis, *Morpheus I*, 1985

Outside the walls of Jerusalem, the weakened Jesus climbs to his place of execution—Golgotha—the “Place of the Skull.” Thick layers of paint give this painting a startling presence. The skull is a compelling reminder of our own mortality, but Morphesis endows this skull with individuality. We can sense here the record of a life of difficulty, of disappointment, of setbacks, of hurt. In reminding us of the mortality of ourselves and our loved ones, yet also of the suffering we have experienced or perhaps caused others, this work simultaneously repels us and beckons us. It also reminds us of a God who so unconditionally loved the world that he fully entered our human experience, with all of its joys and sorrows, and ascended the Place of the Skull and laid down his life.



## Reflection questions

Can you place yourself at Golgotha in your imagination? What are the sights, smells, sounds? Are you near or far away from the crosses? What do you feel? Perhaps empathy, revulsion, or fear, or even gratitude that someone else is suffering and not you?

What and where are our “Golgothas” today, where people are warehoused, forgotten, abused, killed? Hospitals, prisons, inner cities, minefields remaining after the wars are over—or behind closed doors in comfortable homes? Have you been to a “Skull Place”? How did you feel? How did you respond?

Is there a “Golgotha” inside of you? A place of memories from the past, hidden fears, feelings of desolation and abandonment? Do you ever visit this place? How might the pain there be resolved or healed?

What gives you dignity? Are there times when you do not feel you are a “child of God”?

Are there times or ways in which we mock God?

## Scripture

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" *Mark 15:34 (NRSV)*

... Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. *John 19:28–30 (NIV)*

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish? *Psalms 22:2 (NAB)*

Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, LORD, faithful God. *Psalms 31:6 (NAB)*

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? *Isaiah 53:6–8 (NRSV)*

## Artworks

- 5 Craig Antrim, *Icon Wall*
- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station XII*
- 4 Eleanor Dickinson, *Crucifixion of Dountes*
- 7 Tobi Kahn, *Al'akh*
- 6 Charlotte Lichtblau, *Crucifixion*
- 8 Stephen Luecking, *Save-Your*
- 37 Michael Tracy, *Stations of the Cross for Latin America (La Pasión): 12<sup>th</sup> Station – Jesus Dies on the Cross*

## Reflection

(No. 4) Eleanor Dickinson,  
*Crucifixion of Dountes*, 1988

Dickinson's choice of black velvet is unexpected. It makes a profound, depthless background. Could this be how dark it was at Jesus' death, when the sun was eclipsed and the earth trembled? Generally, images of the crucifixion depict it from a distance and frontally; we may have small crucifixes in our homes. What is it to be right at the foot of this life-sized cross? This person is totally exposed and in a position of deep vulnerability and shame—yet we can also see something of dignity here. Is there anyone out in that blank darkness to receive this man's spirit?



## Reflection questions

Dickinson portrays people who identify with Jesus in his crucifixion. If she asked you to pose for her in her studio, what posture would you adopt to express your sense of suffering or identification with the crucifixion?

Some have observed that our society today discourages us from admitting vulnerability or weakness. When did you last admit your weakness?

Many of us have images of God as all-powerful and all-caring. Does it disturb you to challenge God when God is absent? Do you want to take God to task for abandoning his Son (or you) to such intense suffering?

How do you imagine Jesus' cries sound in his last moments? Hoarse and strained? Powerful despite their weakness? Are they ultimately cries of despair or of trust? Are there times in your life when you have made such cries?

Craig Antrim's *Icon Wall* (No. 5) presents 64 of the artist's highly personal contemplations on the cross. If you were to add your cross to this wall, what would it look like?



## Reflection

(No. 37) Michael Tracy, *11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Stations of the Cross for Latin America – La Pasión*, 1981–88

Tracy's monumental triptych has been a constant witness at MOCRA almost since the museum opened fifteen years ago. It was made in direct response to shocking, pressing political and human rights issues of the day. Its abstract panels are a challenge to many viewers, yet in its abstraction, stark beauty, and sheer scale, it successfully speaks to diverse audiences and to new situations. In many ways it exemplifies the way in which Good Friday continues to be a rich source of reflection and inspiration for contemporary artists.

*An explanatory text is found on the wall to the left of the Triptych.*

## Reflection questions

What are your responses to this work? You might consider its size, the palette of colors, the textures of the surface, and the way light and shadow play across the work. Pay attention to any physical or emotional responses that arise, to memories and associations that come to mind.

Tracy created this work in response to massive injustices committed in 1980s Latin America, and a dawning awareness in the United States of our national culpability. Do you think there are contemporary domestic and global situations to which this work might also apply?



## 5. Pietà

One of the most poignant subjects associated with Jesus' suffering and death is the Pietà. Michelangelo's sculpture might be the most famous version: Mary, seated on a rock, cradles her dead son just brought down from the cross. Every element of the work—the angle of their bodies, the bunching and falling of Mary's robes, the small gesture she makes with her left hand—bespeaks her sorrow and compassion.

Like Veronica's veil, this episode is not found in the gospels. But the Gospel of John states that Mary was at the foot of the cross, and it is impossible not to imagine her grieving over her son after he was brought down from the cross.

*Pietà* is Italian for “pity”—not a condescending type of pity, but an empathetic expression of grief. It is Mary's grief over her son who died in such a brutal and humiliating way; it is our sympathy and grief as we join her in her sorrow, as we, too, mourn the death of Jesus. It also calls to mind any losses that we might have experienced in our own lives.

And yet the Pietà also suggests that we are not alone, even in the darkest of times, for what is implied in the Pietà is a shared grief. Like Mary, we are at the side of Jesus at this most desolate of moments. And in that darkness, we feel the sense of community, compassion and love. All of these come together in the Pietà.

## Scripture

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, the disciple took her into his home. *John 19:25–27 (NIV)*

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!

*Isaiah 49:15 (NIV)*

A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because her children are no more. *Jeremiah 31:15 (NRSV)*

## Artworks

- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station XIII*
- 32 Sr. Helen David Brancato, *Crucifixion – Haiti*
- 17 Frederick J. Brown, *The Life of Christ Altarpiece: Descent from the Cross*
- 33 Salvador Dalí, *Deposition from the Cross*
- 9 Nancy Fried, *Weeping for His Vanishing Eyesight*
- 10 Steven Heilmer, *Pietà Stone: Meditation on the Last Temptation*
- 3 Adrian Kellard, *Lovers*
- 12 James Rosen, study for *Homage to the Pietà d'Avignon*
- 13 James Rosen, *Homage to the Pietà d'Avignon*
- 29 Georges Rouault, No. 46: "Le juste, comme le bois de santal, parfume la hache qui le frappe." ("The just, like sandalwood, perfume the ax that strikes them.")
- 38 Thomas Skomski, *Pietà*
- 37 Michael Tracy, *Stations of the Cross for Latin America (La Pasión): 13<sup>th</sup> Station – Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross*

## Reflection

(No. 13) James Rosen, *Homage to the Pietà d'Avignon*, 1989–91

In this work James Rosen honors a renowned 15<sup>th</sup>-century painting. But his choice of medium has a profound effect on his version of the image and on viewers. The painting invites us to slow down, adjust to the dim light, and become receptive to what the painting both reveals and conceals.



The layered veils of wax and

oil mute the colors and the emotions of what is usually a raw scene of grief. Body posture conveys emotion more than the details of faces: the grieving mother contemplates the broken body of her son. While her hands are clasped in prayer, Mary's great mantle spreads to encompass Jesus' body, just as she might once have embraced him as an infant. We join the beloved disciple, Mary Magdalene, and the source painting's donor (kneeling on the left) in a contemplation of both mother and son.

*A reproduction of the Pietà d'Avignon is found next to the label for Rosen's work.*

## Reflection questions

This work requires a commitment of time and attention in order to appreciate it and access its message. Much the same might be said of prayer. What is your experience of prayer? Of silence and stillness? Of contemplation?

When have you experienced moments of spiritual insight (revelation)? When have you experienced moments of spiritual obstacles (concealment)? What were these experiences like, what emotions arose? Did times of concealment ever give way to insight? Did the light of insight ever fade into obscurity?

As an artist Rosen pays homage to a great painter of the past. Who have been your spiritual mentors? Are there authors, artists, clergy, teachers, or perhaps family members or friends, who have provided you inspiration or guidance? What is your relationship with these people?

Is there anyone to whom you serve as a mentor or spiritual director?



## Reflection

(No. 10) Steven Heilmer

*Pietà Stone: Meditation on the Last Temptation, 1992*

Heilmer's work is removed from much of the drama and emotion that are usually evoked by depictions of the Pietà. We move

beyond the particulars of history, of the face of Mary or of Jesus, or concern for details. There is simply the unfinished stone, jagged and angular, and the smooth, enveloping cloth like a protective mother embracing her son. The hint of a human form beneath the cloth suggests that such embracing love restores and reveals the dignity and identity that have been stripped away. Heilmer creates a situation to help us meditate on this, after all the pain and violence. A single lamp illuminates the work, and we may sit on cushions to contemplate. What is at the core of this mystery?

## Reflection questions

Spend some time with this work. What catches your eye? The surface of the marble? Its volume and solidity? The way it seems to levitate? Do you find it difficult to associate this work with Mary and Jesus? Or does it open up your imagination to new ways of considering their relationship?

Cloth is a recurring theme in the story of the Crucifixion: the loincloth of the young man who ran away naked from the garden, the purple garment the soldiers mockingly put on Jesus' shoulders; Veronica's veil; Jesus' tunic, gambled away but not divided; the burial shroud which echoes the swaddling clothes placed around the infant Jesus.

What are your associations with cloth? Did you have a favorite blanket as a child? Do you have a particular favorite, comfortable outfit? Have you wiped a child's face with a washcloth, or changed bed linens for a sick person? What was the feel and texture of the cloth?

Have you experienced the illness or death of a loved one? What was it like for you to be a caregiver? Were there times when you wanted to evade the responsibility? Could you feel yourself as God's hands expressing care and healing?

## 6. Burial

At the end, leavetaking.

The surprisingly quick death, the pressures of Sabbath observance, a discreet but loyal supporter, loving respect shown for the dead amidst violent shock.

The stone rolls into place, the seed dies under the ground, and all of mourning creation holds its breath.

## Scripture

[Joseph of Arimathea] went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with [Jesus] from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. *Luke 23:52–56 (NRSV)*

When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people, / A grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers, / Though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood.  
*Isaiah 53:8–10 (NAB)*

Out of the depths I call to you, Lord. *Psalms 130:1 (NAB)*

## Artworks

- 28 Gryphon Blackswan, *Burial Shrouds*
- 1 Edward Boccia, *Stations of the Cross: Station XIV*
- 20 Nick Boskovich, *Emmaus: Rose of the Passion (Requiem for Caravaggio)*
- 21 Nick Boskovich, *Good Friday*
- 23 Bill Christman, *Fourteenth Station of the Cross: Jesus Laid in the Tomb*
- 14 Ian Friend, *The Protestant Affliction II and III*
- 11 Juan González, *Don't Mourn, Consecrate*
- 24 Patrick Graham, *Rising and Falling*
- 27 Horatio Hung-Yan Law, *Meditations on the Way of the Cross in the Time of AIDS, Station 14: The Remnant*

## Reflection

(No. 23) Bill Christman, *Fourteenth Station of the Cross: Jesus Laid in the Tomb*



Tombs are final things. To bury someone is a definite break, a relinquishing. But of course we know that interring the physical remains of a person does not sever our connections, heal our pains, or obliterate memories. Christman's piece is imposing and solid. It suggests a safe or lockbox. It makes a strong statement about the finality of death...that which moves beyond, remains locked away from our grasp. Death is mysterious, opaque. And yet faith gives us a glimpse of possibility beyond that barrier. Inside this great iron cross is a vision, an echo which shines a light

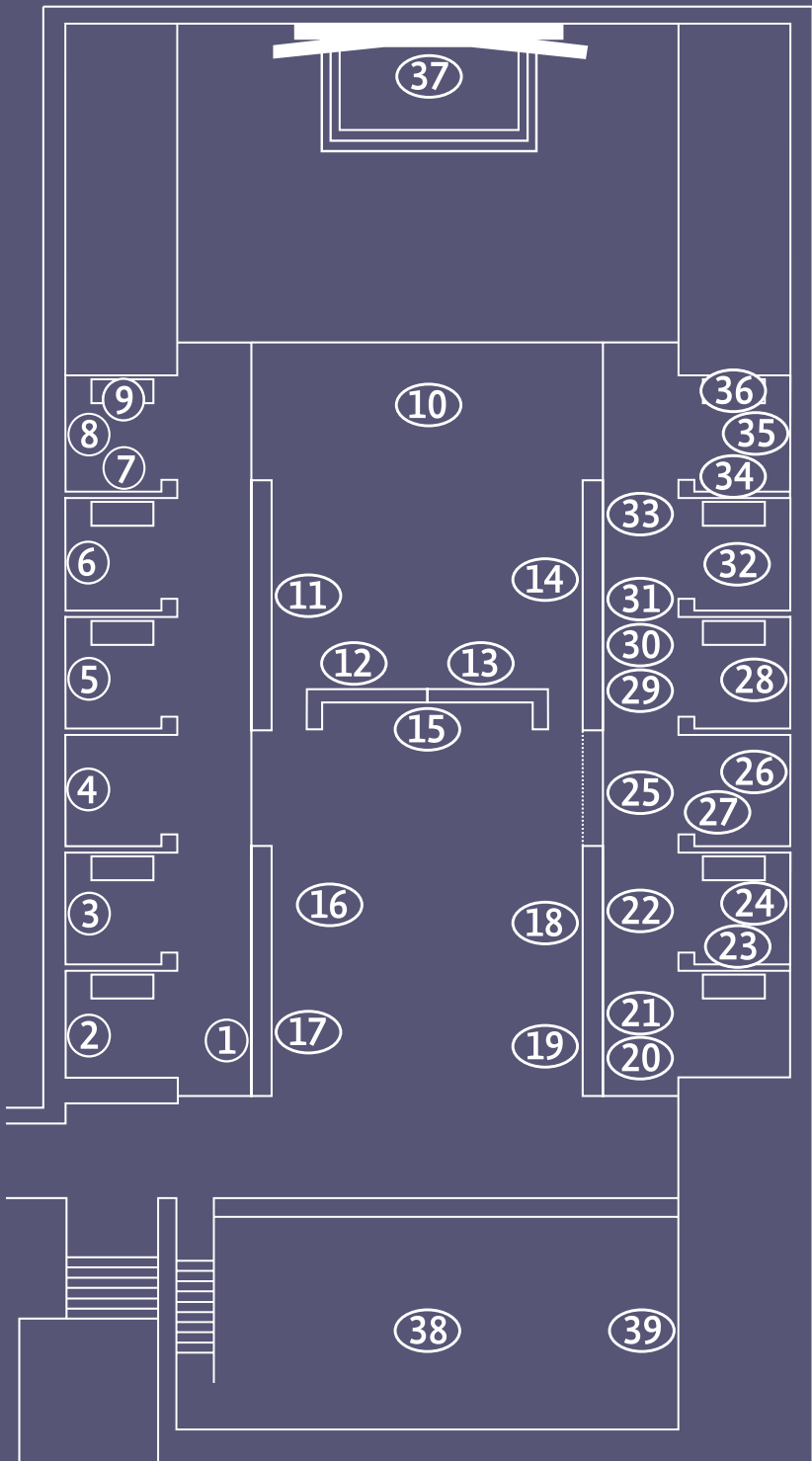
in the darkness and opens the possibility for a renewal. The Paschal Mystery is not only about the seed dying, but also its rising and generation of new life. We are at the edge of Easter, emboldened to hope.

## Reflection questions

Take a moment to call to mind an experience of death in your life, whether physical or metaphorical. What emotions did you experience?

Are there things you have locked away in order to avoid them? Viewed in the light of faith, taking them to God, is there any possibility of new life or healing for these things?

Are there any things that have been taken from you and locked out of your reach—opportunities, people, hopes? Talk with God about these things. Are you angry, resentful? Nostalgic? How could these losses be healed or renewed with God's help?



MOCRA floorplan for Good Friday