

Catholic Social Tradition Pastoral Plan
For Valley Youth Group, Wasilla, Alaska

Created by Molly Link

This Catholic Social Tradition Capstone would not be possible without all of the incredible professors and advisors who have taught me about CST over the course of my four years, including but not limited to, Margaret Pfeil, Clemens Sedmak, Bill Purcell, Rachel Thomas Morgan, Grace Munene, Todd Whitmore, and the countless theology professors who have taught me the wellspring of truth from which CST springs forth.

I would also like to thank all of the people who have been Christ to me over the past four years, teaching me what it truly means to see Christ in the least of these. From Tanzania to Alaska and everywhere in between, it has been a gift to sit at your feet.

Finally, this would be nothing without my dear friend, Kaley Severance, who has taught me so much about how to love my neighbor, and who lives out the principles of CST not because she learned about them in a classroom, but because she knows Jesus in the depths of her heart.

Thank you.

Catholic Social Tradition Series Valley Catholic Youth Group

Youth Minister: Kaley Severance

Time Frame: Over the summer, or as it fits with community needs and timelines

Ages: Designed more for high schoolers, but with the acknowledgement that oftentimes middle schoolers will be involved and participating.

Culture: The Catholic Culture in the Valley is one devoted to following the teachings of Jesus and the Church. Many of the youth are homeschooled and thus find their primary communities within their Church network. The teenagers have a close-knit community in which they all know each other. The kids and their youth minister love to be outside and active. Catholic Social Tradition is not something that is very well known amongst these teenagers, so it is important to show its rootedness in Church Tradition in order to make it approachable and trustworthy.

Goal: I hope that through this curriculum, I can create a way for the Catholic youth in the valley to learn about and engage with Catholic Social Tradition in a way that is fitting for their youth group setting and fills needs in the community.

Notes for the Leader: This series is created for you to use as a resource as you see fit for the needs of your youth group. Be free to use the guides as closely or as loosely as what works for you. There is an abundance of sources from Scripture and Tradition, and you can use all of them or whichever ones you think will resonate with your youth group the most. The activities are designed to fit in with the needs of the greater Valley community, and thus subject to change upon the needs of the community. Ultimately, this guide is meant to be a resource and supplement to your ministry and in no way should hinder your work or the work of the Holy Spirit.

Why?: Catholic Social Teaching is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Church, and it is how, as Catholics, we are called to respond to the needs of the world in which we live. CST is not commonly taught to Catholics, and with these lessons, hopefully a seed can be planted in the hearts of the Valley Youth Group.

Principle 1: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Background for Leader:

The dignity of the human person is foundational in Catholic Social Tradition. We must be able to recognize that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. We are living icons and living saints. It is a challenge for all of us to be aware of how loved our neighbors are by God, but it is often especially challenging for teenagers to understand their own dignity and worth. Therefore, this activity is designed so that these teenagers can spend some prayerful time reflecting on their own belovedness. It may seem unnatural to write a letter complimenting ourselves, but knowing our own goodness is not pride, but knowing better the goodness of God that we reflect.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Cloning
- Death penalty
- War
- Nuclear Weapons
- Embryonic stem cell research

Tradition:

- Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. (Gen 1:26)
- It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God," that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. (CCC 1701)

Activity:

For this activity, the teens will be writing letters to themselves. They will take some time to reflect on where they have gone so far in life, what they have accomplished, their gifts, and talents. You can print out the following page to hand out to the kids, or just post the questions in a visible area. The kids will also need paper to write on and pens, pencils, or markers.

Have the teens spread out and take some time to reflect on the questions. Then, have them write a letter to themselves reflecting on the different themes. If they have a hard time writing things about themselves, have them pretend like they are writing a letter to a friend. How would they speak to a friend about their gifts?

Once everyone has had sufficient time for writing, take some time to reflect in small groups.

Small Group Questions:

1. How did it feel writing this letter? Did you find it challenging or easy?
2. What surprised you in writing this letter?
3. How does knowing our own dignity help us to better see our neighbor's dignity?
4. How does knowing our own dignity help us to love God more?

Closing Prayer:

Radiating Christ- by Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman

Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance
everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.
Shine through us and be so in us
that every soul we come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.
Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.
Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine,
so to shine as to be light to others.
The light, O Jesus, will be all from you.
None of it will be ours.
It will be you shining on others through us.
Let us thus praise you in the way you love best
by shining on those around us.
Let us preach you without preaching,
not by words, but by our example;
by the catching force –
the sympathetic influence of what we do,
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you.

Amen.

Letter to Self Activity

Each and every human being has dignity because we are all created in the image and likeness of God our Creator. Sometimes it can be hard to recognize our own self-worth, so we are going to be writing letters to ourselves. It can seem weird to write a bunch of positive things about ourselves, but when we recognize our own dignity, we are better able to understand the goodness of God and the goodness of ourselves. This helps us better love God and our neighbor. Here are some questions you might want to reflect upon in your letter:

*What ways have I grown?
What have I accomplished in life?
What are my strengths?
What are my gifts?
Who are the people that I care about?
How am I good at loving?
What are my dreams and goals?
What do I hope to accomplish in life?*

Feel free to include as many of these questions as you would like, but do not feel like you have to use all of them. When we are finished writing, we will meet in small groups to talk about writing the letter, but you will not have to share what you actually write if you do not wish to. This letter is for yourself and for God, so be as honest as you can.

Principle 2: Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Background for Leader:

The second principle we are going to focus on is the call to family, community, and participation. Many of these teens have families and communities filled with lots of pain and brokenness, making this topic sensitive to some. This youth group is the biggest source of community for some of these teenagers, so a big thank you to you for providing this space. This lesson is designed to be in conjunction with service to the needs of the community, such as doing yard work around the Church or for parishioners in need. This principle is about responding to the needs of and participating in a community, so use this lesson in a situation as you see fit.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Organization of economics, politics, law, and policy
- Serving our families
- Participation in society
- Serving the common good
- Extending our definition of family

Tradition:

- So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them." (Rom 12:5-6)
- Insofar as it is a "small- scale Church," the Christian family is called upon, like the "large- scale Church," to be a sign of unity for the world and in this way to exercise its prophetic role by bearing witness to the Kingdom and peace of Christ, towards which the whole world is journeying. (JPII, *The Family in the Modern World* 48)

Activity:

The specific activity will vary based on what exactly the community needs. In particular, this should be something that is at service either to the Parish, a family in the community, or people in the greater Valley community. It will involve some sort of service by the teenagers, followed by a small group discussion in order to understand the CST behind the service.

Small Group Questions:

1. What does community mean to me? Why is it important to participate in my community?
2. What does family mean to me? Who is my family, and what is the best way for me to love them, even when it is difficult?
3. How can I be more involved in my community and family? What gifts do I have to share?
4. How can I engage in politics, as a person who cannot yet vote, in a way that is loving and contributing to the common good?

Closing Prayer:*The Holy Family Prayer*

JESUS, Son of God and Son of Mary, bless our family. Graciously inspire in us the unity, peace, and mutual love that you found in your own family in the little town of Nazareth.

MARY, Mother of Jesus and Our Mother, nourish our family with your faith and your love. Keep us close to your Son, Jesus, in all our sorrows and joys.

JOSEPH, Foster-father to Jesus, guardian and spouse of Mary, keep our family safe from harm. Help us in all times of discouragement or anxiety.

HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH, make our family one with you. Help us to be instruments of peace. Grant that love, strengthened by grace, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. May we always have God at the center of our hearts and homes until we are all one family, happy and at peace in our true home with you.

Amen.

Principle 3: Rights and Responsibilities

Background for Leader:

Rights and Responsibilities can be a confusing topic for teenagers. Often at this stage in life, they are trying to navigate in their own personal lives what responsibilities they have as well as what privileges they have as they grow older. It can also be hard to understand how to provide basic human needs for our neighbors, because this can vary based on people's political views. Regardless of political beliefs, however, as Christians it is our duty to care for these needs for our neighbors in some way or another.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Right to life, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, social services, to be cared for (*Pacem in Terris* 11)
- Duties to fulfill those rights

Tradition:

- "Give alms from your possessions. Do not turn your face away from any of the poor, so that God's face will not be turned away from you. Give in proportion to what you own. If you have great wealth, give alms out of your abundance; if you have but little, do not be afraid to give alms even of that little." (Tobit 4:7-8)
- In human society one man's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right (St. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* 30)

Activity:

For this activity, we are going to be making "blessing bags" for homeless people in the Valley community. Organize teenagers to donate different non-perishable items to fill the bags. Encourage the teens to use their own money to buy the materials if they can but invite parents to assist if they are willing. Everyone will gather together to fill the bags with different foods, as well as a prayer or Scripture verse written on an index card. Have each teenager take a few bags home with them to keep in their cars or with them as they bike to share with people asking for donations on the streets.

After packing the bags, the teens will meet in small groups to reflect on the CST principle of Rights and Responsibilities.

Small Group Questions:

1. We are all made in the image and likeness of God, so regardless of our actions, we all have equal dignity and basic human rights. What are some of the basic necessities of human beings? What do people need to be their best selves, to flourish, to grow in holiness?
2. 1 Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Even though we are young, we can still aid in providing for the needs of others. What are some ways we can do this?
3. How can I care for myself so that I may be my best self, flourish, and grow in holiness? Remember that self-care can take many forms, such as treating yourself

to ice cream once a week, being more disciplined in your schoolwork, or giving yourself a break from your phone, to name a few examples.

Closing Prayer:

Christ Has No Body- by St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Amen.

Principle 4: Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Background for Leader:

In Matthew 25, Jesus says that whatever we do for the least of these, we do unto Him. This means that in all things we do, we must consider what the best option is for the least of these among us. When we make decisions about politics, education, economics, the environment, and all other things, we must consider how it will affect the poor and vulnerable. This should be the main criteria that we use, because what we do to the poor and vulnerable is what we do to Jesus. If we truly love Jesus, we must love His poor.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Laws and policies
- Climate
- Social structures
- Education
- Housing
- Health care

Tradition:

- He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (Mt 25:45-46)
- “In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” (Bl. Paul VI *Octogesima Adveniens* 23)

Activity:

For this activity, we are going to be praying the stations of the cross through the lens of mercy and justice. These stations were prayed by Pope Francis on Good Friday during the Jubilee Year of Mercy in 2016. You can pray these Stations outdoors, in a church, or wherever else works best. If the teens are not able to do a walking Stations of the Cross, you can place images in a slideshow to display or pass out booklets with the prayers and/or images. I have attached a handout of slides with the prayers, which can be photocopied and passed around or used just for the leader. Songs can be used as desired.

Small Group Questions:

1. What was it like reflecting upon the Stations of the Cross in relation to suffering in the world right now? What were some of the different sufferings mentioned in these prayers? Do you ever consider those issues?
2. Who are the poor and vulnerable around me? What struggles do they face?
3. In recognizing our own poverty, we see our need for Jesus. In what ways am I poor and vulnerable? Remember that this is not only about money. We are all broken and wounded people in one way or another.

Closing Prayer:*Hail, Holy Queen*

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To you do we cry,

poor banished children of Eve.

To you do we send up our sighs,

mourning and weeping in this valley of tears

Turn then, most gracious advocate,

your eyes of mercy toward us,

and after this exile

show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb,

Jesus.

O clement, O loving,

O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, oh holy Mother of God,

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross

From The Jubilee Year of Mercy, Celebrated by Pope Francis
on Good Friday, 2016

Meditations written by H.E. Msgr. Giancarlo Maria Bregantini,
Archbishop of Campobasso-Boiano
Photographs from Notre Dame Archives

The First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting: "Crucify him, crucify him!" A third time he said to them: "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him". But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished (Lk 23:21-25).

Pilate, timid and afraid of the truth, fingers pointed in accusation, and the growing clamor of the raging crowd: these are the first stages in Jesus' death. Innocent, like a lamb, whose blood saves his people. Jesus, who walked among us bringing healing and blessing, is now sentenced to capital punishment. Not a word of gratitude from the crowd, which instead chooses Barabbas. For Pilate, the case is an embarrassment. He hands it over to the crowd and washes his hands of it, concerned only for his own power. He delivers Jesus to be crucified. He wants to know nothing more of him. For Pilate, the case is closed.

Jesus' hasty condemnation thus embraces the easy accusations, the superficial judgements of the crowd, the insinuations and the prejudices which harden hearts and create a culture of racism and exclusion, a throw-away culture of anonymous letters and vicious slanders. Once we are accused, our name is immediately splayed across the front page; once acquitted, it ends up on the last!

And what about us? Will we have a clear, upright and responsible conscience, one which never forsakes the innocent but courageously takes the side of the weak, resisting injustice and defending truth whenever it is violated?



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
there are hands which give
support and hands which sign
wrongful sentences.
Grant that, sustained by your
grace, we may cast no one aside.
Save us from slanders and lies.
Help us always to seek your
truth,
to take the side of the weak,
and to accompany them on
their journey.
Grant your light to all those
appointed as judges in our
courts,
that they may always render
sentences that are just and true.*

Amen.

The Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls (1 Pet 2:24-25).

The wood of the cross is heavy, for on it Jesus bears the sins of us all. He staggers under that burden, too great for one man alone (Jn 19:17).

It is also the burden of all those wrongs which created the economic crisis and its grave social consequences: job insecurity, unemployment, dismissals, an economy that rules rather than serves, financial speculation, suicide among business owners, corruption and usury, the loss of local industry.

This is the cross which weighs upon the world of labor, the injustice shouldered by workers. Jesus shoulders it himself and teaches us to reject injustice and to learn, with his help, to build bridges of solidarity and of hope, lest we be like sheep who have lost our way amid this crisis.

Let us return, then, to Christ, the shepherd and guardian of our souls. Let us strive, side by side, to provide work, to overcome our fears and our isolation, to recover a respect for political life and to work to resolve our problems together.

The cross will become lighter if carried with Jesus, and if all of us lift it together, for "by his wounds – which are now windows opening to his heart – we have been healed" (cf. 1 Pet 2:24).



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
our night grows ever darker!
Poverty increases and
becomes destitution.
We have no bread to give
our children and our nets
are empty.
Our future is uncertain.
Provide the work we need.
Awaken in us a burning
thirst for justice,
that our lives may not be a
constant burden,
but lived in dignity!
Amen.*

The Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time

He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole. (Is 53:4-5)

It is a frail, utterly human Jesus whom we contemplate in wonder in this most sorrowful station. Yet it is precisely by falling that he shows ever more fully his infinite love. He is hemmed in by the crowd, dazed by the screaming of the soldiers, smarting from the wounds inflicted at his flogging, grief-stricken at the depths of human ingratitude. And so he falls. He falls to the ground.

But in this fall, crushed by the weight of the cross and sheer fatigue, Jesus once more becomes the Teacher of life. He teaches us to accept our weaknesses, not to be disheartened by our failures, and frankly to acknowledge our limits: I can will what is right – says Saint Paul – but I cannot do it (Rom 7:18).

With the inner strength which comes to him from the Father, Jesus also helps us to accept the failings of others; to show mercy to the fallen and concern for those who are wavering. And he gives us the strength not to shut the door to those who knock and ask us for asylum, dignity and a homeland. In the awareness of our own weakness, we will embrace the vulnerability of immigrants, and help them to find security and hope.

For it is in the dirty water of the basin in the Upper Room, that is, in our own weakness, that we see reflected the true face of our God! For "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 Jn 4:2).



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
you humbled yourself to
redeem our weaknesses.
Help us to enter into true
fellowship
with the poorest of our brothers
and sisters.
Uproot from our hearts the fear,
complacency and indifference,
which prevent us from seeing
you in immigrants,
and from testifying that your
Church has no borders,
for she is truly the mother of
all!
Amen.*

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary: "This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed – and a sword will pierce your own soul also" (Lk 2:34-35). Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another" (Rom 12:15-16).

This encounter of Jesus and Mary his mother is poignant and tearful. It expresses the invincible strength of that maternal love which overcomes all obstacles and always finds a way. But even more powerful is Mary's gaze of compassion as she sympathizes with and comforts her Son. Our own hearts are full of wonder as we contemplate the grandeur of Mary, who, although a creature, becomes a "neighbor" to her God and Lord.

Mary's gaze gathers up the tears shed by every mother for her distant children, for young people condemned to death, slaughtered or sent off to war, especially child soldiers. We hear in it the grief-stricken lament of mothers for their children who are dying of tumors caused by the burning of toxic waste.

Tears of bitterness! Tears of solidarity with the suffering of their children! Mothers keeping watch by night, their lamps lit, anxious and worried for their young who lack prospects or who fall into the abyss of drugs or alcohol, especially on Saturday nights!

At Mary's side, we will never be a people of orphans! As with Juan Diego, Mary also offers us the caress of her maternal comfort and she tells us: *Let not your heart be troubled... Am I not here who am your Mother?*" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 286).



PRAYER

Hail Mary, dear Mother, grant me your holy blessing.

Bless me and all my family.

Deign to offer God all that I accomplish and endure this day, in union with your merits and those of your most holy Son.

To your service I offer, and devote myself and all that I have, placing it under your mantle.

Obtain for me, my Lady, purity of mind and body and grant that today I may do nothing displeasing to God.

I ask you this through your Immaculate Conception and your untainted virginity. Amen

(Saint Gaspard Bertoni)

The Fifth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mk 15:21).

Simon of Cyrene just happened to be passing by. But it becomes a decisive moment in his life. He was returning from the fields. A working man, a strong man. And so he was forced to carry the cross of Jesus, condemned to a shameful death (cf. *Phil 2:8*).

But this casual encounter leads to a life-changing decision to follow Jesus and to take up his cross each day in self-denial (cf. *Mt 16:24-25*). Mark tells us that Simon was the father of two Christians known to the community of Rome, Alexander and Rufus. A father who clearly impressed upon the hearts of his children the power of Jesus' cross. Life, if you grasp it too tightly, decays and turns to dust. But if you give it away, it blossoms and bears fruit, for you and for the entire community!

Here is the real cure for that selfishness of ours which always lurks beneath the surface. Our relationship with others brings us healing and creates a mystic, contemplative fraternity capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbor, capable of finding God in everyone, capable too of putting up with life's troubles by holding fast to the love of God. Only by opening my heart to divine love am I drawn to seek the happiness of others through the practice of charity: a night spent in hospital, an interest-free loan, a tear wiped away in the family, heartfelt generosity, farsighted commitment to the common good, a sharing of our bread and labor, the rejection of all jealousy and envy.

Jesus himself tells us: *"Just as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me"* (*Mt 25:40*).



PRAYER

Lord Jesus,

in the Cyrenean, your friend, throbs the heart of your Church,

a shelter of love for all who thirst for you.

Helping our brothers and sisters is the key to the door of Life.

May our selfishness not make us pass by others;

help us instead to pour the balm of consolation on their wounds,

and thus become faithful companions along the way,

tirelessly persevering in our commitment to fraternity. Amen.

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

"Come", my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help (Ps 27:8-9).

Jesus drags himself along, gasping. Yet the radiance of his countenance is undiminished. No amount of abuse can dim his beauty. The spittle and the blows were unable to obscure it. His face appears as a burning bush which, the more it is buffeted, the more it radiates salvation. Silent tears fall from the Master's eyes. He bears the burden of one forsaken. And yet Jesus advances, he does not stop, he does not turn back. He confronts affliction. He is distressed by the cruelty all around him, yet he knows that his dying will not be in vain!

Jesus then halts before a woman who resolutely approaches him. It is Veronica, a true image of a woman's tender love.

Here the Lord embodies our need for love freely given, for the knowledge that we are loved and kept safe by acts of kindness and concern. Veronica's gesture is bathed in the precious blood of Jesus; it seems to wipe away the acts of irreverence which he endured in those hours of torture. Veronica is able to touch the gentle Jesus, to feel something of his radiance. Not only to alleviate his pain, but to share in his suffering. In Jesus, she sees all our neighbors who need to be consoled with a tender touch, and comes to hear the cries of pain of all those who, in our own day, receive neither practical assistance nor the warmth of compassion. Who die of loneliness...



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
how burdensome it is, when
we are separated from all
those
we thought would stand by
us on the day of our
desolation!
Cloak us in that cloth,
stained by your precious
blood
shed along the path of
abandonment,
which you too unjustly
endured.
Without you, we do not
have,
nor can we give, a modicum
of solace.
Amen.*

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time

They surrounded me ... They surrounded me like bees, they blazed like a fire of thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them off! I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me. The Lord has punished me severely; but he did not give me over to death (Ps 118:11,12-13,18).

Truly we see fulfilled in Jesus the ancient prophecies of the lowly and obedient Servant who takes upon himself all our history of sorrows. And so Jesus, prodded by the soldiers, stumbles, overcome by fatigue, surrounded by violence, utterly exhausted. Increasingly alone, amid the encircling gloom! His flesh is torn, his bones are weary.

In him we glimpse the bitter experience of those locked in prisons of every sort, with all their inhumane contradictions. Confined and surrounded, "pushed hard" and "falling". Prisons today continue to be set apart, overlooked, rejected by society. Marked by bureaucratic nightmares and justice delayed. Punishment is doubled by overcrowding: an aggravated penalty, an unjust affliction, one which consumes flesh and bone. Some – too many! – do not survive... And when one of our brothers and sisters is released, we still see them as "ex-convicts", and we bar before them the doors of social and economic redemption.

More serious is the practice of torture, which tragically is still practiced in different ways throughout our world. As it was in the case of Jesus, beaten, reviled by the soldiers, tortured with a crown of thorns, cruelly flogged.

Today, as we contemplate this second fall, how truly do those words of Jesus ring: "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). In every prison, at the side of each person being tortured, Christ is always there, Christ who suffers, is imprisoned and tortured. Even in our greatest suffering, he helps us not to yield to fear. Only with help can those who fall rise again, aided by skilled personnel, sustained by the fraternal support of volunteers, and put on their feet by a society which takes responsibility for the many injustices which occur within the walls of our prisons.



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, boundless
compassion grips me as I see
you fall to the ground for
my sake.
I have no merit, and so
many sins, inconsistencies
and failures, yet you respond
with such immense love!
Cast off by society, put to
death by judicial sentence,
you have blessed us for ever.
Blessed are we if today we
join you in your fall,
delivered from
condemnation.
Help us not to flee from our
responsibilities, grant that we
may abide in your
abasement, safe from all
pretense of omnipotence,
and be reborn to new life as
creatures destined for
heaven.
Amen.*

The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children” (Lk 23:28).

Like so many tapers of light, we see women lining the path of pain. Women of fidelity and courage, neither intimidated by the soldiers nor cringing before the wounds of the Good Master. They are prepared to approach him and to comfort him. Jesus stands there before them. Others trample on him as he falls exhausted to the ground. But the women are there, ready to give him the warmth of a loving heart. First they gaze at him from afar, but then they draw near, as would any friend, any brother or sister, who realizes that someone whom they love is in trouble.

Jesus is moved by their bitter lament, yet he tells them not to be disheartened by his sufferings; he tells them to be women not of grief but of faith! He asks for their solidarity in suffering, not merely a barren and plaintive sympathy. No more wailing, but a resolve to be reborn, to look to the future, to advance with faith and hope towards that dawn which will break even more radiantly upon those who journey with their eyes fixed on God. Let us weep for ourselves if we do not yet believe in Jesus, who proclaimed the kingdom of salvation. Let us weep for the sins we have not confessed.

Then too, let us weep for those men who vent on women all their pent-up violence. Let us weep for women enslaved by fear and exploitation. But it is not enough to beat our breast and to feel compassion. Jesus demands more. Women need to be given reassurance, following his example; they need to be cherished as an inviolable gift for all humanity. So that our children may grow in dignity and hope.



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
stay the hand of those
who strike women!
Lift women's hearts from
the abyss of despair
when they are victims of
violence.
Look upon their tears of
loneliness and
abandonment,
and open our hearts to
share their every sorrow,
fully and faithfully,
above and beyond mere
compassion.
Make us a means of true
liberation.
Amen.*

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!” (Rom 8:35,37).

Saint Paul lists all his sufferings, yet he knows that Jesus was there before him: Jesus, who on the way to Golgotha fell once, twice, three times. Overwhelmed by hardship, persecution, the sword; weighed down by the wood of the cross. Drained! He seems to say, as we do, in our darkest moments: *I can't take it any more!*

It is the cry of those persecuted, the dying, the terminally ill, those who strain under the yoke.

But in Jesus we also see strength: “Although he causes grief, he will have compassion” (Lam 3:32). He shows us that in affliction, his consolation is always present, a “surplus” to be glimpsed in hope. Like the pruning which the heavenly Father, in his wisdom, performs on the branches that will bear fruit (cf. Jn 15:8). Not to lop them off, but to make them bloom anew. Like a mother in labor: in pain, she cries out, she endures the pangs of childbirth. Yet she knows that they are the pangs of new life, of spring flowers blossoming on branches recently pruned.

May our contemplation of Jesus, who falls yet rises once more, help us to overcome the kinds of narrowness which fear of the future impresses on our hearts, especially at this time of crisis. Let us leave behind our unhealthy nostalgia for the past, our complacency and our refusal to change, and the attitude that says: *“But we've always done it this way!”*. Jesus who stumbles and falls, but then rises, points us to a sure hope which, nourished by intense prayer, is born precisely at the moment of trial, not after or apart from it!

We will be more than conquerors, because of his love!



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,
Lift up, we pray, the
unfortunate from the
ground,
Raise the poor from
the dust, set them with
the princes of the
people, and grant them
a seat of glory.
Shatter the bow of the
strong and revive the
strength of the weak,
for you alone enrich us
by your poverty (cf. 1
Sam 2:4-8; 2 Cor 8:9).
Amen.*

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another: "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it". This was to fulfil what the Scripture says: "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my tunic they cast lots". And that is what the soldiers did (Jn 19:23-24).

They didn't leave even a patch of cloth to cover Jesus' body. They stripped him naked. He was without his cloak, his tunic, any garment whatsoever. They stripped him as an act of utter humiliation. He was covered only by the blood which flowed from his gaping wounds.

The tunic remained intact, a symbol of the Church's unity, a unity found in patient journeying, in a peace that is crafted, in a tapestry woven with the golden threads of fraternity, in reconciliation and in mutual forgiveness.

In Jesus, innocent, stripped and tortured, we see the outraged dignity of all the innocent, especially the little ones. God did not prevent his naked body from being exposed on the cross. He did this in order to redeem every abuse wrongly concealed, and to show that he, God, is irrevocably and unreservedly on the side of victims.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we want to return to childlike innocence, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven; cleanse us of our uncleanness and our idols.

Take away our stony hearts which create divisions, which damage the credibility of your Church.

Give us a new heart and a new spirit, that we may live in accordance with your commands and readily observe your laws.

Amen.

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Crucified

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read: "The King of the Jews". And with him they crucified two thieves, one on his right and one on his left. And the Scripture was fulfilled that says: "And he was counted among the lawless" (Mk 15:24-28).

And they crucified him! The punishment reserved for the despicable, for traitors and rebellious slaves. This is the punishment meted out to our Lord Jesus: coarse nails, spasms of pain, the anguish of his mother, the shame of being associated with two thieves, his garments divided like spoils among the soldiers, the cruel jeers of passers-by: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him!" (Mt 27:42).

And they crucified him! Jesus does not come down, he does not leave the cross. He stays there, obedient to the Father's will to the very end. He loves and he forgives.

Today many of our brothers and sisters, like Jesus, are nailed to a bed of pain, at hospital, in homes for the elderly, in our families. It is a time of hardship, with bitter days of solitude and even despair: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

May we never use our hands to inflict harm, but only to draw near, to comfort and to accompany the sick, raising them from their bed of pain. Sickness does not ask permission. It always comes unannounced. At times it upsets us, it narrows our horizons, it tests our hope. It is a bitter gall. Only if we find at our side someone able to listen to us, to remain close to us, to sit at our bedside... can sickness become a great school of wisdom, an encounter with God, who is ever patient. Whenever someone shares our infirmities out of love, even in the night of pain there dawns the paschal light of Christ, crucified and risen. What, in human terms, is a chastisement can become a redemptive oblation, for the good of our communities and our families. So it was for the saints.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, never leave my side, sit beside my bed of pain and keep me company. Do not leave me alone, stretch out your hand and lift me up!

I believe that you are Love, and I believe that your will is the expression of your Love; so I abandon myself to your will, for I put my trust in your Love.

Amen.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the Scripture): "I am thirsty". A jar full of vinegar was standing there. So they put a sponge full of wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said: "It is finished". Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (Jn 19:28-30).

Jesus' seven last words on the cross are the perfection of hope. Slowly, with steps that are also our own, Jesus traverses all the darkness of night and abandons himself trustingly into the arms of his Father. It is the cry of the dying, the groan of the despairing, the entreaty of the lost. It is Jesus!

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). It is the cry of Job, of everyone struck by misfortune. And God is silent. He is silent because his response is there, on the cross: Jesus himself, the eternal Word who out of love became man; he is God's answer.

"Remember me..." (Lk 23:42). The fraternal plea of the thief who became his companion in suffering, pierces Jesus' heart; it is an echo of his own pain. And Jesus grants that request: *"Today you will be with me in paradise"* The pain of others always redeems us, since it draws us out of ourselves.

"Woman, here is your son!..." (Jn 19:26). But it is his mother, Mary, who stood with John at the foot of the cross, who dispels all fear. She fills that scene with tenderness and hope. Jesus no longer feels alone. So it is with us, if beside our bed of pain there is someone who loves us! Faithfully. To the end.

"I am thirsty" (Jn 19:28). Like the child who asks his mother for drink, like the patient burning with fever... Jesus' thirst is the thirst of all those who yearn for life, freedom and justice. And it is the thirst of the one who is thirstiest of all: God, who, infinitely more than ourselves, thirsts for our salvation.

"It is finished" (Jn 19:30). Everything: every word, every action, every prophecy, every moment of Jesus' life. The tapestry is complete. The thousand colors of love now shine forth in beauty. Nothing is wasted. Nothing thrown away. Everything has become love. Everything completed for me and for you! And so, even dying becomes meaningful!

"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). Now, heroically, Jesus emerges from the fear of death. For if we live freely in love, everything is life. Forgiveness renews, heals, transforms and comforts! It creates a new people. It ends wars.

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). No longer emptiness and anguish. But complete trust in the Father's hands, complete repose in his heart. For in God, all the fragments at last come together to form a whole!



PRAYER

O God, who in the passion of Christ our Lord have set us free from death, the wages of our ancient sin, inherited by the whole human race: renew us in the image of your Son; and as we have borne in ourselves, from birth, the image of the earthly man, grant that, by the working of your Spirit, we may bear the image of the heavenly man. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him" (Mt 27:57-58).

Before burial, Jesus is at last given back to his mother. She is the icon of a broken hearted, yet she tells us that death does not forbid a mother's final kiss to her son. Bent over Jesus' body, Mary is bound to him in a total embrace. This icon is known simply as Pietà – pity. It is heartrending, but it shows that death does not break the bond of love. For love is stronger than death! Pure love is the love that lasts. Evening has come. The battle is won. The bond of love has not been broken. Those who are prepared to sacrifice their life for Christ will find it. Transfigured, on the other side of death.

Tears and blood mingle in this tragic embrace. So it is in the lives of our families whenever we suffer an unexpected and grievous loss, an emptiness and a pain which cannot be soothed, especially at the death of a child.

"Pity" means being a neighbor to our brothers and sisters who grieve and cannot be consoled. It is great act of charity to care for those suffering from bodily wounds, from mental depression, from a despairing heart. To love to the very end is the supreme teaching which Jesus and Mary have left us. It is the daily fraternal mission of consolation which is entrusted to us in this faithful embrace of the dead Jesus and his sorrowful Mother.



PRAYER

Virgin of Sorrows, at our altars you show us your radiant face; with eyes lifted up to heaven and open hands, you offer the Father, in a sign of priestly oblation, the saving victim of your Son Jesus.

Show us the sweetness of that last faithful embrace and grant us your maternal consolation, that the sorrows of our daily lives may never dim our hope of life beyond death.

Amen.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. They laid Jesus there (Jn 19:41-42).

That garden, with the tomb in which Jesus was buried, makes us think of another garden: the garden of Eden. A garden which through disobedience lost its beauty and became a wilderness, a place of death where once there was life.

The overgrown branches which block us from savoring the fragrance of God's will – our attachment to money, our pride, our squandering of human lives – must now be trimmed back and grafted onto the wood of the Cross. This is the new garden: the cross planted upon the earth!

From on high, Jesus will now bring everything back to life. After his return from the pit of hell, where Satan had imprisoned so many souls, the renewal of all things will begin. His tomb represents the end of the old man. With as Jesus, God has not allowed his children to be punished by a relentless death. In the death of Christ all the thrones of evil, built on greed and hardness of heart, are toppled.

Death disarms us; it makes us realize that we are subject here on earth to a life that will come to an end. And yet, before the body of Jesus, laid in the tomb, we come to realize who we really are. Creatures who, in order to escape death, need their Creator.

The silence which fills that garden enables us to hear the whisper of a gentle breeze: "I am the Living One and I am with you" (cf. Ex 3:14). The curtain of the temple is torn in two. At last we see our Lord's face. And we know fully his name: mercy and faithfulness. We will never be confounded, even in the face of death, for *the Son of God was free among the dead* (cf. Ps 88:6 Vg.).



PRAYER

Protect me, God: for in you I take refuge.

You are my portion and cup, my life is in your hands.

I keep you ever before me, for you are my God.

You stand at my right hand; I shall not waver.

And so my heart is glad and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.

For you do not leave my life among the dead, or let your servant go down into the pit.

You will show me the path of life, fullness of joy in your presence, happiness for ever at your right hand. Amen.

(cf. Ps 15)

Principle 5: The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Background for Leader:

Many people first enter the world of working during their teenage years. Even if they are not working a job for money, they have certainly put in lots of sweat into their schoolwork and chores at home. As unglamorous as work can be at times, it is actually a great source of dignity for us. It gives us a sense of accomplishment and allows us to contribute to the world around us. As all things, however, it must be placed in the right relation to the rest of our lives. Workers should receive just wages and be treated with dignity. We must also consider those who are unable to work for various reasons with a lens of mercy.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- The economy serves people, not the other way around
- The right to work
- Fair wages
- Organization of unions
- Private property

Tradition:

- “The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.” (Gen 2:15)
- ”The primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: ‘Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life.’” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* 25, quoting *Gaudium et Spes* 63)

Activity:

This principle is going to be taught in conjunction with the service trip to Mary and Clyde Lovell’s homestead. The teens will help with whatever tasks are needed around their property.

Small Group Questions:

1. What do you enjoy about work?
2. What makes a job “just”? Consider things like pay, hours, treatment, and safety.
3. Working hard is a good thing, but we also need rest. How can we balance work and in our own lives? Are you doing a good job of that?

Closing Prayer:

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker- by Brian Moore, S.J.

Joseph, by the work of your hands
and the sweat of your brow,
you supported Jesus and Mary,
and had the Son of God as your fellow worker.

Teach me to work as you did,

with patience and perseverance, for God and
for those whom God has given me to support.
Teach me to see in my fellow workers
the Christ who desires to be in them,
that I may always be charitable and forbearing
towards all.

Grant me to look upon work
with the eyes of faith,
so that I shall recognize in it
my share in God's own creative activity
and in Christ's work of our redemption,
and so take pride in it.

When it is pleasant and productive,
remind me to give thanks to God for it.
And when it is burdensome,
teach me to offer it to God,
in reparation for my sins
and the sins of the world.

Amen

Principle 6: Solidarity

Background for Leader:

Solidarity is about being actively compassionate. We must know the pains of our neighbors not as a passive observer, but as a friend willing to enter into their suffering and accompany our brothers and sisters through it. God emptied Himself to become like us in all things but sin. So too, we must enter into the injustices and suffering that our neighbors experience. In order to enter into this solidarity with others, we must first recognize the experience of our neighbors. This lesson will focus on unveiling some of the struggles that our fellow youth group members experience while simultaneously showing us that we are often not as alone in our struggles as we feel.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Making others' problems also our own
- National, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences
- Unity, not conformity

Tradition:

- And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are. (Jn 17:11)
- “[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (JPII *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* 38)

Activity:

For this activity, each student will receive one of the handouts and spread out. By themselves and without writing their names on their paper, they will go through and circle each question that is true for them. When they have finished the paper, they will turn it over and wait for the leader to collect them. Once everyone is finished, the teens will gather in a circle and the leader will randomly pass out a paper to each teen. The leader will then go through and read each statement, pausing for a moment in between. If the teen's paper has that statement circled, they will stand up or raise their hand until the next statement is read.

Small Group Questions:

1. How did it feel looking at another person's list of answers?
2. Was there ever a moment you were surprised to see multiple people experience something you thought you were alone in?
3. Was there anything that you were surprised that someone in this room has experienced?
4. What can this activity teach us about the way we encounter other people?

Closing Prayer:

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Solidarity Activity

This is a silent activity. For each statement that is true in the last few weeks or months, circle the number next to it. Do not share your answers or write your name on your paper.

1. I have felt lonely.
2. I have struggled with my friendships.
3. I have felt like no one understood what I was going through.
4. I wish I was recognized for something I accomplished.
5. My family has had messy situations.
6. I have cried without anyone knowing.
7. School does not come easily to me.
8. I have felt less gifted than my peers.
9. I have struggled to forgive someone.
10. I have worried about what the future will hold for me.
11. Sometimes I question if I fit in with the people around me.
12. I have struggled in my relationship with God.
13. I have felt like a burden on others.
14. I failed to accomplish something despite my effort.
15. I have wished I could do more to help the people I love.
16. I have had doubts in my faith.
17. I had a bad attitude towards someone.
18. It has been hard for me to see the good in other people.
19. I have been hurt by someone I trusted.
20. I have felt far from God.

Principle 7: Care for God's Creation

Background for Leader:

While being eco-friendly may be trendy in the world of social influencers today, it is actually a call for all Christians that has roots deep in tradition. We are called to care for the earth because it is a good thing created by God, and a gift from God that has been entrusted to humanity to care for. Furthermore, in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis explains to us that caring for the environment is also caring for the people who live in it. We have an obligation to cultivate the earth given to us. Alaska has one of the most beautiful environments on the planet, and also clearly suffers from the sometimes harmful effects of our human failure to care for it. For this activity, we are going to immerse ourselves in the beauty of God's creation and reflect on our duty to care for it.

Examples of Where Principle is Applicable:

- Stewardship of creation
- Protect people and the planet
- Creation is a gift from God

Tradition:

- The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it. (Ps 24:1)
- "Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." (Pope Francis *Laudato Si* 91)
- "The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God." (St. John of Damascus, *Treatise*)

Activity:

If we can find a willing priest, this activity will consist of a hike culminating in a Mass outdoors. The trail can depend on the availability of the priest, the ability of the teens attending, and of course, weather. If a priest is not available, we will substitute another prayer activity at the summit of the hike.

Small Group Questions:

1. How do you see God's image in nature?
2. In what ways do we participate in negatively impacting the environment?
3. What can we do to be better stewards of the land we live on?

Closing Prayer:

Canticle — Daniel 3:57-88, 56 (used on Sundays and Feast Days in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Teens can split into two groups and alternate reading each stanza together.)

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord.

Praise and exalt him above all forever.

Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord.

You heavens, bless the Lord.

All you waters above the heavens, bless the Lord.
All you hosts of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Sun and moon, bless the Lord.
Stars of heaven, bless the Lord.

Every shower and dew, bless the Lord.
All you winds, bless the Lord.
Fire and heat, bless the Lord.
Cold and chill, bless the Lord.
Dew and rain, bless the Lord.
Frost and chill, bless the Lord.
Ice and snow, bless the Lord.
Nights and days, bless the Lord.
Light and darkness, bless the Lord.
Lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord.

Let the earth bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Mountains and hills, bless the Lord.
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord.
You springs, bless the Lord.
Seas and rivers, bless the Lord.
You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord.
All you birds of the air, bless the Lord.
All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord.
You sons of men, bless the Lord.

O Israel, bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Priests of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Servants of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord.
Holy men of humble heart, bless the Lord.
Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.

Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Let us praise and exalt him above all forever.
Blessed are you, Lord, in the firmament of heaven.
Praiseworthy and glorious and exalted above all forever.