

**40<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace**

**An online video prayer offering  
April 10, 2020**



## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant

### **Introduction:**

**The Benedictine Sisters of Erie welcome you to our Good Friday Peace Pilgrimage.**

For forty years, we have gathered on Good Friday in prayerful remembrance of the passion and death of Jesus. We have walked through our city, calling to mind Jesus' journey to the cross 2000 years ago, as we passed through places where Christ is still suffering, in the agony and oppression of our brothers and sisters today.

This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to gather to pray together in person. Instead, we come together online, united in spirit as we pray for peace and justice on the earth. Our theme for the Stations this year is "The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant," and we pray especially for those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, because of the xenophobic and racist immigration policies of our country. We pray that we may all come to see the face of Jesus in the faces of immigrants and refugees, and that all hearts may be opened to welcome them.

## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant

### **Station 1**

**St. Peter Cathedral—Jesus is condemned to death  
"Muslim ban" dooms refugees to famine and war**

### **Refrain:**

**Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.**  
(once by cantor, repeated by all)

### **Reader 1:**

The religious leaders of the day brought Jesus before the Roman magistrate, Pilate, and accused him of declaring himself King. They said he was a threat to the Roman empire, though he had committed no crime. And although Pilate suspected that Jesus was innocent—that he stood before the magistrate deserving only mercy and freedom—he chose to wash his hands of the matter and leave Jesus to die a horrible death.

### **Reader 2:**

The current administration ran an election campaign that promised to bar Muslims from entering the United States, a promise that was put into effect one week into the president's term in office. Claiming to be

protecting the American people from terrorism, an Executive Order barred immigrants and refugees from seven Muslim-majority nations—none of which have been home to terrorists who carried out an attack on the United States. A Yazidi refugee told reporters that she was waiting at the departure gate to board her flight to the US when the ban came.

“We are under threat here in Irbil because my husband has worked with Americans,” she said of her family’s struggle to gain refugee status. “Our whole family is under threat (from extremists) because he has helped Americans. I am not trying to go to the U.S. for political or economic reasons; I am fleeing Iraq because I am a minority, and every day I live in fear that (ISIS) will attack.”

In February of this year, the Trump administration extended the ban to an additional six majority Muslim nations, including Sudan and Myanmar, preventing some of Erie’s new Americans from reuniting with family members stuck in refugee camps.

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

**Give us hearts that break open  
When our brothers and sisters turn to us  
with the cry, “Will you let me in?”**

**Refrain:**

**Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.**

## *The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant* *Station 2*

**Emmaus Grove—Jesus is crowned with thorns**

**Drought/climate crisis drives migrants from their homes**

**Refrain:**

**Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.**

**Reader 1:**

**Facing the reality that he would soon die, Jesus was mocked and ridiculed. The soldiers made a crown out of thorns and put it on his head, beating him with a dry reed. Wounded and tormented by those who had no respect for him, he prepared to walk the way of the cross.**

**Reader 2:**

**Because of the climate crisis, the past decade has seen frequent, intense droughts and late rains, which have led to crop failure and famine in Central America. As the land dries up, the people starve and grow desperate. In Guatemala, 47% of children suffer from chronic malnourishment, leading many young people and families to make a frantic effort to relocate to the US, where they have a better chance of survival. Felipe Alonzo-Gomes was one of these children. At the age of eight, he left rural Guatemala and made his way, with his father, to the United States. Apprehended by Border Patrol, Felipe and his father were detained in an ICE facility, where he became sick. Officials diagnosed him with a common cold, despite a high fever and vomiting, and he died less than a week later.**

### **Prayer/commitment statement**

Give us hearts that break open  
When our brothers and sisters turn to us  
with the cry, "Will you let me in?"

### **Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant Station 3

**St Benedict's Education Center—Veronica wipes the face of Jesus  
US cuts admissions quotas as refugee camps overflow**

### **Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

### **Reader 1:**

A crowd of people looked on as Jesus—bloody, weakened, and beaten and spat on by the Roman soldiers—made his way to Calvary. Legend tells us that one woman in the crowd, Veronica, was so moved by his suffering that she stepped forward, defying the anger of the people and the power of the Romans, to offer Jesus the only compassion she could: wiping his face with her own veil.

### **Reader 2:**

As an unprecedentedly high number of refugees—70.8 million people—seek a safe place to live, the United States is slashing its quota for accepting refugees, to just 18,000 people in 2020. On the island of Samos, Greece, almost 5,000 refugees live in a camp designed for 650. With the Covid pandemic, the risk to these vulnerable refugees has grown exponentially. An Afghan student, attending an English class offered by an NGO, writes that if a man complains about having to share his overcrowded tent with still more people, officials tell him that he should simply move outdoors. In the United States, there are nearly 1.5 million unoccupied homes, and countless federal and nonprofit organizations—like Saint Benedict Education Center, shown here—that have programs in place to help refugees establish productive lives in this country. As the camps overflow with displaced and desperate people, these programs stand empty, waiting for the opportunity to help.

### **Prayer/commitment statement:**

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with the cry, "Will you let me in?"

### **Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

# The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant

## Station 4

Social Security Office—Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

“Public charge rule” punishes immigrants for poverty

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

**Reader 1:**

Despite all that Jesus had already suffered, and all the agony that awaited him, he was still able to look at others with compassion. As he passed by the women of Jerusalem, who were weeping for his pain, and for the loss of their hope that he would free them from Roman oppression, Jesus was moved by their plight, and their vulnerability. “Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children,” he said.

**Reader 2:**

In February 2020, the Trump administration implemented a stricter interpretation of the “Public Charge” rule, which denies a visa to anyone who is dependent on government benefits or is considered “likely” to be in the future. This comes even though research from the Cato Institute shows that immigrants are “less likely to consume welfare benefits and, when they do, they generally consume a lower dollar value of benefits than native-born Americans.” The Los Angeles Times reported that fear of being denied a visa forced some immigrants to withdraw their children from special education programs, and others to drop out of food assistance programs.

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

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When our brothers and sisters turn to us  
with the cry, “Will you let me in?”

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

# The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant

## Station 5

Federal Building—Jesus meets his mother

Migrants fleeing violence are refused asylum

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

**Reader 1:**

Jesus’ mother, Mary, was among those who watched, with a broken heart, knowing that there was no hope for Jesus to escape crucifixion. On that terrible day, she must have remembered the miracle of his birth, her

love for him, and the profound promise he had shown, and asked God why all of that would come to such a terrible end.

### Reader 2:

In January of this year, the Trump administration implemented a “Remain in Mexico policy,” or MPP. Since then, more than 57,000 people have been forced to wait in Mexico for asylum hearings in the United States while their cases are being processed. The children, women and men sleep in tent camps in Mexican border towns while they wait—without access to legal aid, social services, sanitary conditions, or protection from gangs and traffickers. At least 816 asylum-seekers have been raped, kidnapped, assaulted, and even murdered in Mexico, including more than 200 children.

Esperanza is a young woman fleeing from violence in El Salvador. She arrived in Chihuahua, Mexico, and was kidnapped before arriving at the U.S. border. Esperanza was kept locked up in a warehouse for a month. Those responsible beat her until she gave them her father’s phone number, who paid the ransom. After weeks, she was dumped in a ditch near the Rio Grande. She walked all night, with no idea where she was, until men on horseback helped her. She later realized they were U.S. officials. They asked her what happened to her, and she explained. They asked her questions about herself and handed her papers she did not understand. After a couple of days, she was told by one of the officers to come back on the date the paper said and to tell her story when she came back. U.S. immigration authorities returned Esperanza to Ciudad Juarez under MPP.

Esperanza was returned after dark and with nowhere to go, leaving her vulnerable to the violence and insecurity of the city. She was kidnapped a second time. This time there were three other women and two children with her. Her father was again contacted in Guatemala, but he was not able to pay this time. Her family had nothing to exchange for her release...for her life. The perpetrators forced her to repeatedly watch a video of a woman being tortured, and Esperanza believed she was going to end up the same. Fortunately for her, a woman helped them escape. Whether she will ever be able to immigrate to the U.S. is still unknown.

### Prayer/commitment statement:

Give us hearts that break open  
When our brothers and sisters turn to us  
with the cry, “Will you let me in?”

### Refrain:

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant Station 6

Fishing platform—Jesus falls 3 times

Failure to address climate crisis drives migration crisis

### Refrain:

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

### Reader 1:

Weakened by scourging, shoved by soldiers and jeering crowds, and exhausted by the incredible weight of

the crossbeam on his shoulders, Jesus fell to the ground again and again as he walked to Calvary. Those who loved him saw him stagger closer and closer to his death, knowing that his time was running out, praying for a miracle to save him.

**Reader 2:**

Countries with extremely high carbon emissions, like the United States, have had several decades to find ways to avert a climate catastrophe. But pollution has continued, leading to droughts, famines, and natural disasters that disproportionately affect people in impoverished countries with minimal carbon emissions. In Bangladesh, more than three quarters of the country has sunk underwater, and riverbank erosion and cyclones displace tens of thousands of people each year. 20-year-old Amina, whose collar bone was fractured when a tidal flood smashed a wall of her home and crushed her, is one of them. She and her husband have no money for a doctor, much less a move to a safer part of the world.

“Everyone that’s living here, we’re all poor people,” she said, sitting in front of her partially-repaired mud and thatch house. “We don’t have anywhere to go.” Until January 20th of this year, climate refugees were not legally entitled to the rights afforded to other refugees by the United Nations.

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

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**Refrain:**

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## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant Station 7

Governor’s Regional Office—Jesus is stripped of his garments  
Immigrant families with children incarcerated in PA

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

**Reader 1:**

Having reached the place of his execution, the Romans stripped Jesus of his garments, leaving him exposed, degraded, and vulnerable. In that moment, it was more obvious than ever that he was no longer seen as a prophet and a leader, but had been marked as a criminal, left to die in shame.

**Reader 2:**

Berks Family Residential Center, in Leesport, PA is one of the ICE facilities in the US holding immigrant children. During this COVID pandemic, those incarcerated have no way to prevent exposure to the disease and have only limited access to health care.

A 12-year-old from Central America, who was being held in a detention center in the US in the summer of last year, told this story to a lawyer, “The officers who apprehended us had us take off our shoelaces, belts,

and valuables. We were then transported to a detention center where I was held for about 8 days. There were about 300 kids there, and the lights were on all the time, including all night. We were fed, but we weren't given milk, fruit, or vegetables while we were there, and I was not allowed to bathe. Then I was taken to a second detention center. The guards were mean and scary. They yelled at us and when a boy was found to be hiding food for later, the officials handcuffed his wrists and said he would go to prison. Then I was transported to another center. Here I've bathed four or five times, for two or three minutes each. I haven't received any information about leaving here. I want to see my family."

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

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with the cry, "Will you let me in?"

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant Station 8

Intermodal Center—Jesus is nailed to the cross  
Enhanced enforcement creates a culture of fear

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

**Reader 1:**

The goal of crucifixion was not simply to kill off enemies of the Roman State one-by-one. It was designed to be torturous, humiliating, and very public so that it would strike fear into the heart of anyone else who might have wanted to rebel against the empire. As Jesus' body was pierced by nails and his cross lifted, his executioners knew that they were sending a message to the world: If you upend the social order and threaten the empire's occupation, you will be completely destroyed.

**Reader 2:**

In 2017, Andres Sosa Segura was traveling by Greyhound bus to return home to his wife and children in Washington State when Customs and Border Protection agents stopped him during a transfer at the Spokane Greyhound station. Sosa, the only Latino-appearing passenger, was cornered by Border Patrol. He handed the agents a card that invoked his right to an attorney, declined to consent to a search, and gave them proof that he had already been released by a court to await immigration proceeding. The agents pulled Sosa from the bus anyway, telling him that his assertion of his rights was proof that he was "illegal." Sosa was held for four hours before being released. For years, this kind of incident was commonplace, as Border Patrol agents could board buses and pull off anyone whom they suspected of immigrating illegally.

Greyhound notified the Department of Homeland Security this past February that they will no longer allow Border Patrol to conduct warrantless searches on its buses, ending this practice that has sown fear into immigrant communities for so long.

ICE's enhanced enforcement involves racial profiling and generates fear for new Americans and people of color as they move about their daily lives.

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

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**Refrain:**

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## The Way of the Cross; the Way of the Migrant Station 9

Mount Saint Benedict Chapel—Jesus dies on the cross  
US immigration policies rupture families

**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.

**Reader 1:**

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, this disciple took her into his home.

Later...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.

**Reader 2:**

Separating children from their parents, rupturing families is the result of many of the Trump administration's immigration policies: enhanced enforcement, the Muslim ban, refugee quotas and the "remain in Mexico policy."

A staff member at one of the detention center reports that he was ordered to tell two detained siblings, ages 6 and 10, that they couldn't hug each other. "They wanted to translate to these kids that the rule of the shelter is that they are not allowed to hug," he says. "And these are kids that had just been separated from their mom — basically just huddling and hugging each other in a desperate attempt to remain together."

The American Academy of Pediatricians oppose family separation as it can cause "irreparable harm, disrupting a child's brain architecture and affecting his or her short- and long-term health. This type of prolonged exposure to serious stress — known as toxic stress — can carry lifelong consequences for children."

**Prayer/commitment statement:**

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**Refrain:**

Open wide my arms, that the suffering of the world may come in.



**Credits:**

by Erie Benedictines for Peace

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