

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

St. John/Isidore

Nails were not enough to hold the God-man nailed and fastened on the Cross, had not love held Him there.

St. Catherine of Siena

Condemned to Die and Stripped of Garments



The religious and political leaders of the time failed to discern the Messianic personality of Jesus. In their feeble and careless judgment, they sentenced him to die and stripped him of the protection from his garment as we discover in the first and tenth stations in the traditional *Stations of the Cross*.

Viktor Frankl, the Jewish psychologist who endured the horrifying realities of the Holocaust, wrote in his book MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING, "No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him." Is Frankl not correct? Love is the only right prism for seeing and discovering the dignity and worth of every human being, born and unborn. And it is love that reveals the potential of every human being to love, most especially those most in need of our care, the sick, the elderly, the poor and the forgotten.

Quite profoundly, despite the embarrassment meted out to him, Jesus never turned his loving gaze away from those who disputed his essence, criminalized and persecuted him. Jesus was designated criminal because he healed on the sabbath (Jn. 9:1-14), he lessened the burden of the weak and vulnerable (Matt. 11:28-30), he let the woman caught in adultery go free (Jn. 8:1-11). Jesus never condemned anyone, for he, who is love, embraced fully all who he encountered.

The cry of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing," is a proclamation that even in his hour of insurmountable suffering, Jesus does not condemn; he had no need to forgive since he held others blameless. Instead, he asks the Father to absolve his murderers.

St. Catherine's remark pointedly speaks about the grace of love. The gift of the love that Christ extended to all would appropriately shed light on the willingness of the early Christians to feed the hungry lions with their bodies in imitation of love for Christ, and as a symbol of sacrificial love in the world. As Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M., writes in JESUS' PLAN FOR A NEW WORLD, "Those who stay on the side of power have consistently misused and misinterpreted the gospel." He mentions Francis of Assisi as one who gave up his affluent lifestyle to live and serve among the forgotten of society. Francis became an example of the radical call of the gospel, for all time. The gospel is about the love we all share as human beings. Passion for every life, born and the unborn, is the essence of being human. We are called to love all and not condemn or harm another.