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CZESTOCHOWA WAY OF THE CROSS

Jasna Gora Shrine of
Our Lady of Czestochowa, Poland



With the paintings & faith of
Jerzy Duda Gracz

Introduction

(Section from the book – “Golgota Jasnogorska – Trzeciego Tysiaclecia”)

Jerzy Duda Gracz wants us to get involved and experience the Passion of Christ, but also – and maybe first of all – he wants us to be responsible and active during our own self-examination. His words appeal in the same ways as his artistic media, specific “painted words” of his artistic expression.

Critics have rightly noticed that the longtime theme of works of the artist is a certain idea, which is the journey of Jesus on Polish roads, among contemporary Poles. The Golgotha of Jasna Gora, called consciously by the artist his biggest accomplishment, is the culmination of this journey. The artist’s journey through his own life, his journey to Jasna Gora, his creative journey through successive artworks, to his ultimate work crowning his entire life. However, this work of art is first of all a depiction of the last journey of Jesus, his Passion, and a difficult path of faith of his present-day believers.

As far as the artistic media are concerned, Jerzy Duda Gracz remains in his Golgotha of Jasna Gora somewhat faithful to the ideas of poetically understood realism – it’s true that it is specifically implied, 1164full of grotesque, overstated and sometimes leaning toward caricature. Duda Gracz always portrays the world of “real” people, who are frequently somewhat deformed, at times twisted, ugly, bad, funny or piteous. Against the setting of this odd crowd featuring contemporary and historical individuals, ordinary and festive, typical and unique, the artist places the suffering, although very human Jesus, occasionally a little bit distorted, charmless, humiliated and victorious at the same time, Jesus to whom every one of us can come with our own suffering not afraid of rejection.



Prayer to Our Lady of Czestochowa

Our Lady of Czestochowa, Queen of Poland, pray for us Holy Mother of Czestochowa, you are full of grace, goodness and mercy. I consecrated to you all my thoughts, words and actions - my soul and body. I beseech your blessings and especially prayers for my salvation.

Today I consecrate myself to you, good Mother, totally - with body and soul amid joy and sufferings, to obtain for myself and others your blessings on this earth and eternal life in heaven. Amen

Our Lady of Czestochowa, Queen of Poland, pray for us.



The Prayer Of Mary (Magnificat)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.

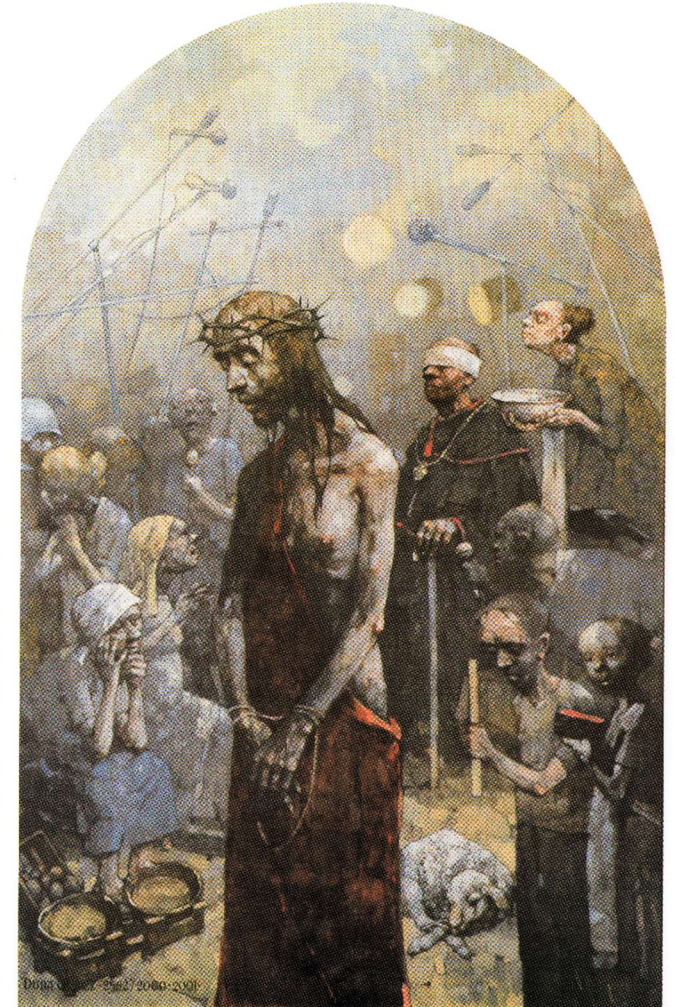
(Lk 1:46-55)

1st Station **PILATE**

Reflection:

Jesus stands before Pilate. This fact raises our doubts as well as creates media sensation. Is the Condemned one credible and real, considering his Kingdom is not of this world ?

Christ plunges in darkness, closes his eyes before earthly laws, since he knows that he is not a defendant but the Heavenly Judge, who will come again to judge the living and the dead. He will be the Divine Judge, good and natural like the sun, contrary to Pilate, who shines briefly under an artificial glow of reflectors, in order for everybody to see how he washes his hands from the blood of the Lamb.



Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as we walk this way with you, may we always seek truth, justice and love, not blinded by the lights of this world. May we not seek fame, popularity and attention of this world but follow you as faithful and courageous disciples.

2nd Station

HERE IS THE MAN

Reflection:

The one, who embarks on his journey to Golgotha along with two thieves, is our God, and despite the fact he humbly takes up his cross. May he also take up our crosses, crutches and artificial limbs, supporting the burden of human cripplehood.

Thanks to the weight of the cross Jesus becomes a support for the suffering, performing miracles of healing.

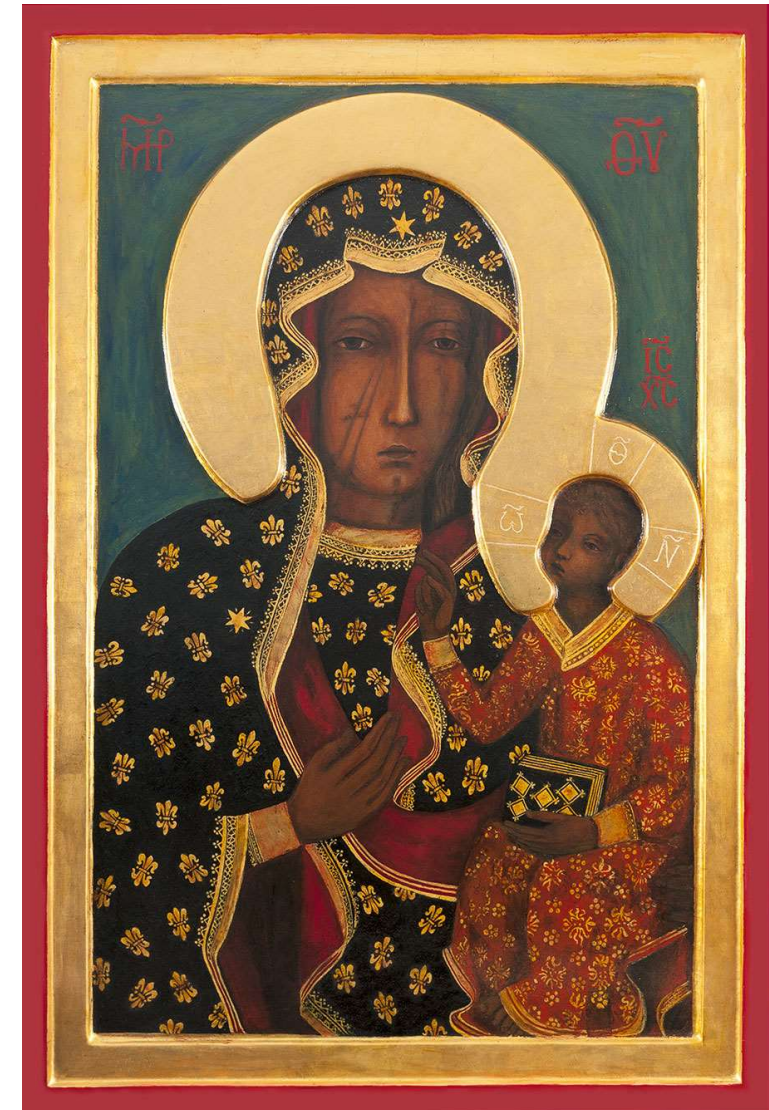
“...with his stripes we are healed.”
(Isaiah 53:5)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, the cross you carried was so heavy, yet out of a deep love for us, you endured your passion. With your cross you offer us healing and strength from our own sufferings, weaknesses and sinfulness. May we, with your grace, have the courage to carry our crutches and help those around us journey to the kingdom as brothers and sisters.



OUR LADY OF CZESTOCHOWA PRAY FOR US !!



18th Station

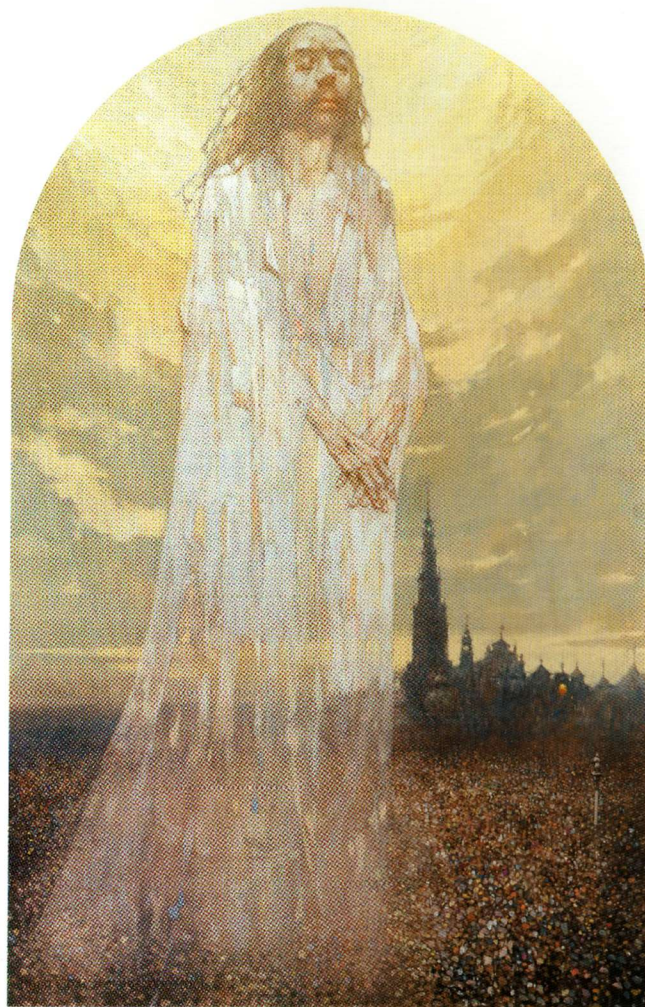
Ascension

Reflection:

Jesus finishes his earthly journey and by ascending to heaven becomes the Apolline Christ – the Sun, the Centre of Heaven and the Human Heaven. Just like before Pilate in the first station, in the last one he also closes his eyes in order for us to remember him not as a judge, but the one who will be releasing and letting people to the house of his father. On the earth, on the Polish earth, remains the house of Our Lady of Jasna Gora, our Heavenly Gate and Jerusalem. Jesus bestows power from on high unto the Apostles in Jerusalem and sends them to spread the Good News.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we are grateful for our many shrines and holy places that inspire us to experience a piece of heaven on earth. May we always strive to be obedient to you sharing the glory of the resurrection and leading others to the Heavenly Gate.



3rd Station

FIRST FALL

Reflection:

We are surprised and distressed over Christ's weakness and lack of angelic intervention. Turning our eyes from this humiliation we do not notice any sign of the sun in it. Blind and scared we deny him as our Saviour, continuing to repeat the weakness of Peter, the Rock upon which Jesus would build his Church. We forget that "God will save humanity thanks to the falls of Jesus under the cross."

(Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, 1976 Lenten Retreat at the Vatican)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross was so heavy that you fell to the ground. You endured and suffered so much carrying the cross for us. May we never turn away, be afraid or weak in faith. May we embrace our cross each day and help others carry their crosses. May we never be blind to injustice, hatred and indifference. May we be the light and hope of all those in need.



4th Station

MOTHER

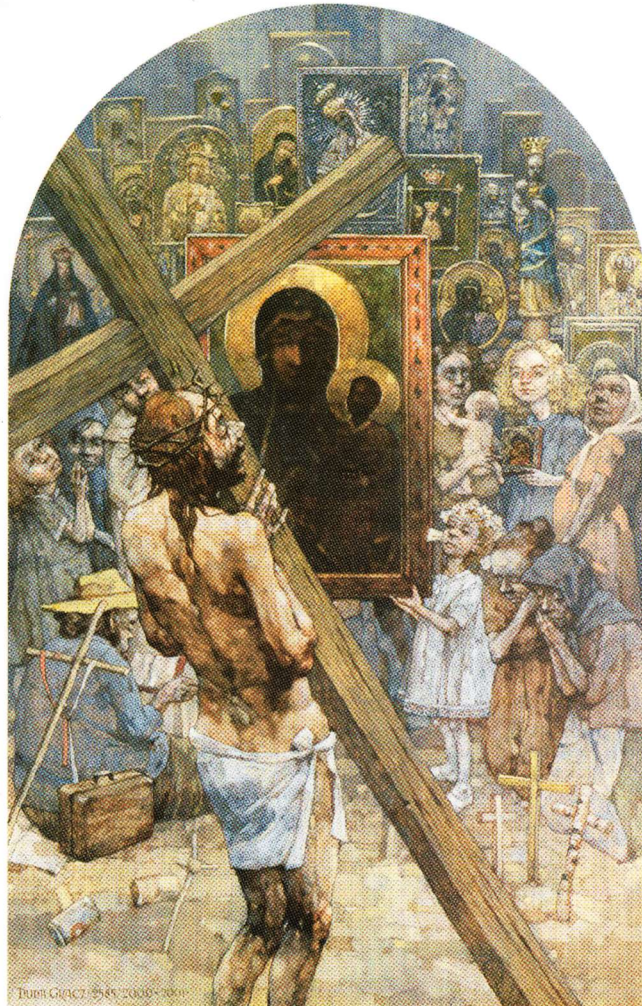
Reflection:

In the Polish Golgotha, Jesus doesn't meet his Mother as a human being, but Mary depicted in the Painting of Jasna Gora and all mothers who are a reflection of her image.

The Hodegetria of Czestochowa shows us the way to salvation. For the first time Jesus during his Passion and Christ-Emmanuel stand next to one another. Emmanuel is the beginning of the way and the cross means its end. Our Lady of Czestochowa and all mothers in their eternal journeys go to God through Golgotha. They give birth, will give birth and will bury, creating the everlasting act of salvation and redemption. Mothers under crosses of human sons have a divine dimension, since their hearts are pierced by a sword in order to fulfill the Scriptures.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may Mary our Mother, always bring us comfort in our pains and sufferings. May she guide us from the stable, to the cross and the empty tomb !!



17th Station

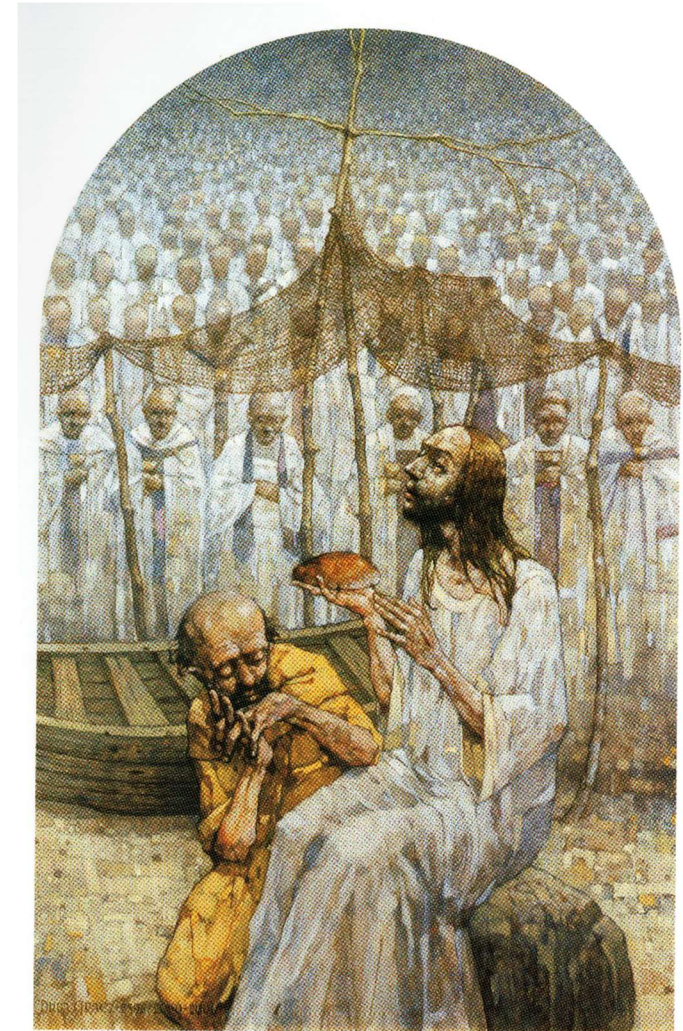
GALILEE

Reflection:

Jesus has been giving orders to Peter, the Apostles and all his successors for centuries, entrusting to them his Church. "Feed my sheep." (John 21:17); "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." (John 21:6). He gives them the last lesson, to follow God and feed people with the Bread of Life. "And he said unto them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...'" (Luke 24:46-47)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we always be obedient and trust you by feeding those who are hungry for truth, justice and freedom. May we cast our nets on the right side of the boat seeking out those who are lost, forgotten and fallen away from Christ's love.



16th Station

THOMAS

Reflection:

“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side.’” (John 20:27) We do not learn about Jesus through faith, but strive to discover him through our mind, building the second Tower of Babel. Despite millennial experiences, we continue to believe in what is touchable, physical and scientifically proved. Our languages mix, of those who know and don’t believe with those who haven’t seen Jesus but believe in him. Only in sickness, affliction and death do we start to believe in Jesus. Only at the end of the world when the Tower of Babel of our mind will collapse will we believe and discover Jesus without touching his wounds.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, over the centuries we have learned so much about ourselves and this world, yet none of it can compare to our faith and trust in you. May we seek you with a simplicity of heart and a childlike love, embracing you, our Risen Lord.



5th Station

SIMON OF CYRENE

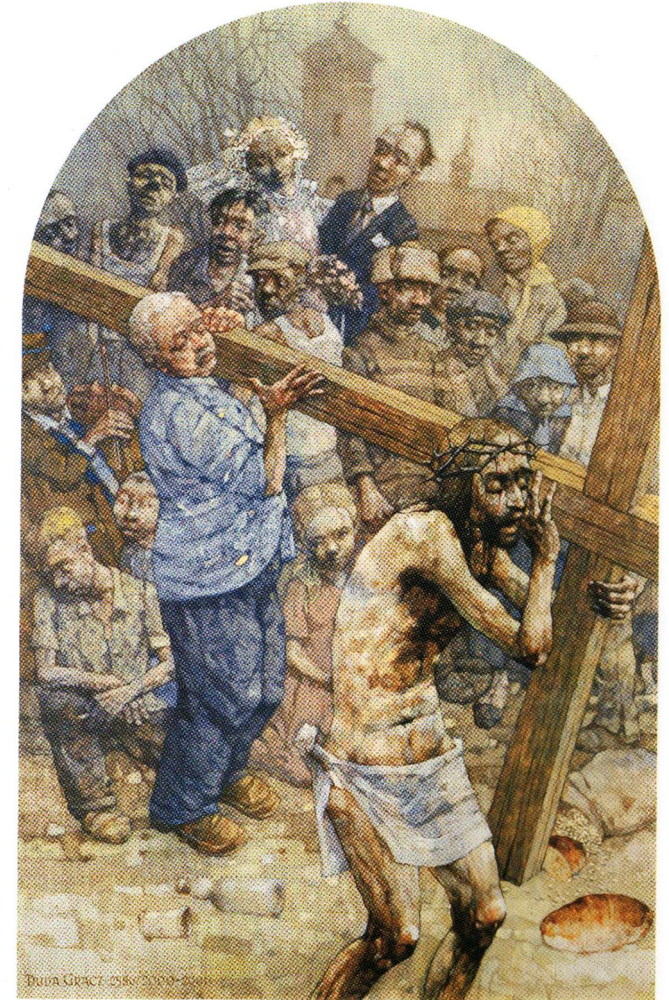
Reflection:

“He was so close, closer than Mary, closer than John, who – although a man – was not called for assistance. How long was he under pressure? How long he walked next to him, underlining that he had no ties with the condemned one and his culpability, and his punishment?” (Cardinal Wojtyla, 1976 Lenten Retreat at the Vatican)

Pressure was needed in order to break the ordinariness of life and boring celebrations. Humiliation, fear of strangers and loneliness were needed in order to notice the ill-treated Bread of Life under the burden of the cross.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we always be ready and eager to help those who are suffering or in need, not counting the cost or concerned for our own well being. May we rush to the aid of others and walk with them in solidarity and love.



6th Station

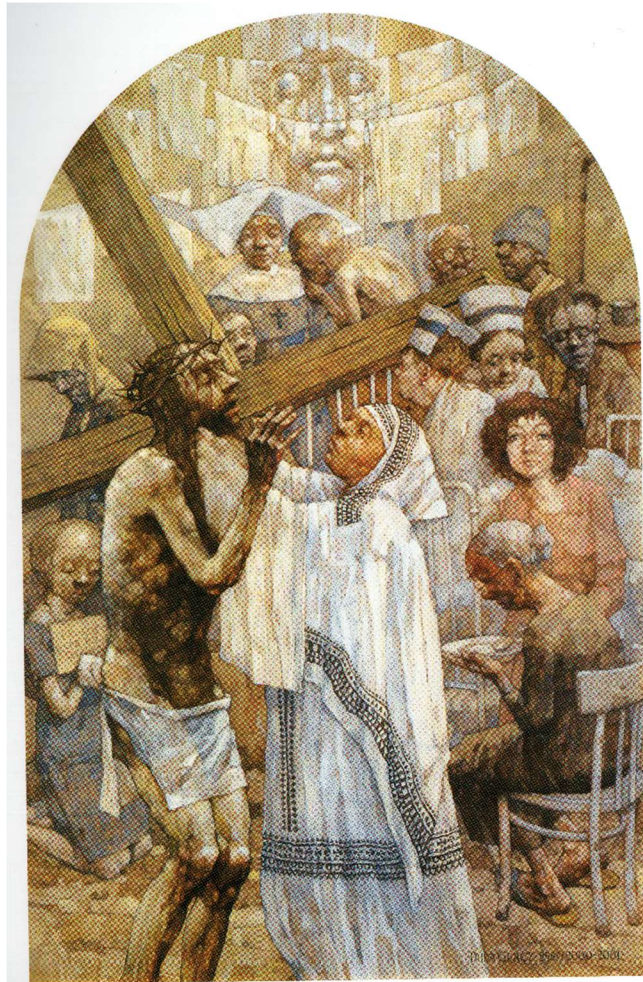
VERONICA

Reflection:

Vera Icon, means True Image. The True Image of Christ in the man is like the gene for pain, diseases and suffering. Are we, who were created in his image and likeness, have a shred of mercy, a shred of Veronica's veil? This veil could become a flag of humanity on earth, without any additional signs, symbols and colours. The white flag with the image of Christ symbolizes the human surrender to his love, since "to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we have the courage of Veronica, who wiped your face during the passion. May we offer comfort and consolation to those who carry heavy burdens. May we surrender to you with all our hearts and be your face, hands and feet in this world that longs for your light !



15th Station

RESURRECTION

Reflection:

Alleluia !! Jesus lives, however his Golgotha is not finished. It continues to be the Way through the Resurrection; renewing the Book of Genesis, it becomes the Holy Spirit raising above the human "waters".

The face of Christ is the only visible face, although there are many people. Jesus is the new Adam in every man, the First and Last Man. He lives in every one of us.

In his resurrection the idea of divinity is fulfilled. Jesus becomes one of us and we ascend to him. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father. To my God and your God." (John 20:17)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, fill us with light and faith so that we live the resurrection each day. Through your passion, death and resurrection we ascend to you --- we become divine because of your eternal and gracious love. New life, new hope and new joy mark our days as an Easter people proclaiming eternal life !!

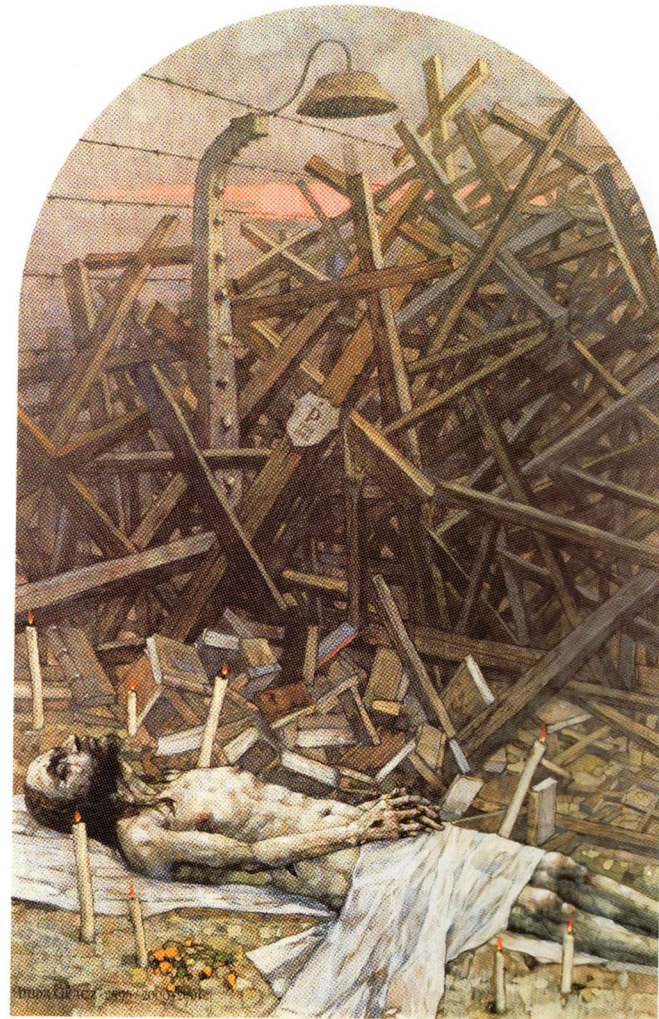


14th Station

THE TOMB

Reflection:

For over 2000 years we have been disturbing the peace of the bodily death of Jesus Christ, from the time of Joseph of Arimathea to this day. The Tomb of Jesus has for centuries been serving as a foundation for theories and books, proclaiming his defeat or nonexistence. Today, on the Polish cemetery of Auschwitz it is crushed by a pile of crosses, which are profaned and thrown away from the so-called gravel pit. Nevertheless, Jesus lives in this tomb and is resurrected on the third day according to the scriptures "Where O death is your victory ? Where O death is your sting ? (1 Corinthians 15,55)



Prayer:

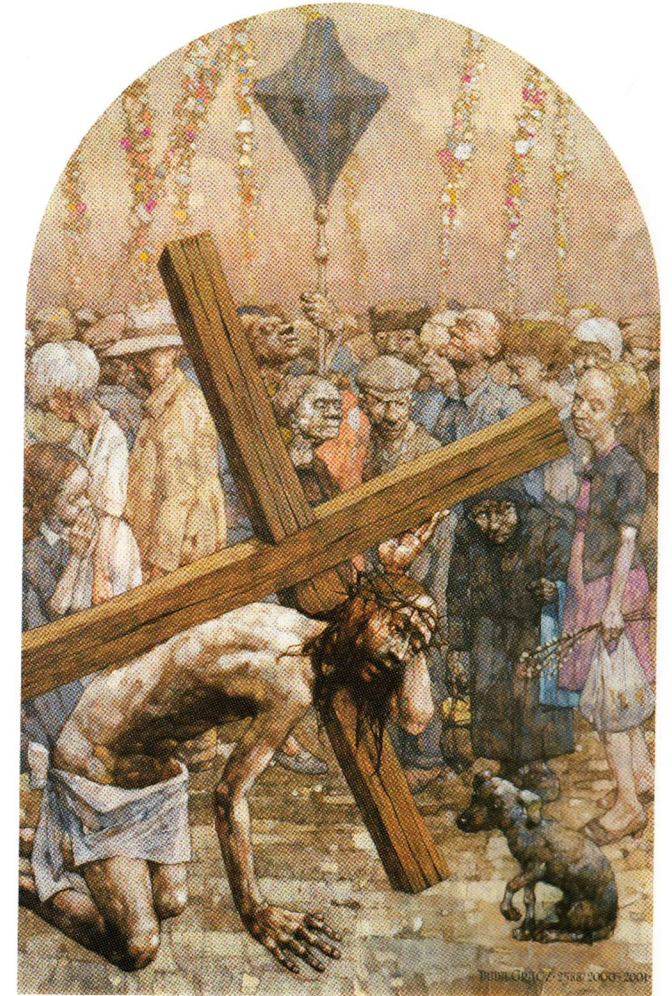
Lord Jesus, through your death you hallowed the graves of all those who have died. May all those who have gone before us, especially those who suffered greatly, may experience the glory, majesty and beauty of heaven.

7th Station

SECOND FALL

Reflection:

"It's common knowledge that the hours before holidays are frequently hectic. And streets are crowded." (Cardinal Woytyla, 1976 Lenten Retreat at the Vatican) The second fall of Jesus takes place in a crowd of busy and bustling people, since it's Holy Week and Easter is in a few days. Only traditional palms are left from Palm Sunday, when we welcomed Jesus, commemorating his entry into Jerusalem. Christ has fallen, but he continues to fight, he's still alive, and we have already buried him and covered him with violet. Only a dog, which doesn't categorize events, notices, recognizes and senses that God is alive.



Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we never forget that you are alive !! That you dwell in our hearts each and every day. May we slow down from our hectic lives seeing your presence in others. May we embrace Holy Week as a time of conversion and renewal restoring us as faithful disciples serving you !!

8th Station

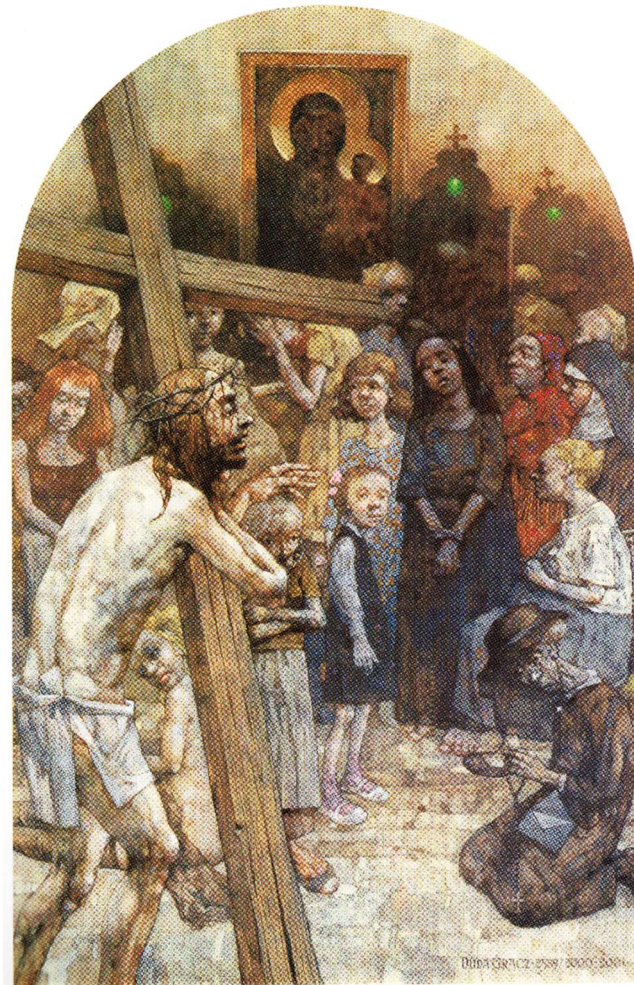
THE WEeping WOMEN

Reflection:

Consolation was offered to the women in the second meeting with the Mother – a beacon guiding us to the Way of Salvation, however, this time through penance. The suffering Christ, saying “...weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and your children.” (Luke 23:28), gives us a hope that genuine grieving is an opportunity for the forgiveness of sin. This station shows us the origins of the dialogue of mercy. Women do not weep for God, but through their pain of giving birth they in fact commiserate with the Human Son, just as he told them.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we experience your mercy and forgiveness each day. May we seek your love and hope in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so our tears may be wiped away and that we may be set free !!



13th Station

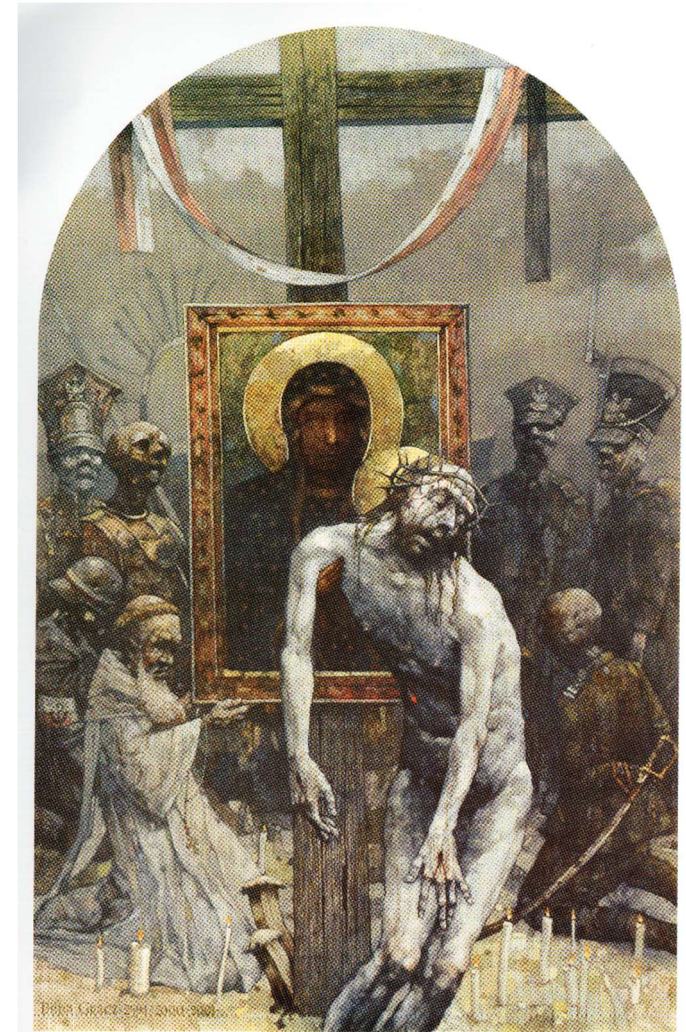
PIETA

Reflection:

The Polish Christ in the arms of the Mother of God liberates the Polish Hell through his suffering and death on the cross. This is Anastasis, meaning descent into hell to free the souls of our martyrs and heroes. However, Jesus doesn't enter Sheol, an abyss, like a hero, he enters it as the Martyred Human Body, which liberates and opens gates, “and his kingdom will have no end.” (Luke 1:33)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for our Mother Mary, who embraces us in our deepest pains and sufferings. As she held you at the end of your earthly life, may we be embraced by our Mother – comforted, strengthened and renewed. May we be filled with compassion and help others and journey with all those who are in need.



12th Station

DYING

Reflection:

It is finished. When Jesus cries from the cross, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani ?” (Matthew 27:46), he comes as close as possible to today’s man through his hopelessness and despair. In his “blasphemous” apogee of loneliness and dying he comes close to us,

diminishing his Divinity to human poverty and weakness. Thanks to this fact the moment of death of Jesus’ body multiplied and liberated crosses across the Earth and people have understood that by following Christ we have to die in order to live. “Man who looks at these arms can think that they embrace the man and world with the highest effort. They do embrace! Here is the man. Here is God himself.” (Cardinal Wojtyla – 1976 Lenten Retreat, Vatican)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we in our times of hopelessness and despair always turn to you knowing that you embrace us with the arms that bore the cross of salvation. May you liberate us from our darkness and transform us into beacons of light.



9th Station

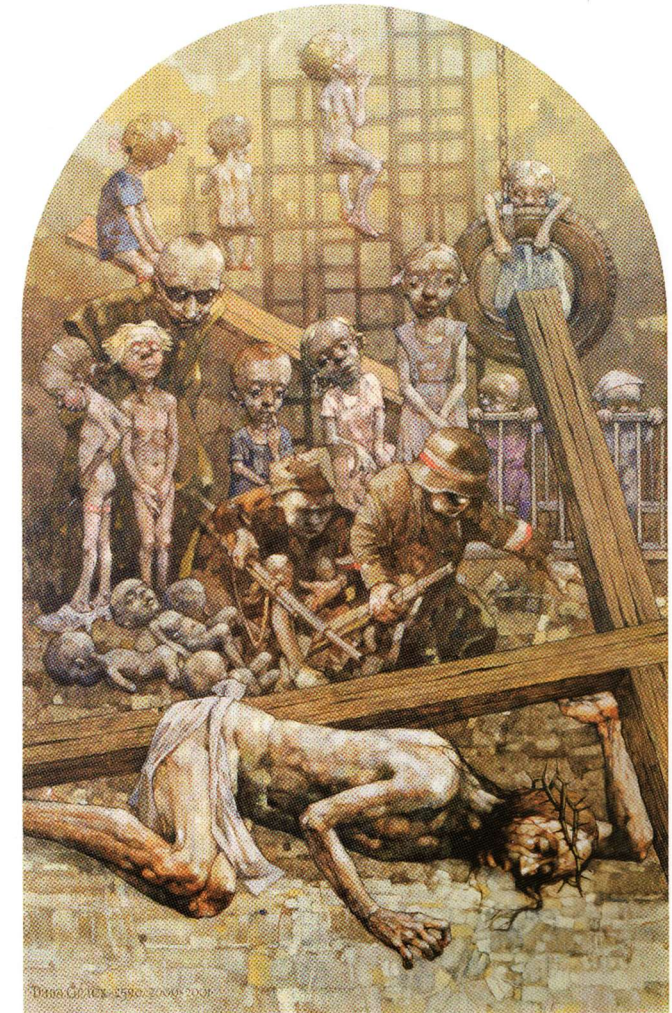
THE THIRD FALL

Reflection:

This is a continuation of the previous station, where we can find weeping for our children. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death.” (Philippians 2:8) However, this time we have Jesus who is weeping. Through the suffering of children the Son of God suffers the most. He is helpless like a child in the mother’s womb. The Passion of Christ means also beating, abuse, raping and killing of the most innocent. This Passion also ends with salvation. Behind the children’s hell there is the ladder from Jacob’s dream. It will first of all provide access to children, who will ascend on it before all martyrs. “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we always seek to protect children and the most vulnerable in our society. May we advocate for those who suffer and be agents of change in our society ending the many forms of violence against humanity.



10th Station

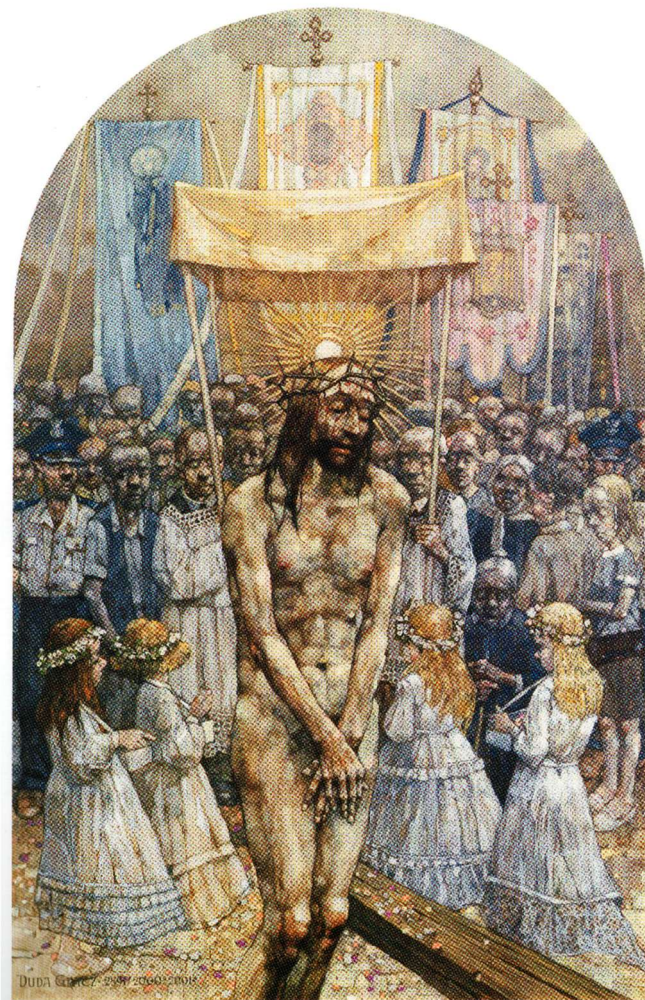
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

Reflection:

The body of Jesus connects iconographically with the parable about the sinful woman and throwing stones by those who have no sin. The “sin” of Jesus is his human nature, his body – the Body of God. However, it is perceived by us as a white body in a golden monstrance, adored and cherished by ringing of bells, in a ceremonial procession. Before this body we throw rose petals instead of stones, not noticing the humiliating nakedness of the Body of the Son of God. However, “the Body of Jesus symbolizes the love for the Father. This bared Body fulfills the will of the Son and the will of the Father.” (Cardinal Wojtyla – 1976 Lenten Retreat at the Vatican)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, may the Eucharist be the source and summit of our lives. May we see you and adore you in the gift of the Bread of Life. May we become what we consume.



11th Station

CRUCIFIXION

Reflection:

Nailing to the cross without executioners. Christ lays himself on the cross, “nailed” to it by human pain, martyrdom of victims who suffered and died in prisons and concentration camps, for God and the Homeland. We commemorate them in symbols of the Polish Way of the Cross leading to our Resurrection. A wagon – the monument to the martyrs killed in the East – and a vehicle – “monument” to the martyrdom of Father Jerzy Popieluszko. They are crowned by the station – Monument of the Crucified Christ, deprived of the pride of martyrdom, featuring human pain and fear. “They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. (Psalm 22)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we are grateful for the courageous men and women who offered their lives for the gospel. May we have a martyr’s heart always placing your grace, light and will above anything else.

