



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#37 - January 2014

## **A Best Practice: Stations of the Cross with Taizé Prayer**

One of the well-loved devotions of our Lenten season is the Stations of the Cross. Parishes often adapt its form/method to help parishioners experience and pray the Stations in deepened ways. This month's best practice relates the experience Stations of the Cross and Taizé Prayer at St. Thomas a'Becket Parish, Canton, MI.

### **What is Taizé Prayer?**

The Taizé Community, an ecumenical monastic order in Taizé, Burgundy, France founded in 1940 by Brother Roger Schutz, is composed of more than one hundred brothers, from Protestant and Catholic traditions, who originate from about thirty countries across the world. Over 100,000 people, mostly young people, from around the world make pilgrimages to Taizé each year for prayer, Bible study, sharing, and communal work.

The distinguishing marks of Taizé prayer are repetition and silence.

- What is unique to the prayer of Taizé is the adaptation of the repetitive form to simple musical lines and core biblical texts that can be sung by a whole assembly of various nationalities, languages, and denominations.
- In the middle of the prayer is a long period of silence (rather than a sermon or meditation).

### **What was the format/experience of Taizé Prayer with the Stations?**

Since Taizé Prayer is prayed with dim lighting and candles throughout the sanctuary, rather than using the traditional Stations of the Cross around the perimeter of the church, the participants' attention needed to stay fixed to the front of the sanctuary.

Thus, a Power Point presentation of the Stations was used, Pictures were found online, depicting each station, many of them from movie sets such as *Jesus of Nazareth* and *The Passion of the Christ*. Each station was simply identified above the pictures.

Pope John Paul II's *Stations of the Cross* was used for the various reflections on each station. Following each Station an appropriate Taizé chant was used for reflection. The RCIA candidates were involved in the service, extinguishing one candle after each station, candles that were set up around the screen on which the stations were projected.

These fourteen candles were set up in tiers on either side of the screen. Many other additional candles were set around the sanctuary. The screen itself was "camouflaged" with greenery and plants and rocks.

A practical suggestion: tiny lights were provided for the people to use in reading the booklets, since the lighting (with only candles) was rather low.



### **Why were the Stations from Pope John Paul II chosen?**

It was decided to use these because the planners wanted to offer a different experience; also, these are very integrated with the Scripture accounts.

## Stations of the Cross celebrated by Pope John Paul II on Good Friday 1991

- 1: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
- 2: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested
- 3: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin
- 4: Jesus is Denied by Peter
- 5: Jesus is Judged by Pilate
- 6: Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns
- 7: Jesus Bears the Cross
- 8: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross
- 9: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem
- 10: Jesus is Crucified
- 11: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief
- 12: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple
- 13: Jesus Dies on the Cross
- 14: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

<http://old.usccb.org/nab/stations.htm>

As they began planning, two concerns were in their thoughts:

- People who would expect a traditional Stations of the Cross might be put off by not walking from station to station and using a media form like Power Point with pictures of each station instead (This proved not to bother people at all.)
- The 14 stations would mean 14 chants, in addition to each station reflection. Hence, there was a concern that the service would drag on. (In reality, it only took about one hour, drawing the participants into the meditation so completely that time was not an issue.)

## Response and Song for the Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pilate

All: Lord, grant us discernment that we may see as you see, not as the world sees.

Song: *Open My Eyes*

## How/why did this idea come about?

During past Lenten seasons various staff people at St. Thomas a'Becket led the Stations, choosing and using whatever reflection resource and method they wished. For example, most used traditional prayers; the youth ministry director invited the teens to participate, who usually wrote their own original prayers. Laura Broyles, director of adult faith formation director and RCIA, usually involved the catechumens and candidates.

Last year, however, Brandon Gauvin, the parish music director approached Laura, suggesting that Taizé prayer be incorporated with the Stations. Since the music ministry would be "tied up" with the music Brandon wondered if Laura and those in the RCIA process would work with him to plan and offer this prayer experience.

## Who was involved in the planning?

In addition to Laura and Brandon, the environment committee of the parish helped plan and execute the candle-lit environment around the sanctuary. The parish office manager published a booklet for the assembly to follow, containing the prayers and songs. (Copyright permission was obtained for the music.)

For a copy of the booklet, go to [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com). Click on AFF Helps.

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## Was copyright permission needed for the online pictures which were used in the PowerPoint?

Only those pictures that were in the public domain, that were able to be used, were included in the PowerPoint.

VII Station  
Jesus Bears the Cross



## What did the participants say about the experience?

- "This was the most profound Stations of the Cross I have ever attended!"
- Many of the RCIA candidates, who had never previously participated in Stations, were deeply touched, entering into prayer.
- "I hope this is repeated every year."
- From some who tend toward the more traditional method of praying the Stations: "This way drew us profoundly into the passion of Christ."

## How did you, as the planners, evaluate this endeavor?

When asked this question, Laura replied, "We were both very pleased with the results. It gave people a new way to pray the Stations; we decided it would be something we would do again in following years. In fact, we are considering offering it on two Fridays of Lent rather than just one."

## Will you do anything differently?

"We're planning on doing it just the same. (That is certainly unusual in my experience since most things do need tweaking!)"

### Response and Song for the Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

All: Lord, grant us gentle spirits that we may comfort  
those who mourn.

Song: *Psalm 23 – Shepherd Me, O God*

## Did you learn anything new about the needs of people, about how to provide faith growth experiences for adults?

Laura's reflections were:

- "What this seemed to confirm is that a new twist on a long-standing tradition - especially when, at the core, the tradition is not really tampered with - is very well received."
- "People seem to welcome a fresh way of experiencing something they have experienced in the past in set ways and consequently get more out of the experience."

## A Wondering GEM

Might there be other devotions which could have a “new twist,” which might help people celebrate and reflect in new ways; which might continue to connect faith and everyday life for the participants?

## A GEMS Suggestion

We know very well the Stations of the Cross (the Via Crucis), an important devotion in our tradition. Today we also have the Via Lucis (Way of Light) or the [Stations of the Resurrection](#).

Inspired by an inscription found in the Roman catacombs, these stations were developed in the 1990s and officially sanctioned by the Vatican in 2001, in the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*: Chapter 4: The Liturgical Year and Popular Piety, Section 153.

These stations combine the events mentioned in the catacombs’ inscription with other post-Resurrection events to create 14 stations. They begin with the resurrection and end with Pentecost. Often we focus on the 40 days of Lent (a very important thing to do); praying the Stations of Resurrection is one way to help us also remember and celebrate the 50 days of Easter.



## Golden Nuggets From You

“Just an excellent issue ([GEMS #22](#)). I loved it and can see using it with Adult Formation, Catechetics, Catechetical Boards, Adult Formation Committee/Boards, because it lays out systematically the work that is to be done. I am looking forward to the continuation of the articles.”

- *Mary Ann Ronan, Adult Faith Formation Consultant and Presenter, Retired Parish Catechetical Leader, Phoenix, AZ*

“I LOVE the idea in the newsletter ([GEMS #25](#)). Already have talked to Fr. Dale and am planning on trying it the week before Lent starts! You certainly made this easy for me. Thanks!!!!!”

- *Diane Seidel, Parish Catechetical Leader, St. Boniface Parish, Bay City, Michigan*

(We welcome your comments, thoughts, suggestions, ideas, etc. Your views and practices continually support and encourage others. Email them to [jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org](mailto:jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org) any time.)



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Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found at:

- <http://www.ecatechist.com> Click on e-books for: *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*.
- [www.pastoralplanning.com](http://www.pastoralplanning.com) Go to Adult Formation: *Nuts & Bolts: Planning and Best Practices for Adult Formation*.