



TASTE Reflection Questions
26 March 2026

St. John Paul II – Way of the Cross

Fr. Herbert Niba

Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry. ~ Padre Pio



1. OPENING

- What part of the talk or which Station stood out to you the most? Why?
- Fr. Niba described the cross in three ways: 1) physical, 2) spiritual/psychological, and 3) voluntary sacrifice. Which of these do you most relate to right now?

2. UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE

- Fr. Niba said the Way of the Cross is not just for Lent, but a way of life. What does it mean to “take up your cross daily” in ordinary life?
- He emphasized that God works through suffering rather than removing it. How do you react to that idea? Do you find it comforting, challenging, or both?
- Reflect on this quote: *“Who you are is God’s gift to you; what you become is your gift to God.”* What does this look like in real life?
- Many Stations highlighted failure, weakness, or setbacks (the falls of Jesus, struggles of JP II). How can failure actually become part of spiritual growth?

3. APPLYING IT TO LIFE

- Where in your life right now might God be inviting you to carry a cross instead of avoiding it?
- The talk emphasized solidarity (like Simon helping Jesus). Who in your life might need help carrying their cross—and how can you show up for them?
- From Station 8, we learned that tears are not enough. This week, how can you let your tears flow into: 1) love that nurtures, 2) firmness that corrects, 3) a dialogue that heals, or 4) a presence that speaks.
- JP II’s life showed perseverance to the end, even in suffering. What helps you stay faithful during difficult or discouraging times?

4. CLOSING

- Fr. Niba’s talk teaches that suffering united to Christ has meaning. How can you practically unite your struggles to Christ this week?
- What is one intention or “cross” you would like to pray for?

Fr. Herbert Niba presented the Way of the Cross as more than a Lenten devotion—it is a lifelong journey of **imitating Christ**. Lent simply provides a structured time to “take stock” of one’s spiritual life. He explains the three dimensions of the cross: 1) **Physical** – suffering such as illness, pain, aging, 2) **Spiritual/Psychological** – rejection, betrayal, loneliness, and 3) **Voluntary** – chosen sacrifices like fasting and self-denial

These forms of the cross unite us with Christ when embraced in love. Suffering is not meaningless; rather, it is part of God’s way of shaping us—just as biblical figures (David, Joseph, Moses) were formed through trials.

Fr. Niba centered this devotion on **St. John Paul II** because his life mirrored Christ’s suffering and love, and the testimonies of those who knew him make the Stations relatable. The goal is to see **our own lives reflected in the Cross**, recognizing that: 1) God works through weakness, 2) Every life has a purpose in His plan, and 3) “Who you are is God’s gift to you; what you become is your gift to God”

STATION	KEY THEMES & EVENTS IN SAINT POPE JOHN PAUL II’S LIFE
1. Jesus is Condemned to Death Christ is judged by worldly systems that reject God.	Faithfulness under oppression and torment. JP II’s experience in Nazi & Communist Poland formed his mission to lead the Church with courage in spite of possible arrest.
2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross Christ freely accepts suffering.	Saying “YES” to God requires sacrifice to take up one’s cross. JP II repeatedly gave up personal desires to follow God’s call, sustained by deep prayer – even lying prostrate on the floor in the shape of a cross.
3. Jesus Falls the First Time Christ’s fall reflects human weakness.	Loss, suffering, and setbacks can deepen trust in God. JP II endured early family tragedies but grew stronger in faith.
4. Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother Mary shares in Christ’s suffering.	True devotion to Mary leads to Christ. JP II’s Marian spirituality shaped his identity and mission (“Totus Tuus”). Led to the living Rosary, intense prayer, service, and pilgrimage to Marian shrines.
5. Simon of Cyrene Helps Carry the Cross Simon represents unexpected participation in Christ’s suffering.	Solidarity with others. JP II stood with workers and the suffering, showing that love is lived through action. He was a companion on their journey.
6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus A simple act of love reveals Christ’s face. She received & radiated His love.	Courageous compassion transforms lives. Encounters with JP II inspired millions, especially young people, to seek Christ and not be afraid to become Saints.
7. Jesus Falls the Second Time Repeated failure is part of discipleship.	Mercy and forgiveness. JP II emphasized repentance and reconciliation, showing that God’s mercy restores all.
8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem Tears are not enough. Christ calls for more than emotion.	Love must lead to action. - True compassion requires transformation, sacrifice, & responsibility. - Gianna Beretta Molta told doctors to save the baby, not her.
9. Jesus Falls the Third Time - Christ suffers persecution. - If they persecuted me, then you too.	Faithfulness in suffering. The assassination attempt on JP II revealed forgiveness, trust in Mary, and reliance on God. This happened on the anniversary of that specific Fatima vision.
10. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments Christ is humiliated and made vulnerable. His face bruised & defiled.	Suffering reveals deeper dignity. JP II’s physical decline showed the spiritual power of human weakness united to Christ. Parkinson’s rendered his speech and movement difficult.
11. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross Christ fully embraces His mission.	Perseverance to the end. JP II refused to step down despite suffering, witnessing that love endures to the end. Jesus did not descend from the cross. Only in the cross is there resurrection.
12. Jesus Dies on the Cross - Christ entrusts Himself to the Father. - He was not abandoned by the Father.	Death as surrender in love. - JP II’s final words reflected total trust in God and completion of his mission. - Read the Gospel of John. He said, “Let me go to the house of the Father.”
13. Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross - He gives the gift of water & blood flowing - Mary receives Christ’s body.	The Church is nourished through sacrifice. The Eucharist and Mary’s example teach us how to remain united to Christ.
14. Jesus is Laid in the Tomb Christ rests in hope of resurrection.	Death is not the end. JP II’s funeral inspired global conversion and faith in eternal life.

The Way of the Cross reveals that: 1) Suffering is not meaningless—it is transformative, 2) Christ shares fully in human pain, and 3) Every life is a journey from **cross to resurrection**. John Paul II’s life demonstrates that holiness is not extraordinary—it is the **ordinary Christian life lived fully**. The devotion invites us to: 1) See our struggles as part of God’s plan, 2) Unite our suffering with Christ, and 3) Become witnesses for others. Ultimately, the message is one of hope: **Life is not ended, but changed**. Through the Cross, we are led to resurrection and eternal communion with God.