A Disciple's Way *of the* Cross

The author Alex Hemmerling was born and raised in Westfield, Indiana, and was baptized at the Log Chapel on the campus of the University of Notre Dame in July 2002 by Fr. Merwin Thomas, CSC.

After Fr. Thomas passed away in 2014, Alex and his family would visit Notre Dame to pray at his grave site in the Holy Cross Cemetery. He also went with his family to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart to pray the Stations of the Cross.

A few remarkable things happened through those prayer experiences. For one, Alex memorized the names and locations of the grave sites of roughly half of the hundreds of priests buried in the cemetery. Also, after praying with the Stations on the side walls of the basilica, Alex returned home and painted each of the fourteen stations from memory. If you have a chance to visit the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame, bring this book along to see how well Alex was able to depict each station and add his own emotions from his time in prayer. He also composed prayers to go along with each station.

Alex has autism, and his love for Jesus, Mary, the Church, the Mass, Holy Cross priests, his family, and Notre Dame are just a few of the many remarkable things that make him one of the most joy-filled people you will ever know.

A note from the Editor

Alexander F. Hemmerling is a lector and a volunteer assistant for the Confirmation program at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church in Westfield, Indiana. He has autism, and his love for Jesus, the Church, the Mass, Holy Cross priests, his family, and the University of Notre Dame are just a few of the many gifts that make him one of the most joy-filled people you will ever meet.

Nihil Obstat: Reverend Monsignor Michael Heintz, PhD
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne–South Bend
Given at Fort Wayne, Indiana, on June 14, 2026

© 2026 by Alexander F. Hemmerling

All rights reserved. In keeping with the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person and the value of creative work, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form—including for the purpose of training artificial intelligence systems (AI)—without prior written permission from the publisher, except as permitted under applicable copyright law. We are grateful for your support of human authorship and the creative vocation. Ave Maria Press®, Inc., P.O. Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556, 1-800-282-1865.

Founded in 1865, Ave Maria Press is a ministry of the United States Province of Holy Cross.

www.avemariapress.com

Paperback: ISBN-13 978-1-64680-521-1

Cover and interior images © Alexander F. Hemmerling.

Cover and text design by Andy Wagoner.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,
The gift of your Son, Jesus, is only comparable
to his own acceptance of your divine will.
His way of the Cross was painful, difficult,
yet life-giving,
bringing redemption to the world.
Unite me closely with Jesus,
as I follow in his footsteps to Golgotha.
Connect me with his strength and
determination.
Keep me near the Blessed Mother
as we experience his pain together,
while never forgetting the eternal joy he won
for us.
I ask this all in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



Station 1

Jesus Is Condemned to Death

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection

Though Jesus was innocent, the chief priests and elders convinced the crowds to ask for the release of Barabbas, a criminal, and to encourage Pilate to destroy Jesus instead. Pilate couldn't comprehend why or name any evil Jesus had done. The crowd shouted even louder: "Let him be crucified!" A riot was breaking out, and Pilate saw there was no pacifying the crowd.

He took water and washed his hands so that they could all see. "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves."

He released Barabbas to them.
Jesus, he had scourged.
And then he handed him over to be crucified.

Prayer

O Jesus, who submitted to unjust condemnation,
grant me courage to stand up for what is right,
even at the cost of my comfort or reputation.
Cleanse me of the fear that leads me to wash my hands
of my responsibility
or to treat others cruelly.
Lead me to choose truth over popular approval.
Amen.



Station 2

Jesus Takes Up His Cross

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Reflection

Ravaged by a scourging at the pillar, mocked with a crown of thorns, Jesus stood before the jeering crowd. There was no protest, no cry of injustice. He silently took up his cross.

Jesus knew that he had committed no crime against man or God. The charges against him were that he spoke of a kingdom not of this world, that he cured the sick and cast out demons, and that he was fueled by a boundless love of God, whom he called "Father."

He offered his suffering, not as a lament, but as a deliberate testimony. It was his testament to the unwavering love of Father for Son and Son for Father. It was a perfect obedience to the divine will, even unto the ultimate sacrifice.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to look at my own daily burdens,
not as curses,
but as opportunities to be more like you.
Grant me the grace to bear my suffering with patience
and determination,
knowing that you are always with me.
Strengthen my shoulders, Lord,
so that I might embrace the cross of discipleship
and turn any hardship into a means of grace and salvation.
Amen.