

Join Members of Catholic Action Network
for our

Fourth Annual Convocation

*Worldviews from the Margins on race, poverty,
gender, & sexual orientation*

**Saturday, April 17th 2004
8:30am—1pm**

Nerinx Hall Academy
530 Lockwood, Webster Groves

Lectures, liturgy, community, and more.

Meals are included in registration.

*Speakers include Anne Farina, Joan Lafferty,
Gerry Rauch, Mark Chmiel.*

*Liturgy concelebrated by Louise Leers and
Lorenzo Rosenbaugh*

*Pre-registration (deadline April 12): \$15 (+
CAN membership \$35)*

Day of Convocation ticket price: \$20

**The Catholic Action Network
for Social Justice**

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THE WAY OF THE CROSS

St. Louis, MO

2004

What does “deny self, take up the cross, and follow me” mean for us - Christians living in an imperial society that has stretched its political and economic arms around the globe, seizing the resources and overriding the self-determination of other peoples? What does it mean for us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow the executed and living Jesus in our context as citizens of the United States?

...to “take up our cross” has specific political and physical implications. Taking up the cross does NOT mean shouldering the personal burdens put before one in life and carrying on in the hope of heavenly rewards. Jesus was speaking of the “execution stake” that is the consequence of posing a threat to entrenched powers. Yet this Jesus bears life for all. How is it that his call to follow him to the execution stake can be a call to life?

The call to follow... is a call to walk in a path of radical love that challenges oppressive power structures. This can lead to danger and possibly to death because we live out this call in the midst of overwhelming forces of greed and violence. Suffering, in the form of loss and persecution, is a consequence of discipleship.

Wholehearted commitment to this way IS true life; not to choose this path is to choose death-in-life. The consequences of faithfulness to this way can be embraced only in the awareness that the end of this story is God’s “yes” of resurrection life.

--Ched Myers, *Say to this Mountain: Mark’s Story of Discipleship*

I want Jesus to walk with me.
I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey.
Jesus, Bread of Life, walk with me.

**FIRST STATION
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO
DEATH**

READER 1: We begin our prayer here at the Courthouse where each day the condemned begin their own way of the cross in a penal system that can rob them of dignity. A courthouse should be a place of justice, and yet today and throughout history, so many in our society find just the opposite. For the poor and for many people of color, there is no justice to be found, just as Jesus could find no justice at his own trial. We remember all those - both victims and their families and those accused and their families - who have found only fear and betrayal in our courts, instead of justice.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

READER 2: A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew:
Pilate called for water and washed his hands in front of the crowd declaring as he did so, "I am innocent of this man's blood; the responsibility is yours." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barab'bas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

READER 3: Jesus enters our hearts through the poor of our world. He takes a new family to himself - all those rejected and abandoned by society, by us. The Reign of God is found where these poor ones are treated with dignity and

where we work for justice in solidarity with them. Do we stand with the poor who are facing a criminal justice system where the odds can be stacked against them? Do we love them and forgive them as we would our own brother or sister? [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters . . .

ALL: ...you did not do it for me.

~

**SECOND STATION
JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS**

Reader 1: We continue our prayer by turning to face City Hall, where our city's policies are enacted. Despite the fact that since 1984 every person killed by a police officer under suspicious circumstances in St. Louis has been African-American, our city has ignored pleas from the community to create a Civilian Oversight Committee to review controversial police actions. This issue exposes the institutional racism that still exists in our society, a racism that is highlighted by the fact that, while every African-American alderman in St. Louis supports the creation of an oversight committee, every white alderman opposes the measure.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

love and protect it, respect it and celebrate its fruits with thanksgiving. Do we consider our earth as we make personal, local, and global decisions? We can create more landfills, or demand better. The broken body of Christ is taken down from a the cross. Let us not create for our children the cross of a broken and abused world. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ...you did not do it for me.

~

**FOURTEENTH STATION
JESUS IS BURIED**

Reader 1: As we conclude our prayer we turn our gaze across the river to the city of East St. Louis. East St. Louis is one of the most violent and impoverished cities in the US. But where should we assign the blame for this? The Chemical factories surrounding the city have incorporated themselves into their own principalities in order to avoid paying taxes to the people that they unceasingly poison with their toxins. Funding for education is so scarce that the city can only sustain a single public high school causing massive overcrowding at East Side High. Children grow up believing they are hated by other communities simply because they are from East St. Louis. Indeed, most St. Louis residents go no further than the opposite shores casinos if they cross the river at all. Are we not all culpable for creating a sense of tomb-like isolation and despair for the people from East St. Louis?

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Mark
Then Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida.

Reader 3: Jesus made his disciples cross the Sea of Galilee, to Bethsaida, to share communion with a community that his own people had demonized. If we were to visit East St. Louis today, we would find communities of neighbors that know each others' names, extended families that care for one another and children that laugh and play. East St. Louis' problems are real, but so is the dignity of the people who live there. Discipleship calls us to cross both the borders imposed by water and our assumptions. [pause]

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Closing Reflection:

The tomb has been sealed— hope buried inside. In reflecting on the passion of the marginalized in our world today, it is easy to feel as the first disciples two-thousand years ago must have, overwhelmed by despair and confusion. And yet we believe that death does not have the final word.

Take a moment to look at the faces of Christ gathered around you here today. Let us gather together in the upper room to hear our God's reply. Let us speak that reply with our lives. Death is not the final word. Hope, though sealed, is waiting to burst forth in resurrection - Who will roll away the stone? Let us begin here and now with a sign of peace.

(let us now share a sign of peace!)

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Mark

As Jesus was starting on his way again, a man ran up, knelt before him, and asked him, "good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"... Jesus looked straight at him with love and said, "You need only one thing. Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." When the man heard this, gloom spread over his face, and he went away sad, because he was very rich. Jesus looked around at his disciples and said to them, "How hard it will be for rich people to enter the Reign of God."

Reader 3: As we reflect at this station on Jesus' death, we also reflect on his invitation to life – life to the fullest. He tells us repeatedly that the reign of God is found only through radical love, not through wealth and material accumulation. As our country pushes farther and farther around the world to supply our nation's consumer demand, will we be among the first to choose to reject the spoils of Empire? We can choose today to die with Jesus to our selfishness and live with him and all people in shared life and living.

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ...you did not do it for me.

~

THIRTEENTH STATION JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Reader 1: Our pilgrimage brings us to the shore of the Mississippi River. We come upon these waters in the midst of a concrete and metal city. Let us ask ourselves, as part of all creation, do we consider ourselves truly responsible for the earth? How many rivers are still drinkable in our lands and others? Have we considered how our earth will continue to sustain and renew itself and us? Or do we think of ourselves as independent from global consequence?

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A Reading from the Book of Genesis:

And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that God had made, and behold it was very good.

Reader 3: We are given dominion over the earth as a parent is given dominion over their child. We are to

"Come to me all you who are tired of carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble of spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light."

Reader 3: Having dark skin in our society is far too often analogous to carrying a cross. Racial profiling continues. Property values decrease when African-Americans move into a neighborhood, while whites flee, helping to create a vicious cycle of poverty. African-American boys are more likely to be suspended from school than white boys who commit the same offenses, and are less likely to receive positive attention from teachers in their classrooms. Throughout the country, drug laws targeting African-Americans are created while African-Americans are sentenced to death at a disproportionately high rate. Yet, institutional racism can be as invisible as it is devastating. We recall Jesus' cry for those with eyes to see-to see! [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ... you did not do it for me.

~

THIRD STATION JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Reader 1: We put ourselves at the foot of the Jail where our poorest sisters and brothers fall again and again. The seems to be where the city has deemed the most appropriate place to contend with those ailing from our sick society.

But we see clearly that the treatment here is treatment for the symptoms and not curative of our sicknesses. It has been said that a measure of a society is how it treats its prisoners. How do we measure up? Do we even know, or have we completely hidden our brothers and sisters inside these walls? Do we even know the crosses that they pick up again and again every day?

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Mathew

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. "The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees are the authorized interpreters of Moses' Law. So you must obey and follow everything they tell you to do; do not, however, imitate their actions, because they don't practice what they preach. They tie on people's backs loads that are heavy and hard to carry, yet they aren't willing even to lift a finger to help them carry those loads."

Reader 3: We have strapped the burden of punishment onto those ailing from poverty, addiction, illness, abuse, cycles of violence, lack of opportunity and education. Rather than invest, rehabilitate, counsel, educate, lift our own fingers and even lives to change these problems; rather than open doors to new life, we shut them and lock behind them our brothers and sisters. We hide injustice behind bars and inside systems we label "justice." [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sis-

ters...

ALL:... you did it for me.

~

FOURTH STATION JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Reader 1: In the midst of downtown St. Louis we find ourselves at an abandoned warehouse. Just down the road abandoned buildings are neighborhood trademarks and constant reminders of our city's "white flight," where wealthy, predominantly white, families fled the racially diversifying downtown, creating suburban sprawl. Those who still live in the city often live in or near those crumbling residences. How can these people feel less than abandoned living in this vacant shell of former prosperity?

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew
"While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take and eat it," he said; "This is my body."

Reader 3: Take this – not the clean attractive, homogenous body of Christ, but the fallen down, in-need-of-repair, abandoned body of Christ. Mary does not flee her dying, persecuted son. She does not run from struggle and suffering. Yet as a society we choose to turn away from full communion. It is only through this communion – this common

union – with our brothers and sisters that we can taste the body of Christ, and hope for resurrection. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters . . .

ALL: ...you did not do it for me.

~

FIFTH STATION SIMON IS RECRUITED TO HELP JESUS

Reader 1: We continue our prayer at St. Louis' Federal Building. Since the second week of August 1945, the week that the United States proclaimed its dominion over the world by dropping two atomic bombs on Japan, our federal government has continuously escalated the nuclear arms race to the point where today New Mexico alone would be the world's fourth most nuclearized state. The federal government has long defended its stockpiling of nuclear weapons by claiming that they will act as a deterrent of nuclear war.

In Jesus' time, the Roman Empire used crucifixion as a deterrent. The crucified were left hanging so that all could see the fate of those who challenged Rome's dominion over their land. Today, with its stockpiles of nuclear bombs, the US threatens to crucify the world, the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner that Rome crucified Jesus the Human One.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the prophet

and their demand for standardized products have given a handful of corporations an unprecedented degree of power over the nation's food supply. In the potato fields and processing plants of Idaho, in the ranchlands east of Colorado Springs, in the feedlots and slaughterhouses of the High Plains, you can see the effects of fast food on the nation's rural life, its environment, its workers, and its health. The fast food chains now stand atop a huge food-industrial complex that has gained control of American agriculture. Farmers and ranchers are losing their independence, essentially becoming hired hands for the agribusiness giants or being forced off the land. Family farms are being replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee owners. Rural communities are losing their middle class and becoming socially stratified, divided between a small, wealthy elite and large numbers of the working poor. The U.S. now has more prison inmates than full-time farmers. And because we are so removed from the source of our daily bread, we can't know if the farm-workers who labor to bring it to us are treated justly or what impact the agriculture practices have on the land.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

READER 2: A reading from the prophet Isaiah
Woe to you who join house to house, who connect field with field, till no room remains, and you are left to dwell alone in the midst of the land! ...Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who change darkness into light, and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter!

READER 3: Woe to those who call evil

good, and good evil. We are constantly inundated with sanitized images of chain-restaurants: of happy meals, predictable quality, and service with a smile. Yet, too often our "value meals" devalue the land and the people who make them. Do we stand with those who suffer the indignity of low wages and get little respect for their hard work? Or do we turn a blind eye towards them as they are nailed to a cross? How do our food choices impact the well-being of the earth and those who tend it? [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

ALL: ...you did not do it for me.

~

TWELTH STATION JESUS DIES

- pause for silence -

Reader 1: Our city's symbol may indeed be a symbol for our whole nation. "Westward expansion" has expanded to all cardinal directions. Under the guise of spreading "democracy" and "freedom" there has existed a racist, oligarchic agenda that enslaves the poor for the comfort of the rich. We began by occupying Native lands and have continued without check. Currently the US has invaded over 200 nations and has occupation or military presence all over the globe. Sweatshops enlist the poorest to clothe and make entertaining objects for the richest. Again and again, "manifest destiny" does not encompass the rightful destiny of all people to live on their own lands, have meaningful work, and raise their children in healthy times of peace. When will we decide that enough is enough?

houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Reader 3: Are we demanding that our resources be used for those in need? Or do we comply with bread and circus, diversion of attention and funds? At whose feet do we lay our treasures? Should it not be especially for the poorest of our children? [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sister...

All: ...you did not do it for me.

~

TENTH STATION JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

Reader 1: We continue our prayer as we face the MCI building. During last year's invasion of Iraq, the US military went to inordinate measures to wipe out Iraq's telecommunication infrastructure with repeated bombings. In the US's subsequent occupation of Iraq, our government has given MCI a \$20-\$40 million contract to rebuild the cellular communications network that was recently obliterated. MCI-WorldCom is just one example of profiteering in an economy that feeds on war.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two brothers who were fishermen, Simon (called Peter) and his brother Andrew, catching fish in the lake with a net. Jesus said to them, "Come with me, and I will teach you to catch men." At once, they left their nets and went with him.

Reader 3: During the time period when Jesus began his ministry in Palestine, the occupying forces of Rome had co-opted the region's fishing industry. Galilean fishermen salted their catch in order to ship them across the region to feed the empire's occupying armies. Jesus called those who would be his disciples to throw down their nets, nets that were used to profit from war, and follow him in proclaiming the Reign of God. Today, let us hear Christ's challenge to remove ourselves from the net of an expansive war economy and begin building an economic system rooted in peace. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ...you did it for me.

~

ELEVENTH STATION JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Reader 1: We pray now at fast food chain restaurants. In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. During a relatively brief period of time, the fast food industry has helped to transform not only the American diet, but also our landscape, economy, and workforce. The centralized purchasing decision of the large restaurant chains

Isaiah

They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."

Reader 3: Simon the Cyrene was pressed into service to aid in Jesus' crucifixion. Into what situations are our young women and men forced into today? What can be said of a society whose best scientists and engineers are used to build machinery for war; whose poor are told that the only way out of poverty is to join the military? What can be said of a society such as this? Who will build the instruments of peace to fashion a new society. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for the least of my brothers and sisters...

All:... you did not do it for me.

~

SIXTH STATION VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Reader 1: As, we move our prayer to KDSK, the St. Louis affiliate of NBC, we again call to mind Jesus' entreaty for those with eyes to see - to see. The corporate media has put a veil over the face of our country to blind us from truth. Local newscasts inculcate fear into their audiences while simultaneously offering up tragedies as entertainment. One investigator found that while murder rates in his community decreased 20%, news coverage of murders increased 600%.

Media coverage of national and international events unceasingly works to perpetuate our nation's blindness. In

classrooms across the country, history textbooks ignore events that would cause students to question their government's past policies. National news broadcasts uncritically back US wars and economic imperialism while their news segments are interrupted and funded by corporate-commercial sponsors who benefit from the US's, militarily imposed, corporate dominance.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

"Then the righteous will answer and say, 'When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the Human One will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Reader 3: There is so much human-inflicted suffering in the world today hidden from light. Yet even in times of blinding darkness there are those with the courage to summon the dawn. Even amidst the suffering and humiliation of crucifixions there are those who act with the courage and compassion of Veronica.

In a spirit of thankfulness let us recall aloud those who have acted with such courage.

We remember Carl Kabat for his witness against nuclearism. Whom else do we remember?

(Pause for others to speak.)

Let us also remember that Veronica, a Palestinian woman, would have been invisible to the powerful around her. Equally hidden are the countless works of mercy carried out by the invisible ones around the world today. Let us pause to consider all of their unreported acts of love.

(Pause for silence)

Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ...you did it for me.

~

SEVENTH STATION JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

Reader 1: Gathered at this public sculpture, we turn our prayer towards the people of Palestine. Today the Israeli government, who receives more US aid than any other foreign government, is building a "separation wall" through the heart of Palestinian lands. The concrete wall reaches 25 feet high and, upon completion, will be 403 miles long. Sections of the wall include electrified fence, sniper towers, and razor wire. The wall will separate Palestinian adults from their jobs, children from their schools, and villages from neighboring villages. Nearly half the area's precipitation falls in the Palestinian West Bank. In this water-depleted area, Israel will effectively annex 31 of the Palestinian's most productive wells.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

From noon onward, darkness came over the land until 3 in the afternoon. And about three o'clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then Jesus cried again in a loud voice and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom, the earth quaked and rocks were split.

Reader 3: How true must Jesus' final words resound in the ears of the Palestinian people, who are isolated, abandoned, and misrepresented throughout so much of the world? Whose houses are bulldozed without warning and whose children are shot at as if for sport How oppressive must their burden be?

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus' death tore in two the Temple's curtain, ending humanity's separation from God and one another. Who will cross over the barriers that divide us today to help Palestinian's shoulder their load. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

All: ...you did it for me.

~

EIGHTH STATION WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS

Reader 1: Our prayer leads us to the steps of Bank of America. The world is now under the boot of corporate-managed trade. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization place rules

and strictures on poor nations. Corporations reap great profits at the expense of the environment and the welfare of the people. Typically, this affects women and children in the harshest ways.

Banks have abandoned low-income and minority neighborhoods. Federal Reserve data shows the number of banking offices in low- and moderate-income areas decreased 21 percent from 1975 to 1995, making it easier for the poor to be exploited by predatory lending.

In our own nation, outsourcing has led to a loss of jobs and communities. The Wall Street Journal reports that Bank of America Corp. plans to cut up to 13,000 jobs after it completes the acquisition of FleetBoston in the \$47billion merger. Corporate greed continues to grind the poor.

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Luke
A large crowd of people followed him; among them were women beating their breasts and wailing for him, but Jesus turned to them and said, "Women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days are coming when people will say, 'Happy are the women without children! Happy are those who have not given birth or nursed a child.'"

Reader 3: Jesus asks the women, and us, to weep for the world as we know it. We weep because of an economic system that shackles the poor tighter

and tighter to manacles of misery. We weep as war and violence cause undo damage to the lives of people around the world. We weep as women take the brunt of the violence. We pray for a renewal of basic fairness. May the world's money serve rather than undermine the common good. We recognize that another world is possible and we strive to participate in the bringing of God's reign. [pause]

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters...

ALL: ...you did not do it for me.

~

NINTH STATION JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

Reader 1: We pray here at the baseball stadium confronted with questions. What are our priorities? Where is our heart? If our heart is where our treasures are, then we can see what our city has chosen. Tax money is building yet another arena. In this community, we have chosen luxury leisure over basic education. How can we justify a new baseball stadium while schools are being closed down, especially in poor areas just down the road, for lack of funding?

We love you O Christ and we adore you.

ALL: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader 2: A reading from the Acts of the Apostles
There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or