

A low-angle photograph of a stone statue depicting the Virgin Mary on the left, looking down at a large stone cross she is holding, and Jesus Christ on the right, looking upwards. The background is a clear blue sky. The image is partially covered by a dark blue overlay on the right side and a white text box in the center.

Prayer For Victims And For An End To Gun Violence

Through the Stations of the Cross



ARCHDIOCESE
OF ST. LOUIS

TASK FORCE ON GUN
VIOLENCE PREVENTION

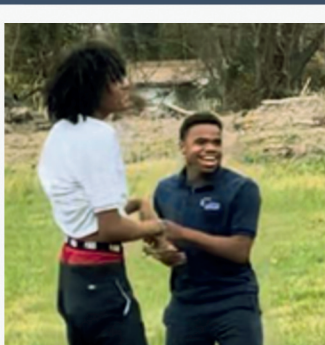
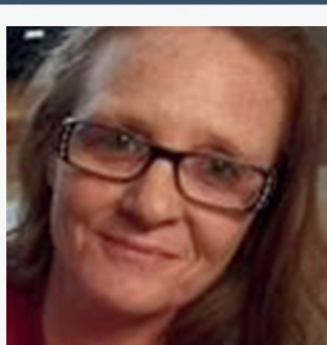
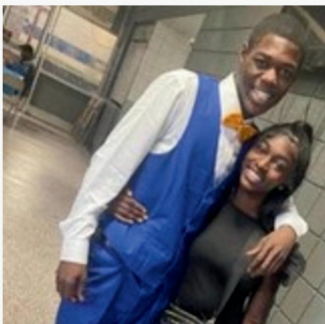
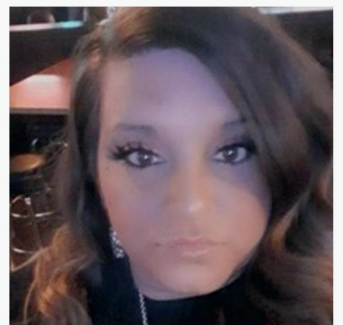
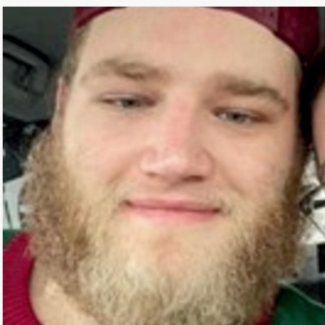
Thank you for joining us today for an Archdiocesan-wide day of prayer and reflection. Last year, 223 people in the St. Louis area were killed by gun violence. In times of trouble and suffering, prayer is a refuge. As we walk with Christ today, we'll remember victims close to our community.

OPENING PRAYER

*Loving God, Source of Love, Comforter of the Afflicted,
be with us tonight as we journey in the footsteps of Jesus
as he goes to his suffering and death.
As we reflect on the suffering of Jesus,
help us to feel the pain and humiliation that he felt,
so that we may be moved by the great sacrifice he made
for all humanity.
Send us your Spirit to enter our hearts
so that with compassion
we may listen and respond to the plight of others
who carry burdens, crosses, despair, and loss of dignity.
Send your Spirit to be with us as we travel this journey together.
Awaken our hearts
that we may accept your challenge to create the world anew.
We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
as one God, forever and ever.*

Amen

MOURNING & REMEMBERING LIVES LOST



References:

National Gun Violence Memorial <https://gunmemorial.org/>
St. Louis Post-Dispatch <https://graphics.stltoday.com/apps/homicide-tracker/2024/>



FIRST STATION:
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas! ... Let [Jesus] be crucified!" (Matthew 27:21–22)

Lawrence, 15, was shot and killed in Pagedale. The Major Case Squad, a regional team of investigators, arrested and charged another juvenile in the murder. A neighbor who lives a few doors down from the crime scene said, "It's heartbreaking. They should have a chance to grow old and live life."

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, though innocent, you were unjustly condemned to death. Today, throughout our cities, other innocents are unjustly put to death, with callous or careless disregard for human life. We pray for the innocent who lose their lives due to anger, hatred, and prejudice.



**SECOND STATION:
JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: And carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull. (John 19:17)

Isaiah, 16, died three days after he was found shot in the street, near the Jennings border in north St. Louis County. Officers responded just before 6:30 p.m. where they found him. He had been shot and was taken to a hospital. Isaiah enjoyed spending time with his family and friends, he was especially close to his sister

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you were made to carry the cross, a heavy burden, but also a cruel weapon. We pray now for those whose lives are deliberately and violently ended while they go about their day-to-day activities.



**THIRD STATION:
JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: I am troubled now. Yet what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. (John 12:27–28)

St. Louis County police were called to an apartment complex in Oakville. They found three people who had been shot. A man and a male teenager were taken to a hospital. Another teen, Colin, aged 15 was pronounced dead at the scene. During a remembrance, Colin's cousin said, "He was always laughing and cracking jokes. If you were sad, you could call on him to make you laugh." "I just wish people would start talking to each other versus resorting to fights."

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell as you carried your cross ever closer to your death. Did you wonder how you might have the strength to get up and continue? We pray for our teens who unknowingly fall, never to get up again, whose deaths should never have happened at such a young age.



**FOURTH STATION:
JESUS ENCOUNTERS HIS MOTHER**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary ... "You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34–35)

Mary Ann, 56, was shot to death by her 26-year-old son in a murder-suicide at the home they shared in Pacific, authorities said. They were discovered by her sister as she looked through a window and saw them on the couch dead. After spending four years in the Marines her son was unemployed, he came home and lived downstairs at his mother's home. Mary Ann would tell her kids, "You never know what someone is going through, you always just need to be kind to them."

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, on your way you were met by your mother Mary, a presence of brave, enduring love. We pray for all women today – wives, partners, mothers - whose lives are ended all too soon by violence. We are confident that in their final moments of fear and pain, Mary is with them, just as she was with you. Comfort them; receive them into your arms. We pray also for the families left with unending grief and loss.



**FIFTH STATION:
SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country ... to carry his cross. (Mark 15:21)

Kevin, 26 was shot and killed on Christmas Eve while protecting his pregnant fiancée from his irate father. A relative heard Kevin say, "Dad, what did I do to deserve that?" before he was shot. "Kevin was loved by many," his mother said. "His family is grieving -- his brothers, his aunts, his uncles, his half sisters, even teachers who knew him in high school. Everybody is missing Kevin dearly."

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, Simon was pulled from the crowd to help you carry your cross. We pray that when called upon, as Simon once was, we will not turn our face. Help us find the courage to assist another in desperate need of help, even as you were along that holy walk to your death.



**SIXTH STATION:
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace."
(Luke 8:48)

James, 66, died at the home he shared with his son in Overland, south of Midland Boulevard. Overland police said he was shot about 1 a.m. in the morning. Officers arrived at the home and found him dead. They arrested James 29-year-old son. "It was an argument that just escalated," police said.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, another woman - perhaps even a stranger – bravely stepped from the crowd and boldly wiped the sweat and tears from your face. We pray that we might be the Veronicas among our friends and acquaintances, and in our neighborhoods; that we might recognize the signs of domestic abuse and act to protect those in need of safety.



**SEVENTH STATION:
JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.
(John 8:7)

Officers were called just after midnight to a block in North St. Louis. There was evidence of a shooting but no victim. A hospital then called them about a man who had been shot. Larrion, 19, died at the hospital. His friends said he possessed a smile that would brighten up the room and a personality that matched. He had a spirit that would make anyone's day better.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell again; you took upon yourself the fullness of our humanity, even pain, doubt, exhaustion, and fear. We pray for the elderly and the youngest among us whose lives are taken in acts of senseless violence.



**EIGHTH STATION:
JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children ...” (Luke 23:28)

Michelle, 37, was abducted from her Clayton home and later murdered. The man charged with killing her targeted her after learning that she was holding money from a settlement for a relative. When she was unable to withdraw all of the money from multiple ATMs, she was shot to death and left in an alley.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you warned the women you encountered not to weep for you but to be concerned with repentance and judgement. We pray for the prosecutors, judges and juries who must hear the stories of those whose lives have been taken; may they judge honestly and fairly.



**NINTH STATION:
JESUS FALLS FOR A THIRD TIME**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

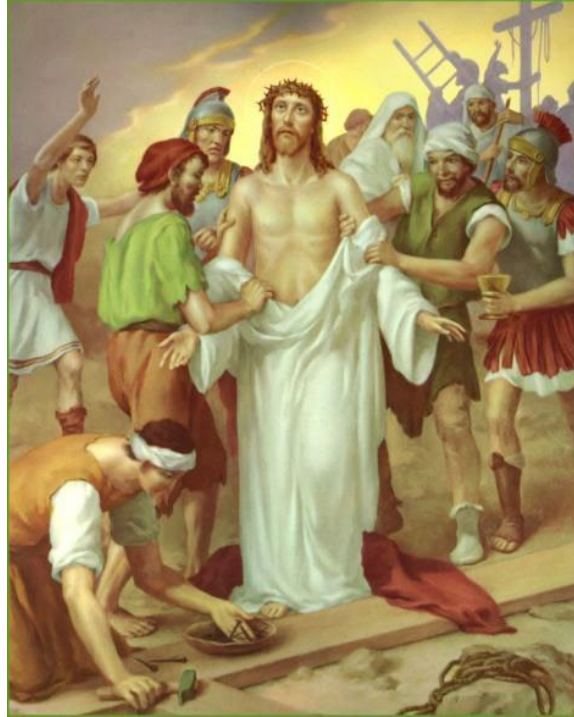
ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet." (Luke 15:22)

Marc, 19, was trying to protect his sister Lanija, 20 at their home when they were both shot to death near St. Ann. According to authorities, the suspect was an ex-boyfriend of Lanija, who is currently in police custody.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, you fell a third time, despite the help of Simon and the support of the women. Though faltering, you continued the long journey of your Passion. We pray for police, fire-fighters, and emergency personnel who day after day are called to scenes of violence, so often too late to prevent them. We pray that you remain with them, keep them safe, and give them the hope that allows them to continue compassionately in their roles as first responders.



**TENTH STATION:
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

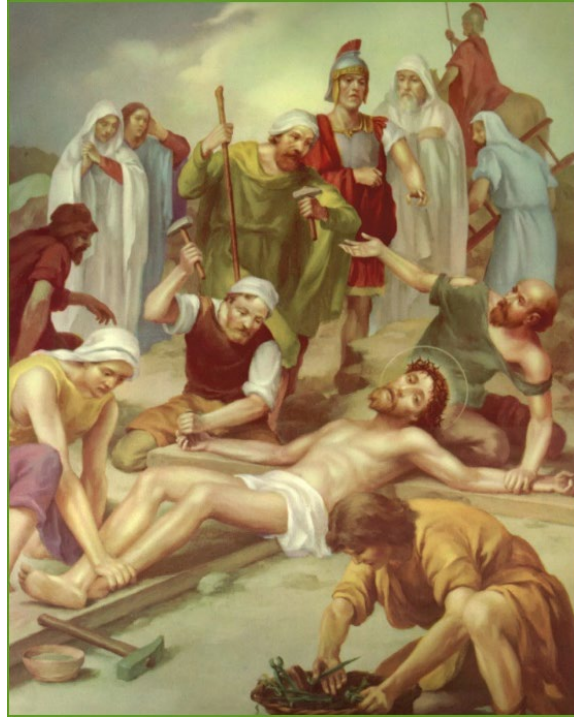
ALL: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LEADER: For creation awaits with eager expectation ... in hope that [it] would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Romans 8:19–21)

Jason, 42, was shot multiple times late Dec. 11 near Gravois Avenue and Bates Street in the Bevo Mill neighborhood of St. Louis, police said. He lived in the 4900 block of Quincy Street and died in a hospital.

(Light Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, after the torture of carrying your own weapon of death, you suffered the further degradation of being stripped of your clothing. We pray for those whose deaths by violence remain unsolved. Like you, Jesus, they are left naked. We pray also for those whose actions contribute to another's death or injury; may they come to repent their actions.



**ELEVENTH STATION:
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Elizabeth, 55, was a victim of a domestic violence shooting in St. Louis, MO. Police officers responded to the scene and the perpetrator was her boyfriend, who was inside the home and refused to come out, police said. After a standoff, her boyfriend began shooting at police and died in the confrontation.

(Lights Candle)

ALL: Christ Jesus, when nails pierced your hands and feet, they were struck with the force of the sins of humankind. Did the onlookers understand the part they played as each nail was struck? Do we, even today, accept our personal connection to the nails that were struck? We pray for all who suffer from domestic abuse. In the home - where they should be most loved - they are most abused. We pray for the awareness to be shocked and outraged by domestic violence and the courage to step in to protect those who are abused.



**TWELFTH STATION:
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)

(All kneel together for a reflective pause, and then rise.)

Colin, a 16-year-old high school hockey player died in the hospital Wednesday after he was struck by a stray bullet while riding in his father's car on Interstate 55 in south St. Louis, police said. Colin was shot while on his way home from a hockey game in Affton. The mayor released a statement calling the shooting senseless and reckless.

ALL: Christ Jesus, after hours of agony, you gave up your spirit. We pray for trauma doctors and nurses everywhere, who daily care for victims of violence and who, after every effort has been made, must pronounce children, women and men dead.



**THIRTEENTH STATION:
JESUS' BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." (Luke 22:19)

A Washington County woman, Amy, 43, was beaten, shot, and killed by her boyfriend, police say, the day before her 44th birthday. "All we know is that she was trying to leave," a police investigator said. "She was just ready to leave the residence, and that's when the brutal assault took place."

ALL: Christ Jesus, after an agonizing death, your body was taken down from the cross and released into the arms of your mother and your closest friends. They mourned your loss, struggling against despair. We pray for families who are called to identify a son, a daughter, a brother, sister, mother, or father whose life has been ended by senseless violence. We pray that they will recognize your face, Christ Jesus, in the desperate yet sacred moments of their grief and that they will know hope.



**FOURTEENTH STATION:
JESUS' BODY IS PLACED IN A TOMB**

LEADER: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

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

LEADER: Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory? (Luke 24:26)

Jaimarcus, 17, was reported missing by his grandmother. He was always home by Sunday afternoon so he could be ready for school the next day. "He would never stay away," she said. "I would tell him I would pick him up and he would say 'OK, Granny. I love you.' He always said 'Granny, I love you.' St. Louis County officers found Jaimarcus, lying face down, dead in the snow riddled with bullet wounds in north county. Both Jaimarcus' mother and his father were killed by guns over a decade ago.

ALL: Christ Jesus, you were gently laid in your burial place by those who loved you. They experienced profound loss, anguish, and overwhelming sorrow. We pray for every family member and friend who attends the burial of one lost to gun violence. We pray especially for the survivors of gun violence, whose lives are changed physically and emotionally by trauma.

CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER:

*Dear God, source of all light,
we are surrounded by the darkness
of the injustices experienced by your people,
the victims of senseless gun violence,
the families and friends of those needlessly taken,
the first responders, medical personnel, and social workers who deal with
tragedy daily,
the teachers who prepare for the unspeakable, the children who live in fear,
the people of faith seeking answers to ceaseless trauma,
and those who seek help in their hopelessness.*

*Surround us and fill us with your Spirit, who is Light.
May our reflections on the mystery of Jesus's death help us to see God's desire:
violence is not answered with violence;
death is not answered with the language of death.
In the silence of the cross,
the uproar of weapons ceases and
the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue and peace is spoken.*

*We desire to be your presence to the least among us
and to know your presence in them as we live in the hope of the Resurrection,
to bring justice and peace to the world.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: *Amen.*

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Martha's Hall (<https://saintmarthas.org/>)

- Since 1983, Saint Martha's has worked to end the cycle of domestic violence. We empower women to take control of their lives and secure a better future for themselves and their children.

Mercy Neighborhood Ministry Resources (<https://www.mercy.net/practice/mercy-neighborhood-ministry/mercy-neighborhood-ministry-resources/>)

- Mercy Neighborhood offers an abundance of resource throughout the St. Louis area.

Cardinal Glennon Hospital (<https://www.ssmhealth.com/cardinal-glennon>)

- Serves children in need of health care throughout St. Louis.

Children's Services Coalition of St. Louis (<https://www.csc-stl.org/>)

- CSC members work together to promote the delivery of high-quality social and behavioral healthcare services for Missouri's children and their families through advocacy, collaboration, and communication.

The BRIC (Bullet Related Injury Clinic) (<https://www.thebric.org/>)

- Community-based clinic in St. Louis specializing in helping people heal after they have been injured by a bullet. "We provide holistic care for anyone dealing with the impact of a bullet to support your mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Whether you have been shot, someone you love has been injured, or there has been a shooting in your community, we are here for you."

Behavioral Health Response (<https://bhrstl.com/>)

- Crisis support, mental health counseling, suicide intervention/prevention, resource referral, 24-hour hotline
- Justice and Crisis Response Unit: street triage co-responder model where a trained J-CRU clinician partners with a St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department officer. Our clinician travels on calls related to behavioral health such as mental health, substance use, trauma, quality of life events, self-sufficiency incidents, and more.
- 911 Diversion program helps the community obtain crisis phone services if an emergency response is not needed.

Crime Victim Advocacy Center (<https://www.supportvictims.org/>)

- Victim advocacy, trauma-informed counseling, support groups, legal assistance, fundraising for crime victims fund (support for victims of all types of crime, including violence).

Be SMART for Kids (<https://besmartforkids.org/>)

- The Be SMART campaign was launched in 2015 to promote responsible gun ownership in order to reduce child gun deaths. Whether you're a gun owner, or you know someone who owns a gun, there is a role for everyone in the conversation around secure gun storage. Be SMART is a framework that parents, caretakers, and community leaders can follow to help keep their communities safe.



Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

Chair: **Deacon Dan Fitzgerald**

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