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The Ultimate Guide
to Lent



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Praying & Creating

{ the stations of the cross }

BY JASON JENICKE

As a child my parents would take me to pray the Stations of the Cross at church every Friday during Lent. We would pray a version of the Stations by Clarence Enzler, titled, “Everyone’s Way of the Cross.” This version greatly influenced me from a young age.

As I've grown in my faith, I can now reflect and see that the Passion of Christ depicted in the Stations of the Cross is the story of Jesus carrying our sins; Jesus carrying the load that we cannot bear ourselves.

As I pray the Stations of the Cross today, I try to walk along with Jesus, who is journeying toward His crucifixion.

I reflect on the ways I make judgments of others based on the wisdom tied to this world—just as Pilot did in the first station.

I reflect on the ways Jesus helps me get back up again when I sin—just as Jesus rose again and again after falling under the weight of all our sins.

I reflect on my own death and the price I should pay for my sin—just as Jesus died for my sins in the twelfth station.

Praying the Stations of the Cross this Lent has been a new journey for me. I am a full-time Catholic artist, and in 2021, I began working on a new art commission creating oil paintings

of each of the 14 Stations of the Cross. My path of research, design, creation and painting has allowed the Stations to become an even more central part of my prayer life.

My hope for each of us this Lent is to spend some time with the Lord on His journey toward the Cross.



Digital renderings of the oil paintings being created. Stations three and twelve are depicted in this Guide. Additional sacred art by Jason Jenicke can be found at this website:

www.jasonjenicke.com

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WRITTEN BY JASON JENICKE

Jason earned a Bachelor's of Fine Arts from the University of Kansas. He has worked as a professional full-time artist for 20 years in the mediums of charcoal, oil paints, clay, and digital painting and drawing. His primary work has been Catholic sacred art, producing more than 40 original oil paintings of biblical scenes and portraits of saints. Jason enjoys solving rubik's cubes, watching movies and going on family adventures. He is married to Jennifer and together they have three children: Weston, Gwendolyn and Isaac.



Peace & Quiet

{ mindfulness for catholic families }

Catholic Mindfulness is like taking the spiritual classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence and living it rather than reading it.

It's a chance to focus on the present moment. With young families, it's easy to focus on "what's next"—the practices, the projects, the grades... but Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34, "Do not worry about the things of tomorrow. Today has enough worries of its own."



1. PICK A TIME

Find 15 minutes to set aside for you and your family.



2. ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Try to avoid technology and bedrooms.



3. CHOOSE YOUR LEADER

We've written this activity to be led by mom or dad, but it can just as easily be adapted for others such as aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas or beloved guardians.



4. SPREAD OUT

Have each kid grab a pillow, carpet square, or something similar to sit on. Make sure everyone spreads out.



5. CREATE YOUR SPACE

The whole family should sit comfortably in their own space, but criss-cross applesauce on the floor is the rule of thumb.

BREATHE

Mom or dad (or the adult leader) should ask everyone to close their eyes, then lead the family through six deep breaths.

Instruct everyone to breathe in for a count of six, hold the breath for a count of four, then breathe out for a count of four.

Begin with the sign of the cross.

READ

The adult should read aloud. Read slowly, calmly and clearly.

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was 12 years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not

finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them.

He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man. Luke 2:41-52

LUKE 2:49



Why were you
looking for
me? Did you
not know that I
must be in my
Father's house?

SAY

It can be scary when you're lost or when you've lost someone.

Being scared is kind of like being worried. We're scared that something bad might happen, or we might get hurt. When someone is lost, or we've lost someone, we feel scared that they might get hurt, or that we might not be able to find them.

Do you think Jesus was scared? He was alone for three days. What about His mom and dad? Do you think Mary and Joseph were scared as they searched for Jesus?

Jesus tells us in the Bible that we shouldn't worry. That's hard to do, but focusing on the present moment and trusting in God's control is a great way to avoid fear and worry. Let's take a few moments right now and try to totally focus on this moment and give it over to God.

Let's try to forget all the other fears and worries that might be in your mind: Fears and worries about school, friends or family.

Let's try to push everything out of our minds and focus only on this moment and God's presence.

We're going to take three slow, deep breaths, and then sit in silence for one minute. If your mind starts to wander, just focus on your breathing and try to ignore all the other stuff that pops up in your head.

Keep your eyes closed and remember, after our third breath, we are going to be quiet and still for one minute.

Let's take a deep breath.

one — two — three — four — five — six

Hold it.

one — two — three — four

And breathe out.

one — two — three — four

Breathe in.

one — two — three — four — five — six

Hold it.

one — two — three — four

And let it out.

one — two — three — four

And one last time, breathe in.

one — two — three — four — five — six

Hold it.

one — two — three — four

And let it out.

one — two — three — four

Stay quiet for 60 seconds.

Close with the sign of the cross.



Crawfish Étouffée

{ meat-free lenten recipe }

Although getting your hands on live crawfish for a Southern style crawfish boil in Ohio can be both difficult and expensive, finding frozen crawfish tails is a little easier. And those tails are the perfect ingredient for this classic Cajun dish.

Note: Can't find frozen crawfish tails? Small frozen shrimp are the perfect substitute for this dish!

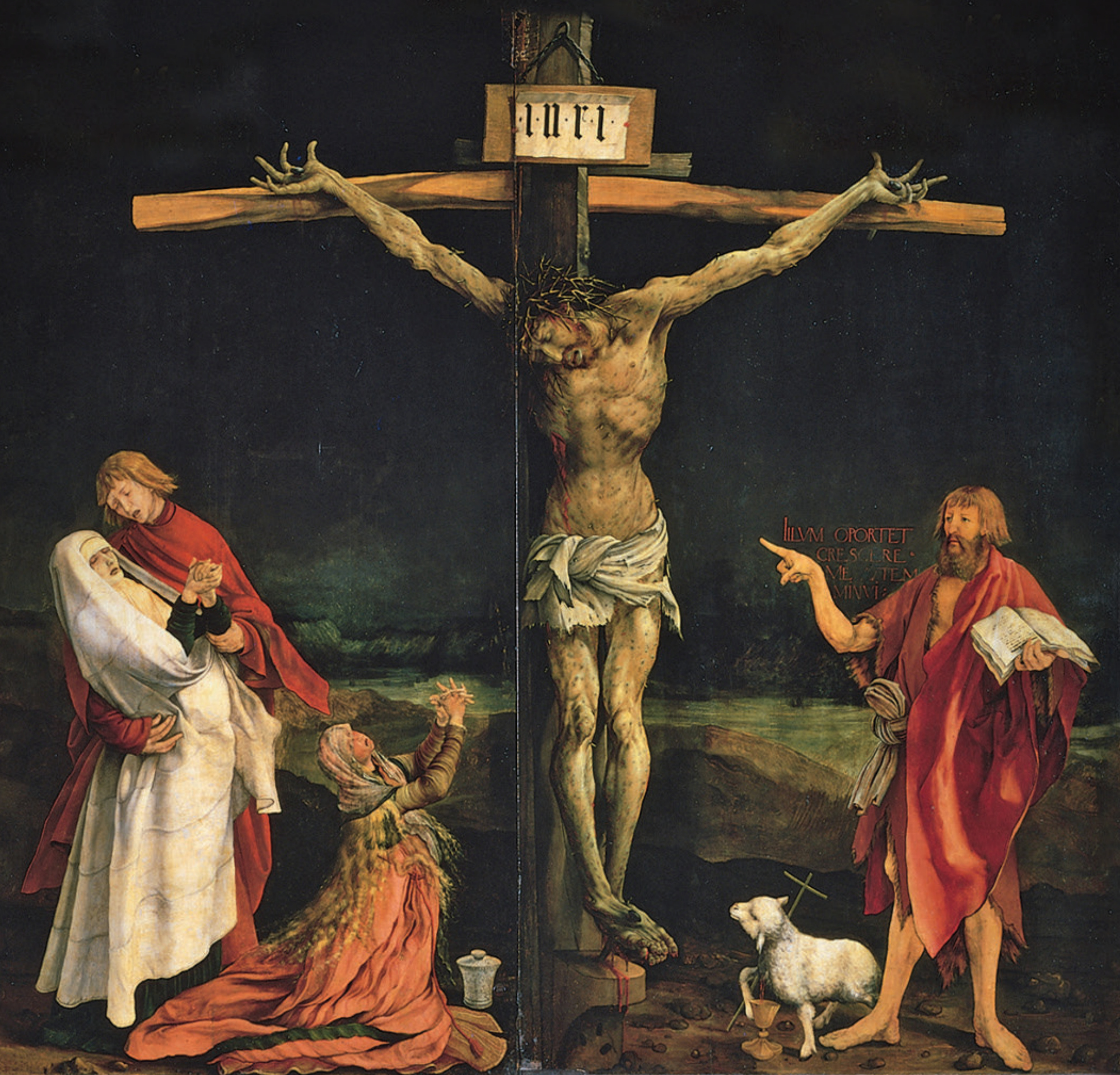
INGREDIENTS

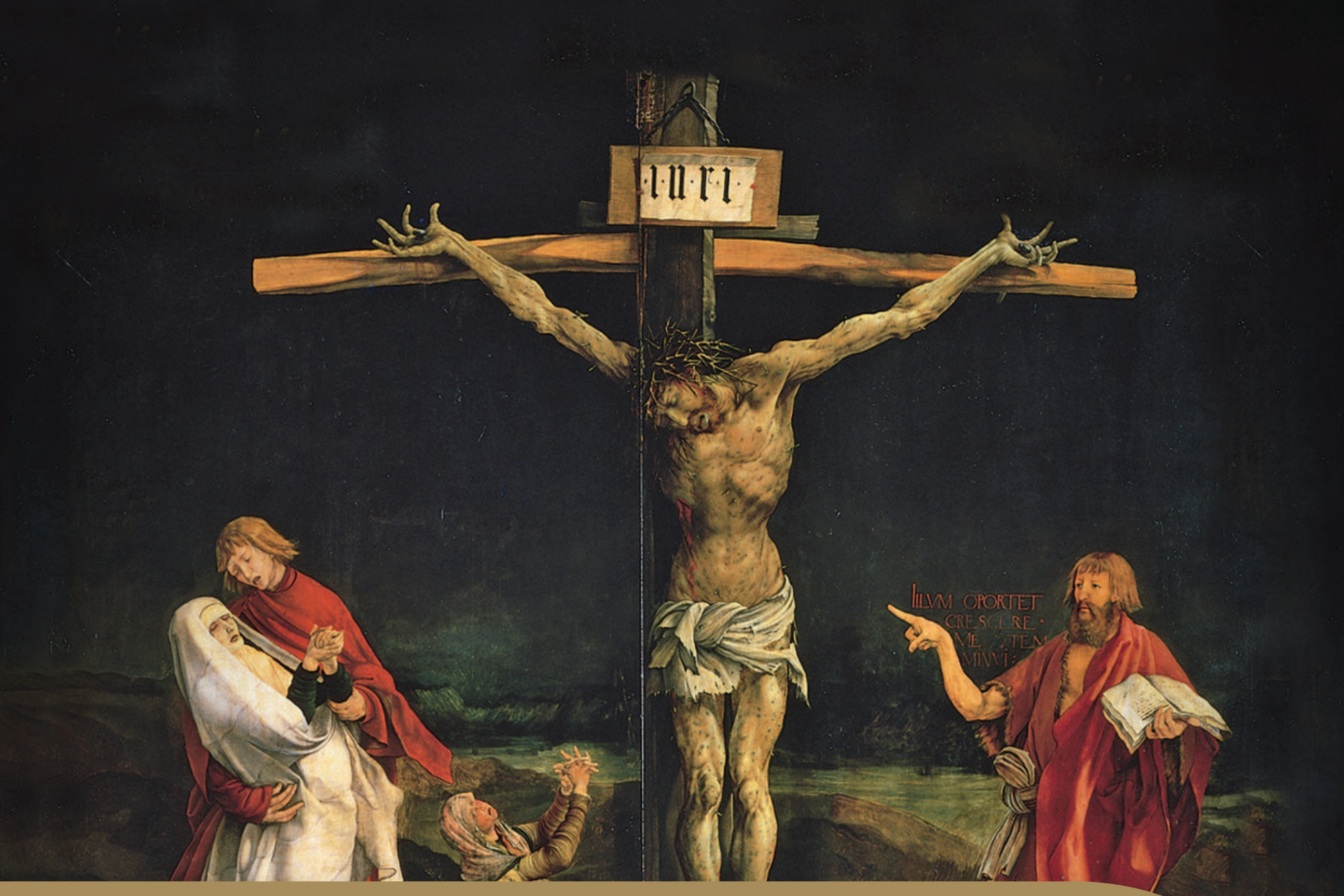
- 2 lbs. crawfish tails
- 2 large onions
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium green bell peppers, chopped
- 1 stick butter
- parsley, chopped
- green onion tops, chopped
- salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. flour
- 1 cup water
- 4 cups of cooked rice

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt butter over medium-low heat.
2. Add vegetables, cooking for 30 minutes or until veggies are golden brown.
3. Stir in 1 Tbsp. flour.
4. Add crawfish tails.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Add one cup of hot water.
7. Let simmer in a covered pot until tails are tender.
8. Add chopped green onion and parsley.
9. Serve hot over rice.

visio divina





Isenheim Altarpiece

{ visio divina }

BY EMMA CASSANI

You may have heard of *lectio divina*, “divine reading,” where we read and pray through scripture. *Visio divina* is similar, but means “divine seeing.” When practicing *visio divina*, we look at and pray through sacred art.

In college, I took a few art history classes and immediately fell in love with the way I could learn so much about the world simply by looking at a piece of art. For me, art is its own beautiful, powerful language.

The language of art can be cultivated and expanded with knowledge and practice. Each week this Guide will provide you with some tools to help you better understand art's language.

Isenheim Altarpiece

MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD, (1512–1516 CE)

This week we'll focus on the *Crucifixion Panel* of the *Isenheim Altarpiece* by Matthias Grünewald.

It was created in 1512-16 CE during the Renaissance. However, Grünewald ignored the styles of the classic Renaissance artists of his time. Instead, he admired late medieval and gothic art and relied on his own expressiveness, creating truly unique work. This altarpiece is known as the most terrifying and gruesome depiction of the crucifixion in the Western World.

The Isenheim Altarpiece was originally commissioned by a monastic hospital, devoted to St. Anthony. Now it resides at

the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France. This altarpiece is a massive, moveable polyptych, measuring 15-feet wide by 11.5-feet tall.

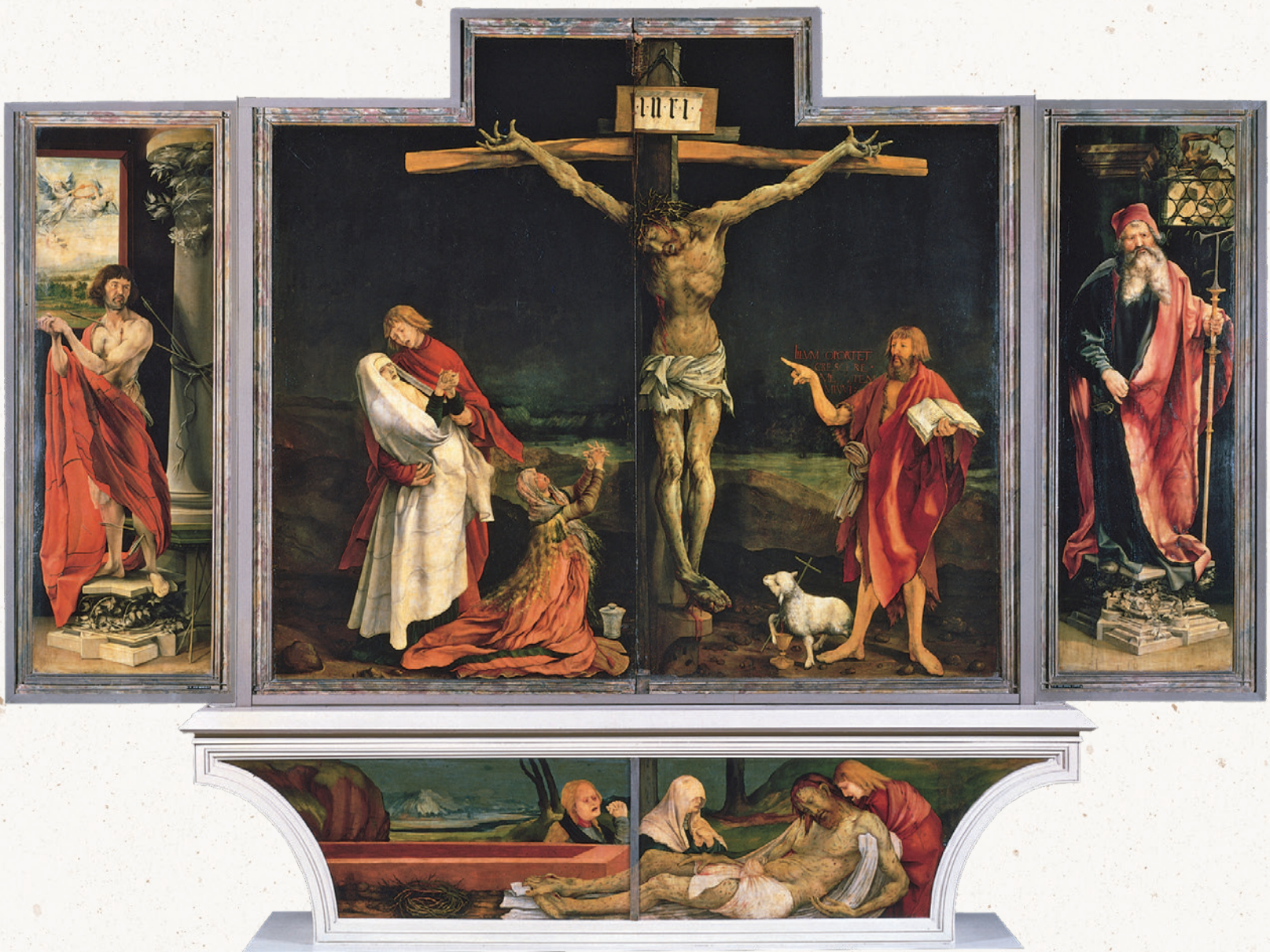


Isenheim Altarpiece, GRÜNEWALD, (1512-16 CE)

The *Isenheim Altarpiece* at the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France. The closed view stands in the front, while the inside views are displayed behind it. For size reference, two viewers stand at the base.

Artistic elements to look for in Grünewald's work:

- emphasis on suffering
- exaggerated expression
- strong emotion
- intense light and shadow
- depth and perspective
- symbolism



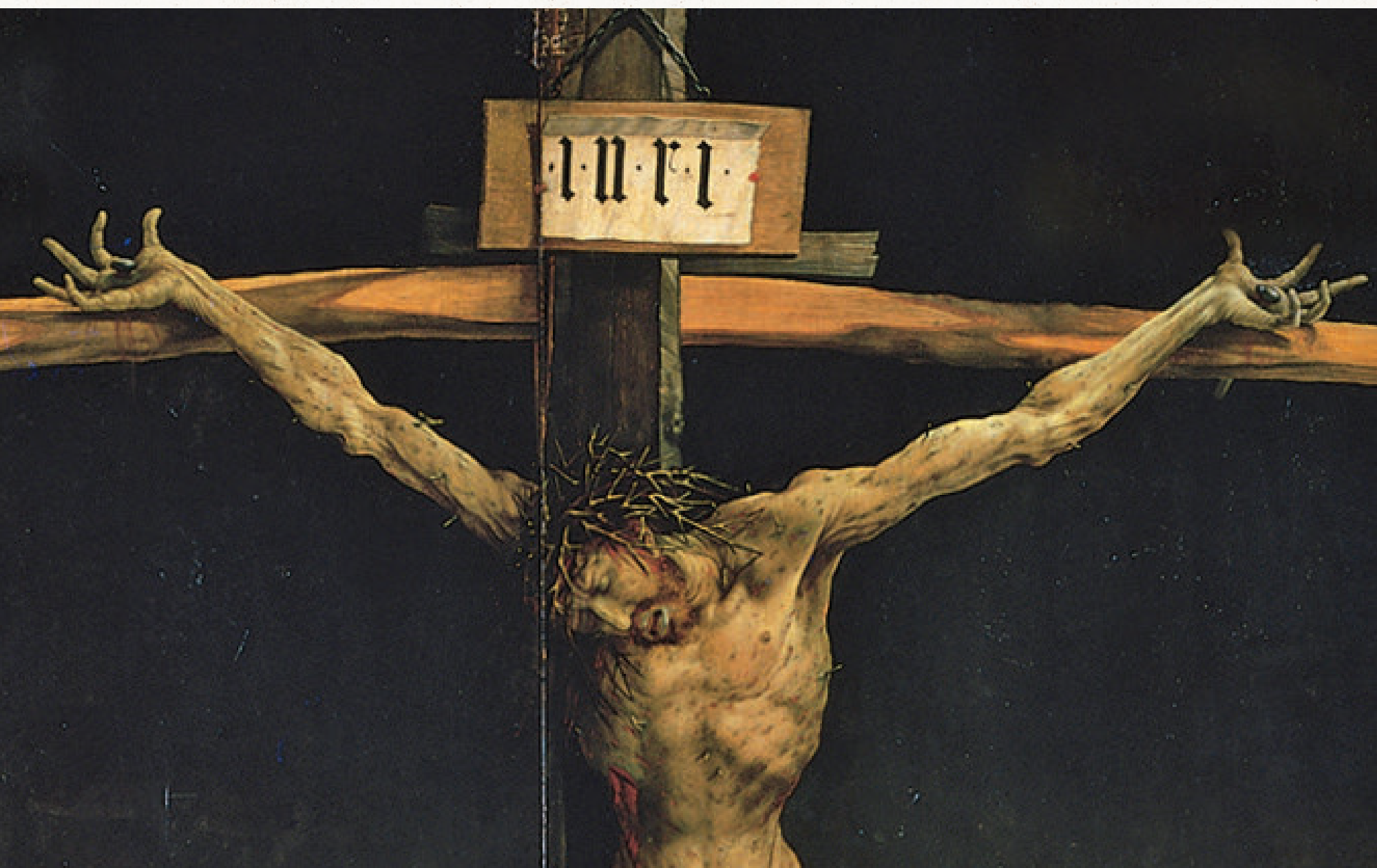
Isenheim Altarpiece, GRÜNEWALD, (1512-16 CE)

Pause here and examine Grünewald's depiction of the crucifixion. Through these stylistic elements, think about what Grünewald is trying to communicate to his viewers.

Made a guess? Great. Let's break it down.

ART ANALYSIS

Taking in the altarpiece as a whole, we see a brutally realistic depiction of Jesus' death that is often not seen in our daily lives. Grünewald emphasized the **harsh reality of Jesus' suffering**. We see an emaciated, tortured Jesus hanging on the cross. His body is stricken with sores, blisters and wounds. His skin is spotted with affliction and thorns. His limbs are disjointed and contorted. Nails forcefully piercing His palms, Christ's hands bare horrific anguish and are often described as "physical screams." His feet twist unnaturally in excruciating pain. Christ's head drops in exhaustion with lips blue and mouth agape as He succumbs to His last breath. We see the true ugliness of the cross.



The overall scene is dark. Grünewald uses **dramatic lighting** purposefully to reference Matthew 27:45: “From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.” Also, Grünewald creates this amazing **perspective**. This altarpiece is huge, which makes the viewer feel like they are truly standing at the foot of the cross.



To the right of Jesus stands a stoic man with scripture in hand, stiffly pointing at Jesus. He stands barefoot, communicating that He stands on holy ground. Latin is inscribed just above his hand, “*illum oportet crescere me autem minui*,” translated to English as, “He must increase. I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). These details clearly imply that this is John

the Baptist. However, scripturally, John would not have been present at the crucifixion as he was martyred some time before. His portrayal is **symbolic**.



A lamb is positioned just below John the Baptist, reflecting the Gospel: “John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world’” (Jn. 1:19). The lamb, a sacrificial animal, also **symbolizes** purity and gentleness. It stands triumphantly, grasping the cross while blood pours out from its heart into a gold chalice. The lamb represents Christ’s **suffering** and victory over death.

To the left of Jesus are the mourners. An unnamed woman in the Bible blessed Jesus' feet with oil, and washed and dried His feet with her tears and long hair. Although it does not explicitly say it in scripture, tradition equates this woman with Mary Magdalene. She agonizes over Jesus' death, pleading and praying in deep despair with her hands resembling Jesus' contorted fingers.



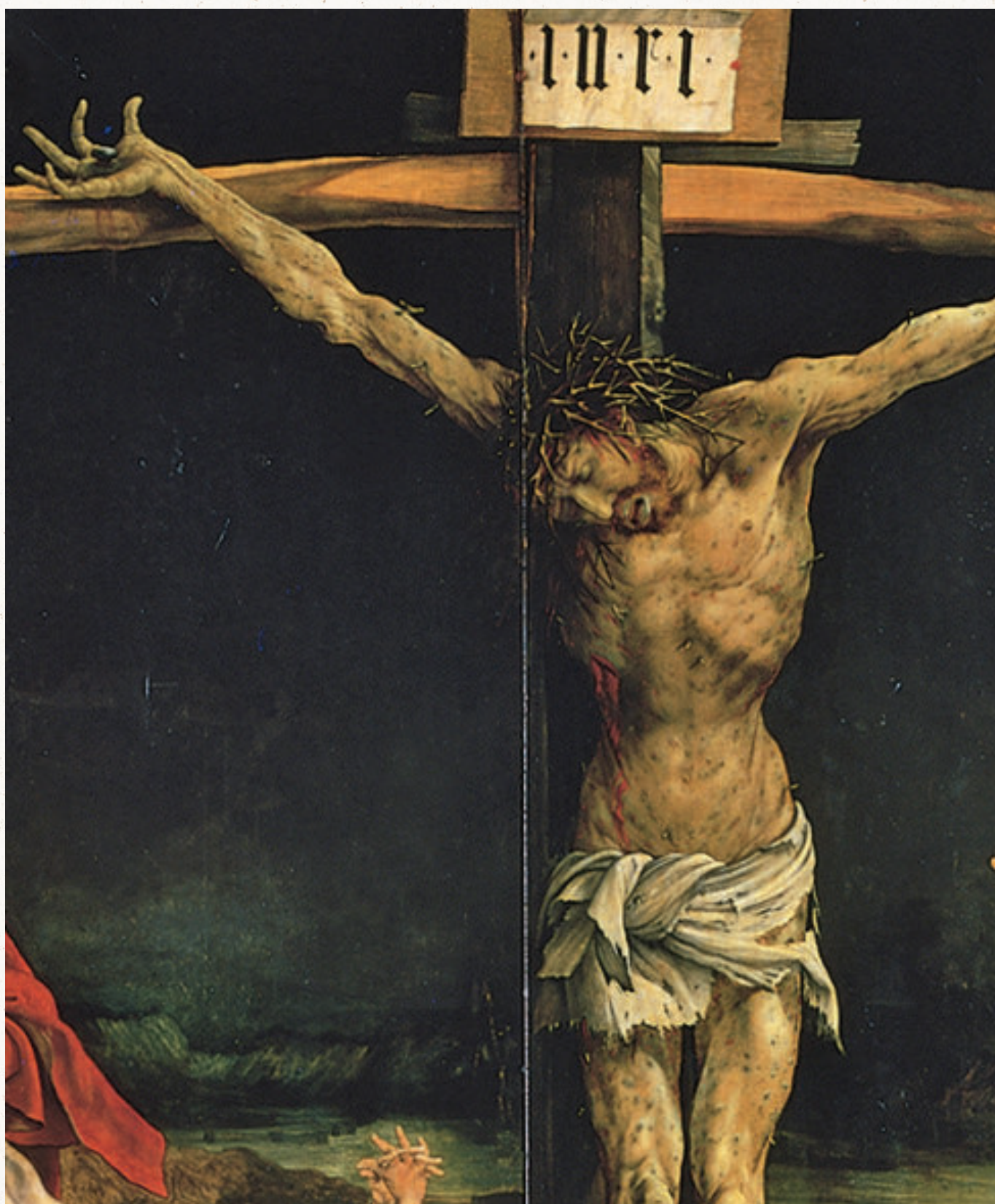
Next to the woman is the virgin Mary, clothed in white, swooning into John the Evangelist's arms (Jn. 19:26). She wears a veil that resembles a shroud worn at a burial.



Moving onto the winged panels, St. Sebastian is presented on the left with arrows in his sides and St. Anthony to his right. They were both known as healers, which suited the hospital setting for which this piece was commissioned. Many of the patients that resided at this monastic hospital dedicated to St. Anthony were afflicted with a skin condition called St. Anthony's fire disease. This disease created sores on the patients' skin, and many needed their limbs amputated, most often just below the knees.



In Grünewald's portrayal of Christ, He appears to have this skin condition. In the lower panel depicting Jesus' entombment, Grünewald purposefully places the door seal just below Jesus' knees as a way of saying Jesus' legs need amputation from the disease. This is truly a powerful image for the hospital's patients. Grünewald intentionally made this connection so they could see themselves in Christ's **suffering** and Christ **suffers** with them.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. God understands our suffering because He endured it on the cross.
-

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is your initial feeling when viewing this piece?
 - How do you think God is speaking to you through this painting?
 - Would you find this painting consoling when you are suffering?
 - Does this painting help you unite your suffering with Jesus for the good of others?
-

PRAYER

Say a prayer in thanksgiving for the ability to connect with God through art and beauty. Bring your suffering to Jesus. Thank Him for His sacrifice and unconditional love.



Positivity Bookmark

{ secret service }

Lent is a season of almsgiving, and while we typically think of almsgiving in terms of financial gifts, it also includes acts of service.

We invite you to engage with this season by giving alms in a whole new way. Add some surprise and delight to the world around you with secret acts of service.

Each week we will give you a simple service challenge to fulfill some time during the week.

THIS WEEK'S SECRET ACT OF SERVICE

Make and hide a positivity bookmark.

There are a couple different ways you can accomplish this week's secret service, all of which tap into the same idea: send out a random reminder of kindness and love into the world. You and your kids could write a note or a card and attach it to a helium balloon and release it to the wind, or you can paint rocks to hide in your community.

Our challenge is a bit different: create a positivity bookmark, go to your local public library, and put the bookmark in a random book to be discovered at a later time.

This is a fun and easy task to accomplish with your kids. Design your own simple bookmark or print something off the internet, color it in, and add your own positive message or

Bible verse. Then go to the local library and let each member of the family go “hide” their bookmark. Finally, say a short prayer for whoever finds it, that they would know how much God loves them!

COMPLETED YOUR SECRET SERVICE?

Let us know how it went on **Facebook** and **Instagram**: @thecatholictelegraph



An Unexpected Diagnosis

{ story of hope }

BY ANNE POIRIER

“Do you want to test for Down syndrome?”

My doctor posed this question to me in the fall of 2017. I was newly pregnant with our second child. My husband, Tim, and I already had a little girl, Lucy, and we were excited to add another child to the mix.

“No,” I answered bluntly. “Why would I test for Down syndrome?”

I have always been pro-life. For my entire life, I knew in my heart that life begins at conception and that every little soul is worthy of life—regardless of their gender, circumstances of conception, if they were planned or unplanned, whether or not they have a unique diagnosis.

When my doctor asked if I wanted to test our unborn baby for Down syndrome, I knew that most people who get a positive result end up having an abortion—and that thought made me sick.

Fast forward to the spring of 2018, and our second baby was born! Another girl and she was beautiful. We named her Alice. When she was an hour old, a doctor looked at me and coldly said, “We think your baby has Down syndrome.”

That moment will forever be the most pivotal moment of my life.

I would be lying if I said that learning we had a child with a disability was an easy pill

to swallow. It wasn't. Fear enveloped me and seemed to paralyze me for weeks. But when I came to terms with her diagnosis, I realized something I always knew but seemed to temporarily forget—*God doesn't make mistakes.* Alice was not a mistake, her diagnosis was not a mistake, and me being chosen as her mom was not a mistake. God gave me Alice for a reason—and I decided that I would spend my life shouting her dignity and showing everyone that she is just as worthy of life as you and me.

The Down syndrome abortion statistics are staggering. Of those women who have a prenatal test for Down syndrome, 67-percent choose abortion. When I think about these women, I so vividly remember the fear that accompanies the diagnosis. But fear is a liar—and when you choose faith over fear and let God's plans unfold, your life changes forever.



ALICE IS LOVE.

She is four-years-old now, and she's smart, funny and the most joyful child I ever met. She does gymnastics and dance classes. She goes to preschool and recently won the "happy-go-lucky award" in her class. She is thriving.

Having a child with Down syndrome is nothing like I thought it would be. People with Down syndrome can do anything—but Alice's abilities do not make her worthy of life; she is worthy of life simply because God created her and she is meant to be here—just like every other baby ever conceived.

WRITTEN BY ANN POIRIER

Ann Poirier lives in Cincinnati with her husband, Tim, and their four children. She writes a blog about Down syndrome and spends her time advocating for those with disabilities and trying to change perceptions. In addition to her blog, Ann is writing two books. Both center on the blessing of Down syndrome.