Voices of Sisters
Spirituality
Social Justice



(Unsplash/Erik Witsoe)



by Sr. Joan Sauro

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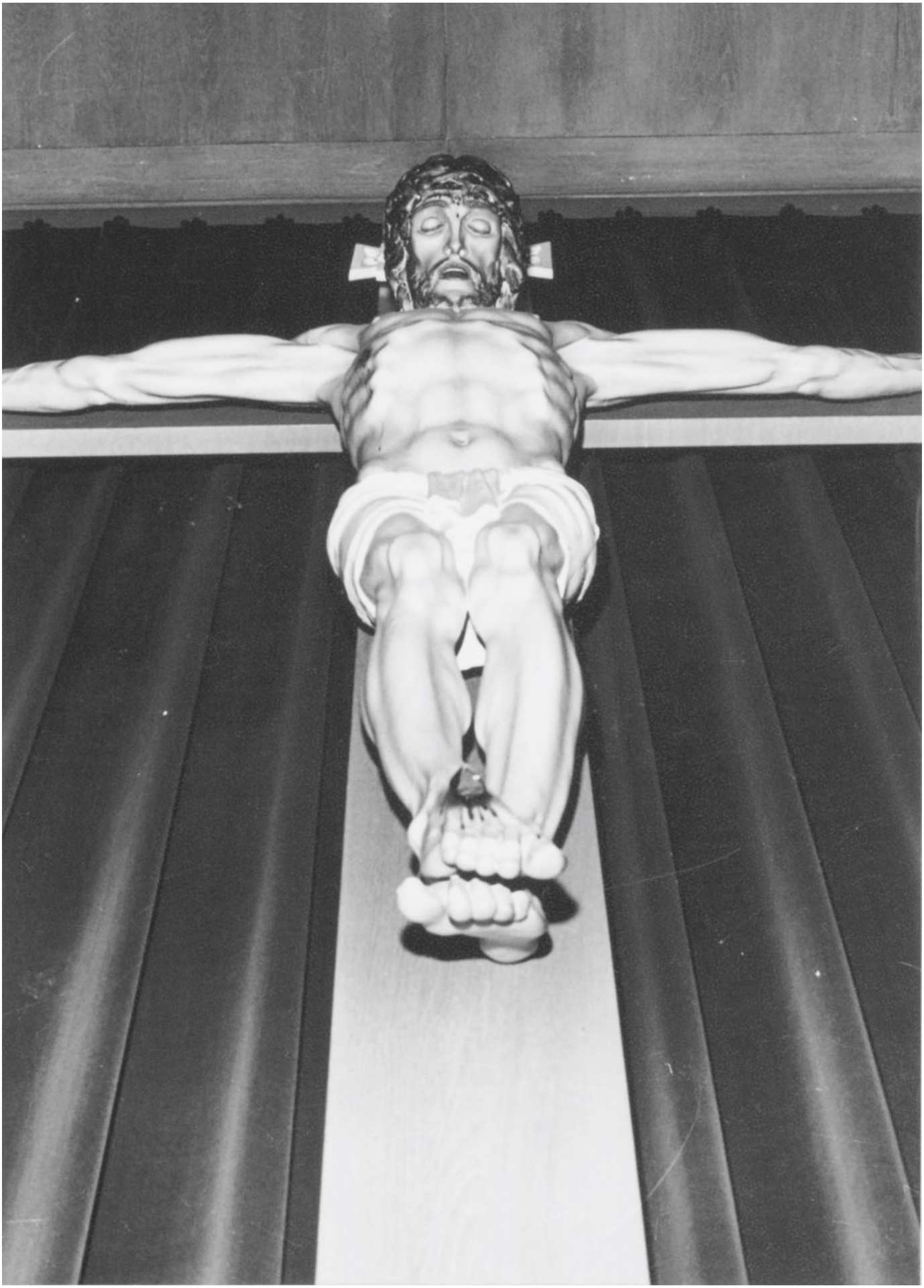
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For years I worshiped in the church across from our home. Like everybody else, I sat in a pew and gazed at the life-size crucifix high above the back wall of the sanctuary. The Head was bowed, with a thin layer of accumulated dust. No one had any idea what the Face looked like. Over time, we rarely lifted our eyes.

One quiet afternoon when the church doors were open and the place empty, I slung my camera over my back and went in to get a good view. I moved the celebrant's chair over to the altar, climbed up, knelt on the altar and placed my hands on the tabernacle, asking for Christ's blessing. Then I looked up.



(Courtesy of Joan Sauro)

Like the bent head, our neighbor's closed door hides her shaved head, her wasted body, the pancreatic cancer having its way. The friend I share a home with has sciatica and walks with difficulty.

Three doors down, the stalwart 60-year-old lifts his 98-year- old cousin, Maria, into his truck, tucks her in safely, and drives her to Sunday Mass out in the suburbs. An usher with a wheelchair greets them at the curb and steers Maria straight to the front. Here the resurrected Christ rises high above the altar. He is arrayed in glory and spreads his arms in welcome. This is the Savior Maria prefers.

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But this is not the Savior who appears in our neighborhood. Some are not welcome. On one side of our home, two lesbians are being evicted. Day after day, piece by piece, they load their truck for parts unknown. On the other side, the grammar school teacher throws up his hands after a year's shutdown, empties *his* apartment, and heads back to the family home three hours away. Two cars and a truck have come to help him.

The Suffering Face of Christ is everywhere to behold.

One morning at church we celebrated the life and death of the woman who had donated the money for the crucifix under which her body lay. Afterwards there was a small luncheon at Twin Trees Restaurant.

I ran the two blocks to where the woman who had just buried her mother now wept into her lunch. I hoped to console her with my photo of the crucifix.

In my rush I fell on the unforgiving sidewalk between the two trees and broke my jaw, three teeth and the right hand holding the picture of Christ crucified — now spattered with my blood and bits of broken teeth.

Sprawled between two trees, with the crucified in my bloody hand, I knew what it might mean to lie broken with Him.

A year later, after many doctor visits, I decided to wash all the clothes that no longer fit and all the ways that didn't fit either. I hung the whole kit and kaboodle out on the line to dry and laughed at the dance they did in the wind. Then I neatly folded the shirts and slacks and gave them to the women leaving next door.

Sorry to see you go. Please remember us when you wear these clothes.