

Artistic Depictions of the Crucifixion



A study of themes in depictions of the crucifixion over time

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Communicating Through Art

How do we teach people who cannot read?

- Small children
- Non native speakers
- Individuals with severe cognitive disabilities

How do visual aids (images, film, manipulatives etc) help you to learn and understand new material and concepts?

In this study we will look at six depictions of the crucifixion of Jesus and use them to see how the church has evolved in her view of Jesus over time, and recognize important Biblical themes..

Alexamenos Graffito

*For the word of the cross is folly to those
who are perishing, but to us who are being
saved it is the power of God*

1 Corinthians 1:18

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Alexamenos_graffito.PNG



Alexamenos Graffito Introduction

Discovered in 1857 in Rome, carved into plaster

Estimated date 200AD

Greek Characters read “Alexamenos sebetai theon”
meaning “Alexamenos worships his God.”

If the date is correct, this was the time of conflict
between the spread of Christianity and demise of Greco-
Roman polytheism

What are your questions about this engraving? What do
you see that piques your interest?

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Alexamenos_trazo.png



Alexamenos Graffito

Given the clues of history and what you see in the painting, what do you think the attitude toward Jesus was at the time of this engraving?

Compare/contrast with our modern attitude toward Jesus

Read Acts 7:54-60 & 9:20-25. What do these verses say about the ridicule the early Christians experienced?

If this graffiti was all the information you had to learn about the death of Jesus ... what would it teach you?



Alexamenos Graffito & The Foolishness of the Cross

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Do you think the cross was a negative or positive object/image to the ancient people of Greece?

Imagine the perspective of the nonbelievers of ancient Greece, as well as the non-believers we deal with today - why would they find it foolish to follow Jesus?

What is the warning Paul delivers to the Corinthians? (v 22-24)

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (v. 25) React to this verse.

Alexamenos Graffito Conclusion

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving us your Word, that we may cling to your promises in times of trial and temptation. Grant us patience and wisdom in our conversations with those who view your cross as folly, and with the martyrs around the world suffering for their beliefs.

Amen

Basilica of Santa Sabina



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SabinaCrucify.jpg>

Basilica of Santa Sabina - Crucifixion Door Panel

The church is believed to be constructed during Pope Celestine I (422-432). The doors could have been finished during Pope Sixtus III (432-440).

Earliest known public depiction of the Crucifixion

Church is located in Rome, on the Aventine Hill

Depiction is a relief on a wooden door panel. The other door panels depict other scenes from the Bible. The Crucifixion is the upper left panel.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/63/Santa_sabina_door.JPG



Basilica of Santa Sabina

What do you see?

What don't you see?



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sabin_aCrucify.jpg

Basilica of Santa Sabina

Discuss:

Based on this depiction, and the history of the church and Rome around 430, what is the attitude toward Jesus?

What does this depiction communicate to an illiterate person who Jesus is?

Do you think the message is accurate?
What should be added or removed to improve the depiction, if used as a tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus?



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SabinaCrucify.jpg>

Basilica of Santa Sabina

What does scripture say about crucifixion?

22 “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, **23** his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” **11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” **12** But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— **14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:10-14

Basilica of Santa Sabina

Conclusion

Closing prayer from scripture - choose a psalm.

Gero Crucifix

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerokreuz_full_20050903.jpg



Gero Crucifix

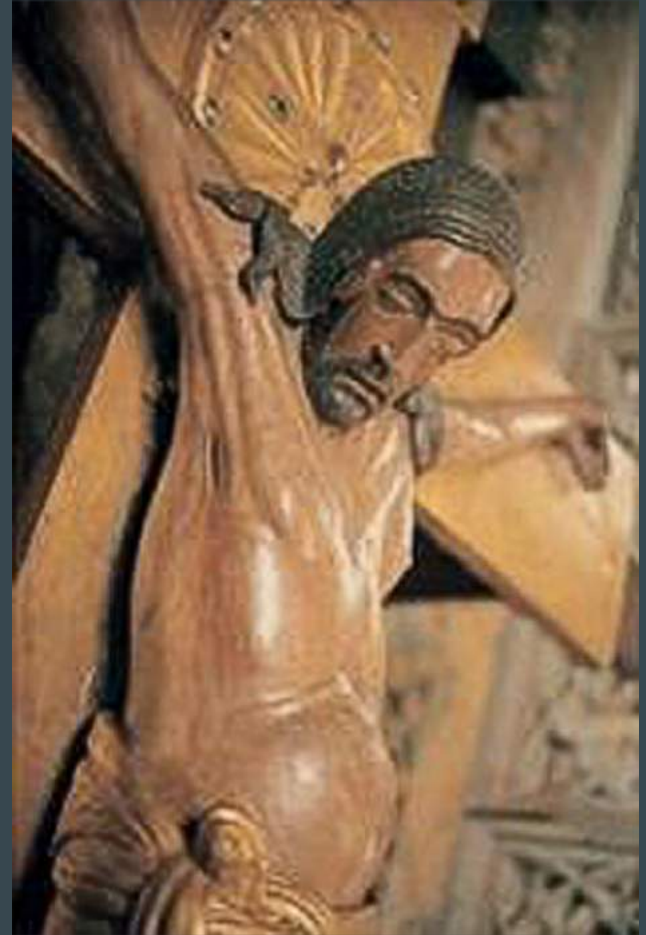
Commissioned by Gero - Archbishop of Cologne - between 965-970

During the Ottonian Dynasty in Germany.

Carved of wood, and painted.. It's 6 feet tall and 5.5 ft wide

Original work was the cross - the gold background was added later.

<http://www.cleansingfire.org/2011/04/the-gero-crucifix/>



Gero Crucifix



What do you see?

What don't you see?



Gero Crucifix

How does the Gero Crucifix differ from the depiction on the doors of the Basilica?

What details were used to make this a more realistic depiction of Christ's death?

What does this teach you about Jesus?

Do you see anything that does not gel with scriptural accounts of the crucifixion?

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerokreuz_full_20050903.jpg



Gero Crucifix

The Hypostatic Union - the term used to for the existence of both the human and divine natures in Jesus.

Try to imagine yourself in the position of the people at the time - This is the first depiction of Christ's suffering, and it's life-sized. How do you think this cross impacted their worship, or their understanding of scripture?

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerokreuz_full_20050903.jpg



Gero Crucifix

Why is the doctrine of Hypostatic Union important? What does scripture tell us about the two natures of Christ?

Colossians: This is a letter written by Paul to address a false teaching

Read Colossians 1:19 & Colossians 2:9

What does *fullness* refer to?

What does this tell us about the nature of Jesus?

Gero Crucifix

So what? What do we do with this? Why does this matter?

Closing prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus,

Place firmly in our minds and hearts both who You are and what You are so that we may proclaim Your grace and image to others. Amen

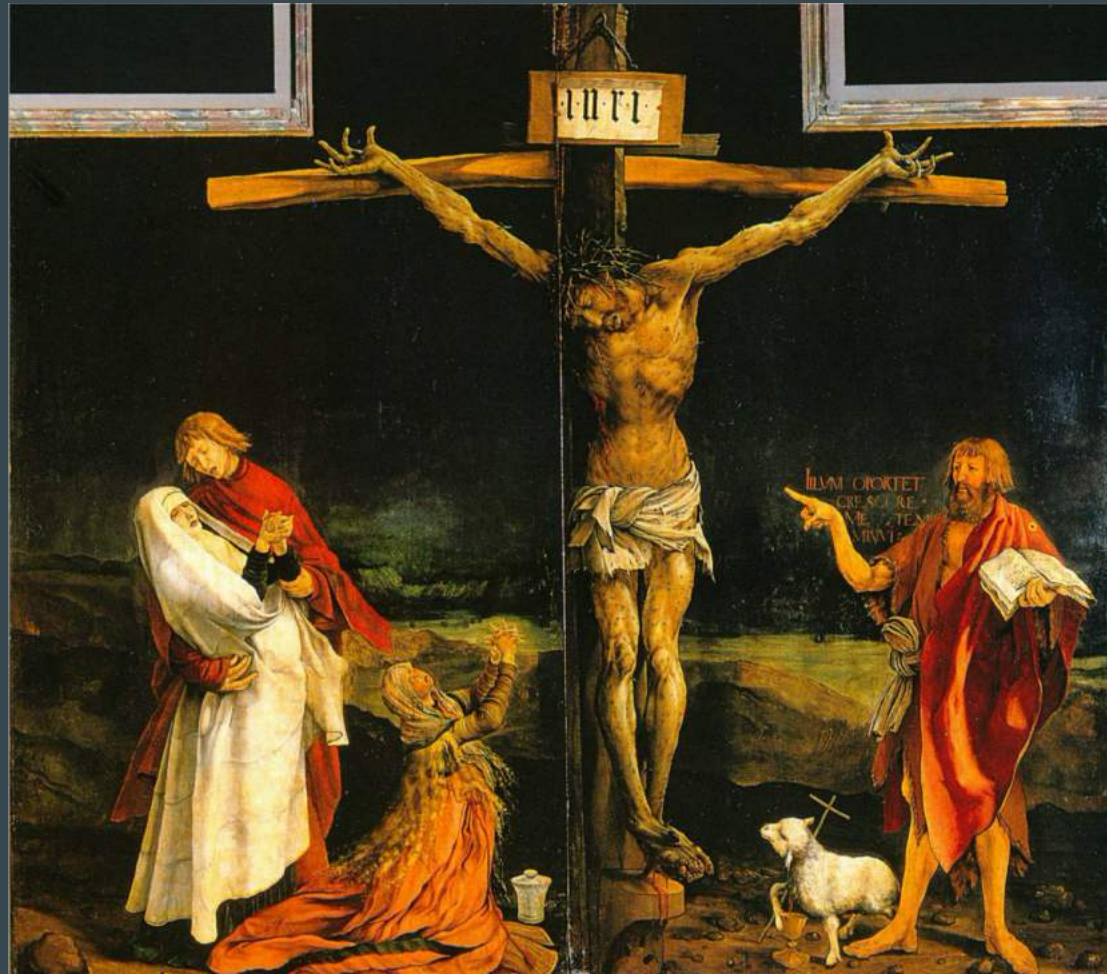
Isenheim Altarpiece



<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/renaissance-art-europe-ap/a/grnewald-isenheim-altarpiece>

Isenheim Altarpiece

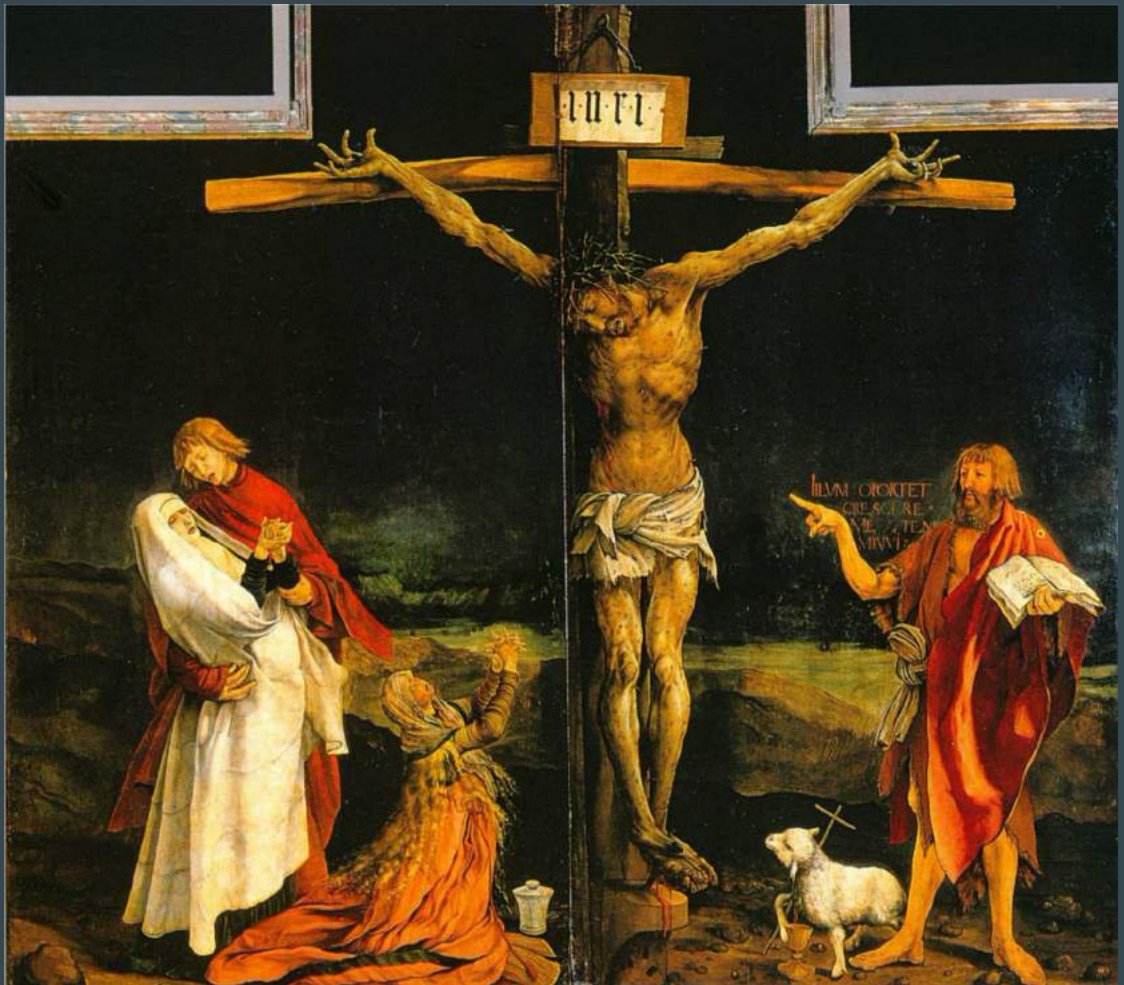
- Painted wood
- Completed in 1515
- Placed in St. Anthony's Monastery in Isenheim, Alsace
- On the left - the Virgin Mary with St. John the Evangelist, and Mary Magdalene on the ground
- On the right is John the Baptist



Isenheim Altarpiece

What do you see?

What don't you see?



Isenheim Altarpiece

Christ's suffering in this piece mirrors the suffering of the patients in St. Anthony's Monastery.

Take a minute to think about what is afflicting you

Sin is the reason for our afflictions

Isenheim Altarpiece

The Temptation of Jesus *Matthew 4:1-11*

This temptation occurs immediately following the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River

Read verses:

1-2

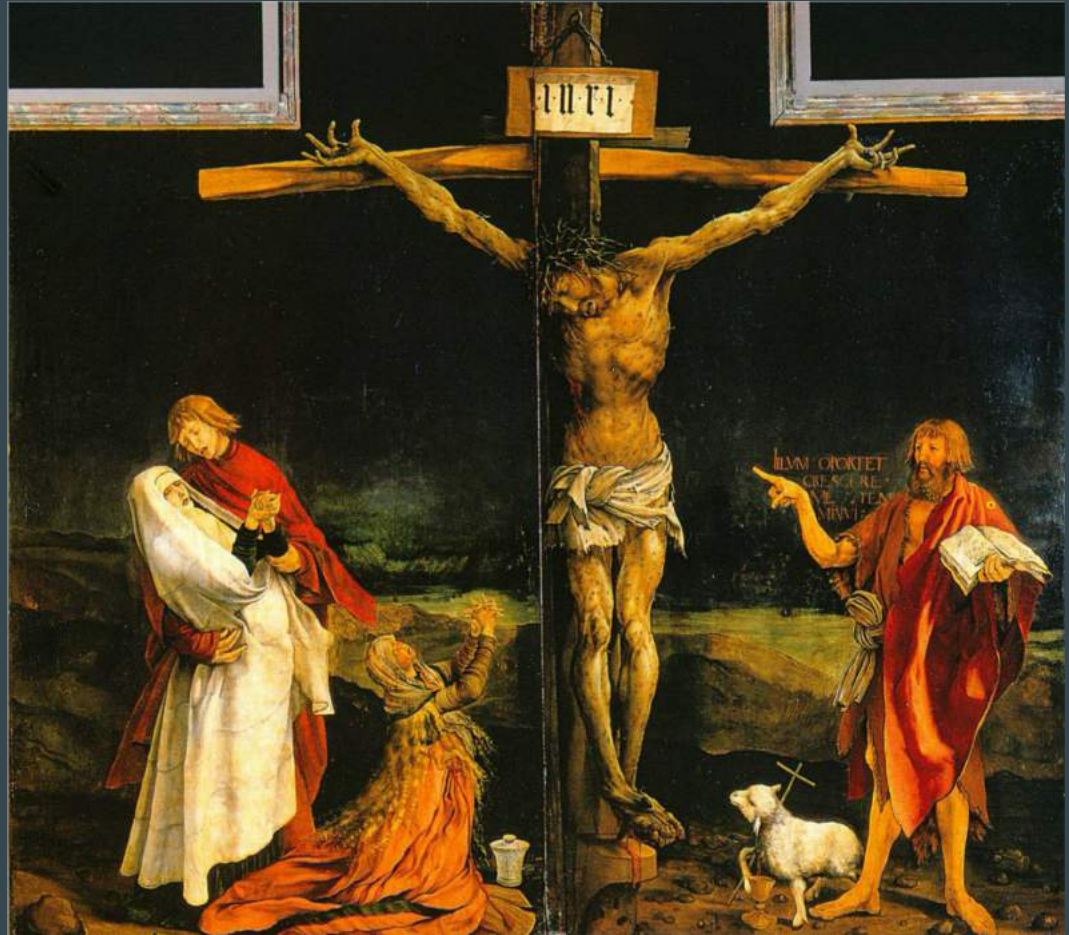
3-4

5-7

8-11

Isenheim Altarpiece

How does the humanity of Jesus - suffering through trials and temptations - affect you?

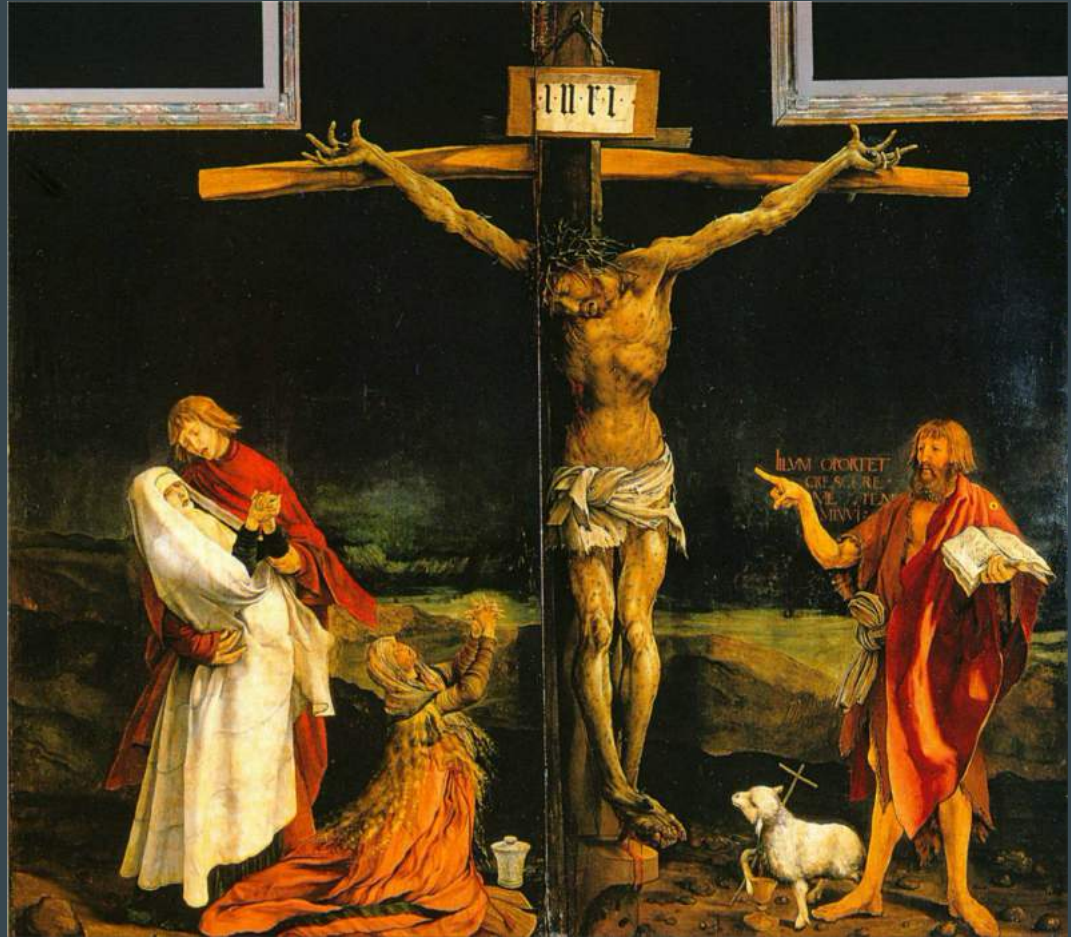


<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/renaissance-art-europe-ap/a/grnewald-isenheim-altarpiece>

Isenheim Altarpiece

Closing Prayer:

Lord,
Thank you for humbling yourself to
suffer a greater suffering than we, and
by doing so faithfully you fulfilled the
law that we cannot. Grant us the
reminder of your sacrifice and
authority so that we may rest in the
knowledge that you have conquered
all temptations that afflict us. Amen



The Crucifixion

Nikolai Ge

https://arthive.com/artists/121~Nikolai_Nikolaevich_Ge/works/395731~The_crucifixion



The Crucifixion

A piece from the realism art period

Was banned from view from the general public as it was deemed inappropriate

Ge created several variations of this, as well as preliminary sketches that were displayed in private homes



https://arthive.com/artists/121~Nikolai_Nikolaevich_Ge/works/395731~The_crucifixion

The Crucifixion

Preliminary sketch

Christ and the Robber

Read Luke 23:39-43

What did the thief do in
this passage?



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e8/Ge_ChristandRobber.jpg

The Crucifixion

What does scripture tell us about faith and absolution of our sins?

Romans 5:1-5

Romans 1:16-17

Romans 3:25

Considering the intertwining of faith and repentance, how does Christ's absolution of the robber during His crucifixion impact your understanding of the relationship between contrition and faith in the absolution of your sins?

How do you predict this will impact your own confession and absolution during the Divine Service and outside of service?

The Crucifixion

Closing prayer

https://arthive.com/artists/121~Nikolai_Nikolaevich_Ge/works/395731~The_crucifixion



Jesus Shed Blood

Sara Bowersock

Sara Bowersock, Point Blank Art & Design, LLC.
www.PointBlankArt.net
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Jesus Shed Blood

Pop Art
Circa 2014
acrylic & spray paint on canvas

What do you see?

What is the emotion expressed?

Which words on Christ's body are most noticeable to you?



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Jesus Shed Blood

Psalms of Lament - King David

	What is David's lament?	What is the reason given for the suffering?	What is David's confession of faith?
Psalm 6			
Psalm 13			
Psalm 28			

What do these three psalms have in common?

Jesus Shed Blood

What do these psalms teach us about lamenting?

Does this piece communicate what David's lamenting "formula" was in the psalms?

Where do you see the lament, the reason, and the confession represented in this painting?

Sara Bowersock, Point Blank Art & Design, LLC.

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Jesus Shed Blood

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,
You conquered death and the grave
and, therefore, can handle anything.
You are our strength and our shield
through our suffering. Lord, hear our
plea, and accept our prayer through the
merits of Jesus, who prays for me.
Amen

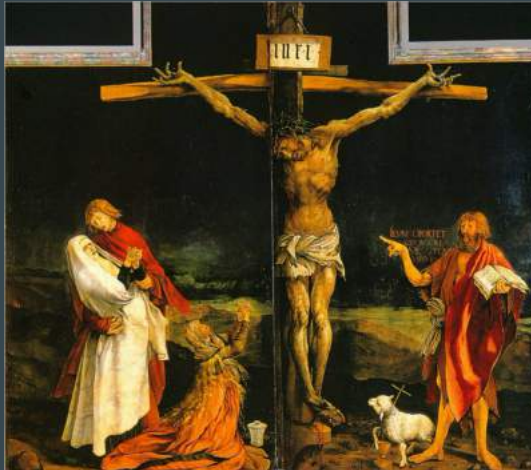
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Conclusion



Conclusion

Consider the Biblical theme we studied with each piece:

Alexamenos - Ridicule/foolishness of the cross

Santa Sabina door panel - guilt or shame of our sin that placed Jesus on the cross

Gero - Hypostatic union

Isenheim Altarpiece - the humanity of Jesus

The Crucifixion - absolution

Jesus Shed Blood - maintaining faith and trusting God through our suffering

Do you see elements of these themes in the world today? Where?

Which theme do you feel is most relevant to you?

Select one theme and visually depict it on your own cross