

Sacred Heart in Highlandtown takes Good Friday Stations to the streets

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HIGHLANDTOWN – Hundreds of Catholics filled the streets bordering Sacred Heart of Jesus-Sagrado Corazón de Jesús March 29 for an annual Good Friday procession featuring scenes from the Stations of the Cross.

The 11-block, bilingual procession began at noon on the church steps with Pontius Pilate condemning Jesus to death. Elaborately costumed actors from the parish's art and culture ministry led the procession down the steps and to the street, the Roman soldiers cracking whips over Jesus' back as he carried the cross.

The procession paused at intervals for the actors to portray one of the 14 Stations. Redemptorists Robert Wojtek and Orlando Gonzalez took turns leading hymns, prayers and offering reflections as the crowd walked behind the actors. The procession culminated inside the church with Jesus' crucifixion.

To view a slideshow of the event, navigate the arrows below.

Father Wojtek, Sacred Heart's pastor, said the procession is a devotion that offers an important public witness.

"It's both a reminder for ourselves, as well as a testimony to others, of our belief – to take our faith to the streets, to say we're not ashamed to proclaim that this Lord who died for us is our savior," he said. "This is part of life – the cross, death. It's through death that we come to life."

Sacred Heart parishioner Edgar Torres, 26, participated in the procession with his sister 14-year-old sister, Hilda.

"I come because I want to remember how Jesus died on the cross and to pray for myself, my family and my friends," he said.

"You want to see with your own eyes what happened, and you want to feel like you're there," added Hilda Torres, who said she has attended similar processions in Mexico.

Abilene Torres-Romero, 11, walked in the procession with her family, as she has in

years past.

"It's to honor Jesus," she said. "It was really hard when people were hitting him, and when he was carrying the cross."

The procession was a first for Denise Waicker, 45, a Lutheran who plans to begin RCIA classes at Sacred Heart in September.

"It was incredible," she said. "I've done Stations of the Cross years ago in Israel, and that was life changing, but this - wow. All I can say is that it was incredible."

She was impressed with how seriously the actors took their roles, she said.

"In this day and age, when so many people are critical of everything you do, for these performers to portray their parts with such passion, that, to me, was overwhelming," she said.

The annual procession began years ago at St. Michael the Archangel in Fells Point, which closed in 2011. Parishioners gathered at the former church March 27 for a smaller Stations procession, Father Wojtek said.

Sacred Heart was to host a second "burial procession" after its Good Friday 6 p.m. liturgy with parishioners carrying statues of the crucified Jesus and the sorrowful Blessed Virgin Mary.

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