

On the occasion of the release of the Senate torture report

by [Eric Pankey](#) in the [March 2, 2016](#) issue

In Piero della Francesca's  
"Flagellation of Christ,"  
The room is needlessly spacious

For the blunt work at hand.  
Three figures in the foreground  
Take no notice of the violence.

Except for the purpose  
Of composition,  
They are superfluous.

Some critics argue these three  
Are Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea  
And the beloved disciple John,

Who will later bribe the authorities,  
Claim the body of their friend,  
And bury him in a borrowed grave

Once the humiliations,  
Beatings, and execution end.  
At this distance, Jesus

Appears to console his tormenter,  
Whose right hand is raised  
As if in protest

(One can barely see the whip.)  
*How hard it is to do my job,*  
He complains, *and not feel put upon.*