

The Way of the Cross

Grace: Ask for the grace of “sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me”

Introduction:

You have witnessed the trial of Jesus and seen him sentenced to death. Can you accept that Jesus is going to die? In this reflection you watch Jesus be flogged and forced to carry His cross with a small group of criminals. Where is the justice? Why does Jesus not protest more? Can you understand what is motivating Jesus at this moment?

You stand and watch as Barabbas is released, how can you begin to describe the feelings inside of you? And to add insult to injury, you witness the harsh beatings that Jesus receives. Jesus is humiliated, stripped, bruised, and bloodied. As Jesus looks at you, what thoughts and feelings are moving in you?

You watch as Jesus carries the cross and you see them grab Simon as the soldiers pressure him to help Jesus. How do you feel about Jesus being surrounded by criminals and at this moment in his life to be counting on a stranger? Where are the other disciples? Where are Jesus' friends?

As Jesus approaches the weeping women, what motivates Jesus to take the risk and speak with them? Looking at Jesus, it is obvious that each step Jesus takes is another step closer to His death.



Do you dare to enter into the experience and feel the true weight of the cross that is upon Jesus' shoulders? Dare you follow Him and stand by Him in spite of the heat and the danger of being associated with Him? Dare you keep pace with Jesus as he stumbles and falls? What could possibly motivate you to continue to walk with Him? What is it that drives Jesus up the hill?

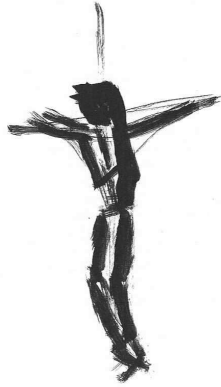
Matthew 27:26-32 - Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Jesus Christ,
May your death be my life
and in your dying
may I learn how to live.
May your struggles be my rest,
Your human weakness my courage,
Your embarrassment my honor,
Your passion my delight,
Your sadness my joy,
in your humiliation may I be exalted.
In a word, may I find all my blessings
In your trials.

--Blessed Peter Faber, SJ

Luke 23: 26-32 - As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed! Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'" Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.





In these or similar words ... I was relieved, it is about to end, they are unchaining him. But then I realize, they are just turning him over, to whip his other side. Will this never end? How deep does their hate go? I cannot bear to watch him getting whipped any more, I feel what he feels, I share his pain. Suddenly a guard arrives, telling them to stop. If he hadn't I would have done something to end that horrible torture. But finally, I thought, this is going to end. I was in the crowd, watching Jesus and Pilate at the top of the steps. Jesus was indescribable, not a spot without blood on his body. I nearly rejoiced when Pontius Pilate asked the crowd if Jesus had had enough punishment, surely the crowd would see what I see, feel what I feel, sorrow beyond any other. Surely the crowd sees that this man has been tortured more than any man. Surely the crowd will let this man go free. I was wrong, immediately the crowd started shouting, "Crucify him!" The hate overwhelmed me, and I broke down into tears. Could they not see the condition of this man? Why are they doing this to him? Jesus started his long trek carrying the cross, and I looked around me, all shouting, throwing things, surging against the wall of soldiers keeping them back from Jesus. I wondered what they would do if they got through to Jesus. I could not imagine the pain Jesus was feeling, and I wished I could share it with him. Further to my sorrow, as if carrying the heavy cross was not enough, the guards were also whipping him on his walk. I was in disbelief. I wanted to wrench the whip away from the guard and show him how it felt, why are they doing this? Why? I wanted to scream, yell at them, knock sense into them. But I was slowly realizing that this was going to continue, I could not accept it. I watched Jesus continue up the road, crying the number of tears equal to the amount of blood he loses. Please let this end soon. I can't watch anymore.

Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand the agony that Jesus endured, it can be helpful to confront some of the real pain and agony that others experience. Consider the cross that those who suffer from AIDS or any grave illness such as cancer have to carry. Like Jesus they know that the road they are traveling will end in death. Consider visiting someone at a local hospital or hospice. Consider doing some research on HIV/AIDS to learn about those who suffer from this disease.

