



Let us Pray the Way of the Cross Together

3rd, 4th & 5th Stations

Armenian Chapel, el-Wad Road, Simon of Cyrene Chapel

We adore you Oh Christ and we praise you,

because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.



Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:4-6

Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Meditation

Man has fallen, and he continues to fall: often he becomes a caricature of himself, no longer the image of God, but a mockery of the Creator. Is not the man who, on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among robbers who stripped him and left him half-dead and bleeding beside the road, the image of humanity par excellence? Jesus' fall beneath the Cross is not just the fall of the man Jesus, exhausted from his scourging. There is a more profound meaning in this fall, as Paul tells us in the Letter to the Philippians: "though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men... He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross"



(Phil 2:6-8). In Jesus' fall beneath the weight of the Cross, the meaning of his whole life is seen: his voluntary abasement, which lifts us up from the depths of our pride. The nature of our pride is also revealed: it is that arrogance which makes us want to be liberated from God and left alone to ourselves, the arrogance which makes us think that we do not need his eternal love, but can be the masters of our own lives. In this rebellion against truth, in this attempt to be our own god, creator and judge, we fall headlong and plunge into self-destruction. The humility of Jesus is the surmounting of our pride; by his abasement he lifts us up. Let us allow him to lift us up. Let us strip away our sense of self-sufficiency, our false illusions of independence, and learn from him, the One who humbled himself, to discover our true greatness by bending low before God and before our downtrodden brothers and sisters.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross made you fall to the ground. The weight of our sin, the weight of our pride, brought you down. But your fall is not a tragedy, or mere human weakness. You came to us when, in our pride, we were laid low. The arrogance that makes us think that we ourselves can create human beings has turned man into a kind of merchandise, to be bought and sold, or stored to provide parts for experimentation. In doing this, we hope to conquer death by our own efforts, yet in reality we are profoundly debasing human dignity. Lord help us; we have fallen. Help us to abandon our destructive pride and, by learning from your humility, to rise again.

IV

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his Mother

From the Gospel according to Luke. 2:34-35,51

Simon blessed them and said to Mary his mother: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed". And his mother kept all these things in her heart.



Meditation

On Jesus' Way of the Cross, we also find Mary, his Mother. During his public life she had to step aside, to make place for the birth of Jesus' new family, the family of his disciples. She also had to hear the words: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?... Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is brother, and sister and mother" (Mt 12:48-50). Now we see her as the Mother of Jesus, not only physically, but also in her heart. Even before she conceived him bodily, through her obedience she conceived him in her heart. It was said to Mary: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. He will be great and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David" (Lk 1:31ff.). And she would hear from the mouth of the elderly Simeon: "A sword will pierce through your own soul" (Lk 2:35). She would then recall the words of the prophets, words like these: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was like a lamb that is led to slaughter" (Is 54:7). Now it all takes place. In her heart she had kept the words of the angel, spoken to her in the beginning: "Do not be afraid, Mary" (Lk 1:30). The disciples fled, yet she did not flee. She stayed there, with a Mother's courage, a Mother's fidelity, a Mother's goodness, and a faith which did not waver in the hour of darkness: "Blessed is she who believed" (Lk 1:45). "Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8). Yes, in this moment Jesus knows: he will find faith. In this hour, this is his great consolation.

Prayer

Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord, you remained faithful when the disciples fled. Just as you believed the angels incredible message — that you would become the Mother of the Most High, so too you believed at the hour of his greatest abasement. In this way, at the hour of the Cross, at the hour of the world's darkest night, you became the Mother of all believers, the Mother of the Church. We beg you: teach us to believe, and grant that our faith may bear fruit in courageous service and be the sign of a love ever ready to share suffering and to offer assistance.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross



From the Gospel according to Matthew. 27:32; 16:24

As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Meditation

Simon of Cyrene is on his way home, returning from work, when he comes upon the sad procession of those condemned – for him, perhaps, it was a common sight. The soldiers force this rugged man from the country to carry the Cross on his own shoulders. How annoying he must have thought it to be suddenly caught up in the fate of those condemned men! He does what he must do, but reluctantly. Significantly, the Evangelist Mark does not only name him, but also his children, who were evidently known as Christians and as members of that community (cf. Mk 15:21). From this chance encounter, faith was born. The Cyrenian, walking beside Jesus and sharing the burden of the Cross, came to see that it was a grace to be able to accompany him to his crucifixion and to help him. The mystery of Jesus, silent and suffering, touched his heart. Jesus, whose divine love alone can redeem all humanity, wants us to share his Cross so that we can complete what is still lacking in his suffering (cf. Col 1:24). Whenever we show kindness to the suffering, the persecuted and defenseless, and share in their sufferings, we help to carry that same Cross of Jesus. In this way we obtain salvation and help contribute to the salvation of the world.

Prayer

Lord, you opened the eyes and heart of Simon of Cyrene, and you gave him, by his share in your Cross, the grace of faith. Help us to aid our neighbors in need, even when this interferes with our own plans and desires. Help us to realize that it is a grace to be able to share the cross of others and, in this way, know that we are walking with you along the way. Help us to appreciate with joy that, when we share in your suffering and the sufferings of this world, we become servants of salvation and are able to help build up your Body, the Church.