

Good Friday

Seven Stations of Jesus' Death

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people lined the streets, waving palms in the air. “Hosanna in the Highest Heaven!” they shouted. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” By this point, Jesus had a reputation. Everyone who came to the City of Peace for Passover knew of the promise of the Messiah. Just as Moses had been sent to liberate Israel from captivity in Egypt, the Messiah would come to free all people from the bonds of oppression.

Roman officials also knew about the Messiah. And they did not hesitate. Crucifixion was common. The Roman Empire used the threat of such a violent and humiliating death as a weapon of control. Dissidence was discouraged. Asking questions of those in power was forbidden. To them Jesus’ death was by itself unremarkable. He wasn’t the first self-titled ‘Messiah’ to spark the hopes of Jerusalem or the scorn of Rome.

But there was something about Jesus. Despite the danger of entering the city during such a busy, crowded time, Jesus could not help but laugh and smile as he rode a donkey along the stone streets. His power was not found in the might of metal and sword, but of bread and compassion. This parade was a parody of the Roman military processions, a protest march against the violence and colonization.

His joy and laughter quickly faded, though, once the parade had passed. The political climate of ancient Judea did not tolerate disobedience. The fragile bargains struck between Roman authorities and Temple priests could not withstand scrutiny. Too soon, Jesus was betrayed, tried, and sentenced to death.

What made Judas betray him? How could Peter deny him?

If Jesus truly was the Christ, was there nothing he could do to avoid such a death? If there was, why did he choose to die this way? These questions and others were just as difficult to answer for the disciples and the early Christian communities as they are for us today.

Scripture says, before time began, God spoke into the nameless void: “Let there be light.” And there was light. Creation began with light, but a shadow remained. To know the light – and thereby to know God – we must also examine the darkness. It contains the unpleasant memories of our failure and struggle. And also, within that shadow, is our unlocked potential.

Jesus suffered and died. Jesus still suffers and dies. The passion is not over for the poor, the powerless, the war-torn and the despised. In our hearts we know that all of God’s creatures are connected; we belong to each other; we are responsible for each other. Too often, though, we find ways to turn aside from need and agony; we ignore the cries for help; too easily we avoid the suffering of this world.

Why? Perhaps, it is the shadow of our soul, that lingering desire to dwell only on the joy and grace of light. But at what cost?

During Holy Week, we struggle to stay awake during Jesus’ passion. We struggle to accompany Jesus on such a perilous journey. We do not face this alone; even Jesus did not carry his cross without help.

The resurrection of Jesus offers us hope and reassurance. We do not have all the answers, but we have a God – *Emmanuel* – who suffers with us and for us.

Drive Me Deep to Face Myself

Lord, grant me your peace,
for I have made peace
with what does not give peace.
and I am afraid.

Drive me deep, now,
to face myself so I may see
that what I truly need to fear is
my capacity to deceive
and willingness to be deceived,
my loving of things
and using of people,
my struggle for power
and shrinking of soul,
my addiction to comfort
and sedation of conscience,
my readiness to criticize
and reluctance to create,
my clamor for privilege
and silence at injustice,
my seeking for security
and forsaking the kingdom.

Lord, grant me your peace.
Instill in me such fear of you
as will begin to make me wise,
and such quiet courage
as will enable me to begin
to make hope visible,
forgiving delightful,
loving contagious
faith liberating,
peace-making joyful
and myself open
and present
to other people
and your kingdom.

Ted Loder, *Guerillas of Grace*

The hour has come.



1. Jesus is condemned

Mark 15:6-15

At the festival, Pilate would release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom.

Pilate asked of the crowd, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he understood that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

Pilate spoke to them again, “What do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?”

They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?”

But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!”

Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for getting swept up in the crowd. Forgive my broken spirit that chooses vengeance over justice, retaliation over sacrifice.

Strengthen my backbone. En-courage my faith. Amen



2. Jesus meets his mother

Luke 2:15-19

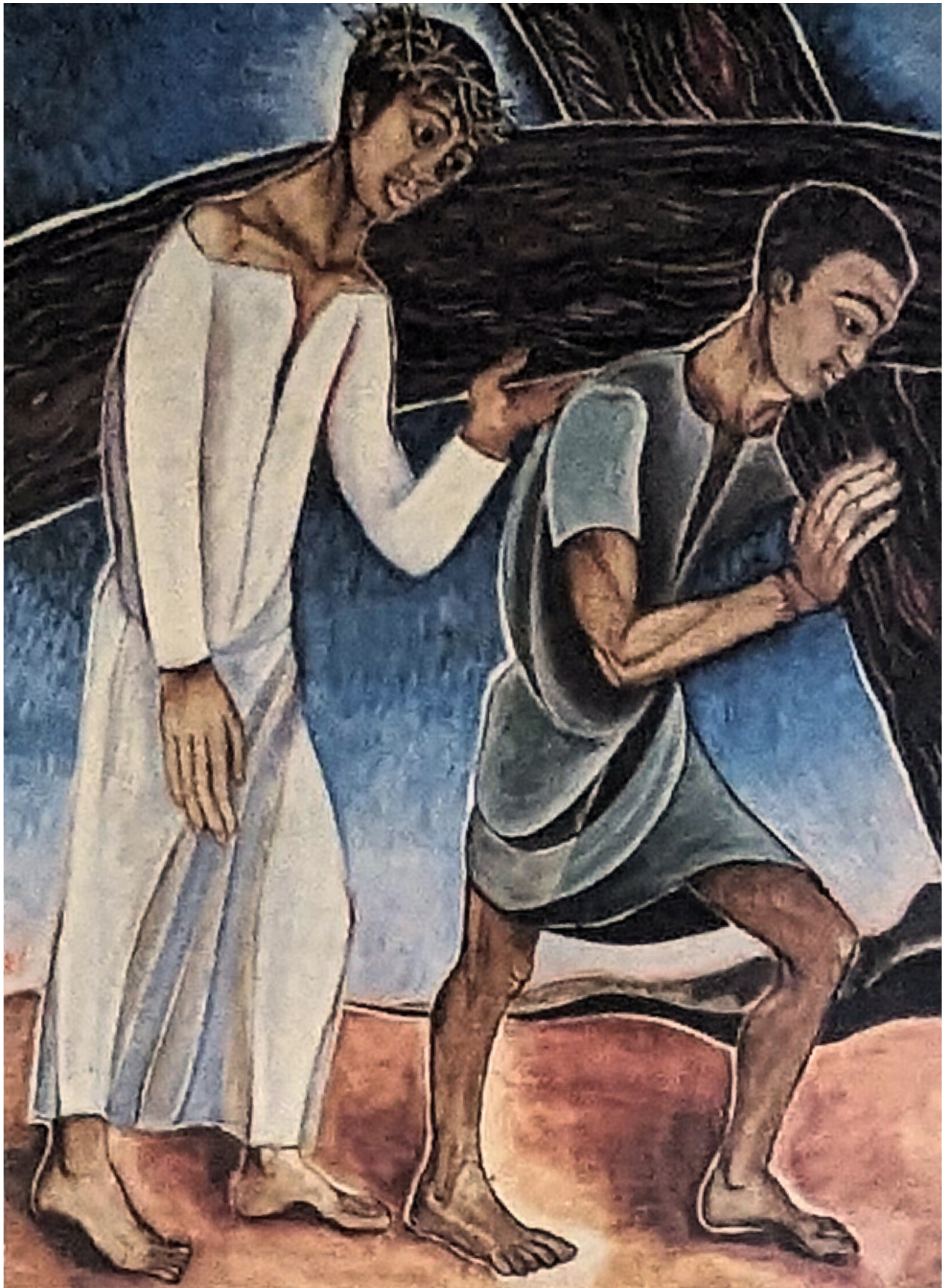
When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Holy One has made known to us.”

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for rejecting my past. Forgive me when I blame my parents for lessons I did not learn, for opportunities I did not take, for challenges I did not step up to. Bend my knee. Humble my ego. Amen



3. Simon bears the cross

Luke 23:26

As they led Jesus away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for ignoring the suffering of others. Forgive me for not answering the call to offer my own life up. Forgive me for not journeying with those who are oppressed. Soften my heart and strengthen my will. Amen.



4. Jesus falls

Matthew 26:36-41

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.

Going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “Abba, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

When he came to the disciples he found them sleeping. “Could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for falling asleep. Forgive this anxiety that consumes me and disconnects me. Awaken my spirit. Stir me to bold action and devoted solidarity with those whose lives are lived every day in trial. Amen.



5. Veronica wipes Jesus' face

According to Church tradition, Veronica was moved with pity when she saw Jesus carrying his cross to Golgotha. Removing her own veil, she wiped Jesus' forehead. Jesus accepted this act of kindness, holding the cloth to his face before returning it to Veronica. Having done this, the cloth bore the image of Christ's face.

Luke 7:37-38

A woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for not acting, for not showing up. Forgive me for witnessing suffering and doing nothing. Forgive me for hoarding my possessions when you told me to sell them and give the money to the poor. I still don't quite believe what good it will do. Amen.



6. Jesus is crucified

Matthew 27:38-48

Two bandits were crucified with Jesus, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. If he is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.” And, “He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’”

The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink.

Prayer

God, forgive my avoidance, for advising restraint. I honestly thought you would do something magical, that Elijah might descend in his fiery chariot and relieve your agony. I did not realize that I could be of use. Amen.



7. Jesus is buried

John 19:38-42

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Prayer

God, bury my sin with you, that I may never again sit idly by and watch. Bury my greed with you, that I may never again preserve my own privilege at the cost of another's life. Bury my guilt with you, that I may never be held back by this, but propelled forward to fulfill your love. Amen.



Thomas

Put your hand, Thomas,
on the crawling head
of a child
imprisoned
in a cot in Romania.

... Gaza, Haiti, Yemen, Burma...

Place your finger, Thomas,
on the list of those
who have disappeared
in Chile.

... Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Syria...

Stroke the cheek, Thomas,
of the little girl
sold in prostitution
in Thailand.

... Afghanistan, Venezuela, the United States.

Touch, Thomas,
the gaping wounds
of my world.

Feel, Thomas,
the primal wound
of my people.

Reach out your hands, Thomas,
and place them at the side of the poor.

Grasp my hands, Thomas,
and believe.

The Iona Community, *The Pattern of Our Days*,
edited by Kathy Galloway

Stations

These Stations are by an unknown (to me) artist. They are displayed in the Roman Catholic church in Pomerini, Tanzania. Built by the Franciscans, it is currently led by Fra Paulo, a devoted and beloved pastor. This community also supports the non-profit organization Mawaki, a regular partner with the Africa Exchange Project.

