

VIA CRUCIS: THE WAY OF THE CROSS

We entered Jerusalem; now we enter into the Passion of our Lord. The text in italics between the narrative and responses are for meditation, and aren't read aloud. Please feel free to take this insert home to use as a devotional during Holy Week and on Good Friday. We will sing verses of ELW hymn # 'Go to Dark Gethsemane' throughout the Passion narrative.

HYMN , VS 1 Go to dark Gethsemane, all who feel the tempter's pow'r;
your Redeemer's conflict see. Watch with him one bitter hour;
turn not from his griefs away; learn from Jesus Christ to pray.

INNOCENCE CONDEMNED

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests, with the whole council of the Temple held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and dragged him away to Pilate, the Roman governor. They accused Jesus of crimes against God, of rousing the people against Rome, telling Pilate, "He deserves to die." Pilate examined Jesus, and found no foundation for the accusations against Him and told the Council: "I find no guilt in Him." The gathering crowd began to demand that Pilate release a prisoner, a custom of his at the Passover. He asked: "Who do you want me to release? Do you want me to release this man?" But the crowd, stirred up by the Council and the priests called for BarAbbas, a man condemned for insurrection and murder. Pilate tried again, and asked the crowd: What do you want me to do with the man called, 'King of the Jews'? And they shouted, "We have no king but Caesar! Crucify him! Crucify him!!" Pilate asked, "What evil has He done?" But they responded, "Crucify him!!" Pilate sat upon the judgment seat, and washing his hands of the matter, said, "I am innocent of this man's blood!" and, releasing BarAbbas, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

-Silence for reflection-

The calls of "Hosanna" are gone and the same voices cry out, "Crucify!" Now He stands condemned and judged – by lies and envy, by sin. Will you see His suffering? Will you walk this journey?

A: Innocent, you were condemned; before Pilate your word was twisted,
the same voices that praised you now call for your death.

**C: You were obedient unto death; by your death and resurrection,
make us obedient unto life and salvation.**

BY HIS WOUNDS...

Then the Roman soldiers took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and gathered the whole battalion around Him. They removed his own clothes, and put a scarlet robe around him. One of them twisted thorny branches together into a crown, and they pressed it down on his head. They knelt before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They hit him, face and head and shoulders, they spit on him. When they had their fun, they stripped off the scarlet robe, put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

-Silence for reflection-

Can you feel the weight bearing down? He carries more than the weight of the cross, blunt, thick, heavy enough to support a man's dead weight. He carries the burden of our sin. The prophet's voice echoes down the ages: By His wounds, we have been healed.

A O Lord, You carried your cross on your wounded back, in love for us and for all the world.

C Help us take up the cross and follow, today, and all of our days.

Vs 2 Follow to the judgment hall, view the Lord of life arraigned;
oh, the wormwood and the gall! Oh, the pangs his soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn from him to bear the cross.

BURDENED

Jesus went out, carrying his cross, led by the soldiers, and hemmed in by the crowd along the streets. He was made a spectacle as He was led through the streets of Jerusalem, and tradition tells us He stumbled, falling under the weight of the cross and the soldiers' abuse. As the procession wound through the city, they came upon Simon, a man from Cyrene, come in from the countryside for the Passover celebration. The soldiers took the cross and forced it on Simon, and made him carry it behind Jesus. All the while a great crowd followed after Jesus. Some mocked and jeered. But among them were women who cried out, who lamented his suffering. One, it is said, risked the soldiers' wrath to bring Jesus some ease when he fell, wiping the blood and sweat and spittle from His face. Jesus said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but for yourselves and for your children."

-Silence for reflection-

With every step our sin presses down; the sin of the world presses down. Jesus cannot carry this burden alone. A stranger takes the cross. But Simon doesn't offer – he is compelled by the Romans, forced to shoulder Jesus' cross. Tradition says that as Simon walked with the wounded and suffering Christ, his resentment transformed to compassion, compassion to empathy. He lifted up the cross willingly to ease Jesus' suffering, and walked willingly to Calvary, transformed by the suffering Christ. This journey is not done. Will we let the cross transform us? How can he go on? How? For God so loved...

A You bore the burden of our sins, which make us stumble and fall.

C We are weak; we turn to you for strength.

A As you struggled along the way, a passerby was drafted to help you
and he lifted up your burden.

C Turn our hearts, and make us as willing to share the burdens of those in need.

CRUCIFIED

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. Humiliation was not over. When the mob of politicians and soldiers and rabble came to the place outside the city walls called Golgatha -the Skull- there the Roman soldiers stripped him and crucified him with the criminals, one to his right, the other on his left. As Jesus hung there, the soldiers gambled for His clothes and the mob jeered. Jesus prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

The crowd stood watching, and even the rulers sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ, the Chosen One of God." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. When Jesus said, "I thirst," they offered him a sponge soaked with sour wine, saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

-Silence for reflection-

If you are the King –save yourself! The rulers thought they had gotten rid of this threat to their power and status. The soldiers were just executing one more criminal. They could not see past their own assumptions, their own need to control. Sin, selfishness, misguided duty blinded them. They could not see the Lamb of God. Will we see? Will we follow?

- 3 Calvary's mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at his feet,
mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete.
"It is finished!" hear him cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die.

O Lord, with strong and holy love,

You took your place among the condemned.

**We have mocked your suffering and death by every sin,
and made our excuse: we are only human! Our sin condemns us.**

A Forgive us our sin, O Lord Christ; we thirst for new life!

**C For You are the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world:
redeem us, and make us whole.**

COMPASSION FROM THE CROSS

There was a notice nailed above Him, which read: "This is the King of the Jews," written in Latin, Hebrew and Greek so all could understand. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal –whom tradition calls, Dismas, rebuked him. "Don't you fear God?" he said, "We're getting what we deserve for our crimes. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he pleaded, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"

Even crucified and dying, Jesus answers those in need. One is dear –his own mother. The other, one receiving punishment for crimes committed. For his mother he provides care for this world. To the thief, he opens paradise. Blessed woman; blessed thief!

-Silence for reflection-

A O Lord, even in Your suffering you reached out in compassion and mercy;

**C May Your cross challenge us to care for our families,
our communities, and all those placed in our care.**

OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH

It came to about the sixth hour in the afternoon, and the sun hid; darkness shrouded the whole land and until the ninth hour, when Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit

my spirit." He breathed his last, saying: "It is finished!" In that moment the earth shook, great rocks split apart, and in Jerusalem the curtain of the temple, that hid the Holy of Holies was rent, torn in two, from top to bottom. The Roman centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was the Son of God! When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what happened, they beat their fists against their chests in anguish and slunk away. But those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

-Silence for reflection-

Obedience is not something we do well –from Adam’s sin to our own, isn’t it all about saying “No” to God? Like the terrible twos: “No!” “Mine!” “Gimme! “She made me!” We said “No!” The Lamb of God said “Yes!” Finished? Yes, through Jesus’ obedience the power of sin is finished, our separation from God is finished, death is finished. With the centurion we cry: Praise be to God!

- A O Lord, when your sacrifice was complete,
you handed your life to the Father, and He did not forsake You.
- C Keep us close to your cross, O Christ that we may walk in the obedience of faith,
now and at the hour of our death.**

DOWN TO THE GRAVE

When it was evening, a wealthy man from Arimathea, named Joseph, went to Pilate. He was a member of the Jewish High Council, but had not gone along with their plot against Jesus. He asked Pilate for Jesus’ body. Now, Pilate had ordered the legs of the crucified be broken to make sure they died before the Sabbath began. The soldiers did as Pilate ordered, breaking the legs of first one, and then the other to speed their deaths. They realized Jesus was already dead. But one soldier, to make sure, took a spear and drove it into Jesus side, and blood and water flowed from the wound. And witnesses remembered that scripture had said: “Not one of His bones shall be broken,” and “They shall look on the One they have pierced.” Then Joseph of Arimathea, who was a member of the Council, and a secret disciple of Jesus went to Pilate, and asked permission to bury Jesus. Pilate agreed. So Jesus’ body was taken down, and Joseph wrapped His corpse in linen and laid it in a tomb cut into rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph to the tomb, and saw where and how his body was placed. Then they went to where they were staying and prepared the spices and perfumes needed to care for His body. But they did not go, because by that time it was the Sabbath-day, and they rested, obedient to the commandment. The Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Silence for reflection.

- 4 Early hasten to the tomb, where they laid his breathless clay;
all is solitude and gloom. Who has taken him away?
Christ is ris’n! He meets our eyes. Savior, teach us so to rise.

The service continues with the Creed.