

Stations of the Cross

A Pilgrim Journey



contemplation & photography by Cherie Renae

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Introduction



Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey, a searching out of our own beliefs. Pilgrims (Peregrini in Celtic tradition) travel expecting spiritual awakening and miracles. We can adopt the same mindset as we follow the path of the Stations of the Cross.

I've used scripture readings from the NET Bible. Its use of contemporary language and ease of understanding helps us slip into the stories - to see them, feel them, experience them - as we walk the road to Calvary with Christ.

The conversations that accompany each scripture are intended to enhance personal contemplation in the context of God and community, to move from *"What does this mean to me?"* to *"How does this call me to respond to God, to my community, and to the world?"* The questions may feel uncomfortable. This is intentional. This should not be a comfortable walk; rather, the path should prick our consciences and cause us to look more deeply at ourselves, our life and our world.

You may want to bring a journal to record your thoughts, or use the note pages in the back of this booklet.

Take your time. Don't rush yourself or God. Give each station full attention, full contemplation, full prayer. This is not a stroll of a few minutes, it's a journey of a lifetime. When we enter the pilgrim path, we will not exit the same.

In Peace,

Cherie Renae

1. Jesus is Condemned to Death



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:15-26, Mark 16:6-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:33-40)

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them,

“You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. When I examined him before you, I did not find this man guilty of anything you accused him of doing. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, he has done nothing deserving death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.”

But they all shouted out together, “Take this man away!”

Pilate addressed them once again because he wanted to release Jesus. But they kept on shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”

A third time he said to them, “Why? What wrong has he done? I have found him guilty of no crime deserving death. I will therefore flog him and release him.”

But they were insistent, demanding with loud shouts that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. - Luke 23:13-25

Contemplation:

Pilate had a moral decision to make. Would he do what was right, or would he choose political expedience? Pilate chose politics over integrity.

What difficult decisions do you face? In what ways are you tempted to choose what is easy over what is right?

Contemplate Jesus’ condemnation.

2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, John 19:17)

So the soldiers led him into the palace (that is, the governor's residence) and called together the whole cohort. They put a purple cloak on him and after braiding a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

They began to salute him: "Hail, king of the Jews!"

Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Then they knelt down and paid homage to him.

When they had finished mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes back on him.

Then they led him away to crucify him. - Mark 15:16-20

Contemplation:

The government of the day publicly whipped, battered and then ridiculed their prisoners, encouraging those watching to do the same. Prisoners then had to carry their own cross through these taunting crowds, whose participation lent support to the government's inhumane actions.

Consider your attitudes toward others. In what ways might some of your opinions or actions (political or otherwise) contribute to oppression?

Contemplate the plight of Jesus.

3. Jesus Stumbles for the First Time



Scripture:

(Isaiah 53:4-8, Matthew 11:28-30)

But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed.

All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the Lord caused the sin of all of us to attack him. He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth. He was led away after an unjust trial – but who even cared? - Isaiah 53:4-8

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry. - Matthew 11:28-30

Contemplation:

Jesus was weakened from the whippings and beatings, and the cross was heavy. He was not super-human. He was as frail as you or I.

Consider your weaknesses, physical and otherwise. How might you keep your grip on the cross even when you stumble?

Contemplate Jesus' pain.

4. Jesus Meets His Mother, Mary



Scripture:

(John 19:25-27, John 16:22)

When a woman gives birth, she has distress because her time has come, but when her child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world.

So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. - John 16:22

Now standing beside Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. So when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, look, here is your son!" He then said to his disciple, "Look, here is your mother!" From that very time the disciple took her into his own home. - John 19:25-27

Contemplation:

Mary put on a brave face and offered love and encouragement to her beloved son.

Imagine Mary's pain: picture someone you love - a child, parent, spouse. Can you, like Mary, summon the strength to stay centered, even in crisis?

Contemplate Mary's pain.

5. Simon of Cyrene Carries Jesus' Cross



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26)

*As they were going out, they found a man from Cyrene named Simon, whom they forced to carry his cross.
- Matthew 27:32*

The soldiers forced a passerby to carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country (he was the father of Alexander and Rufus.) - Mark 15:21

As they led him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. They placed the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. Luke 23:26

Contemplation:

It wasn't mercy that moved the guards to order Simon to carry Jesus' cross, it was self-preservation. It wouldn't please the crowds - or the guards' superiors - if Jesus died before he was crucified.

Simon didn't want to do it. He didn't want to be associated, even peripherally, with a convicted man. Still, he was compelled to carry the cross.

Might there be times where you allow concern over your reputation to hinder you in helping others?

Contemplate Simon carrying the cross.

6. Veronica wipes Jesus' face



Scripture:

(Is. 52:14-15, John 14:9, Matthew 25:37-40)

He was so disfigured he no longer looked like a man; his form was so marred he no longer looked human. - Isaiah 52:14-15

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" - John 14:9

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the king will answer them, 'I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.'
- Matthew 25:37-40

Contemplation:

In the midst of the madness, courageous Veronica stepped up. She looked past Jesus' criminal status and saw someone in need. She couldn't carry his cross. She couldn't prevent his execution. But she did what she *could* do - she wiped his face. For this seemingly small act, she is forever remembered.

What small things can you do to help others in need?

Contemplate Veronica's compassion.

7. Jesus Stumbles a Second Time



Scripture:

(Hebrews 4:15, Lamentation 3:1-2, 16)

*I am the man who has experienced affliction
from the rod of his wrath.
He drove me into captivity and made me walk
in darkness and not light.
He ground my teeth in gravel;
he trampled me in the dust. - Lamentation 3:1-2, 16.*

*For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been
tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. - Hebrews 4:15*

Contemplation:

Jesus was battered and weak. He fell again, face-down in the dust from which we were created, the dust to which we will all return. His heaving breath made the motes dance - and it still does.

Where can you feel the breath of God in your life?

Contemplate Jesus lying in the dust.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem



Scripture:

(Luke 23:27-31, John 15:6-8)

A great number of the people followed him, among them women who were mourning and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For this is certain: The days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore children, and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if such things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" - Luke 23:27-31

If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples. - John 15:6-8

Contemplation:

These women followed Jesus, loudly crying for him. They raised their voices in protest against the wishes of the majority.

Where might you be called to raise your voice against injustice? Will you do it, even in the face of hostility?

Contemplate the courage of the women of Jerusalem.

9. Jesus stumbles for the third time.



Scripture:

(Phil. 2:5-8, Luke 14:11)

Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature.

- Philemon 2:5-7

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

- Luke 14:11

Contemplation:

The three falls are symbolic of human effort. First, we give what we think we can safely give. Secondly, we venture beyond our perceived limits. Finally, we give all, without hope of recovery. It is in this third giving that we find our resurrection.

At what level do you give of yourself and your resources? At what level does God ask you to give?

Contemplate Jesus and His unrestrained sacrifice.

10. Jesus is stripped naked



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:35b, Mark 15:24b, Luke 23:34)

They divided his clothes by throwing dice. - Matthew 27:35

Then divided his clothes, throwing dice for them, to decide what each would take. - Mark 15:24

But Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Then they threw dice to divide his clothes. - Luke 23:34

Contemplation:

Public humiliation was an integral part of Roman punishment, therefore, they crucified people naked.

It's easy to be outraged at the barbarism of the past, but are we any less callous today?

Do you ever revel in the small - or large - downfalls of others? Do you ever feel they 'got what was coming to them'? How do you think God sees them - and you?

Contemplate Jesus' humiliation.

11. Jesus is Crucified



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:35a, Mark 15:24a, Luke 23:33, John 19:18)

So when they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. - Luke 23:33

There they crucified him along with two others, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had a notice written and fastened to the cross, which read: “Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews.” - John 19:18-19

Contemplation:

Jesus was tortured yet again, nailed through his flesh to the cross.

It's unthinkable that people committed such horrible actions against one another. It's unthinkable that masses of people watched, approved, encouraged. But it happened because they saw Jesus as 'other' - a criminal, a renegade - and not as one of themselves.

Who do you consider 'other'? Are there hurtful words and actions that you approve, and perhaps even encourage, against those who are 'other'?

Contemplate Jesus' agony.

12. Jesus Dies



Scripture:

(Luke 23:46, John 19:30, Phil. 2:8)

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And after he said this he breathed his last. - Luke 23:46

Jesus said, “It is completed!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. - John 19:30

He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. - Phil. 2:8

Contemplation:

As Jesus hung there, he forgave the soldiers. He offered words of encouragement to the two crucified beside him. He prayed for his mother and his friends. In the worst possible circumstance, he loved. He loved until the end.

Consider the ways you show love in your life. Where else might God be calling you to offer kind words and giving actions?

Contemplate Jesus’ sacrificial love.

13. Jesus is Removed from the Cross



Scripture:

(Matt. 27:56-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-39)

Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council, a good and righteous man. (He had not consented to their plan and action.) He was from the Judean town of Arimathea, and was looking forward to the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock, where no one had yet been buried. It was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they returned and prepared aromatic spices and perfumes. - Luke 23:50-56

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (but secretly, because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he went and took the body away. Nicodemus, the man who had previously come to Jesus at night, accompanied Joseph. - John 19:38-39

Contemplation:

Crucifixion victims were generally thrown into a mass grave. But two respected men of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, approached Pilate and asked for his body.

The men's standing in the community won them this concession. They used their influence for this good act.

Do you use your influence (great or small) to benefit those less fortunate, less 'connected' than you? Where can you make a difference?

Contemplate Jesus' death.

14. Jesus is Laid in the Tomb



Scripture:

(Luke 23:50-57, John 19:38-42, John 12:24-26, Romans 6:10-11)

Then they took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the aromatic spices, in strips of linen cloth according to Jewish burial customs. Now at the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb where no one had yet been buried. And so, because it was the Jewish day of preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus' body there. - John 19:40-42

I tell you the solemn truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain. The one who loves his life destroys it, and the one who hates his life in this world guards it for eternal life. If anyone wants to serve me, he must follow me, and where I am, my servant will be too. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. - John 12:24-26

Contemplation:

Jesus' body was carried to the tomb and prepared by those who loved him. The sun was setting as a huge stone was rolled across the tomb's entrance. The light of the world lay extinguished in the grave. All returned to their homes to observe the Sabbath.

Where do you go when the world turns dark and hope seems extinguished? Where is God in your darkness?

Contemplate Jesus' still body.

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Personal Reflections

Personal Reflections



Images taken at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Corvallis Oregon