

Way of the Cross, Way of Reconciliation

An Examination of Conscience



Jesus' passion took place just before the Spring high holy days in Israel around the year 30 A.D and seemed to be the ending of his teaching and works of healing. It was engineered by jealous and troubled officials, both Jewish and Roman, who subjected Jesus to immense brutality and pain. The Gospel writers, especially John, interpreted this terrible event through the lens of the passover lamb whose blood released the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Stations of the Cross help us to imagine Jesus as the Lamb of God slain to deliver us from bondage. As you follow him to Calvary, ponder his suffering and allow him to release you from whatever holds you in chains of unforgiveness, fear, or guilt.

Jesus is condemned to death

Pilate had the authority to execute Jesus or to set him free. Unable to find evidence against Jesus, he nevertheless sentences him to death and then publicly washes his hands of the whole business.

Questions to Ponder

Have I condemned others to suffering, alienation, and even death by my indifference or anger? Even though I believe people to be innocent, do I join the crowd to condemn them? Do I try to "wash my hands" of the consequences of my decisions, making excuses and pretending that it isn't really my fault? Do I try to absolve myself and explain away my guilt instead of throwing myself on God's mercy? For the times I have failed, Lord have mercy.

Jesus takes up his cross

Knowing what is in store for him, Jesus has to carry the instrument of his own suffering, torture, and death. Throughout his whole life, he embraced the pain and limitations of being human; now, for our sakes, he takes to himself the final trial of death on a cross.

Questions to Ponder

Do I accept the burdens, crosses, and responsibilities of my life, or, do I find little – and some times big – ways to get around them. Am I really willing to bear the cross of just being human, of always being dependent on my Creator? Do I thank God for what I have or do I grumble about what I lack? Am I a good steward of creation, careful to protect the environment. For my lack of caring, Lord have mercy.

Jesus falls for the first time

Under the weight of the cross, Jesus stumbles and falls hard to the ground. Despite the pain and growing weariness, he gets up to continue on his way.

Questions to Ponder

Do I get so discouraged by my failures that I want to give up? Do I try to force myself to be perfect and then hide my mistakes from others? Have I forgotten that failure is an inevitable part of my life? Am I willing to pray to ask God for the courage I need to get up and try again? For times I have slipped up, Lord have mercy.

Jesus meets his mother Mary

As their eyes meet, Jesus sees the anguish of Mary's heart. He does not turn away, even though he can not take away her pain, even though his suffering is causing her pain. Instead, he momentarily forgets his suffering in his great compassion for her.

Questions to Ponder

Am I willing to face my family and friends or co-workers in their difficult times? Have I offered support to others or have I shielded myself from the sufferings around me? Do I cherish my parents or children, giving them respect and carrying out my responsibilities toward them? For the times I've turned away, Lord have mercy.

Simon is forced to carry Jesus' cross

Humiliated and physically exhausted, Jesus accepts Simon's help.

Questions to Ponder

Am I willing to accept the assistance of others with humility and gratitude, or do I resent the offer of help? When I see someone in need, do I reach out to them or ignore their plight? Am I careful to offer help without acting superior. For the times pride got in the way, Lord have mercy.

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Dripping with sweat, spittle and blood, Jesus' face shows the strain of his ordeal. Although her gesture did not rescue him from his predicament, Veronica's kindness brings him a moment of relief.

Questions to Ponder

Am I willing to do what I can to ease someone else's suffering, or will I give up if I can't "fix" everything for them? Do I try in small ways each day to be thoughtful of others, or have I been wrapped up lately in my own concerns? For my self-centeredness, Lord have mercy.

Jesus falls a second time

Although Simon helps him and Veronica has just wiped his face, Jesus is overcome and stumbles again.

Questions to Ponder

Have I taken good care of my own health? Do I treasure my body and others' bodies as gifts from God? Am I careful to avoid those places and circumstances I am tempted to repeat particular sins? For my cooperation with evil, Lord have mercy.



Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Jesus encounters a group of ritual mourners and bluntly tells them, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children."

Questions to Ponder

Am I willing to tell the truth whenever necessary, even though it may hurt? Have my prayers and religious observances been genuine, and not just for show? For my insincerity, Lord have mercy.

Jesus falls a third time

The third fall: suffering on top of suffering. Again the pain becomes unbearable and Jesus collapses.

Questions to Ponder

Has the presence of evil in the world led me to become cynical? Do I make fun of others and their values? Do I take my own faith for granted? Have I given regular attention to the praise and worship of God? For my lack of fidelity, Lord have mercy.

Jesus is stripped of his clothing

As horrible as it is to imagine, Jesus' clothes stick to his open wounds. When they tear off his garments, knives of pain shoot through his body.

Questions to Ponder

Do I cling to my possessions, career, and friends, making them more important to me than Jesus? Have I gained what I own honestly? Am I willing to depend completely on God for what I truly need? For the times, I have put my faith in idols, Lord have mercy.

Jesus is nailed to the cross

The Roman soldiers could have tied Jesus to the cross, but instead they nail his hands and feet. With hardened hearts, they give little thought to their cruelty.

Questions to Ponder

Have I grown callous to others in my speech and actions? Have I come to accept human cruelty, no longer even being outraged by torture and murder? Do I engage in gossip about the misfortunes of others, or do I try to be a healing presence in the midst of tragedy? For my part in spreading sin, Lord have mercy.

Jesus dies on the cross

Jesus hangs lifeless on the cross, having poured out the last of his vitality. He holds back nothing, counts nothing more important than experiencing fully the limits of the human nature he shares with us.

Questions to Ponder

Do I appreciate the life God has given me, or do I grow bitter with envy as I think about the possessions and relationships other people have? Can I see areas in my life where I hold back from God? Can I ask for God's help to give my whole being to serve the Creator's will? For my stubbornness, Lord have mercy.

Jesus is taken off the cross

Stunned by all they have witnessed, the disciples take Jesus' lifeless body down from the cross so that it might no longer be subject to violation and scorn.

Questions to Ponder

Have I honored my promises and commitments? Have I done my share to uphold human dignity, even when it is unpopular to do so? Do I value all human life regardless of age, sex, race, or other qualities? For my blindness, Lord have mercy.

Jesus is buried in the tomb

With the stone rolled across the tomb opening, all is silent, finished. Those who conspired against Jesus think they have won the day. His disciples think all is lost.

Questions to Ponder

Am I willing to hope even when everything seems to be lost? Do I call upon God in the worst of times and offer thanks in the best? Have I let Jesus into my heart? Have I let him into my actions, practicing works of justice and mercy? For the hardness of my heart, Lord have mercy.

Complete this examination of conscience by praying the traditional Confiteor

I confess to Almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I sinned through my own fault,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and what I have failed to do;
I ask blessed Mary, ever Virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

