

Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Scripture: Luke 23:26 – 31

Fourth Sunday of Lent 2024

On Jesus' journey to Calvary carrying his cross of condemnation and after falling for the first time, he encountered his mother, Mary. When Jesus and his mother meet, they just looked at each other, No words could express how they felt. Mary was filled with sadness and Jesus was in such pain and anguish.

What Jesus saw in his mother' eyes must have hurt him more than the raw pain of his wounds. This, for Jesus, is the most painful time of all. This is his bereavement.

Think about this scene – Jesus see his mother along his path to Calvary. He has blood upon his face and a crown of thorns on his head. This had to have been Jesus' most painful time seeing his mother!

I tried to think of a time when I was in pain and experienced such a moment. Let me share this personal story. My father had been suffering from dementia for two years. I do not think he knew who I was for those last two years. He had lost one leg and they were going to take his second leg when he died. At my father's funeral, my younger brother asked me say some words for our family. I composed a few words for his funeral. When I stood up to share, I walked towards the open casket. Suffering And as I approached the casket, my father's big nose came into view. My dad had a nose like Corporal Klinger from MASH. My dad would often do his imitation of Jimmy Durante with his friends – 'Cha Cha Cha, good night Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are!'

It was from this nose that I had received words of love and discipline. I stood facing the casket and it was at that time that I felt the most sense of loss! I felt like Mary.

Jesus carries the heaviest burden of the loss of his family. The loss of a loving relationship between mother and child. This was not of his making. The violence inflicted upon Jesus etched into the very heart of his mother as she watched the agony of her son.

We can see Mary's pain. We can see the pain of a mother who is watching her child suffer.

In this modern world we often see a mother's pain when a child gives his/her life up to drug addiction.

We can see a mother's pain when her child commits suicide.

We can see a mother's pain who is suffering violence in her home and the ongoing threat of violence in her home from spouse or from a child.

We see a mother's pain in coping with the breakdown of a marriage.

We see a mother's pain in a couple trying desperately to rebuild their relationship and make a family anew.

Oh yes, we can see Mary's pain in each women dealing with a crisis within her family.

Oh yes, we can remember the gaze that rested between him and his mother, Mary. In this moment of pain there was also a moment of deep and enduring love.

Jesus gives us the courage to bring that love into the deepest recesses of our homes, to our children, and to our spouse. Jesus gives us the courage to seek help in the places of fracture and disharmony in our circle of relationships.

Jesus does fall for the second time and this time the Roman soldier escorting Jesus to Calvary looks out into the crowd along the road to Calvary and orders Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus. Simon of Cyrene is a stranger in the city. He did not know Jesus but that did not matter. What matters here, is that in this moment of need, Jesus' needs supersede Simon needs. Simon is capable of lending his shoulder and strength to helping Jesus with his cross.

Simon made his offering of strength and shoulder. Simon took on the cross of Jesus for himself. He took the weight of Jesus' cross. He took on the cross that Christ could no longer carry. He took on the cross of condemnation!

In today's world, where is Jesus? Where is Jesus hiding? Jesus lies hidden in every unknown beneath a person in need takes. Across our world, we can see human suffering in the faces of strangers. We can see Jesus in the faces of those struggling for democracy in the Middle East. We can see Jesus in the faces of those starving in Gaza. We can see Jesus in the faces of those fighting for freedom in Ukraine. We can see Jesus in the faces of those at our southern boarder seek freedom in our country. We can see Jesus in the faces of those dealing with the loss of life and destruction of property.

We can see Jesus in the faces of people we know or do not know. We can see Jesus in the faces of people who must live with the destruction and ravages of war and the forces of nature. We can see Jesus in the faces of people dealing with floods and drought, dealing with devastating effects of climate change. We can see Jesus in the faces of farmers who can no longer produce a harvest or raise animals like they use too. They cannot produce enough to meet the needs of this world.

Let us grasp our opportunities to be a Simon in our world. In those times when we can help, let us have the generosity to do so. May we continue to share the spirit of Simon through our support of all who work to alleviate suffering in our world. May we have the humility to accept all the Simons along our road who reach out to help us in our moments of need.

So, who are the Simon of Cyrene in your life? I have a slip of paper which says – ‘Who was your Simon of Cyrene?’ Please take a slip or two and write down your helper. These names will be shared next week during our prelude for the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

On the other side of this slip of paper is a place where you can write the name(s) of people you have helped. Who have you been a Simon of Cyrene for? Please take a slip or two and write down those you have helped. These names will be shared next week during our prelude for the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Those watching virtually, if you wish to share either people who have been your helper or those people’s names that you have helped, please contact me by email at teachpast@gmail.com and I will include you in our sharing next Sunday.

Aimee, could you play some music while we do this.

Let us pray:

We adore you O Christ and we praise you because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world. AMEN.