

Along the track

Meeting Jesus on the Way

Holy Mary mother of God, pray for us sinners now and forever, Amen.

What a heartbreaking scene. Wasn't it bad enough, but now mother and son meet.

At the Temple all those years ago she heard from the elderly Simeon: "A sword will pierce through your own soul" (Lk 2:35). And indeed it has. Here she was, watching her son "like a lamb that is led to slaughter" (Is 54:7). Others ran away, Peter even denied he ever knew him. Where are they now? But Mary could not stay away. She would not go. She watched His every step, she felt His every pain, every lash, every exhausted breath, every insult hurled at Him. How could she not accompany Him in these final hours? How could she not be with Him every moment? She would endure being pushed aside, crushed in the crowd. How could she not be with Him, how could she not push to the front of the crowd so that Jesus knew she was here, close by? How could she not speak to Him just once more? Blessed are you among women.

Then, a woman called Veronica steps out of the crowd and wipes the face of Jesus. A risky move, not welcomed by the soldiers. They push her away. What a simple act of kindness. Impulsive, but risky, pushing her way past the soldiers to wipe the face of Jesus. They push her away. But one small act in such a dreadful ordeal – what a difference that must have made. You are not completely on your own! You have not been abandoned.

The soldiers are becoming impatient. This is taking too long! They are afraid You won't make it to the hill. As You grow weaker, they panic. They grab a man out of the crowd, Simon from Cyrene and make him carry Your cross. He was just a bystander, caught up in the crowd, but all of a sudden he is a participant in this drama. Did others insult him too? Did they spit on him, mock him, hassle him? Having travelled over a thousand kilometres to make this pilgrimage, he has carried an instrument of death and that renders him unclean, unable to celebrate the Passover.

The women again. They step forward. The women of Jerusalem They knew Jesus, they had listened to him, they had seen his love and compassion first hand. They saw his healing, how he embraced the sick and offered forgiveness even though in the process he

had broken social and religious rules. Now they are here to support him. They are here when others have fled. And Jesus appreciates it – despite His pain, despite the effort with each step, the agony of each movement and His determination to keep going, He somehow summons up the energy to speak to them: *Don't weep for me, but for yourselves and your children.*

And now, what an indignity! You are stripped bare. They barter for Your clothes. You have nothing left. You remind us of a harsh reality, Jesus. When all is said and done, we must stand before our God, *naked*. No cover-ups, nothing between us and God. No make-believe then, no pretence, no hiding. It's just God and me. When it's all been said and done, all my treasures will mean nothing. Only what I've done for love will stand the test of time.

During these final hours, it is the women who remain faithful, it is the women who remain with Jesus, who support Him. They walked with Him on that final journey, they stayed with Him, they remained at the foot of the Cross until he died:

There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee... ..
Matthew 27 55

Jesus appears first to these faithful women after the resurrection. It is these women who are chosen to be the first witnesses and proclaimers of the resurrection.

And He said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" Mark 16 7-8

Regards
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