

If you can't go out.. go in.. to the infinite world of our Soul
Holy Week Day 1

First Station - Jesus is Condemned



Pilate washes his hands

Judgment

It is easier to blame than to fix the problem.
It is easier to recognize another's faults than our own.
It is easier to wash our hands than to take responsibility.

Some religious people might say that Covid 19 is a sign of God being angry while others believe that nature was out of harmony and is seeking to rebalance. Either way we feel condemned by this virus so it has something to say to us about judgment.

Our judgements tell us more about ourselves than about another. A judgmental attitude is something we can be entirely blind to. We want another to change but are not prepared to see where change is first needed in us. We often expect a positive response from someone we are negative towards forgetting that what we reap is what we sow and what we give out is what comes back. A judgmental approach blocks a favorable response.

Jesus taught, 'Do not judge so that you will not be judged, and as we judge so we shall be judged for the judgments we give out will be the judgments we will get back.' The Judge sits in the highest place in the courtroom. To be judgmental is to assume we see the whole picture and know the entire story. This we never do. Hence we are only allowed to pass judgment on specific behaviors but never on persons. People rarely act from malevolence but from what seems right from their perspective and the more we know the whole story the less we are inclined to judge.

The ABC's of Judgment are Anger Blame and Complain.

Being non-judgmental also extends to ourselves. We can easily be our own judge, jury and executioner, always harsh and punishing towards ourselves. Our self-criticism destroys our self-esteem leaving us never feeling good enough. Learning to drop our self-judgments, accepting mistakes as part of life and being self-compassionate are important spiritual disciplines as we journey through life and particularly through our current crisis.

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Holy Week Day 2

Second Station - Jesus Receives his Cross



Acceptance

It is as it is,
How can we deal with it?
Things are as they are,
How can we make the most of them?

The Cross, whether it comes from within or is imposed from without bites deep. Reality can be extremely hard to bear. Yet acceptance of reality is essential to moving forward. Every journey can only begin from where we are at just now. The crosses of life need to be transformed in our lifetime or they become transferred to another generation. Life breaks us all; the challenge is to grow strong at the broken places. We are defined not by what happens to us but by what we have faced and transcended. The cross we carry at this present time will not leave us as it found us; even in the winter of distress it carries the potential for renewal and growth. The depth it carves into our hearts is our capacity for joy.

Could it be that total acceptance is too much to expect of ourselves? Acceptance is itself a gift that invites us to pray 'Lord I accept my non-acceptance and offer it to you. By your grace of acceptance may I move forward.'

All acceptance has to begin with self-acceptance. The one constant relationship we have in life, from conception to eternity, is our relationship with ourselves. From this flows all other all other relationships and we can never be closer to another than we are to ourselves. The foundation of all right relating is to be right with myself. At its deepest level loneliness is not so much missing another person as it is to be missing myself. The God who accepts me unconditionally as I am does not expect me to bear the cross of self-rejection since as I am towards myself so I will be towards others.

<https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/titelgeschichten/20192020/digital-concert-hall/>

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Holy Week Day 3



Third+ Stations - Jesus Falls (Not once only!)
Temptation

Only in the Father's Will do we find our True Life

At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus was tempted to fall three times but withstood. Each temptation began with the devil trying to throw a seed of doubt in his mind as to his true identity. So he says, 'If you are the Son of God, turn stones into bread,' which means go the route of materialism and work on the assumption that by accumulating more and more of what you want you will find what you need. Jesus responds wisely quoting the scriptural truth that, 'It is not on bread alone that we can truly live. Until this current crisis stopped us dead in our tracks many had everything the world could offer and yet were running on empty and devoid of inner peace.

Then the devil tempts him with power, and the glory that can be his. All he has to do is put himself first and leave God out of his life. Again Jesus sees through the temptation and answers with: 'You must worship the Lord Your God and serve him alone'. He knows that to be dependent on others' approval in order to feel good about oneself is itself a form of slavery. In the light of Divine approval we already have the ultimate approval.

Next the devil took him up to the high point of the temple and invited him to take the risk of putting on a spectacular show. This would mean putting God to the test: if he jumped then God would surely have to look after his own. Here the temptation is to step out of alignment with the divine will for his life. Later God would ask him to walk on water, and it would happen, but just now he was not being asked to put on a show. Hence Jesus replies, much to Satan's disgust, 'You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

All the temptations of Christ are ours as well. They come down to giving God first place in our lives, and living life His way, which is often not our way.

There's a Hole in My Sidewalk - My autobiography in 5 short Chapters. (Portia Nelson)

CHAPTER 1: I walk down the street and there's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in, I am lost, I am helpless, but it's not my fault and it takes forever to find a way out.

CHAPTER 2: I walk down the street and there's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there, I still fall in, it's not my fault and it takes a long time to climb out.

CHAPTER 3: I walk down the same street and there's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I still fall in, it's a habit, but it is my fault, and I get out immediately.

CHAPTER 4: I walk down the street and there's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there so I walk around it.

CHAPTER 5: I walk down a different street.

Falling and Rising: From, 'not my fault' to, 'it is my fault' is the movement from passing the blame to taking responsibility. It is the path of healing and maturity. To blame is to forever blame so that when we fall it's difficult to rise again.

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Holy Week Day 4



Fourth Station - Jesus meets his Mother

Separation

Selfhood begins in the going away
Love is proved in the letting go

Here the one who suffered by his coming into the world now suffers in his going out of it. The age-old prophecy of Simeon to Mary when Christ was presented in the Temple is now being fulfilled; 'And your own soul a sword shall pierce that the secret thoughts of many may be revealed.' Through the centuries hearts have opened freely to the one whose heart was pierced. Mary had begun her role as the 'Help of Christians.' In someone who has suffered there is no judgment, but only acceptance, compassion and understanding.

Motherhood is a precious gift but a temporary role. The life Mary bore was not her own. It had come through her but not from her so it was not hers to hold onto. When Jesus was lost to her as a twelve-year-old it was his first step towards finding himself. Later in his ministry she could have felt sidelined as he was about his father's business. While it was her role to give him roots she also gave him wings. She made him independent enough to discover who he was as the Son of his Father.

Mothers who in good faith do too much for their children, especially what they are capable of doing for themselves, keep them dependent. So they fail to become mature adults and in their need keep coming back to 'Mammy'. She in turn is subtly holding onto her role and failing to embrace her true identity apart from being mother. In essence she stands in danger of destroying what she treasures most: her beloved children.

By giving all, and asking nothing, children are placed firmly in her debt,
and owe her nothing less than everything.

Prayer of the Mothers (Hebrew & Palestinian) for Peace: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyFM-pWdqrY>

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Holy Week Day 5

Fifth Station - Simon helps Jesus to carry his Cross



Support

In life we can bear most things provided we have support

Simon of Cyrene was a passerby who was coerced – protesting - into helping Jesus to carry his Cross. Two thousand years later we still remember his 'hard luck' that was also his unique privilege! Life's greatest blessings often come in strange disguises and deserve our hospitality. Perhaps Covid 19 is just one of them?

There are crosses that are just too much for any one person to bear and yet they cannot be carried by anyone else. Simon didn't carry the cross of Christ but he did lend his shoulder and did his bit in helping Jesus to carry it. How can we be Simons, especially at this time?

- ▲ a friendly smile can light up someone's day.
- ▲ a phone call can break down a wall of isolation.
- ▲ a word of encouragement can enable someone to keep going.
- ▲ a helping hand can help someone to cope.
- ▲ a listening ear can help someone to see.
- ▲ a thoughtful gesture can make all the difference.

The opposite of Love is not Hate but Indifference. Hate acknowledges the presence of the other while Indifference looks the other way. The all too common attitude of 'minding our own business' can be an excuse for refusing to get involved. Where there is genuine need what other people think of us is not our business since offering support to another is not about us.

For some, to give support may come easier than receiving it. To ask for help, to acknowledge our need requires humility and relinquishing the myth of self-sufficiency. It is Pride that wants always to give but never sees the need to receive. In the heart where there is space for both giving and receiving there is no room left for pride.

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Holy Week Day 6
Sixth Station - Veronica wipes the Face of Jesus



Restoring our God-Image

Exercising Faith is overcoming Fear

Unconcerned at what others might think or do Veronica forces her way through the soldiers and onlookers, takes off her veil and wipes the sweating bloodstained face of her master. To do so she braves threats, verbal abuse and even violence. With a woman's special vision she was able to look beyond disfigurement and see divinity. Tradition holds that the imprint of Jesus' face remained on the cloth like a signature of gratitude.

To step forward in faith is to overcome fear and claim our divinity.

FAITH can be understood as Fantastic Adventure In Trusting Him.
FEAR can be understood as Fantasy Experienced As Real.

Faith will see us through this crisis. Fear will hold us back.
Faith sees a positive outcome. Fear only sees disaster.
Faith places us above our circumstances. Fear places us below.
Faith sees new beginnings. Fear only sees endings.
Faith extends the comfort zone. Fear reduces it.
Faith sees opportunities. Fear only sees obstacles.
Faith accepts reality as it is. Fear rejects the present.
Faith allows us to walk on water. Fear makes us sink.
Faith sees divine order. Fear sees chaos.
Faith conquers. Fear falters.
Faith creates that which is believed. Fear does likewise.

Whether believer or non-believer we daily exercise either faith or fear and create the reality of our lives accordingly. St Augustine said that 'Faith is believing what you don't see and the reward of Faith is to see what you have believed.' Fear, apart from its positive aspect, has its roots in yesterday, makes today feel safe and is our enemy of tomorrow. It alerts us to the perils of the 'now' because of what happened before and while it appears to keep us safe, it is our only obstacle to joy.

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Holy Week Day 7

Jesus Is Crucified



Surrender, the Place of Transformation

Jesus emptied himself and became as we are and, being so, humbled himself.

'Into your hands I commend my spirit'

Jesus did not cling and he did not grasp. These words point to *kenosis* which means self-emptying (of the ego). It was his journey of life that led through the cross to his exultation. This journey was also the central message of his life – in word and deed – to his followers:

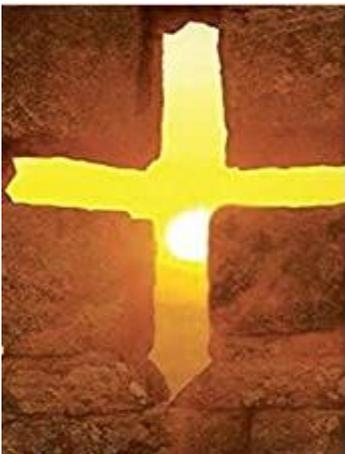
'Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies it remains but a single grain.'

The act of letting go is the key to abundant living – the living of a grace-filled life.

Allowing the business that is my life to come under 'new management' always involves an act of radical surrender. Up to this point it is the ego that is in control. It is the little 'I' that has its own power, beauty and purpose. It is what makes us get up in the morning; it is what makes us health and safety conscious; it is what makes us take steps towards self-improvement and self-development. However, it does like its independence and abhors the idea of surrender because that signifies its own death. It is the seed that does not want to die even though it is only in so doing that it can begin to bear fruit.

Postscript - Jesus Is Risen!

Transformation of Awareness



Incarnation is about God opening in Jesus opening his heart and stretching out his arms to the whole world. Resurrection is about a new awareness – opening our eyes to see that it is not all about our search for God but God's search for us. The initiative is all on the Divine side. This means that Christianity – or any spiritual path – was never meant to be one enormous effort to be loved by God, but rather one great act of gratitude for being so loved totally and unconditionally.

May you walk in the light of LOVE and stay safe and well this Easter!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcOAileqHIY>