

Walking with Christ to Calvary

The ugliness of our sinful hearts was swallowed by the mercy of the one who never sinned, never transgressed, only loved. His lifeless body, wounded, bleeding, broken told the story of the pain and anguish of a blessed woman who had stood in shock and horror on that lonely hill as she watched the gruesome display amidst the jeering crowd. She longed to hold his infant self, pressing him close to her skin as she wrapped him in her mantle of love against the cold evening wind. She remembered that day in the temple when Simeon foretold that a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart. She longed to hold his hand, just as she did so many times in the marketplace, when they walked together, picking out fresh vegetables for their family meal. She longed for another gaze out the window as he worked with Joseph handing him tools and taking the occasional turn at the lathe.

Calvary exists in our world as a physical place, but also as a place in our hearts. We have walked this road with our Savior in the moments of our own lives, when all our tears would not bring back our loved one, when infirmity held its grip and we didn't know if we would see the sunlight another day. Calvary is a place of laying down our sorrows, disappointments, broken dreams, lost chances, and the sins of our lives that we carry deep inside our hearts with the shame of the Prodigal. It is the place where the woes of our world meet the blood-drenched soil of our Savior as we wonder whether the Father has any patience left for the wayward ones.

We know the story. The writers have told it with great care, so that we would never forget what happened on that windy hill where three crosses were erected. We struggle to take it in, the totality of it, the beating, the harsh words, the slapping and whipping, the judgment. It was the Father's plan. It was the outpouring of His scandalous mercy upon a world that chose the lie instead of a life in the garden forever. It is raw and painful as it cuts to the depths of our hearts. It is our sin that he carried on that cross and we feel its weight.

There are no words in our human language to express the fullness of emotion, the debt of gratitude that we owe to the One who carried it all for us. For our offenses he suffered, for our sins he bled, and we echo his cry, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me."

We need to come here, to this place of suffering so the world can be healed. For it was through the death of one man that the world triumphed over what was lost by the fall. By the shedding of his blood, he freed us to walk in the light of a new Easter morn when every tear is wiped away. We need to come here to be renewed in our faith that despite the horror of evil around us, a bright light breaks through the darkness to welcome a new day. To remember that fateful Good Friday when all hope was lost as John the Beloved held our Blessed Mother as they walked away from the frightful scene. To feel again the silence and

eeriness of those hours following the crucifixion when fear gripped the disciples and no one dared show his face. To dream Resurrection dreams as in the days of Lazarus and to wonder if we would again see a miracle in our midst.

Let us come here to this lonely hill and be renewed. Let us not turn our face from the sacrifice of the cross that paid the price for our sins. Let us prepare our hearts to walk this road confidently, knowing that Jesus' love overcomes all our earthly worries and cares. Let us trust that the Father's hand has not faltered and the world still spins under his loving and merciful gaze. Let us come here and stay a while, remembering the sacrifice, and offering our prayers for all the needs of our earthly life.

This is the place of the meeting of hearts. The bleeding heart of the Savior joins the pierced heart of his Mother as they plead for a world in trouble. It is here where we stand once again on holy ground, on the soil trod by saints and angels. It is here where we lay down our hearts and our lives, broken as we are, before the One who loved us to the cross and who walks this earthly journey with us. Let us not miss this opportunity to walk this road.