



*"Whom do you seek?"*

The Questions of Jesus

Lent 2018

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## Welcome

Welcome to Heart of Mary Bible study, we are so happy you decided to join us on this Lenten journey.

We hope you dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others with the beauty of God reveals to you through it. We will begin Ash Wednesday and end Holy Saturday.

If you are doing the study independently, know that we at Heart of Mary are here for you. Through our website and social media, we are participating with you! You are never truly alone!

If you are completing the study in a group setting we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with. Please use this free study journal for your reference and resource during your meetings and the personal time.

God bless you all,

To Jesus through Mary

Your Heart of Mary team

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## Whom Do You Seek: Questions of Jesus

Jesus asks many questions in the Gospels. You can bet that everything He did and said was important and had meaning, so the questions He asked must have been pretty important too. Some of them in obvious ways, and others in more subtle ways that go deeper than the surface-level context of the question.

This Lent, we want to journey through some of those questions together. We want to discover how those questions relate to the ministry of Jesus, how they relate to salvation history as a whole, and how they relate to our very own hearts.

Each week will focus on a different question, starting with the context of the question itself in Scripture. The other days of the week (except for the first week, which is a mini-week) will look at the question in relation to our lives, in relation to the Old Testament, in relation to another instance in the Gospels, and lastly in relation to one of the Stations of the Cross. In this way, we will simultaneously walk on pilgrimage through Scripture and the Way of the Cross, examining our own hearts along the way.

Soul Saturdays will be comprised of a playlist of songs for you to pray with this Lent, a song each week that also relates to the theme of the question. Feel free to carve out a few minutes of your day each Saturday, listen to the song and/or read the lyrics, and process everything that we reflected on the past week.

Whom are you seeking this Lent?

Let's all seek Jesus together. *Emily Naylor*



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## WEEK 1 - 1st Station

At the Cross her station keeping,  
stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
close to her Son to the last.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,  
all His bitter anguish bearing,  
now at length the sword has passed.

### **What Good is It to Gain the Whole World But Lose Your Soul?**

#### Mark 8:34-36

What good is it to gain the whole world but lose your soul?

Jesus speaks this question to his disciples right after He explains to them that the Messiah must suffer and die. The disciples can't understand, for the Messiah was supposed to free the Israelites in a worldly sense. But Jesus always looks deeper. He wanted to free them from sin, to bring their souls to new life in the Father. Worldly death was the only way to achieve this.

Jesus also asks this question to each one of us today on Ash Wednesday. This is a day when we remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. We begin our journey of Lent, taking up our cross and following Him to Calvary, and past that to the Resurrection. This is the irony, that we can only have a resurrection once we've passed through Calvary. We must lose our lives in the world in order to gain our souls. This is the beauty of Lent, that the Church recognizes we need to reset our priorities each year and remember.

So many people are running, chasing, seeking to gain the whole world in order to fill a deep void within themselves that only God can fill. And in the process, we are losing our souls, forgetting what it truly means to be human. Yet even now, we can return to Him. No matter how far we have strayed, how much we have tried to gain the world. Scripture is a constant story of humankind turning away from God and then returning to Him, from Adam and Eve to the Israelites to the Apostles.

Will we pick up our crosses this Ash Wednesday, this Lent, and follow Him? Will we lose our "lives" in the world, to find new life in Him?

Reflection: In what ways can I die to myself and to the world a little more this Lent? What have I been trying to fill the "God hole" in my heart with?

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**Adam & Eve**

Genesis 3:1-7

What good is it to gain the whole world but lose your souls?

The Fall of Adam and Eve is about pride, but more specifically about ingratitude and not trusting in God. It's about not trusting that God is who He says He is, or that He won't come through. The lie of the serpent that Eve believed is that God is holding out on you - and you have to take it into your own hands to be satisfied. This is the lie in our own hearts too that makes us go out and try to find our satisfaction and joy in the world, like we reflected on yesterday.

Adam and Eve tried to gain the knowledge of good and evil, the only thing in the Garden that wasn't available to them, but lost their souls and Eden in the process. Was it worth it?

God knows what He's doing. He knew it was best for us humans that we didn't try to discern between what was objectively good and evil, that we left that up to Him. We are surrounded by this in our culture now, everyone seems to be grabbing for the fruit and deciding what their own personal moral truth is. Is it worth it for us? Are we any happier?

God was not holding out on Adam and Eve. He is not holding out on us. He only wants our good, and wants us to be completely satisfied in Him. His teachings are only meant to safeguard us and bring us to this deeper intimate union with Him, whether on this side of Eden or the next. We can trust Him and stop running after the world, stop reaching for fruit that doesn't satisfy.

Reflection:Do I believe the lie that God is holding out on me? In what areas of my life?

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**1st Station of the Cross, Jesus is Condemned to Death**

Matthew 27:15-24

Pontius Pilate has a Garden moment, except this time it's the Pharisees cheering him on to go against what was right, and not the serpent. Pilate was too scared of a political riot, and chose preserving his rank in the world over saving Christ, even after his wife warned him not to. He symbolically washed his hands of the matter, but I've always wondered what he thought that first night after the Crucifixion.

Did he feel the earth tremble that day? Did he wonder at all about his decision? We don't know if he ever advanced in rank, if he went on to do great things. In trying to gain the world and save his life, he only went down in history as the man who condemned Christ to death. In this moment, Jesus loses the world but truly gains salvation for each and every one of us.

I also wonder what it was like when Pilate died and came before Christ, except this time the roles were switched - Christ was judge and Pilate was "on trial". I can only imagine the mercy that Christ looked at Pilate with, with the same eyes that looked upon him on earth, which was Pilate's for the taking if he chose it.

How many times do we condemn Christ to death in ourselves when we sin, when we choose preserving our lives in the world over Him? The good news, sisters, is that Christ always looks at us with this same mercy, ready to restore our lives in Him. It's ours for the taking if we chose it.

Reflection: Have you ever had a "*Pilate moment*" in your life? How can Christ become more alive in your heart this Lent? *Emily*

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**Garden by Matt Maher**

In the cool of the day  
You come and meet me  
All the blue fades away  
The stars are winking

Your love's so strong  
I can't recall  
What was this thing  
They called the fall?

And You walk with me  
You never leave  
You're making my heart a garden

Oh, why would I hide  
Away from Your face  
When the light of Your love  
Illuminates?

Your hand in mine  
A steady line  
Drawn on my heart  
And deep in my mind

And You walk with me  
You never leave  
You're making my heart a garden

All the broken are mending  
The mournful rejoicing  
Seeing through tears  
Of peace overflowing

And You walk with me  
You never leave  
You're making my heart a garden

Yeah, You walk with me  
You never leave

You're making our world a garden

Listen to it on You Tube <https://youtu.be/K-X6rPVTGdo>



## WEEK 2 – 4<sup>th</sup> Station

O how sad and sore distressed  
was that Mother, highly blest,  
of the sole-begotten One.

Christ above in torment hangs,  
she beneath beholds the pangs  
of her dying glorious Son.

### **O you of little faith, why do you doubt?**

#### Matthew 14:22-33

In today's reading, Christ asks Peter, "*Why did you doubt?*" and I have to reflect on that in the many times I've doubted Christ, myself.

During college, when my parents divorced, dating as a young person, trying to get my career up and running, getting through college, I honestly couldn't even count the number of times I've doubted Christ. Where does this doubt come from? Why do we doubt Christ, even after all of the words of love and wisdom He left for us in the scriptures? Does it come from a need to control our environment or situations? Is it a lack of faith or an excess in anxiety? I think it's a little bit of everything, depending on the person.

However, Christ doesn't want us to doubt Him. He wants us to come to Him and rely on him, regardless of our own personal feelings or situations. Peter gave Christ an "*if/then*" scenario...If you're really you, make me able to walk to you.

So Christ humored him, and even still, Peter doubted. He got scared when he saw the wind, and began to sink. How often do we get nervous about our own circumstances and begin to sink under stress or other circumstances beyond our control? Let us pray for peace and for the willingness and ability to let Christ guide us and let our faith grow in Him and His word.

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**Oceans by Hillsong United**

You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep  
My faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sovereign hand  
Will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed and You won't start now

So I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior (x3)

I will call upon Your name  
Keep my eyes above the waves  
My soul will rest in Your embrace

I am Yours and You are mine

[Listen to it on You Tube https://youtu.be/dy9nwe9\\_xzw](https://youtu.be/dy9nwe9_xzw)

### WEEK 3 - 5<sup>th</sup> Station (Simon)

Is there one who would not weep,  
whelmed in miseries so deep,  
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain  
from partaking in her pain,  
in that Mother's pain untold?

#### **Who do they say that I am? Who do you say that I am?**

#### Matthew 13:13-16

When Jesus asks his disciples who other people think He is, they say that people claim Jesus to be John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets back from the dead. Then Jesus asks his disciples "Who do you say that I am?"

It doesn't sound like a strange question. But it's not a question like "*What do you think of me as a person?*" It asks us to think about who Jesus is in and of himself. Is he just another spiritual teacher? Is he just a mere prophet? Is he a liar? Is he a lunatic? Remember that Jesus said that we should love Him more than we love our own families. These aren't the words of a mere spiritual teacher. He wasn't a lunatic, either, because he shows signs of clear, cohesive thinking and His words were taken seriously by *thousands* of people. It was written that He spoke with authority.

What remains is what Peter says: "*You are the Messiah, Son of the Living God.*" Messiah. "*The anointed.*" As the Messiah, Jesus was expected to be, in Bishop Robert Barron's words "Yahweh moving among His people," who would "gather the scattered tribes of Israel...cleanse the temple of Jerusalem...deal with the enemies of the nations and...reign as lord of heaven and earth."

The people in Jesus's time expected Him to be someone who would overthrow the Romans and reign as a new David. What nobody realized is that the "*enemy of the nations*" that Jesus had to overthrow was sin itself, the one thing in this world that separated humans from God. He conquered sin through His death and resurrection, giving us new life, a new state of being.

Reflection: What kind of person do you think Jesus was expected to be back in His time?

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**Who people said Jesus was vs who He said he was.**

John 8:2-11

Place yourself in this scenario. It's early morning. You're sitting with Jesus in the temple area, listening to him teach. It feels like having a college class outside. All of a sudden, the scribes and Pharisees come in with a woman. She's half-dressed, with her clothes and hair disheveled from being dragged through the streets.

The Pharisees call this woman an adulteress and tell Jesus that the law commands them to stone her and ask Jesus what to do with her. It seems like it can only go one of two ways. Either Jesus sides with the Pharisees or he defies their authority and gets accused of blasphemy and heresy.

So what does Jesus do? He stoops down to write something in the dirt. What I wouldn't give to go back in time and take a picture of what He wrote. But notice that He doesn't give any answer to the Pharisees, who kept pestering him. So Jesus stands up and tells them *"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

The Pharisees were rendered completely silent at what Jesus told them. They began to leave, one by one, with the oldest men being the first to leave until the only people left in the temple courtyard are the adulteress, Jesus, and the crowd. Then Jesus asks the adulteress where everyone went and if anyone has condemned her. When she realizes that the Pharisees are gone, she tells them that no one has condemned her. Jesus then tells her *"Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."*

The Pharisees expected Jesus to fall in line with the letter of the Mosaic law. Jesus showed that His mercy and allowing the woman a chance to start a new life, free from sin was what was really needed. She didn't get off scott-free. She didn't deserve this second chance. Then again, none of us *deserve* God's grace. As Wonder Woman said, *"It's not about deserve, it's about what you believe. And I believe in love."*

God's love is what saves us, sisters in Christ. Believe in that.

Challenge: Go to Confession sometime this week. Lay your heart out, no matter how long it's been

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**Simon came to know Christ through sharing the Cross**

Matthew 27:32

I don't know much about Simon of Cyrene. I remember him as being part of the Stations of the Cross. I just don't know much else about him as a person. I know that Cyrene was a place in Africa, which means there's a very good chance that he was black. However, Mark 15: 21 mentions something: Simon of Cyrene was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Rufus gets mentioned as a friend of Paul in Romans 16: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."

What does it all mean?

For one thing, our Church has been diverse from the very start. If someone from Africa was there at the way of the Cross, it means that all are welcome to join Simon on the road with Jesus. One other interesting thing to point out is that Simon was basically ordered or forced to help Jesus. It's not certain if Simon knew Jesus up to this point. He must have heard about the Resurrection, though, and became a disciple. What's even more awesome is that he brought his family into the Christian faith as well. If at least one of his sons was a contemporary of Paul and Mark, Rufus must have been a young man.

Imagine a convert to the Church being able to convert their whole family. My convert friends would probably consider that to be a miracle in and of itself. If you're a convert to the faith, do you think you would be able to bring your non-Catholic or non-Christian relatives over?.

For my fellow cradle Catholics, Simon of Cyrene might represent people we don't normally talk to, people outside of the church or from different faiths. My challenge for you is to share Jesus with them. *Monique*

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**Here's My Heart by Lauren Daigle I Am They version**

Here's my heart, Lord [x3]  
Speak what is true [x2]  
I am found, I am Yours  
I am loved, I'm made pure  
I have life, I can breathe  
I am healed, I am free

Here's my heart, Lord [x3]  
Speak what is true  
Cause I am found, I am Yours  
I am loved, I'm made pure  
I have life, I can breathe  
I am healed, I am free

You are strong, You are sure  
You are life, You endure  
You are good, always true  
You are light breaking through  
Oh, here's my heart, Lord  
Here's my heart, Lord [x2]  
Speak what is true  
Here's my life, Lord [x3]  
Speak what is true [x3]

I am found, I am Yours  
I am loved, I'm made pure  
I have life, I can breathe  
I am healed, I am free

Cause You are strong, You are sure  
You are life, You endure  
You are good, always true  
You are light breaking through  
You are more than enough  
You are here, You are love  
You are hope, You are grace  
You're all I have, You're everything  
Here's my heart, Lord [x3]  
Speak what is true  
Here's my life, Lord [x3]

Speak what is true

Listen to it on You Tube: [https://youtu.be/8\\_FbJ6yeEUo](https://youtu.be/8_FbJ6yeEUo)

## WEEK 4 - 6<sup>th</sup> Station (Veronica)

For the sins of His own nation,  
She saw Jesus wracked with torment,  
All with scourges rent:

She beheld her tender Child,  
Saw Him hang in desolation,  
Till His spirit forth He sent.

### **Whom do you seek?**

#### John 18:1-8

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples across the Kidron valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, procuring a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you seek? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am he. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When he said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he; so, if you seek me, let these men go.

This question, posed by Jesus, places us in that critical moment of betrayal in the passion narratives. Four basic words that form that piercing question, whom do you seek? What strikes me as I read this passage from John's gospel is how in control Jesus was throughout this betrayal and subsequent arrest. Jesus already knows he will be betrayed and arrested and he knows what will happen over the next long, excruciating hours that will lead to his death on the cross. He knows because it is his father's will and he is there to fulfill His will, God's plan for our salvation. Jesus knows that it will take God made man to purchase our salvation.

I sense this unity between the father and the son when Jesus asks the arresting party "Whom do you seek?" to which they respond "*Jesus of Nazareth.*" It's Christ's response that takes my breath away, he responds "I AM" Jesus didn't say "*oh, that's me, I am Jesus of Nazareth*" he said something much more profound, he said "*I AM*" in the same way that God told Moses that he was the I AM from Exodus 3:14. Those present at Christ's arrest must have made the startling connection as we learn that "*they drew back and fell to the ground.*"

No doubt as Jews they know who I AM is! Jesus is in control throughout this entire scene, he does not attempt to flee from the arresting guards, he steps boldly toward them not only to confirm that he is Jesus of Nazareth but that he is God himself. Christ fulfilled countless prophecies and through his public ministry gained many followers. Even in the final hours of his life, Jesus continued to try to draw people to his father, showing us that God is never hiding from us, He is waiting to be seen by us, he is waiting on our response to his question "*Whom do you seek?*"

God is present with us, always waiting for us. We cannot do what God has called us to do without him, how do you seek God for guidance?

## John 18:4

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in a retreat for our confirmation candidates. There were around 20 children all in the 9th grade gathered to learn more about the sacrament they will receive very soon. Typical of these types of retreats, the day began with each of them being somewhat quiet and shy. As the day progressed and we engaged in more and more games, activities and prayerful conversations, there was a shift as I could see the bonds between them growing and their hearts opening wide to the lessons they were receiving. By the end of the evening, there had been singing, laughter and tears. Not tears of sadness but the kind of emotion that being filled with the Holy Spirit causes. At one point in our final activity one of the youth made the comment "wow, God showed up today!" and my immediate thought was "YES HE DID!" Then it occurred to me, wait, God is always there, it was us that really showed up and sought Him in a big way.

I think this is a common mistake we make, sitting around waiting on God to show up. We believe that if God wants something from us, he will set a bush on fire or part the sea. We look for the big moments we learned about in the Old Testament. But that is not how God works. God no longer talks to us in these ways. God sent his son to save us, Jesus has purchased our salvation, it is ours for the taking, but we must seek it and Him. We hear God now in our thoughts, in the actions and words of others, and through our gut and intuition. I admit though that trying to hear Him can feel hard and sometimes confusing. In our sin-saturated reality, we can get distracted by the superficial and what can feel more pressing is to seek the "likes" and comments of others on our social media posts.

We seek the approval of those who have a very narrow view of our seemingly perfect lives through the filtered content we share online. In truth, we really should be seeking Him who sees us in all of our unfiltered messiness and loves us anyway. It's also easy to get caught up in seeking material possessions, promotions, praise and recognition, the list could go on! Don't get me wrong, I honestly admit all of these things can make me feel pretty special and excited, but here's the rub, it is short lived.

It's not long until I glance at what others have and I am on the search again for what is going to lift my spirits and esteem again! This shallow cycle is endless because we were meant to find our self worth and satisfaction in such things. God isn't interested in our worldly accomplishments, he is interested in the work we do to seek him and to live his commandments. We were never meant to seek the likes, comments, and praise of others, we were meant to abide in him and in doing so, grow and bear much fruit John 15:5.

God is there always in a big way, we need only to seek him out. Ponder: I love the word abide. It evokes feelings of acceptance, rest and unity for me. Take some time today to reflect on what it means to abide in Christ. What can you do with more intention, to seek him and abide in him?

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## **King Solomon**

### 1 Kings 11:1-13

As I read through this Old Testament passage about King Solomon, it's hard to see where there may have been any redeeming qualities to this man. Each sentence is more damning than the next. The phrase that grabs my attention, however, is this one "For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. This is the sentence that makes me ache not just for Solomon, but for myself and for everyone who has gotten so caught up in living for the moment that we end up making a complete mess of our lives.

I don't think any of us set out to intentionally mess up our lives; I think it is something that begins slowly. Like that frog we all learned about in science class sitting in the pot of water, completely unaware that the temperature of the water is getting hotter and hotter until it reaches boiling point, and then it's too late!

I believe this is what has happened to King Solomon. He has forgotten to guard his heart carefully and consequently, his life and legacy have left him in a hot mess. Solomon was not always this careless; in fact, in the past he was a king who sought the Lord frequently, who built a temple that he prayerfully dedicated to the Lord. He was a man with such wisdom that people from all over the world sought him out. But somewhere along the way, Solomon no longer sought God in all that he did. And in all of his humanness, when he stopped seeking God, he began to give in to the sinful desires of his heart.

Keep in mind that this is the same king that prayed during the temple dedication

*"LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; may he not leave us or forsake us; that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our fathers."* 1 Kings 8:57-58

yet in choosing to no longer seek God, he clung to his forbidden wives and ended up with his own heart being turned away from the Lord. It's worth noting that in this same passage, Solomon's father David is mentioned. David was also a man whose heart had been led astray. His sinful desire for women leading David to commit sin upon sin. Yet, unlike Solomon, David was called a man after God own heart. Acts 13:22 So why is this? The answer boils down to this, David's response to sin was the opposite of Solomon, David did not stop seeking God, he sought to repair his relationship with God through repentance. Psalm 51 David owned his sin! Solomon, however, continued in his sin and ceased seeking God. His refusal to repent and seek the Lord resulted in Gods declaration that He would tear the kingdom away from Solomon during the rule of his son. Solomon's legacy would not be all that God had initially designed and desired.

Today's passage is a reminder that our God is a loving and forgiving God. He wants to forgive our sins, he wants a relationship with each of us, He is after our hearts. God wants us to seek him.

Ponder: What may be holding you back from seeking God? What are you holding on to that holds your affection more than Him? Give it to him, seek His forgiveness; He is waiting for you.

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**The Woman at the Well**

John 4:7-14

Imagine drinking water and never becoming thirsty again. In these verses, we get a glimpse into a conversation Jesus had with a woman from the village of Sychar in Samaria. Jesus was offering her water, but not from the well she was drawing from. Instead, Jesus offered her a gift of living water. Jesus knew this woman had made some poor life choices and was living with a man that was not her husband. Words like forgotten, ignored, and rejected were words and feelings all too familiar to her. Unlike the people in her town, Jesus was not afraid to engage her in conversation. Her sins did not deter him, in fact, Jesus was often seen with people living in sin-soaked realities.

In Mark 2:17 Jesus says *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* Because of her past sins and reputation, the woman at the well had a habit of seeking out others to meet her needs. There had been numerous husbands. As she spoke with Christ about the living waters, her sincere interest can be felt, perhaps she thinks this living water may help to make life easier. She had no idea this encounter with Jesus was about to change her life forever.

There may be times when we find ourselves thirsting for something more. Perhaps it is wealth, material possessions, or praise and recognition. Often, we place our hopes and dreams in these things, thinking they may satisfy our thirst for more. But while the shallow water this world offers may leave us momentarily satisfied, eventually we will thirst for more.

Like the woman at the well, Jesus invites us to seek him, to have our deepest desires satisfied in a way that only he can. Like the woman at the well, Christ knows our sins, yet he longs to have a relationship with us because he knows that it is through Him that our sins are washed clean, and we are forgiven.

Ponder: The Samaritan woman found Jesus, the source of living water, and she eagerly sought him, wanting to know more. Her excitement from this encounter with Christ, her seeking the living water, sent her into town to share with the very people who had shunned her. Gods redemptive grace turned her mess into her message. How can we follow this example today and share with others about our experiences with the redeeming love of Christ

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**Veronica**

**Psalms 27:8-9**

Veronica embodies the universal yearning of all believers to see the face of God. On Jesus way of the cross, Veronica performed an act of womanly kindness: she held out her head cloth to Jesus. Undeterred by the brutality of the soldiers or the chaos of the crowd. Veronica shows the courage born of goodness. Blessed are the pure in heart, the Lord had said in his Sermon on the Mount, for they shall see God Matthew 5:8. In Christ's time, death sentences were executed in very public, horrific way. But this particular execution drew an especially chaotic crowd as many gathered to see Jesus in the final hours.

It was her curiosity about Jesus that brought her there, to begin with, it was God's grace and her desire to seek him that propelled her into action. She saw his bloodied and pain-filled face and acted with love. Jesus met her gaze, and his image was forever impressed upon her, heart and soul. She saw the face of God and his goodness.

It is only with the heart can we see Jesus. His love purifies us and gives us the ability to see and recognize the God who is love itself. Veronica embodied great sensitivity and intuition which led her to seek Jesus, to be willing to bear witness in his final moments and to do what she could to alleviate at least some of his suffering. This is the gift of sensitivity that Saint John Paul II was talking about when he said: "Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person because they see the persons with their heart." This is what happens when we respond to the question Whom do you seek?with a passionate You Lord! This is the genius of God working through the gifts given to women.

Have you ever followed through with an idea, an act of kindness or charity, responded to someone needing help, you were following your gut, your instincts, your intuition and you discovered after the fact that you were exactly where you needed to be when you needed to be there? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, this is what happens when we seek Him! *Amelia*

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**"Come to the Water" by Matt Maher**

O let all who thirst  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who have nothing  
Let them come to the Lord  
Without money, without price  
Why should you pay the price  
Except for the Lord?

And let all who seek  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who have nothing  
Let them come to the Lord  
Without money, without strife  
Why should you spend your life  
Except for the Lord?

And let all who toil  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who are weary  
Let them come to the Lord  
All who labor without rest  
How can your soul find rest  
Except for the Lord?

And let all the poor  
Let them come to the water  
And let the ones who are laden  
Let them come to the Lord  
Bring the children without might  
Easy the load and light  
Come to the Lord

Come to the Lord  
Come to the Lord  
Come to the Lord

I will run to you, I will run to you  
I will run to you my Lord

I will run to you, I will run to you

I will run to you my Lord

[Listen on You Tube: https://youtu.be/I5047C0Lulc](https://youtu.be/I5047C0Lulc)

## WEEK 5 – 7<sup>th</sup> Station

O thou Mother! fount of love!  
Touch my spirit from above,  
make my heart with thine accord:

Make me feel as thou hast felt;  
make my soul to glow and melt  
with the love of Christ my Lord.

### **Do You Want to Be Healed?**

#### John 5:1-9

Most healing stories in the Gospel involve the sick person calling or reaching out to Jesus, asking for healing. But Jesus reaches out and asks the question instead to the ill man who had been lying at the Pool of Bethesda for thirty eight years. Don't you think it's a little strange? Of course he wants to be healed! He's been lying there for thirty eight years! But if we look deeper, of course there is a reason.

Tradition tells us that this pool was associated with healing, that many invalids would come there to seek healing in its waters. Legend even says that occasionally an angel would "*stir the waters*", and the first person to enter the water would receive healing. The root of the word Bethesda in Hebrew means house of mercy or grace. It was a place where those invalids who were considered disgraced in society would come and find healing, mercy, and grace.

The man obviously believed that healing was available in this place, otherwise he wouldn't have sat there for so long. What he did lose belief in, however, was that this healing would ever be available for *him*. He had completely lost hope in being healed. He told Jesus that he had no one to put him in the pool, and others outran him every time when the waters were stirred. I can just imagine the depression and despair in his voice.

Jesus healed much more than his body in this encounter. He healed his heart and restored hope to his soul. Jesus asked this question to him because the man needed to believe in healing again. He needed to admit that yes, he did want healing, after giving up for so long and becoming





## **Testimony**

Do you want to be healed?

My journey of healing has been long and frustrating at times. I have sometimes felt like the man at Bethesda, giving up hope of ever being healed of my anxiety disorder while watching others be healed instead. Other times I have felt like the woman with the hemorrhage (who we will reflect on in a few days), reaching out to touch Jesus' hem full of a quiet hope while doubled over in pain from endometriosis. I have even felt like the paralytic on the mat, being lifted down to Jesus by the hands and prayers of others as I struggled to figure out my food allergies, or dealt with deep suffering in my family. Healing for me has been a journey, with many stages and seasons.

I learned early on through my healing journey that the body, mind, and soul are intricately intertwined. Emotional or spiritual suffering can manifest in the body, just like bodily suffering can affect our hearts and souls. We must always get to the root of healing, much like Jesus did.

One of the most frustrating parts of my journey has been with my anxiety disorder. My panic attacks started when I was in high school, and for a variety of reasons one of the places that they manifest the most is at Mass. Sitting in the crowded pews and going up to communion can sometimes be terrifying for me, even though I know I am about to receive Peace Himself and yearn to receive Him so deeply. It breaks my heart that I have equal parts fear and Jesus running through my veins after I've received communion. I am sitting in the literal house of grace, the healing pool of His mercy, and yet I'm like the man at Bethesda who just sits and waits and can't find healing. I have reached out for the hem of His garment so many times, asking for healing, and yet it still doesn't come. There are times when the suffering is so great that my heart yells out to God, *I want to be healed, why won't you just heal me?*

But through it all, even when I haven't felt Him, He has been by my side. What I needed to learn was that the healing is in His hands, and not mine. On His time, in His way, by His hand. For so long I have tried to endlessly search for cures, wanting to take control of the healing process, thinking if I worked hard enough He would finally heal me. That I just had to trust enough, and if I wasn't healed yet it meant I wasn't trusting

or didn't have enough faith, that it was somehow my fault. I believed this lie in my heart for a long time, this common stigma about mental illness among Christians. I do need to learn how to trust, but in a different way.

I am slowly learning what it means to truly surrender control and leave everything in His hands, to trust that I don't need to be perfect. I am also learning to trust that He only wills my good, and if He hasn't healed me yet it's for a reason. If I didn't suffer from anxiety, I wouldn't be healed of my perfectionism and learn what it *truly* means to love and trust God.

It humbles me and helps heal my soul. He *is* healing me, on the level that I most need to be healed, even though I don't always see it or understand it. He is making me "well."

Reflection: Do you know that your body is a walking miracle? Take some time to ponder this and thank God for the gift of your body, and ask Him on what level (body, mind, or soul) you might need healing the most.

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## **Valley of Dry Bones**

### Ezekiel 37:1-14

This prophecy from Ezekiel comes as the Israelites are in exile in Babylon. They have been taken away from the Promised Land given to them through Moses, and their kingdom destroyed, punishment after King Solomon's sin of sacrificing to other gods. They find themselves slaves once again, this time in Babylon instead of Egypt. Yet Scripture in this period of exile is full of prophecies of the Restoration of Israel, of its healing, after a time of penance and reparation for their sins.

As the Lord says at the end of this prophecy, the bones represent Israel. In the vision, Ezekiel looked out at the bones, completely dried up and withered. Israel was totally destroyed, and had given up hope of returning home. The temple was in shambles and the people were spiritually dead.

Yet the Lord sees them. He tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, and they come alive. Notice, however, that they weren't completely alive until the breath had come into them. This can mean literal breath, but also the breath of the Spirit, much like in the creation of Adam. They were like hollowed-out trees until this breath entered them.

Israel had to repent before it could be restored. By giving all of these prophecies of hope, the Lord was asking the Israelites if they wanted to be healed, if they wanted their land to be healed. They were given the formula, and it was then up to them to follow through with it. Eventually, they did return home and the Lord restored them and began to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah.

Do you feel like dried up bones? There is hope for you, sister. Ask for the Spirit to breathe new life into you. This is no ordinary breath. It's a breath that brings life to both body and soul, to the driest of bones. It's a breath that brings healing.

Lent

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Reflection: Do you feel like you're in a spiritual or physical exile of some kind? Or simply just worn out and feel dry and empty? Take some time with the Lord today and ask for your own restoration.

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## **The Woman with a Hemorrhage**

### Luke 8:43-48

Unlike the man at Bethesda, the woman with the hemorrhage reached out to Christ full of hope. Not only did she believe Christ could heal her, but she had "spent all her money on physicians" trying to find a cure for her illness. She was desperate, and believed even the hem of His garment would be enough.

Christ did not have to ask her if she wanted to be healed, but what He did ask her was to proclaim it in front of everyone. Think about it - Jesus was God. He knew exactly who touched Him and what sort of healing she received. Jesus didn't have to ask "*Who touched me?*" for himself - He had to ask it for *her*.

This woman with the hemorrhage was considered unclean, a complete outcast. She would have been forbidden to enter the temple with a flow of blood according to Jewish law. For her to be following Jesus in the first place was probably risky. He could have quietly healed her and let her go on her way.

But Jesus always wants to go deeper. To heal her place in society, to heal the wounds in her heart, He needed to heal her publicly. She needed to own her healing in front of the crowd. By asking "*Who touched me?*", Jesus is truly asking her, "*Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be healed of shame, of feeling like an outcast, of fear?*" Scripture says that the woman "saw that she could not remain hidden" and came before Christ.

It is only then that Christ tells her that her faith has made her "well", and to go in peace. True, whole peace.

Reflection: Are there wounds in your heart that you would prefer to remain hidden? In what aspects of your life do you need to reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment for healing?

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**7th Station of the Cross, Jesus Falls for the Second Time**

Can you imagine Christ, falling to the ground?

I shiver when I think about it. Imagine the weight of the cross hitting his already bruised and torn body, his face hitting the cold ground, the thorns digging deeper. The soldiers jeering at him, the crowd staring at him.

I would have just laid there and given up the first time, let alone three times. Imagine how much strength and courage it took to get back up. But Christ gets up after each fall. He keeps walking, all the way to Calvary. He gets up for you, for me. He gets up.

As Pope Francis so beautifully puts it, "*Jesus falls under the weight of the cross, but he is not crushed by it.*"

How do we get back up after we have fallen in sin, or after we have been through a time of suffering? Life can knock you down, but all that matters is how you get back up. Sometimes the crosses we carry can seem so burdensome and heavy that we can't imagine continuing on. But the good news is that we don't have to get up on our own. Christ is always there, offering His hand to help us up and asking, *Do you want to be healed?* We don't have to be crushed by our crosses either. We just have to reach out and grab His hand, over and over and over again.

After his Passion, Christ ultimately rose from the dead, rose from the biggest "fall" of death and healed humanity's biggest wound. That bright Easter morning, He rose as "*the sun of righteousness...with healing in its wings.*" Malachi 4:2

Reflection: How have you gotten back up after a fall in your own life? Did you ask Christ for strength?*Emily*

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**"Beautiful Things" by Gungor**

All this pain  
I wonder if I'll ever find my way  
I wonder if my life could really change, at all  
All this earth  
Could all that is lost ever be found?  
Could a garden come out from this ground, at all?

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

All around,  
Hope is springing up from this old ground  
Out of chaos life is being found, in you

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us [x2]

You make me new,  
You are making me new [x2]

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us [x2]

You make me new,  
You are making me new [x2]

Listen to it on You Tube-<https://youtu.be/1spkhp41ig4>

## WEEK 6 – 8<sup>th</sup> Station of the Cross

Holy Mother! pierce me through,  
in my heart each wound renew  
of my Savior crucified:

Let me share with thee His pain,  
who for all my sins was slain,  
who for me in torments died.

**And which of you by worrying can add a single hour onto your life?**

Matthew 6:27

Reflection

In the United States, there are more drugs prescribed annually for anxiety and depression than for any other disease or illness. I am well aware that there are many people who receive such treatment who truly have physiological imbalances and/or deficiencies that need these drugs each day. But today there are so many prescriptions, to me it seems highly unlikely that the only way all those people can be set free from depression and anxiety is through drugs.

I have a thought. What if each person who desires freedom from depression and anxiety would make daily time to sit in quiet before the throne of their Creator? And there in his throne room, surrounded by multitudes of heavenly host singing and all the faithful who have gone before us praising, they place at his feet their worries and concerns and needs that are often overwhelming. This could take a long time, but that's okay. It's worth it. Because after they release everything to him, the next step is to ask him to refill their hearts with his thoughts and desires and hopes. Perhaps they would then say, *"I will look to your face and your heart in the morning. And I will remember you throughout the day. I will seek first who you are. And I trust you to take care of my every concern. Jesus, I trust in you."*

Even if drugs were still needed by some, would life be better all around?





## Matthew 6: 27

A Time When this Passage was Real to Me, Before we entered the Catholic Church in 2000, my husband was a pastor – first of a small evangelical Bible church, later as a priest in the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

Those years with the Bible church proved to be a great test for us in many ways. We were certain God had placed us there and though life could have been very difficult for our family of five, it instead became a testimony of faith.

When we arrived, church attendance was seven adults and one child. Rent and utilities were provided for us in a parsonage about three miles up the road, and Ed received a salary of \$50 per week. That \$50 was given to cover groceries, gas and insurance for our one vehicle, clothing, medical expenses. Well, it was to cover every imaginable living expense. Entertainment for our family was unheard of. Naturally, we couldn't afford health insurance but miraculously we were all quite healthy during those years. In fact, when I brought one of our children to the family physician for strep, about four years since the last visit by any of us, he asked which doctor we had been seeing, assuming we had changed loyalties. He was shocked that we hadn't needed a doctor during those years. Though our clothes were hand me downs and purchased at thrift stores, none of us wore rags. And I remember vividly the first time we sat down to dinner and I whispered to Ed, "*This is the last food in the house.*" Without fear or worry, we said our meal time prayer of thanksgiving and began eating. There was a knock at the door. There stood a friend with several bags of groceries.

We did not worry. We never announced our needs to anyone. Instead, we prayed together daily, seeking his will in our lives and laying our needs before him. Then we went about the work he had called us to do. By the end of the second year, Ed began part time work as a traveling salesman, which included a company car. That increased our income to about \$24,000 a year.

By the time we left that little church in the woods, attendance was regularly over 60 adults and children; people were drawn to the heart of Jesus through our trust and obedience We truly lived Jesus' admonition to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first and all things we need would be added to us. And so, it was. When



## **Esther**

Matthew 6:27 Esther 3:13-14; 4:6-17

*How can we relate Matthew 6:27 to salvation history in the Old Testament, as in the story of Queen Esther?*

Men and women don't always like to follow God's advice, thinking they might know better what's best for them, as we saw in the Fall. Because God loves his people, from that moment, he has continually shown the way to be re-united to him. The gift of free will has gotten man in deep trouble over and over again.

The Old Testament is replete with examples of God's desire to save us from ourselves. As time progressed from Adam and Eve we see more clearly that his plan of final redemption has been at work. His people only need to set themselves aside and seek first his righteousness and his will.

Jesus is Righteousness. We witnessed him put the final clamp on the power of evil and death in the world, when at the cross he spoke, "*It is finished.*" Immediately he descended into hell and on the third day he rose victorious to prove that statement. When we accept this work done for us, we share his victory.

Queen Esther shows how great this plan of redemption can look. For three days, she and the Jews of the land denied themselves through fasting. In deep prayer they surrendered their will to God, whom they sought first and above all. And they were delivered from the hand of the enemy.

Do you ever feel like the enemy has control over parts of your life? Consider this idea: For three days, surrender to God through fasting or, at the least, by denying yourself simple pleasures. Pray three times a day during that time, releasing to your Father all the worries and concerns and things you know are out of order. At the end of three days, everything in life won't be '*fixed.*' But I can imagine your soul will be assured of who has the final victory. And your peace will pass all understanding. And that will be enough.

Lent

When have you experienced a desperate need like Queen Esther and her people? What did you do? How did God intervene for you?

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## **"Come to me all who Labor"**

### Matthew 6:27

Can I relate this question of Jesus to another passage in the New Testament?

The passage where this question is excerpted from, Matthew 6:25-33, reminds me of Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 11:28-29: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* Let's paint a picture.

In a wide-open valley, lush with waving green grass and speckled with wildflowers in every created color, guarded on every side by tall mountains, Jesus sits on a huge rock. You see him from the mountain slope. You've been toiling with the things of life – a job you don't like or one that you need, family issues, illness of friends or yourself, bills – the list of the stuff that weighs you down often seems endless. You are drawn to Jesus because you can almost see peace surrounding him, filling the air around him. One by one you drop your burdens as you slowly navigate the rocky slope toward him. When you reach the valley floor, your bag of burdens is empty and you are free to run to Jesus. His outstretched arms gather you into a warm hug and then you melt to the valley floor, and sit by his feet, your head laid on his lap.

As he strokes your brow, his soft words penetrate not just your mind but your heart, as well. *"Child, thank you for laying down your burdens and accepting my offer of rest. You exhaust yourself with toil and worry when it is truly not necessary. Your Father in heaven knows exactly what you need. Let me teach you."*

You let out a breath that is so huge it's like the released air from an over-filled balloon. There is a knowing deep inside that he is right. If you continually seek him and his righteousness first, all of your needs will be met. He continues, *"Rest in me. Let my Presence be the yoke that guides you through life whose path often seems too rocky and winding to find your way. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. I love you."*

Tears escape your closed eyes. Your breath is even. Worry and fear and confusion no longer have a place in your mind or heart. You trust and you are at peace. When was the last time you emptied your burdens to the heart of Jesus? How did you feel afterward? Is it time to do that again?

**At the 8th Station of the Cross – the Women of Jerusalem**

Matthew 6: 27

The day of the crucifixion of the Son of God by those created in his image is the darkest day in the history of creation. Even before we reach the end of the story – his glorious resurrection and ascension – His Passion teaches us. We learn lessons on the Way of the Cross that carry us through our own darkest days.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Station, Jesus meets the Daughters of Jerusalem. They wail and lament for him. Yet he knows where this path leads and so he tells them to weep not for him but for themselves and generations to come. Why? Because he knows there will be many who will not follow him to the cross, to his glory and victory. And he knows that for them, life will be one of great sadness and desolation, pain and suffering. It will be a life with no glory at the end of the journey.

Our salvation is a continual work in progress. Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is ever-changing and adds more new challenges each day because of the rapid technological race. Life today requires constant attention to our spiritual well-being or worry can take over. Thankfully, there is a way to tend to our spiritual life. God teaches us how to move toward his glory without fear or lament through his written Word and those who teach it, through the Magisterium, and through the Mass and all the Sacraments.

What is your daily plan to keep your life in order with his steps so that you are always walking toward glory, not desolation?*Cheryl*

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***"Rest" by Matt Maher***

Oh my Lord, You are my shepherd and I shall not want  
Oh my Lord, beside still waters You repair my heart  
I trust in You, oh I trust in You

Even though I walk through the valley of death  
You restore my soul and You give me rest  
All the memories of Your faithfulness  
You restore my soul and You give me rest  
You restore my soul and You give me rest  
You give me rest

Oh my Lord, You prepare a table for You and me  
Oh my Lord, in the middle of a fight with my enemies  
I trust in You, Oh I trust in You

I will fear no evil for You're here with me  
Your goodness and Your love, they will never leave  
Just a closer walk with Thee, just a closer walk

Listen to it on You Tube: <https://youtu.be/BdFo08LuUfw>



## WEEK 7 – 12<sup>th</sup> Station of the Cross

Let me mingle tears with thee,  
mourning Him who mourned for me,  
all the days that I may live:

By the Cross with thee to stay,  
there with thee to weep and pray,  
is all I ask of thee to give.

**"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"**

### Matthew 27:45-51

When Jesus cried out these words, the crowd thought Jesus was calling on Elijah to save him. What they don't realize is that Jesus was actually quoting Psalm 22. The Psalm starts out lamenting God, feeling abandoned, but it calls upon the Lord for aid and ends with the hope of victory and triumph over one's enemies.

There are times in our lives when we feel like God has abandoned us, that there is no sense of hope. We don't have to live in a war zone or live in a prison. Some homes and families are already war zones or prisons. We can even be prisoners of our own anxieties and fight just to feel *something* as we battle depression. No matter what your circumstances, the truth still rings clear: It's always darkest before the dawn.

God has never abandoned us, no matter what we may feel at the moment. Even when we are at our worst, He is holding us and giving us His strength. Don't be afraid to ask for His strength because it is infinite. He will give you the strength to overcome the worst of your circumstances. This transformation won't be something that happens overnight, but having this hope is the first step out of the dark.

There was a time in my life when my anxiety threatened to consume me. Even now, I still struggle to not worry about things outside of my control. I'm also aware that the successes in life don't come handed to you on a silver platter. All happy endings need to be earned, after all. In spite of all the struggles in my past, present, and future, though, what keeps me going is the knowledge that I am not alone. God is with me, ready to carry the things I can't handle, and helping me accomplish things. The Lord is my strength and He is always with me.

Question: Do you feel that God has abandoned you? Where do you feel the need for God to give you strength? *Monique*

Matthew 27:46

Today’s reflection is a really hard one. For Christ, himself, to feel as though the Lord had forsaken him even though Christ already knew what was coming shows us the desperation and devastation in Christ’s heart. He had faith in our Heavenly Father’s plan, but still felt left behind and abandoned.

How easy is it for us, likewise, to feel abandoned, lost, or left behind in today’s society? We have so many pressures to keep up, so many pressures to buy the latest phone or the latest car, it’s easy to get lost in the materialism and feel lonely with our faith and heart in material things rather than the Lord and our relationships with family and friends. My parents separated then divorced just after my senior year of high school, and I felt like I had always done the right thing, been the good kid, made the good choices, and suddenly everything I knew was falling apart. I went through a pretty hard time, and made some very unhealthy choices for a few years. I felt abandoned and decided to be selfish and self-destructive. How easy is it to fall into these selfish choices and hurt those around us when we feel abandoned by God or even family members!

Our Father didn’t abandon Christ, however, and neither does he abandon us. We must have faith and keep our hearts facing the Lord, even when it’s hard.  
What struggles lead you to doubt the Lord’s plan and love for you?  
What helps you refocus on the Lord when you feel abandoned or left behind? Focus on those things, and remind yourself that He will never abandon us.*Mandi*

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Lent

## **Isaiah the Suffering Servant**

Isaiah 53:1-12

*Jesus spoke, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" How can I relate this anguished cry to salvation history in the Old Testament?*

I stand among hundreds of gawkers at the cross.

My people have been oppressed for countless generations. We have longed to be redeemed. I am a good Jew. I go to synagogue, I pay my tithes, I know Scripture well.

These past three years, I have watched and listened to the man on the cross, Jesus. Didn't a quickening in my heart alert me each time I was in his presence? There are many who believe every word he has spoken and who seem to know for certain who he is. But for some reason, I've always been swayed by the Pharisees and Sadducees who were bent on squashing any hope that he might be Messiah. They tried to convince us that he was actually one struck down by God.

Now at the cross, every word from the prophet Isaiah floods my mind: spurned and rejected, humiliated, disdained, tortured. All this to a man who had never shown a bit of violence in actions and whose words were always about love and forgiveness. He never defended himself when accused of every kind of misdeed or, even, blasphemy.

And, then, he speaks the words, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Those words pierce my heart with the reality that the Redeemer we have longed for was not an earthly king but God himself. The knowledge is at the same time a weight and a freedom to my spirit – like the dawn Light that at once reminds me of the dark night past and the hope of a new day. For here is the Son of the one true God, dying for me. He is the final sacrifice. His punishment should be my punishment. The guilt he is hung for is my guilt.

But God, my God, truly loves me – loves us – so much that he gave his Only Son for me to have life. Once and for all, I can be re-united with him from whom I strayed so many times.



## **Garden of Gethsemane**

### Matthew 26:36-46

I don't know about you, but when I'm tired I can't function. Sleep comes over me powerfully and swiftly, and I have no choice but to give in to my body and my heavy eyelids. Growing up, I was known as the one who always fell asleep first at sleepovers. I've been able to fall asleep on airport benches, in the back of a bouncing truck on the backroads of Haiti, and even in a chapel in the Holy Land during an overnight prayer vigil..

So I get the disciples. They had just had an emotional and confusing supper and now they are faced with the prospect that Jesus will be betrayed. They are exhausted emotionally, and I'm sure physically after three years of traveling with Jesus. I'm sure they fought sleep as hard as they could, but it overcame them without fail as they leaned against those old olive trees in the middle of the night. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Why have you forsaken me?

In this moment, Jesus feels forsaken by His disciples. He had just come from the pinnacle of communion with them, instituting the sacrament of broken and shared bread and washing their feet in an act of selfless service. Yet they couldn't repay Him this favor, this grace, when He needed them the most. He feels utterly alone in His suffering and no one on earth can comfort Him. I'm sure He's also beginning to feel forsaken by the Father as well, which He will utter in a few short hours. If you've ever been to the Holy Land, you can see the giant, old olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane that most likely still stood back in Jesus' time. As I walked among them, I couldn't help but wonder what they've seen, the stories they could tell. I wonder if they were the only thing that could keep company with Jesus that night.

Today is Holy Thursday, the day we remember the Last Supper. At most churches, after the Mass is over the Eucharist is processed out of the main church into a different part

Lent

of the church or parish center, where it will remain on Good Friday until the Easter Vigil. I encourage you to stay after Mass tonight and pray at this "altar of repose", even if just for a moment, as your time in the Garden with Jesus. Stay awake with Him for however long and keep Him company in the tabernacle. In this way we can comfort His heart and pray for our own. *Emily*

Reflection: When have I fallen asleep and forsaken Jesus, either physically or spiritually in my heart? How can I stay awake with Him more this Holy Week?

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**The 12th Station of the Cross - , "Eli Eli, la'mac sabach-tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

Matthew 27:46

I've seen Mel Gibson's Passion of the Christ once in its entirety since it was first released. I've tried a few times since then to watch it but am unable to complete the movie. My husband and I saw the movie when it was released in the theater during a tough time in our lives. The auditorium was filled with the sounds of weeping at the graphic depiction of our beloved Christ being tortured and killed. It was almost unbearable to watch. I joined them in weeping, not only because of how devastating it was to watch, but I cried from a place of shame and despair for being such an unworthy sinner. I also wept for joy and gratitude for a God who loves without end. I was indeed a crock pot of emotions who left the theater changed. I now had imagery to accompany the words I had read for years about our Lord's suffering and death that I would never forget.

Though I continued to struggle with feelings of being unworthy, I left the movie knowing no matter what I had to face, with a God that loved me enough to endure what I had just witnessed, I could and would meet my struggles and work as hard as I could to deserve His love. For the first time in weeks, hope had shed light into so many of my dark places.

In His final moments on the cross we hear Jesus quote the first line of Psalms 22, from the righteous sufferer, *"Eli Eli, la'mac sabach-tha'ni?"* that is, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

In a scene that was playing out as it was prophesied in Psalms, Jesus suffered on the cross as he was surrounded by people mocking and jeering him. I have often wondered in these final moments if his brief interaction with the thief brought him some consolation, a voice of belief among the jeers. And just as Psalm 22 ends with all praise and confidence in God's perfect plan, Christ, the righteous sufferer, surrenders his spirit. As the sun darkens as the last semblance of life fades from Christ, the veil that has separated us from God is torn, from top to bottom. We have reached the peak of salvation history, all that has been promised is fulfilled. In sinking to the depths of suffering, he rose to the heights and radically fulfilled the commandment of love. He did this for you and for me. His crucifixion, this incomprehensible demonstration of love, carved a path for me and you to spend eternity with our God.

Lent

Regardless of what earthly struggles I may experience, the knowledge of what Jesus was willing to suffer for me encourages me to join my own suffering with his and find peace in knowing his love purchased my salvation and yours.

Ponder: "*Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures*" 15:3. That the death of Christ was foretold in the Old Testament is one of the ways in which we know that "Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan" (CCC 599). *Amelia*

How does the knowledge of His plan influence you today? Consider today how you can view your own suffering, your difficult circumstances and challenges, as an opportunity to join them with His, the righteous sufferer, and like Jesus, have faith in God's plan .

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**Even Unto Death” by Audrey Assad**

Jesus The very thought of You  
It fills my heart with love Jesus  
You burn like wildfire And I am overcome

Lover of my soul Even unto death  
With my every breath I will love You [x2]

Jesus You are my only hope  
And You, my prize shall be Jesus  
You are my glory now And in eternity

Lover of my soul Even unto death  
With my every breath I will love You [x2]

In my darkest hour In humiliation  
I will wait for You I am not forsaken  
Oh, I lose my life Oh, my breath be taken  
I will wait for You I am not forsaken

One thing I desire To see You in Your beauty  
You are my delight Yeah, You are my only

You have sacrificed Oh, Your love is all consuming  
You are my delight Yeah, You are my glory  
Oh, You are my glory Oh, You are my glory

You're the lover of my soul even unto death  
With my every breath I will love You [x2]

Listen to it on You Tube:<https://youtu.be/uAfp8vg4Jz8>

