

Introduction

It's time once again to follow Jesus on his Way to Calvary by praying the Stations of the Cross. For many of us, it's been a year since we've engaged in this devotion. Many things have happened in our lives as the seasons have changed: children have grown, new lives have come into the world, and beloved others have gone home to God. Much can happen in a year, but the death and resurrection of Jesus are always the underpinning of our lives in Christ.

Our perseverance in our baptismal vows gets stronger as we meet the challenges of life and recognize that, bidden or unbidden, God abides with us.

"This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how."

(MARK 4:26-27)

Jesus never wavered in his perseverance to live with us, to walk with us, and even to die with us. Every year, as we sleep and as we rise, his death and resurrection are at work in us. We know not how.

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THE FIRST STATION

Jesus Prays in the Garden | *Scripture: Luke 22:41-46*

Perseverance in PRAYER

LEADER The First Station:
Jesus Prays in the Garden
[PAUSE]

Jesus knew that the hour of his passion and death was upon him. Even in his terror, he persevered in his lifelong trust in his Father. He begged that the cup be taken away but that, finally, the Father's will would be done.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Throughout his life, Jesus taught a lot about prayer. *Ask*, he said. *Seek*, he said. *Knock*, he said. In his great intimacy with the Father, he knew that God wants to give us what we need. In the garden, Jesus told the Father what he longed for: that the terrible cup of suffering be taken away. He did not grovel, or flatter, or try to bargain for his life. He knew that God would give what was in God's will to give.



We don't realize it, probably, but when we pray, we are asking that the Holy Spirit be given to us.

READER *In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. (ROMANS 8:26)*

[PAUSE]

How do you sense the Holy Spirit groaning with you as you pray? In your prayers for the sick and the dying, for wholeness for your loved ones and for yourself, can you sense the Holy Spirit praying with you? "How much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Persevere in prayer, Jesus says.

[PAUSE FOR SILENT PRAYER]

ALL O Jesus, give me the strength to persevere in prayer even when I see no answer. Help me to feel your Holy Spirit groaning with me as the Spirit groaned with you in the garden. Amen.

THE SECOND STATION

Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested | *Scripture: Mark 14:43-46*

Perseverance in BETRAYAL

LEADER The Second Station:
Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested
[PAUSE]

Jesus' betrayer had arranged a signal with the soldiers. The man he kissed was the one. He approached Jesus in the garden, kissed him, and called him "Rabbi." What excruciating agony to be greeted with love by the very friend handing you over to your executioners. But Jesus persevered in his love for us, even while being betrayed by one he loved.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Friendship in the ancient world was crucial to survival. Tribes and families stayed together as protection from outside aggressors. Jesus, by calling the Twelve, created a new family, rooted in love. They shared everything together. They even worshiped together in the Temple.



READER *For it is not an enemy that reviled me—that I could bear—Not a foe who viewed me with contempt, from that I could hide. But it was you, my other self, my comrade and friend, You, whose company I enjoyed, at whose side I walked in the house of God. (PSALM 55:13-15)*

[PAUSE]

Have you ever found grace in persevering in friendship with people who have hurt you, knowing that their unloving actions can be redeemed by your determined love for them? As the prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi puts it, *Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.*

Persevere, even in betrayal, Jesus says.

[PAUSE FOR SILENT PRAYER]

ALL O Jesus, the betrayal of Judas was terrible, but more terrible was that he assumed he could never be forgiven. Let us never betray your love by passing judgment on ourselves and forgetting that your love for us is stronger than death. Amen.

THE THIRD STATION

Jesus Is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

Scripture: Matthew 26:62-66

Perseverance in MAKING WISE DECISIONS

LEADER The Third Station:
Jesus Is Condemned by the Sanhedrin
[PAUSE]

How terrifying it must have been for Jesus to hear the words “He deserves to die!” He lived in Galilee and had traveled to Jerusalem. He may well have seen crosses holding crucified people along the roads that he and his disciples walked. He could have called upon his Father to save him at that moment. But he persevered for us. The Sanhedrin condemned him. The Romans would be next.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

ALL Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

It takes wisdom to make good decisions. The Sanhedrin thought they were making the right decision because Jesus was creating problems for their lifestyles and their understanding of the Law. He might provoke the Romans. It was better that “one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish” (John 11:50).



READER *Yet we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away. Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

(1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8)

[PAUSE]

Looking back on your life, what are the good decisions you have made? How do you judge that? Did those decisions benefit others? Did they bring a sense of peace? In the long run, can you look back and be grateful that you didn't judge those who were vulnerable while you were powerful?

"Judge not," said Jesus, "lest you be judged." Persevere in kindness.

[PAUSE FOR SILENT PRAYER]

ALL O Jesus, the Sanhedrin didn't know what they were doing. There are times in our lives when we, too, act without really understanding the situation or without considering the consequences down the road. Help us persevere in making wise decisions, we pray. Amen.