



JESUS CHRIST IN EVERY CULTURE

INTERNATIONAL HOLY WEEK ART

I wonder if many of us were to be honest, when we think about Holy Week our minds immediately jump to Easter. And why not? Wouldn't we rather celebrate the resurrection of Christ than sit with all the emotions we may feel in looking at His betrayal, the beatings He endured and ultimately, His death? As the lyrics of the hymn "How Deep the Father's Love" force us to reckon with, the stark reality that "ashamed I hear my mocking voice" and that "it was my sin that held Him there" on the cross can be too much to reconcile.

Yet Holy Week invites us to slow down and to contemplate the truth that without death, there can be no resurrection. While we may want to just skip to the good part and sing songs in church on Easter Sunday about the empty tomb and a buried body beginning to breathe again, we are missing something if we are too quick to pass over the rest of the events leading up to the resurrection. There is so much for us to see in the way Jesus served His disciples during the Last Supper (including the one who would betray Him), His honest prayer of indifference as He chose to surrender to the Father's will in the garden, and how we ourselves, like Judas and Peter, also betray and deny Jesus.

Since the 4th century, Holy Week has been practiced by Christians all over the world as a set aside time for them to remember the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In Egypt, children are sprayed with holy water during Palm Sunday while in Germany a minority group waves banners while riding horses proclaiming Christ's resurrection. In Latino cultures during *Semana Santa* it is common to see processions of the "Via Dolorosa" (the Way of Suffering) throughout the streets carrying statues of Christ on a cross, often with people carrying their own crosses to participate with Christ in His suffering. In Mexico people gather to watch "La Quemada de Judas" (the burning of Judas) as a way to purify and cleanse their own souls from evil. Reenactments of the Passion of Christ are held worldwide, and we must ask, Why? Because there is something about seeing the events of Holy Week take place that stirs our hearts and souls in a way that just knowing about it can't quite do.

This collection of different cultures' artistic representations of the events of Holy Week is an invitation for all of us to see. To see the Christ that came to earth for us, died for us, and rose from the grave, so that we may come to know and worship Him as King. We invited friends to write reflections on the events of the week because we have seen them embody the life and death of Christ in their own lives, and knew that their words would invite us to seek Christ in new ways. As you spend time during Holy Week meditating on the whole story of Christ, and not just His resurrection, we pray that you would find peace and unity in knowing that millions of Christians all over the world for the past 1,700 years have been, are now, and will continue to do the same.

Katie & Jessica

Visio Divina



One helpful way of engaging with art with the intention of connecting with God is to do Visio Divina. Visio Divina, sacred seeing, is an ancient form of prayer that continues to be a powerful method of meditation. It invites the viewer into "divine seeing" and shares roots with the ancient practice of Lectio Divina. (Lectio Divina calls for a slow interaction with scripture through meditation and prayer, allowing a word or phrase to catch your attention.) Similarly, Visio Divina invites us to encounter God through art. Here are the steps to Visio Divina, which we would encourage you to try as you engage the collection of art here.

STEP 1

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax and focus before looking at the art.

STEP 2

Let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of the photograph. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so. Gaze at the entire picture. Notice the shapes, the colors, and the lighting. Notice the detail of both the foreground and background. Once you have visually gotten a feel of the artwork in its entirety, note what has drawn your attention.

STEP 3

Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye. Try to keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so. Meditate on the part of the picture that has drawn your attention. How is God speaking to you? Why do you think God drew your attention to this particular part? What could it mean for your life today? Do you sense God inviting you to understand, know, or do something? What emotion do you feel as you look at the picture?

STEP 4

God has been speaking to you as you meditated on this artwork, and now you can respond to Him. What is your prayer? Are there any desires within you that you want to bring to God?

STEP 5

Spend the last moments in silence to simply rest in communion with God. Enjoy this opportunity for the stillness.



Entry Into Jerusalem
India (2012)
Jyoti Sahi

This story of the Triumphal Entry is filled with many ironies. First, this is one of several times where Jesus' royalty is paired with his lowliness. Here the "Son of David" receives his grand welcome into Jerusalem, not riding on an impressive royal horse but on a lowly borrowed donkey. The most striking irony is that this same crowd that lays palm branches and even their own clothes on the road, shouting Jesus' praises upon his arrival, not many days later would shout "Crucify him!" when he didn't live up to their expectations. Even the title Triumphal Entry is ironic, as Jesus certainly wasn't a conquering king, riding in to triumph over his enemies. However, in a different way, he was absolutely triumphant over his greatest enemies: sin and death. What a joy that we too can sing Hosanna as he triumphs over our sin, having bought us with a price!

Reflection by Eric Warren

How has your loyalty to Jesus shifted over time?

How has Jesus shown up in your life, perhaps not as you expected? Take a moment to thank him for these unexpected blessings.



Jesus Cleanses the Temple
Ethiopia (17th century)
Artist Unknown

When you take an exhaustive look at the world, this big beautiful world formed by our Creator's breath, does it seem like God's justice reigns? If not, welcome. You're in good company. With our eyes we see what is painful, what is broken and what needs to be restored. Yet not only with our eyes do we notice injustice but we experience it in our very own bodies and lives. And our hearts question, Where is our God? Where is the God who cares and intercedes for the orphan, widow, and foreigner?

In our doubt, He arrives, reminding us with His actions in the temple that He too has eyes that see what is unjust. He clears the temple. But, Jesus doesn't clear the temple to remove humanity and He doesn't clear it to make more space for Himself. He first removes those engaging in an oppressive system of buying and selling and follows it up by making room for justice to occur. And in His physical body He ministers to others, healing the sick in just the same place where injustice once attempted to rule. Jesus reclaims the space and proves God's mercy and justice reign.

Reflection by Jessica Haverkamp

As you imagine yourself in this story, is it uncomfortable for you to think about Jesus kicking people out of the temple?

Ask God to show you what injustice in the world breaks His heart. How might He be inviting you to help others to see it?



Jesus Washing the Feet of His Apostles

China (circa 1960)

John Lu Hongnian 陸鴻年

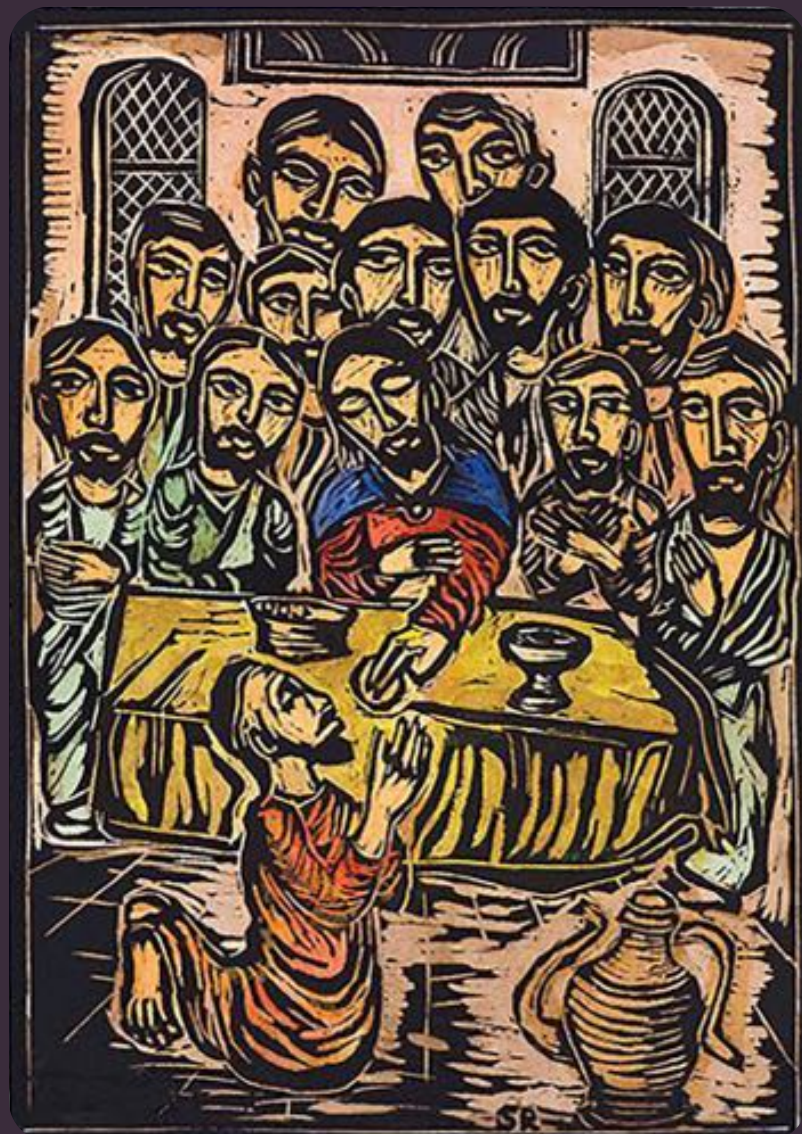
Concerned looks were on the disciples' faces as Jesus rose after dinner. Peter is assuming what Jesus has in plan. Jesus prepares water and begins to wash the other disciples' feet. Peter grows uncomfortable. When it comes Peter's turn, he refuses to let his Lord wash his feet. "It should be the other way around", he thought. Peter had been shown that Jesus was God's son and Peter wasn't about to dishonor Him like this. Everyone else was thinking it, but Peter said what was on his mind.

A concerned look was now on Jesus' face. Despite Peter's good intentions, his stubborn refusal to be served by his Lord revealed a problem. Jesus softly but sternly let Peter know that one not willing to be served by Him has no part in Him. Peter has a choice: to stubbornly insist on his conception of his Lord, or to submit to what his Lord had actually asked of him. Peter chose to surrender and relent to letting his Lord serve him.

Reflection by Luke Haverkamp

Do you ever believe it is more spiritual to serve God than to be served by Him? In what ways might God be desiring to serve you?

In what ways have you insisted on your own way with God, rather than surrendering to what He has actually asked of you?



Feeding of Judas at the Last Supper
India (circa 1984)
Solomon Raj

“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God, as we walked about among the worshipers.” (Psalm 55:12-14) The feeling of betrayal. The feeling of things taken out of context, used against you for another's gain. Even the simple feeling of being misunderstood. We all have most likely experienced some version of this, and can ask, “What do we do when we feel it within the body of Christ?” It's one thing to know Christ; it's another thing to know Him as Lord. If you journey back into the passage in Matthew 26, you'll see Jesus make the statement over dinner, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples do not point fingers at each other; instead, they express sorrow and remorse, one by one asking, “Is it I, Lord?” Yet, when Judas responds, he asks, “Is it I, Rabbi?” Do you see the shift? The other disciples speak of Jesus as Lord, yet Judas addresses Him simply as good teacher. Judas has been with Jesus, but his shift from knowing Jesus to believing isn't there. We could easily assume that if Christ knew about the upcoming betrayal, He probably never would have cultivated a relationship with Judas. However, this is not true. Judas is one of the twelve. He walked the roads with Jesus, slept in the same places as Jesus, and listened to the teachings of Jesus while sitting next to the other disciples. Judas was an insider chosen by Christ. And Christ allowed it to take place because Christ loves us but He knows that in the darkest places of our hearts is a desire to build our kingdom, not His Kingdom. And yet Christ goes to the cross to free us from that reality anyway.

Reflection by Jeremy Horton

Are there any ways that you have been withholding forgiveness for another or resisting Jesus' forgiveness of you?

Have you experienced betrayal? How does reflecting on Jesus' betrayal help you to embrace the forgiveness of the cross for you as well as for others?



1994
STONIS BACERAGA 994
D. 12. 14. 96

Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane
Japan (circa 1984)
Sadao Watanabe

Jesus withdraws to be with the Father, giving us one of our greatest examples of Jesus' value for intimacy with His Father God. The night before the most difficult emotional time in His life, Jesus does not isolate himself from God, He moves toward the secret place with His Father.

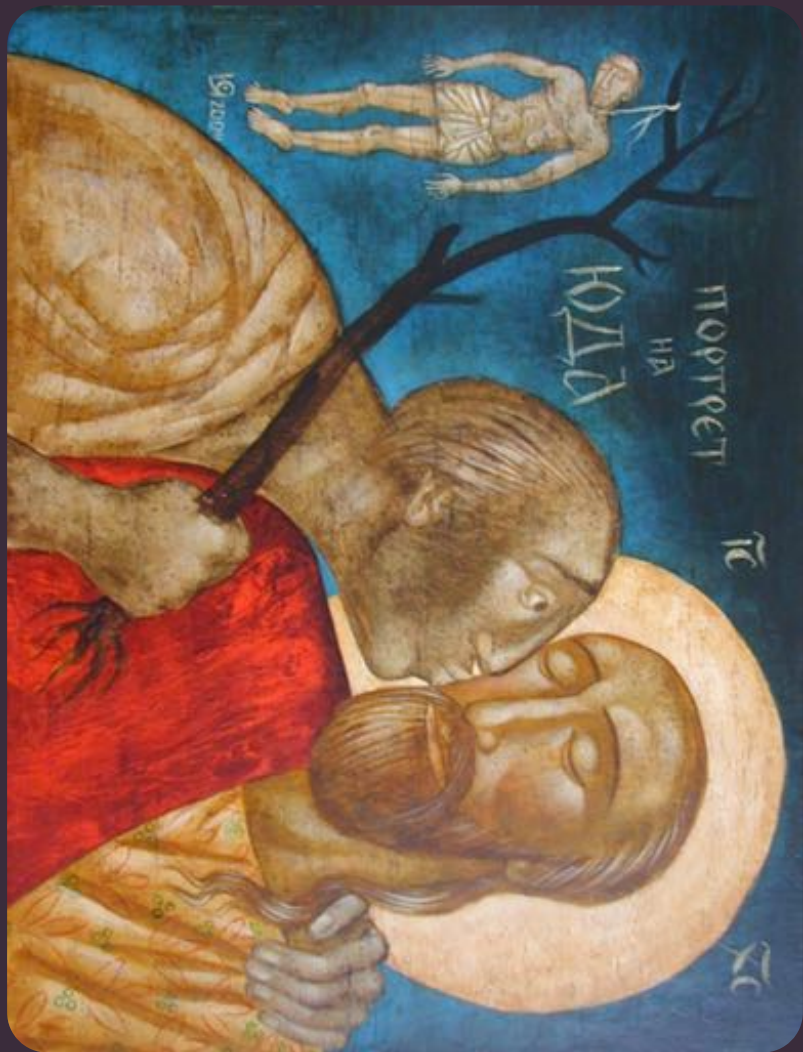
He then prays "not my will, but yours be done." This is arguably the clearest and most simple version of surrender that we see from Jesus. With an excruciating path on His doorstep, His best friends and community slept with avoidance. How did Jesus not crumble with paralyzing fear? It's because He had firmly established two things throughout His life; intimacy and surrender.

We can know this to be true about life: suffering will come. We can't avoid it, and it's not God's will for us to avoid it. So how do we prepare our souls to survive suffering? We invest in our intimacy with the Lord and our surrender to His way.

Reflection by Stephen Clark

How might God be inviting you to cultivate intimacy with Him in this season of life?

When in your life have you been invited to pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done"? When in your life have you resisted praying this way?



15/2009

ПОРТРЕТ
НА
КОЛДА

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Portrait of Judas
Bulgaria (2004)
Julia Stankova

Love Like Jesus Loves
A Liturgy When Feeling Betrayed

Like being naked and mocked,
betrayal is intimate and personal,
drenched in contempt,
thoroughly patronizing.

Teach me to love like Jesus loves.

“Friend, why have you come?”
Even then, an invitation to turn back.
Free from cynicism, Jesus pleads again for His friend to wake up
from the evil mission and turn back.
It doesn’t have to be this way.

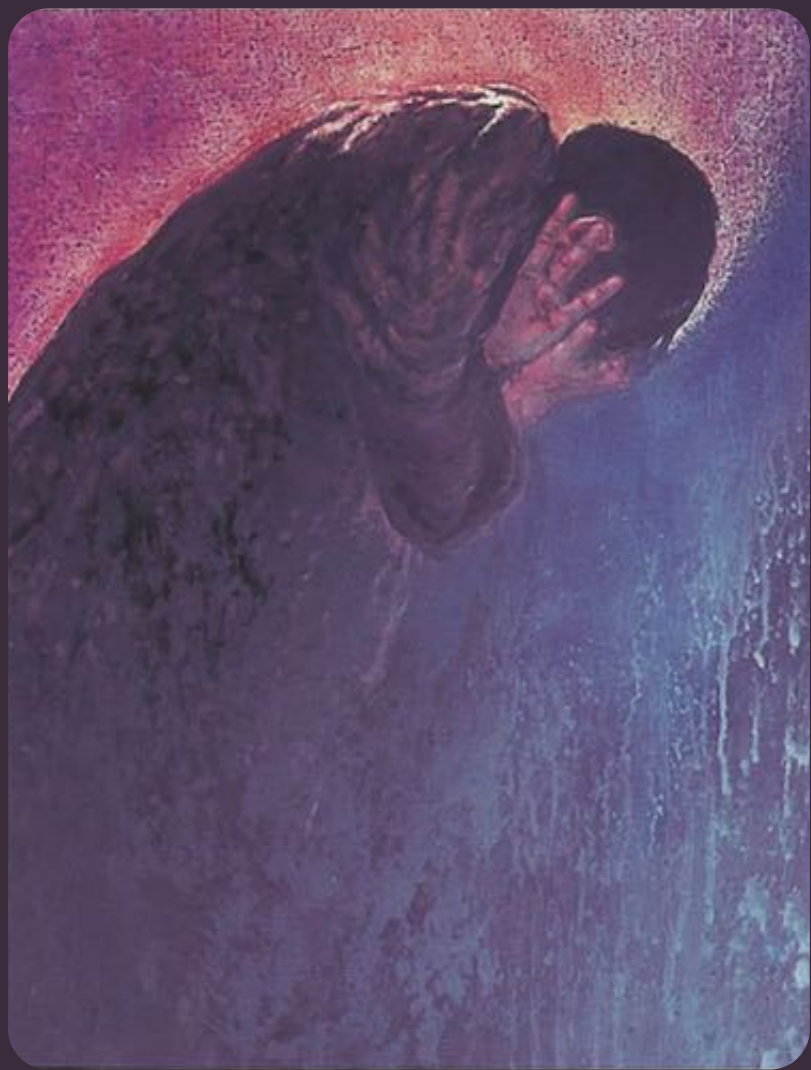
Teach me to love like Jesus loves.

Let me see my betrayal in the light of Yours. Through Your Holy Spirit, I pray blessing on my enemies, competitors, and critics—for the ones I’ve embraced, trusted, and for whom I’ve delightedly sacrificed. And when the twin serpents of bitterness and self-pity threaten to twine about my soul, will You teach me to love like You love? Replace my resentment with Your hope. May Your love flow through me even to my enemies. For my good and Your glory, Amen.

Reflection by Mary Scheibe

What could it look like for you to love like Jesus loves?

Will you pray for God to cause your enemies to flourish?



Peter's Denial
India (1954)
Frank Wesley

Have you ever considered how you associate a variety of smells to particular people, places or moments of your life? The disciple Peter certainly did, and a swirl of emotions and memories would have come flooding as he considered the smell of charcoal. This harsh, bold, pervasive smell of charcoal matches that of Peter's threefold denial of Jesus around the fire. And yet, what is true for the life of a Christ-follower? Shame, sin and evil do not get the final word. This, in fact, is the stunning proclamation of Easter weekend. So, what will be true of Peter and his gut-wrenching betrayal? Among the appearances Jesus makes to His followers after the resurrection, we quickly recognize why Jesus makes a charcoal fire on the beach of Galilee's Sea. Consider Peter as he races to the shore and smells the unmistakable charcoal fire: the lump in his throat, the pit in his stomach as he is immediately brought back to his denial of Jesus. And yet, the kindness of Christ would provide for Peter a new memory to associate with an old scent. This fire, like the cross, would be the place for a great exchange: shame for restoration; betrayal for reconciliation; regret for recommissioning.

Reflection by Alanna Sellinger

What moments in your life do you feel like you have disappointed God the most?

What could it look like for you to come to God and allow Him to bring healing and restoration to these moments?



Were You There
India (1954)
Frank Wesley

Jesus' final act before the Crucifixion was to carry His cross from where He was tried at the Praetorium, 600 meters uphill to Golgotha. Having already received open wounds from the lashes and the crown of thorns, each step of carrying the cross embedded the splintered wood and the thorns further into His flesh. Adding to this sensory overload were the jeers of the mocking crowd and cries of those who loved Him. While this tortuous journey seemed senseless to His followers, this final act before the crucifixion was crucial to fulfilling all righteousness through His life. He had instructed and warned His disciples that following Him meant carrying one's own cross. What seemed like a metaphor for suffering was now a stark reality that they were witnessing. With each step, Jesus modeled what it means to follow Him and paves the way for us to do so in His power.

Reflection by Mike Easton

Consider the things in your life that you are currently carrying. How might you imitate Christ as you carry these?

What circumstances in your life, like the jeers Jesus experienced, are making your cross harder to bear?



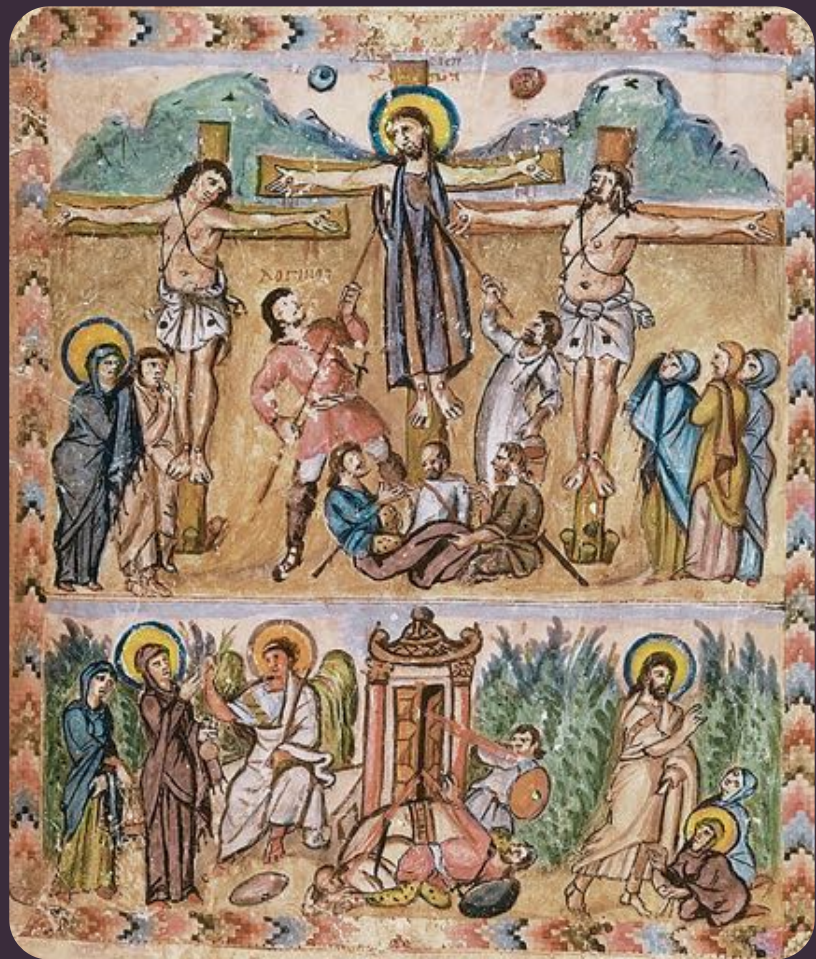
The Disrobing of Christ
Spain (1579)
El Greco

A scene of chaos shows soldiers and officials looking on Jesus with a mixture of contempt and scorn. A man in yellow at the bottom right is consumed with his job of preparing the cross for the stake that will pierce Jesus' feet. The three Marys at the bottom left seem overwhelmed at the sight of the cross. The official in green leading Jesus with a rope is ready to strip Jesus of the robe placed on Him by the Roman soldiers for the purpose of mocking. The soldier to Jesus' left, in contrast to everyone else in the scene, is dressed in 16th century armor, reminding us that every generation would have rejected Christ. The man in black, set in the crowd to the right of Jesus, is the only character whose eyes are glaring at the viewer. That fact, taken with his finger pointing toward us, screams, "You too are a sinner in need of saving." The clouds are split, announcing that the way to God is being opened through the sacrifice of his Son! Finally, Jesus, clothed in a brilliant scarlet robe and surrounded by a chaotic mob, commands our attention. Though Christ has arrived at Golgotha, the place of His crucifixion, He is the only one settled in this picture. His face portrays a quiet strength and His upward focused eyes beam with peace regarding the eternity-changing work He was accomplishing.

Reflection by John LaRavia

Look at the image again. If you were to be honest, who do you believe you would have been as this was taking place?

How in your life do you feel that you are being stripped of the things you deserve? How might God be inviting you in those moments to know and be like Christ?



The Crucifixion and Resurrection
Syria (586)
Illumination from the Rabulla Gospels

Death is disorienting. Nothing strips us of our delusion of keeping ourselves and others alive like death does. In this illustration, we are invited to linger with the thoughts and emotions of people close to Jesus as He is crucified. He was a son, brother, friend, mentor, and enemy. He wept when he experienced the profound emotion brought on by Lazarus' death. Now, He is the one dying. He struggled to breathe on the cross. It was excruciating. Some watched, others hid. It was disorienting as Messiah took His last breath and ceased all brain activity. He needed to be buried because He was dead. Family and friends of Jesus experienced what the psalmist calls "the valley of the shadow of death." There could be transformation in this valley, but to get to the other side, they would have to navigate through it. Jesus tried to prepare His followers for His death, but the night was deeply dark, still, and quiet. They had questions...Where is Emmanuel? Is God still with us? As was true for those closest to our Lord, you and I will traverse deep valleys, disappointment and death. Though the night may seem darkest before daylight comes, we can emerge transformed, with a new faith and hope.

Reflection by Tonni McCollister

Why do we seem to want to hurry through considering Jesus' suffering and death? How could taking our time with grief deliver us to deeper faith, closer relationship, and greater love for Jesus and others?

When in your life have you struggled to believe that God is truly Emmanuel and is still with you?



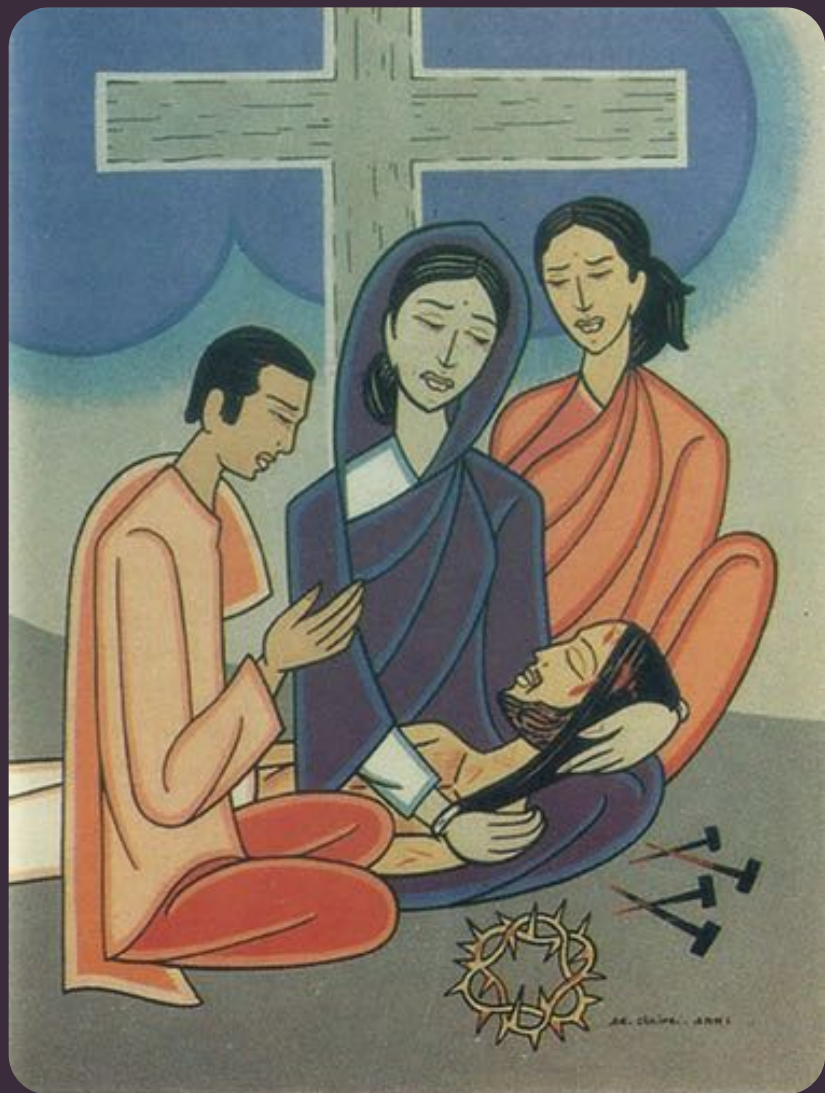
He Bore It Silently
Uganda (2013)
Gloria Ssali

Hematohidrosis is a condition in which the capillaries that supply the sweat glands rupture, causing one to sweat drops of blood, due to intense physical or emotional distress. This is ultimately regarded as an extreme activation of the fight-or-flight response which is so primal to our human physiology. In relinquishing the glories of his throne to take on human flesh, Jesus physically embodied human nature. Human blood ran through his veins. From childhood, he knew what it was like to feel his heart race, to see blood flow from a cut, to experience a wound throbbing on his skin. Life Himself took on skin and bones, nerves and blood. In the hours before his execution, Jesus embodied anguish itself. His nerves were so rattled in dreadful anticipation of what lay before Him that they told His heart to race, His eyes to weep, and His blood vessels to expand to the point of bursting. Our Lord, Who came to Earth that we may know Him, experienced anguish, anxiety and fear just like we do. We worship a God who can relate to us in our pain, and yet knew no sin. That body bent over with grief in the garden was broken for us; the blood that seeped from his skin was spilled to wash us clean.

Reflection by Moriah Snyder

How does the bodily suffering of Christ invite you to accept your own struggles and limitations of anxiety, fear and pain?

How might Jesus relate to you in this season in whatever suffering you may be experiencing?



DR. C. S. LEWIS, 1931

Pieta, Mother of Compassion 1 (13th Station of the Cross)
India (circa 1970)
Sister Claire

A mother, surrounded by comforters and fellow mourners, holds her son's lifeless body in her arms. Mary and I have this experience in common. My firstborn son died shortly before birth. When I finally got to meet him, when I finally held him in my arms, he was already gone. It was an experience so profoundly painful that it can't be described with words. Pictures and paintings do it more justice.

You may not have had a personal experience like this. But for all of us, in the Passion story and in depictions of it, the Lord invites us to look death fully in the face. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) For then and only then will we so desperately need the victory that follows, that our lives will be forever changed by Jesus' work to defeat death on the cross. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." (Romans 6:8-9) Death will no longer have dominion over any of us.

Reflection by Kate Clark

What might the Lord be inviting you to look fully in the face of in the midst of your present pain and suffering?

What victory does Jesus' work on the cross offer you as you remember that death has no dominion over you?



The Two Marys Watch the Tomb of Jesus

France (1886)

James Tissot

The fact that Jesus died the day before the Sabbath is no coincidence. It gave His followers a chance to be still, reflect, and mourn. Without the Sabbath, it would have been easy to go about a typically busy and distracted life. But God chose to provide a deliberate time and space for rest, so that they would be able to find rest in Him in the midst of chaos, trial, crisis, confusion, uncertainty, and death. They had a regular practice and rhythm of this rest so that when the time came when they desperately needed it, they already knew how to sit in the presence of God. This is the beauty of the spiritual disciplines. Only the followers who knew Jesus well were able to sit with their loss and longing in the presence of their Lord and find rest in Him. Notice in the art here the intentional act of waiting that the women are doing. Jesus invites us to know and be with Him daily in order to prepare us to stay and wait with Him and for Him when we experience the hardships of life.

Reflection by Katie LaRavia

How does knowing Jesus enable you to engage with Him when you are going through difficulties?

How might Jesus be inviting you to wait with Him and for Him in your life right now?



Christ Appears to Mary
Cameroon (circa 1970)
Vie de Jesus Mafa (Life of Jesus Mafa)

As Mary is walking to the tomb, she is already devastated that her rabbi had been crucified. Imagine her cold shock when the place she expected to find Him was found to be empty. She runs to Peter. There is no consolation there. He is as shocked as she is and he takes off running. But Mary stays. She stays and she weeps just as her Savior once did outside the tomb of Lazarus. That tomb was full. This one was empty.

Suddenly a voice, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are seeking?" These words quietly thunder from Jesus' resurrected lips to Mary's ears. She accuses Him of taking the body - she'd accuse anyone at this point. Rage builds from a place of deep, inconsolable sorrow until she hears Him say her name: "Mary." And she realizes - and responds "Rabboni!"

What was once empty, now fills with His presence. Death is met with life. Shocked again, but now with a joy indescribable as she hears the Savior say her name.

In our inconsolable sorrow, our Consolation says our name. In death and emptiness, the Risen One who is with us always says our name. To hear our Risen Savior say our name is enough in the midst of our deepest sorrow.

Reflection by Rudy Hartmann

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the midst of deep sorrow. Jesus says your name.
How does it impact you? How do you respond?

Do you believe that Jesus would be enough in your sorrow?
What might it take for you to be able to believe that?



Road to Emmaus
Ukraine (2021)
Khrystyna Kvyk

The place was Emmaus, a hot spring, a three-hour walk from Jerusalem. The day is Resurrection Day. Yet none knew. Those who followed Jesus had swirling thoughts. "We thought Jesus would redeem us... Our religious leaders handed him over to be crucified and killed..." After Jesus' body went missing, were the officials mounting a treacherous investigation? Deep in conversation, two friends ambled along. "Our Jesus - He prophesied and did miracles. Why did He let Himself die?"

Then, an inquisitive stranger butted in. "What events?" the stranger asked. Both froze. Faces darkened. How could anyone escape knowledge of the events? Yet this Stranger calls them foolish and starts babbling about old prophets. Moses? Of course, saved from the reeds. Israel? Yes, the blood on doorposts saved all the firstborns. Isaiah? Of course, a baby born to a virgin - Mary! The government will be on his shoulders! This is what was expected.

Then the narrative changes: What - a lamb? A sacrifice? By His stripes, Israel is redeemed? No, a Redeemer comes differently, doesn't he? Not in ways that we tend to expect. We so often have expectations, formed by religious tradition and culture. Jesus didn't even fit the mold of what the Jews were expecting in a Messiah. When we are wrapped up in our expectations, we are at risk of missing the Messiah. But Jesus exceeds, surpasses, and throws into a tailspin all of our expectations. We only need to have eyes to see the Savior who has come to wreck everything that we ever expected.

Reflection by Cori Crawford Van Oss

Are you only looking for Jesus in ways you've learned to expect (ie. Church, quiet time, etc.) How might you be missing that Jesus is showing up in your life in unexpected ways? Are you attentive to notice these promptings?

Are you ever distracted by the difficult circumstances in your life that you miss the presence of Christ in your midst?



Katie LaRavia does Member Care for Campus 2 Campus, an overseas mission organization. She cares deeply about how people are interacting with God (or not), and loves to create and provide resources and tools that will help with that. She lived in China for 11 years and has a Masters in Christian Spiritual Formation and Leadership from Friends University. She currently lives in the US with her husband John and her 2 kids.

Jessica Haverkamp does Member Care for missionaries. She was able to live in China and Thailand for a number of years. She is currently getting her Masters from Friends University. She is passionate about helping people find refreshing ways to interact with God. Additionally, she enjoys walking alongside those experiencing doubt in their faith. She, her husband Luke, and daughter are currently enjoying Iowa as their home.

Campus 2 Campus is a mission organization that exists to see Gospel movements from the campus through the city to the ends of the earth for the glory of God. They partner with the local church to send laborers overseas.

Feel free to share this digital version. If you are interested in a printed set contact Katie at katie.laravia@gmail.com