

## **Station 1 Jesus takes up the cross**

### **John 19:13-17**

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the people, 'Here is your King!' They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

### **Mark 8:34**

Jesus called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

### **Reflection:**

On Good Friday, we traditionally spend time contemplating the Crucifixion and death of Jesus. This might seem a maudlin exercise, designed to make us feel bad about ourselves and our own sins. How can we complain about anything, we who are guilty of so much, when this one truly innocent person suffered even more?

Perhaps today we can shift our thinking a bit. Suffering is not a competition and it is not punishment. Nobody deserves all the bad things that happen in life. If this year has taught us anything, surely it has taught us how interconnected we all are. It has affirmed the deep truth of the idea that when one suffers, all suffer. No person can be truly whole, healthy, or safe, until all are whole, healthy, and safe.

Perhaps it is time to consider the Cross a symbol of solidarity. Jesus chose to suffer as one of us. The "punishment" meted out to him by the state was unjust. Contemplating the Cross can lead us beyond focusing on the agony of the One and allow us to be in touch with the injustice that continues to crucify the many.

For those who follow Jesus, taking up our cross might well mean simply "to accompany those who suffer the most, and witness to our hopes in the Resurrection" (Maura Clarke).

**Action:** What heavy things have you been carrying this past year? Are there burdens you feel have been laid upon you that you would like to release?

If you'd like, you may pick a rock to carry with you during this prayer walk. The rock can symbolize any kind of burden that troubles you now. It's even possible you might want to carry a second rock, this one to remind you of some other individual or community that has been especially burdened by racism, poverty, homophobia, or some other systemic sin and injustice.

You will have a chance to set these rocks down at the end of the walk. Take time throughout the walk, perhaps in the time in between stations, to meditate on whatever burden or burdens the rocks represent.

**Prayer:** Jesus our sibling and friend: You stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the Cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace. Help us to find our place with you among the lost and the least, the wounded and the oppressed, that we all might be freed from our burdens and live together in harmony and peace. Amen.