

Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross (Mark 15:16-24)

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Guidelines: Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts.

Ignatian Meditation Process: Ignatius chose this Gospel reading for Week 3 of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Read the introduction and then "Ask for the grace". Then quietly read the passage by using your imagination to enter into the story, sensing and feeling what's going on. Don't analyze the passage or seek insights — *experience yourself as a character in the story*. After the second reading have a "colloquy" (short, personal conversation) with the Lord. You can use the prompts and questions at the bottom to guide your prayer time and journaling (and sharing with others).

Introduction: It's gruesome and grievous to see our precious Lord and Savior Jesus being sadistically abused and crucified by the Roman soldiers. Happening into this tragic scene are Simon of Cyrene and his two sons. According to the ancient tradition, Jesus staggers and falls under the weight of his cross and this is why the soldiers force Simon to carry it. Now he and his sons are up close and personal with Jesus on his Via Dolorosa (Way of Suffering). Probably they stand at the cross and watch Jesus be crucified. Apparently they are won over to become his disciples! (Romans 16:13)

Ask For the Grace: Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I ask for the grace I desire: To sorrow with you, to be broken with you, to cry with you, and to suffer internally with you — doing this with gratitude for the great suffering you endured to obtain God's mercy for me.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Mark 15 (MSG)

16-20 The soldiers took Jesus into the palace (called Praetorium) and called together the entire brigade. They dressed him up in purple and put a crown plaited from a thornbush on his head. Then they began their mockery: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" They banged on his head with a club, spit on him, and knelt down in mock worship. After they had had their fun, they took off the purple cape and put his own clothes back on him. Then they marched out to nail him to the cross.

21 There was a man walking by, coming from work, Simon from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They made him carry Jesus' cross.

22-24 The soldiers brought Jesus to Golgotha, meaning "Skull Hill." They offered him a mild painkiller (wine mixed with myrrh), but he wouldn't take it. And they nailed him to the cross. They divided up his clothes and threw dice to see who would get them.

1st Reading: Visualize yourself in the Gospel story. Don't seek intellectual insights — stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?

2nd Reading: Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?