

5th Station of the Cross (Traditional), 8th Station of the Cross (Modern) - Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene to Carry his Cross



“As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.” ~Luke 23:26

*Christ on the Way to Calvary
Titian (c 1560). Museo Nacional del Prado*

Very little is known about Simon of Cyrene other than the Roman soldiers compelled him to help Jesus carry his cross. This is mentioned in the books of Luke, Matthew and Mark. He was from Libya, probably a black convert to Judaism. We are told that he and his family of two sons and a wife became Christians after this event.

So why is this one of the Stations of the Cross if that is all it was?

- What we do know is that the dynamic is one of “helping,” even when you do not want to, and the effect of the dynamic being one of influence and change.
- Consider how often the suffering of others has unwittingly impacted you? How have you tried to “help,” others in their suffering to lighten their burden?
- What was your motive? Is there a difference between being compelled to help out of fear and willingly taking on the suffering of another in love? Who are the Roman soldiers who “made you be helpful?”
- How have you been changed by “helping,” others when having been compelled by fear?
- Have you had the experience of someone walking ahead of you, while you followed carrying their suffering for them?
- What is the transformation that happens when we are forced to help others out of fear. for long enough? How were you converted to follow the way of the Christ instead of the way of fear?

In the quote below, replace the words, “the cross,” with the words, “facing our inner suffering.” Can you see how this has been misunderstood, and is exactly the truth?

*“In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection against our enemies;
in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind;
in the Cross is joy of spirit; in the Cross is excellence of virtue;*

*in the Cross is perfection of holiness.
There is no salvation of soul, nor hope of eternal life, save in the Cross.”
~Thomas à Kempis, The Inner Life*