

6th Station of the Cross (Modern) – Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns



Thy began to mock and beat Jesus; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ~Luke 22:63-65

The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head ... They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

~John 19:2-3

Sir Anthony van Dyck – Museo Nacional del Prado

Contemplate what the painting would be if you were to depict the ways in which your thinking has pricked you and brought blood. When has your thinking caused you to sweat, blood and tears?

Thorns are a very ancient symbol denoting suffering, defense and the pain caused by defenses. A rose bush first grows healthy green leaves and stems protected by thorns and when it is mature enough, roses blossom. Thorns are mentioned in Genesis to talk about the suffering of the world when one leaves the unity of the spiritual world, or "fall from Grace." Like the Sleeping Beauty, thorns surround us while we are still asleep. We are only awoken if we find a gallant part of ourselves that breaks through the hedge of thorns and awakens us with the kiss of love.

Our intellects are the thorns of protection we need up until a certain point in our development, but are also the symbol of being pierced and hurt by our own defenses once they are no longer needed. The intellect is our "crowning glory." It is pinnacle of evolutionary development that can both serve and destroy us. It is the King we worship for a long time on our path. But it is a false king – a poor shadow of true royalty of wisdom and Truth. A big pitfall on the spiritual journey is to mock and denigrate ourselves for having those intellectual defenses that once protected us.

Flagellation represents the ways in which we shame and humiliate ourselves, beat up on ourselves and keep ourselves "humble" and, so, "good." This kind of shaming and desecrating of ourselves does not actually result in humility, but in pride for being so spiritual. So while feeling immense shame and degradation, we, at the same time, can feel Holy and Righteous for suffering "like Jesus." This is the theology of shame and martyrdom in which many of us were raised. This understanding creates a huge split within our own souls, deep shame and false pride for feeling shame as well as self-pity for the suffering we bring on ourselves. Not a pretty picture!

Consider how you have used debate, rationalization, argument, excuses, denial, intellectualization, minimizing, lying, and distorting as thorny defenses to protect your feelings of shame.

Consider how you yourself have re-created and re-activated shame within you by self-condemnation, self-criticism, self-hatred, self-castigation and judgment, or by trying to change, control, force and demand of yourself. Listen to your voice when you do this and see if you can recognize how it is an introjected voice from your family and culture.

*"Love knows the secret way there. While the mind smells profit and quickly sets up shop. Love sees untold treasures far beyond. Lovers trust in the wealth of their hearts while the all-knowing mind sees only **thorns** ahead. To wander in the fields of flowers pull the **thorns** from your heart."*

~Rumi