

13th Station of the Cross (Traditional) – Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to Joseph of Arimathea



“The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away.” ~John 19: 32-35, 38

The Descent from the Cross. (c. 1435) Rogier van der Weyden. Museo del Prado

With hands and feet nailed, it is very difficult to breathe; the weight of the body collapses the upper torso. Each breath depends on pushing against the nails in the feet to get upright enough to get a breath. In this way the torture is prolonged, and it can take days before exhaustion sets in and you collapse and suffocate, or lose consciousness and suffocate. The laws of the Sanhedrin were explicit. Dead bodies could not hang on the cross on the Sabbath, which was the next day. They did not have to break the legs of Jesus because he had already died. This seems to be accurate historically. However, whether he was already dead because he was pierced by the lance of the Roman soldier or whether his body was handed to his mother in the traditional version of the Stations of the Cross seems to be more myth than historical fact, and so more interesting and closer to truth.

- When in your life have you acted badly and then covered it up with self-righteousness because you “obeyed the law?” Can you find the hypocrite inside of you?
- What do you imagine was the fear of the high priests?
- How have you paraded as Holy, when you are in fact acting out of fear?
- What has metaphorically died and has been given into the arms of the Mother who is filled with compassion – i.e. has suffered with, in this dying process.
- How do you know that it is only in “dying,” i.e. accepting, surrendering, sinking into your inner suffering with the compassion of your immortal Soul, that there is always resurrection to a new state of consciousness? Think of examples you can draw on – they are touchstones for your growth. Remember this is not a one-time, linear story!
- What does the piercing of the heart, the blood and the water symbolize in this process?

*“You are two hands, two legs, and two eyes,
But if your heart and the Beloved are also two,
what good is that?”*

*You call out, 'I am the lover',
but these are mere words.
If you see lover and Beloved as two,
you either have double vision
or you can't count.”*

~Rumi