

Jesus Surrenders to his Passion (Retreat part 24)

Throughout the centuries, the account of the passion of Jesus has been told to help believers understand the mystery of suffering and how Jesus' surrender defeats the power of sin and death.

At this point in our retreat, we are prepared to contemplate, in detail, the passion of Jesus. Our desire is to enter into the Gospel story and to be there with Jesus. We want to be touched by the power of this drama. The one we love and want so much to be with invites us into his story to experience his suffering, with him. The depth of our compassion for him leads to an even deeper intimacy. Take each part of the story and experience its meaning. The garden struggle to surrender; the betrayal, the arrest, and abandonment by his disciples; the trials; the mockery, the crowning with thorns, the beating, and the way of the cross are scenes we want to become very much a part of our consciousness this week.

Throughout each day this week, we want to know the profound love of Jesus for us. As we go through the ordinary struggles of living, and face the most difficult challenges of our lives, we want to experience Jesus' solidarity with us. As we contemplate the meaning of his passion, we want to see his solidarity with all who have, are, and ever will suffer.

This week you might consider praying the Stations of the Cross, a powerful centuries-old devotion, as a resource for our journey this week and next week. Every night, let us give thanks for the graces we receive by walking through our lives more conscious of the passionate love of Jesus for us.

We begin this week by reading Matthew's account of Jesus' passion ([Matthew 26:14–27:66](#)). It is perhaps the most familiar story in our imagination, but we can refresh it by letting it become the conscious focus of our week. This will give us vivid images that we can reflect on in the context of our every-day life this week.

The Last Supper ([Matthew 26:14–30](#))

We reflected on the Last Supper last week. Now we focus on it as the beginning of the Passion. When we read about Judas's betrayal and Peter's promise never to deny him, we have fruit for our week. We can say, with Peter, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never say I don't know you." Throughout the week, I can become more highly conscious of times I hide how much I know Jesus.

The Garden ([Matthew 26:36–56](#))

The garden is a powerful image of Jesus, asking his disciples to pray with him. Instead, they fall asleep. All week, in small in-between times, we can remind ourselves how much Jesus wants us to be with him in prayer about his Passion this week. It is important for us to see Jesus agonize in prayer over his surrender. His words can come to us throughout the week, to shape the way we make our choices to open ourselves to God's desires in us. To pause here to be with Jesus, as he is kissed by a betraying friend and as all his friends just run away, is a powerful communion with the one we love in a moment of deep abandonment.

The Religious Trial ([Matthew 26:57–68](#))

Caiaphas and the religious leaders can't find an opening in their hearts for Jesus. How painful it must be for Jesus to face his failure to win over the very people he came to save. To mock his self-revelation as the indictment for his execution must have stung bitterly. All week I can focus on this part of his Passion as I observe how little he is accepted in so much of our culture today.

Judas and Peter ([Matthew 26:69–27:10](#))

They both betray him. Judas can't perceive how God could forgive him, and he kills himself. How much Jesus must have grieved Judas's despair. Peter becomes transformed by his denial. He is able to be used by Jesus to lead in great humility and gratitude.

The Roman Trial ([Matthew 27:11–21](#))

The Roman trial is full of ironies. He will not have his death sentence commuted. Pilate will wash his hands of the whole affair, and he will say he finds him innocent but then have him whipped and executed. We can place this trial in our memory this week as we are filled with a sense of sadness, outrage, gratitude for what Jesus went through, for me.

The Way to Crucifixion ([Matthew 27:22–66](#))

We have provided an online prayer experience, “The Stations of the Cross,” to help with this part of the contemplation on the Passion. Perhaps we can do one or two stations a day, to enter more deeply into the journey of Jesus into intimacy with our suffering. The grace we desire is to experience a growing compassion with Jesus and to know most intimately that this is all an experience of his love, for me.

Pray with [Psalm 22](#). The Gospel writers must have found it to be a powerful source of inspiration about how Jesus must have used this prayer in his struggle and trust in God.

Begin each day by focusing on a part of this mystery, perhaps just for a few moments while doing something very routine (putting on slippers, while showering, while dressing). Throughout the day, recall these reflections in the background of your consciousness. Notice the mystery of the Passion of Jesus revealed in the smallest of things you see and experience in your day. End each day expressing some gratitude for what you are learning and feeling in Jesus’ Passion this week.

Pray in these or similar words...

Dear Jesus,

I came to prayer this week to be with you in your suffering. I stay with you in the Gospel, as you are whipped, beaten, mocked, and stripped. I watch as you struggle to surrender yourself to God. I see the fear and vulnerability you must feel, even as you give your total trust to God. You never stop praying as they batter you with questions, treat you with derision and condescension. You are with your Father in spirit, because that is the only way you know to continue this journey God sent you on.

This week I will walk with you and spend time with you in these events. I will again join you at the Last Supper and in the garden. I can’t bear to watch as you are in the trial and I feel so helpless watching you, my dear friend, be pushed into this inevitable death. I know these next hours will be so terrible and I want to be there for you, but I find myself hiding with Peter, pretending I don’t know you, afraid for myself.

It is only as I do the stations of the cross that I can take each step with you in this. I can walk with you each little way as I see how you have done all of this for me. How can I thank you for all you have done? I will carry those images with me throughout this week.

I want to be with you in your familiar story this week.

Thank you, Jesus, for being with me. Please, let me be with you in each moment of your agony this week, as I try to recognize you in the daily sufferings of my life.