

The Way of the Cross (Mark 15: 21-32)

The Crucifixion of Jesus

21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²²Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' ²⁷And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!' ³¹In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

(Translation © Lawrence Moore, *Mark for Missional Disciples*, Walking the Walk Publications, 2018)

Commentary

The story that began with the announcement of a road in the desert for the Lord to walk on (1:2) ends with Jesus walking the road to Golgotha and crucifixion. That sense of “How can it have come to this?” permeates Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion at every point. He emphasizes the dashed hopes of the people and the triumph of Jesus’ enemies in the mockery of the crowds in the reactions of the various bystanders – the contrast between what should have been and what is actually transpiring. The ending of Jesus’ life and ministry on a Roman cross calls into question Mark’s opening promise that this is a Good News story: in what possible sense can that be true?

Simon of Cyrene: “It should have been Peter!” (15:21)

If we have learned one thing from Mark’s sparse, stripped back prose, it is that everything in the story is included for a purpose. There are no incidental or accidental characters. What, then, might we make of his introduction of Simon of Cyrene, who is pressed into service by the Romans to carry Jesus’ cross?

The aim of Mark’s passion narrative is to make clear what Jesus meant when he called his disciples to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him”; to “lose their lives for his sake and the gospel” (8:34-35). There are four different “cross-bearers” in his passion narrative other than Jesus himself, who take up the cross for reasons other than the Good News of the Kingdom: Barabbas, who was prepared to “take up his cross” for the insurrection; the two bandits, who had been members of a rural rebel army; and Simon of Cyrene, who is pressed into service by

Rome.

There is one more person that the story has led us to expect to be there, and who is glaringly conspicuous by his absence: Simon Peter. Simon was the first disciple whom Jesus called. Unlike Matthew, Mark does not recount Jesus changing his name to Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-19). Instead, he emphasizes Peter's deep resistance to the Way of the Cross. In Mark's narrative, Peter is portrayed as being torn between his fierce love for and loyalty to Jesus (Peter, the Rock) and his aversion to what following Jesus means in practice (Simon). He is "a man caught between two names". Significantly, as we have seen, when Jesus finds Peter sleeping in Gethsemane instead of keeping watch with him, he reverts to the name "Simon" (14:37). It signals Peter the betrayer, deserter and denier.

Despite his protestation, "Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you" (14:31), Peter has denied ever knowing Jesus and is nowhere to be seen as Jesus walks the Way of the Cross towards Golgotha.

Simon of Cyrene seems to be Mark's way of emphasizing Peter's absence: it should have been Peter bearing Jesus'/his own cross! Mark underscores Peter's complete failure to follow Jesus when faced with the cross in the detail he gives us about Simon. Simon is a Gentile (his sons have Gentile names). He is bearing the Jesus' cross because he is "pressed into service" by Rome, rather than freely following in answer to Jesus' call. He is as reluctant a follower of Jesus to Golgotha as his namesake, who is so glaringly "not there".

Should we read something into Mark's statement that Simon of Cyrene is from a rural area? Mark describes him as *erchomenon ap'agrou* – literally, "coming from the fields". While this is legitimately translated as "coming from the countryside", it also echoes the three parables of the field – the Sower and the Seed, the Parable of the Growing Seed, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed (chapter 4). This is the point in the narrative where Jesus has been at pains to say that God's Kingdom will come through growth, not armed revolt. What if Mark is trying to tell us that the cross can be borne for reasons that will not bring about the Kingdom; that Jesus must indeed die as its seed if the harvest that is the Kingdom is to become possible? This is what Peter (also from rural Galilee) ought to have "got"! Had he done so, he would have been there.

Whether Mark intends this level of textual connection, it fits with what he will make clear: this extraordinarily tragic end to the story of Jesus *is* Good News, because it is the means by which God will bring about the Kingdom. Jesus is "taking up his cross" because he is willing to "lose his life for the sake of the gospel".

The journey to Golgotha: discipleship, politics and spirituality (14:22)

Mark simply says, "Then they brought Jesus to the place that is called Golgotha, which means, "the place of the skull" (14:22). The *Via Dolorosa* with its Stations of the Cross has become, within Christian practice, an individual, pious exercise in spiritual examination and devotion. That is not inappropriate as a spiritual exercise

for a disciple of Jesus. What has been lost, however, is the intensely political dimension of Jesus' crucifixion, and with it the connection with politics in the spirituality of the cross.

Mark portrays the humiliation, procession and crucifixion as a Roman Triumph – a political execution demonstrating and celebrating the defeat of a rebel against Rome. The official charge against him is hung on the cross as both a proclamation and deterrent: "The King of the Jews". Jesus is executed for confronting what St Paul calls the "principalities and powers" (Ephesians 6:12), as John the Baptist had been. He dies because of his political activity in service of the Kingdom.

Mark has unmasked those powers during his trial: the temple system, the Jewish royalists, Rome and Satan. We habitually differentiate clearly between the "human" powers (which we label "political") and Satan/demons (which we label "spiritual"). Neither Jesus nor Mark operates within that worldview. We have seen what are, for them, the integral connections between demon possession and the Roman Occupation. Mark's Jesus is clear: his entire ministry – his teaching, healing, exorcisms and proclamation of the Kingdom – is an assault on "The Strong Man".

To understand both Jesus and Mark at this point, we need to stop thinking of Satan and demons in terms of the supernatural world of *The Exorcist* – although it is easy to see where the film makers might have drawn inspiration from the account of the Gerasene demoniac. Rather, we need to recognize Mark's framework of a conflict between two opposing world orders: the Kingdom of God and Empire.

THE WORLD AS:	KINGDOM OF GOD	EMPIRE
<i>Ruler:</i>	God	Satan
<i>Representative:</i>	Jesus	Caesar (+ client kings and priests)
<i>Experienced as:</i>	Heaven on earth	Hell on earth
<i>Source of power:</i>	Holy Spirit	Demons
<i>Priorities:</i>	"The least first"	"The first at the expense of the least"
<i>Sustained by:</i>	Compassion, inclusion, generosity	Exploitation, exclusion, greed
<i>Mechanisms:</i>	Healing, exorcism, self-sacrifice	Power, money, military force
<i>Characteristics:</i>	Liberation, flourishing, life	Domination, despair, death

Jesus' journey to the cross is the proclamation of the nature and cost of discipleship: it is to share in Jesus' mission to transform the world into the Kingdom of God. This means confrontation with all the powers that combine to make the world the way it is. There is no distinction between the political engagement with the structures of power on behalf of the least first that this entails; and the proclamation, pastoral care, and formation through prayer, Bible study, and spiritual discipline that we habitually associate with discipleship and spiritual growth. All of these things are equally life in the Holy Spirit, and what it means to follow Jesus in the Way of the Cross.

Wine and myrrh (15:23)

Jesus is offered drugged wine to ease his pain, but refuses: he has vowed not to drink wine again until he drinks it in the Kingdom, in renewed fellowship with his disciples (14:25).

“And they crucified him ...” the brutality of crucifixion (15:23)

Mark did not need to dwell on the details of Jesus’ crucifixion for his audience. The poor, the dispossessed and the marginalized experienced life under the Occupation as hell on earth. They were, at best, little more than slaves – expendable cogs in the vast machinery of Empire that operated for the benefit of the power-holders. As those who yearned most keenly for liberation, they were only too aware of the consequences of rebellion: crucifixions were a stark, everyday reminder that regime change was a hopeless pipe dream.

The horrifying brutality of crucifixion was absolutely intentional. It was designed as an instrument of “shock and awe”, to dissuade any would-be dissidents or rebels. Hans Reudi Weber gives us a chilling portrait of what Mark’s bare statement entailed:

Sometimes the condemned had a tablet, stating the *causa poena*, the reason for his conviction, hung around his neck. He then had himself to carry the transverse bar of the cross (the *patibulum*) to the place of execution. There he was undressed and scourged, if this had not already been done. According to ancient custom, the executioners were allowed to distribute the condemned man’s clothing among themselves. At the place of execution there usually already stood a pole (*stipes* or *palu*) ... The convict was then laid on the ground, both forearms or wrists were tied or nailed to the transverse bar, and he was then raised by the *patibulum* ... If the condemned man was intended to be visible from afar, the high cross was chosen. Usually, though, the pole measured no more than about seven feet. This meant that wild animals could tear the crucified man apart. The feet of the victims were not supported by a footrest as Christian art has depicted it since the seventh century, but were tied or nailed to the pole. Usually, the condemned man “sat” on a peg (*sedile* or *cornu*) which was fixed to the middle of the pole ... Generally, the crucified one died of gradual asphyxiation.

(HR Weber, *The Cross: Tradition and Interpretation*, cited by Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, pp 385-6)

We need to hear Jesus’ call to “deny yourself take up our cross and follow me” in this light. To do so is to begin to understand the horror of the disciples at Jesus’ words, and their deep resistance to following him on this particular road. To risk crucifixion by taking up arms and fighting Empire is one thing; deliberately and knowingly to submit to crucifixion without doing everything in his power to avoid the cross is the step too far.

The division of Jesus’ clothes (15:24)

It was customary for the executioners to divide up the clothes of the

prisoners. There is poignant symbolic significance here: Jesus' clothes, which had once healed a bleeding woman, are now, like their owner, impotent.

We need also to note here the first of three allusions to Psalm 22, the great Psalm of Lament. Mark evokes it three times during his account of the crucifixion: the division of Jesus' clothes (Psalm 22:18), the mockery of the crowds (Psalm 22: 7f) and Jesus' death cry of abandonment (Psalm 22:1). As we shall see, Mark deliberately constructs his narrative to rob the echoes of the psalm of any hope.

The two bandits (15:27)

Mark has portrayed Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane as a bandit arrest: the arresting officers arrive armed with swords and clubs, clearly expecting a fight. This provokes Jesus' question, "Have you come to arrest me as though I were a bandit?" (14:48). Now his crucifixion between two bandits only underscores Mark's contention that this is how Jesus was perceived by Rome and how Pilate's inscription above him ("The King of the Jews") was to be interpreted. The inscription above him is Rome's charge and Rome's proclamation of who Jesus is and represents in the imperial world: he is a rural terrorist.

There is a deep irony in Mark's narrative. He tells us that the bandits are crucified "one on the right and one on the left". This echoes the request of James and John (10:37). The echo is deliberate. Jesus' response had been to ask them whether they were able to share his baptism and his cup (ie his suffering). He has declared that they will later "take up their cross" and will suffer for his sake and for the gospel; for now, though, they will fail. Therefore "to sit at his right and his left" is not his to give (10:40). It transpires on Golgotha that this "privilege" is given to the two bandits!

Why? We have seen that Mark's frames his account of Jesus' crucifixion as a meditation on Jesus means by "taking up the cross". The bandits have been prepared to do so. They have been faithful to the call to throw off the yolk of bondage and Occupation. We need to realize that Jesus asks no less of his own disciples. Following Jesus is not a way of *avoiding* the cross. It is a result of the call to join the Kingdom's revolution against Rome. The difference between Jesus and the bandits is about the nature of that revolution: for Jesus, it is a non-violent revolution. It means suffering and absorbing the violence of The System, rather than participating in it.

Mark emphasizes this in the mockery of the bandits (15:32). They effectively say to Jesus, "What price your way, eh? Where has it got you? What difference have you made?" Like the crowds and the chief priests, they are looking for some sign of power (coming down from the cross) that will give any sense of hope that Jesus' way of revolution (taking up the cross) will have any effect. Ironically, it is precisely by remaining on the cross that "the seed of the Kingdom" will be planted.

The mocking bystanders (15:29-32)

The mockery of the bystanders is Mark's second echo of Psalm 22. It is also their verdict on Jesus' messianic mission: it had started out with so much promise, and

look at it now. The cross is the apparent death of the New World of the Kingdom that Jesus had proclaimed. It exposes it as a hopeless pipedream. This is not the way that God will save the people and bring about the Kingdom. The chief priests make this explicit: the cross makes it impossible to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel (15:32). The messianic dream that Jesus evoked and represented has died. Rome has triumphed.

“Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me”

Mark intends us to be similarly horrified by Jesus’ call. Its reality for Jesus and Mark’s own community challenges our easy acceptance of cost-free discipleship in a faith that is at fatally at ease in the world of Empire – the money-driven world of power politics, influence and military force. The principalities and powers perceived Jesus as so dangerous that he needed to be killed. For the most part, the only contemporary threat of death comes from being part of a fading organization that is being abandoned in droves by insiders and outsiders alike as irrelevant, reactionary and unattractive, mourning its glory days of power and influence. The cross has been sanitized and sentimentalized – a piece of jewelry to be worn, or the subject of mawkish hymns like “The Old Rugged Cross”. It is incorporated into coats of arms, national flags and military badges. It no longer stops any would-be disciple in their tracks, in agonized indecision about whether they can realistically shoulder the cost of answering Jesus’ call.

That ought to signal a crisis for the church. The Kingdom has not yet come; Empire still rules. How, then, is it possible that discipleship of Jesus is so apparently cost-free? The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, argues that the Christian church needs to rediscover and recover the cross if it is to be renewed as truly the church of disciples of Jesus in the present. He writes in *The Crucified God*:

The cross is and cannot be loved ... Today the church and theology must turn to the crucified Christ in order to show the world the freedom he offers. This is essential if they wish to become what they assert they are: the church of Christ and Christian theology ...

There is an inner criterion of all theology, and of every church that claims to be Christian ... It is the crucified Christ himself. When churches, theologians and forms of belief appeal to him – which they must, if they are Christian – then they are appealing to the one who judges them most severely and liberates them most radically from lies and vanity, from the struggle for power and from fear. The churches, believers and theologians must be taken at their word. And this word is ‘the word of the cross’. It is the criterion of their truth, and therefore the criticism of their untruth. The crisis of the church in present-day society is ... the crisis of its own existence as the church of the crucified Christ ...

To take the theology of the cross further at the present day means to go beyond a concern for personal salvation, and to inquire about the liberation of man [*sic*] and his new relationship to the reality of the demonic crisis in his society. Who is the true man in the sight of the Son of Man who was rejected and rose again in the

freedom of God? ... What does it mean to recall the God who was crucified in a society whose official creed is optimism, and which is knee-deep in blood?

(Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, pp1-4)

Going deeper into the text (Mark 15:21-32)

Jesus is marched, in the grand tradition of Roman conquest, to the site of execution (15:21f). This spectacle functioned as a deterrent to would-be subversives and as an aggrandizement of the Roman military presence. The prisoner would normally carry his own execution stake, but presumably Jesus is too weak from torture. "Simon of Cyrene from the country" is drafted for the task. This closes the circle of the Jerusalem narrative: Jesus entered the holy city amid a triumphant crowd of rural peasants (see 11:8), but leaves it accompanied by a sole farmer.

It is much easier to appreciate the glory of Jesus' resurrection than his painful crucifixion. Yet, Mark's Gospel, written around 65 to 70 AD, focuses on Jesus' "suffering servanthood." Christians believe that we are "saved by the death *and* resurrection of Jesus." The key is to put both together. We need to deeply trust and allow both our own dyings and our own certain resurrections, just as much as Jesus did! This is the full pattern of transformation. If we trust both, we are indestructible. That is how Jesus "saves" us from meaninglessness, cynicism, hatred, and violence—which is indeed death.

God is Light, yet this full light is hidden in darkness (John 1:5) so only the sincere seeker finds it. It seems we all must go into darkness to see the light, which is counter-intuitive for the ego. We resisted this language of "descent" and overwhelmingly made Christianity into a religion of "ascent," where Jesus became a self-help "saviour" instead of a profound wisdom-guide who really transforms our minds and hearts.

In recent centuries, reason, medicine, technology, and efficiency have allowed many modern, middle- and upper-class people to rather "successfully" avoid the normal and ordinary "path of the fall." Yet the perennial and mature tradition of all world religions, and even the modern addiction recovery movement, believes that growth comes through some form of "falling upward," not climbing upward, which is all about ego.

Many of the happiest and most authentic people I know love a God who walks with crucified people and thus reveals and "redeems" their plight as God's own. For them, God is not observing human suffering from a distance but is somehow *in* human suffering *with us and for us*. Such a God includes our suffering in the co-redemption of the world, as "all creation groans in one great act of giving birth" (Romans 8:22).

Is this possible? Could it be true that we "make up in our bodies all that still has to be

undergone for the sake of the Whole Body” (Colossians 1:24)? Are we somehow partners with the divine? Of course we are! In fact, I think that is the whole point. The mystic knows there is only *one* suffering and we all participate in it together: the eternal suffering love of God.

Jesus takes on our suffering, bears it, and moves through it to resurrection. We too can follow this path, actively joining God’s loving solidarity with all suffering since the foundation of the world. Jesus does not ask us to worship him. He asks us to follow him by trusting and allowing this risky but revealing journey.
(Richard Rohr: Center for Action and Contemplation)

All age worship ideas (Mark 15:21-32)

One of the keys to good all age worship is to keep it simple and relatively short. Ideally aim for a service of 45-50 minutes. That’s not to say a service can’t be longer but if you are thinking of 1hr30+ think carefully about your use of space and above all else be creative, take risks and have fun – partying is integral to the kingdom but we’ll leave that for a year on Luke...

Reflection - One thing we can discern from the Gospels and the disciples is that they believed in a connection between Jesus and the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies. One of the most significant prophecies to shape our thinking and understanding of the cross has been the ‘Servant songs’ of Isaiah. Chapter 53.5 ‘He was pierced for our transgressions’ is a case in point. Of course this has led to considerable debate and discussion as to whether these verses can be attributed and connected in this way. They have been words that have caused division between people of differing theological viewpoints.

Perhaps where there can be some agreement is in recognizing that Jesus crucifixion was as a result of political and theological differences that led to an unjust trial and sentencing. In that sense on the cross he bears the consequence of human weakness – or sin. Jesus is killed because of the failings of complacent religion and a dominant power system. But does that go far enough? Was something else happening here? From Jesus prayer and experience in Gethsemane we might certainly draw that conclusion. Could the ‘cup’ from which he would happily be delivered if it be God’s will represent the sin and suffering of the whole world?

In some languages ‘sin’ means ‘without’. I’ve always found it a useful tool when thinking about the wider concept of sin – the God who does not let us go is nevertheless ignored, rejected, denied, pushed out...and into that ‘empty space’ pours in greed, injustice, selfishness, arrogant pride and all the things that create a world which is a far cry from the biblical understanding of God’s reign. It is to the victims who unwittingly occupy this empty space that Jesus comes, that Jesus bears the sin of the world and shines light onto the way of the kingdom that comes with

him.

Simon of Cyrene may not have been expecting to be doing much on the day of the crucifixion but on that day he bears some of the physical weight of the cross. As followers of Jesus, the church of Christ, we are called like him to bear that cross for the victims of the empty spaces created by the world's sin and shine light upon the way of the kingdom. It could be for people exploited and trafficked, those seeking asylum or refuge, it might be for those struggling with mental health issues, addiction issues, for those who cannot feed their children without a food parcel because of crippling debt or unpaid benefit, for those who hate and hurt themselves because no one has told them how loved and precious they are. Like Simon our 'cross' is to be borne, not to be planted so we can be nailed to it, but carried to remind ourselves and the world of who we follow and what that kind of sacrificial love entails but most importantly what it can achieve.

Idea/Prayer

You will need: Post-its, large nails, couple of hammers, a cross or two planks laid down, a basket of small wooden or card crosses.

Pass the post-its and nails and invite people to take one of each.

Reflect upon the things that deny God and the life he offers freely to all. It could be that for each participant there is a particular issue of injustice that burdens or the name of an individual. Invite them to write the name or situation on the post it and then to nail it to the cross – for some this may be an act of commitment to the task of addressing the situation being prayed for or it could be a prayer/claiming of freedom for the individual concerned.

After people have completed the action invite them to take away a small cross that through the coming week they will be reminded of the burden they have borne and perhaps will continue to pray and act.

The noise of nails being hammered can be a powerful one – you may feel that instrumental background is helpful as an accompaniment.

Liturgies and hymns Mark 2: 1-12

This is where you can find hymn suggestions and liturgies for use with this week's text.

Prayer Reflection for Good Friday

(inspired by Mark 15:30, Luke 23:39)

I wonder, Jesus,
that you did not save yourself;

not so much from the cross,
from pain or from death
– although the terror and agony
of those certainly call out
for liberation –
but I wonder
that you did not
save yourself
from us:
from our mob mentality,
from our voyeuristic thrill of abusing flesh,
from our violent fear
and our rebellion.
Forty years in the wilderness didn't teach us.
Prophets and war couldn't deter us.
The miracles of the Son of Man
couldn't sway us
from making
gold idols of our egos
or clawing at the earth for ownership.
I wonder that you didn't see
that we cannot be saved,
and save yourself
(save God)
instead.

(Written by Rachel Hackenberg, and posted on **Rachel G Hackenberg**.<http://rachelhackenberg.com/blog/>)

A Communion Liturgy

It is a dark day to be gathered here, Jesus;
It is a barren place this ñ filled with shadows and death.
But we are here because we need to be here;
the shadows of this day are our shadows, the death is our death;
Now, as we worship, your cross becomes for us a mirror,
reflecting back to us our own brokenness, sinfulness and darkness.
And as we reflect on Your love-inspired sacrifice,
we discover an open doorway to life.
We gather at the foot of Your cross,
because we desperately need to be here.

Amen.

Praise and Confession

It seems impossible that anyone would give what you did
to save men and women like us;

But, you gave yourself freely for our sakes.
It seems unimaginable that anyone could love the way you did,
including outcasts, rebels, and even your persecutors,
and refusing to strike back;
But, you loved so much that you laid down your life for our sakes.
It seems inconceivable that anyone would offer the forgiveness that you did, even as
nails pierced your flesh, and the cross was stained with your blood;
But, you did not hold our sin against us,
and took on yourself the suffering that should have been ours.
Forgive us that we have allowed greed and violence,
pride and deceit, bitterness and coldness,
to have a place in our hearts;
And fill us again with Your immeasurable grace, Your inexhaustible love,
and Your unconquerable life,
That we may be changed, and may express our love and devotion through lives of
worship.
Amen.

The Lords Prayer is said or sung together.

Requests

If the cross tells us anything, O Lord,
it is that You know and share our suffering:
You are with us, and all those who are victims of disease,
of the violence or abuse of others,
of our own ignorance, foolishness or sin.

Help us and restore us, O Lord, we pray.
You are with us, and all those who inflict pain on others and on our world,
through our selfishness or greed,
through our brokenness or anger,
through our rigidity or need to be right.
Help us and restore us, O Lord, we pray.

You are with us, and all those who are fearful of threats
to this world we call home,
to our safety and survival,
to our sense of community and togetherness as people.
Help us and restore us, O Lord, we pray.

Silent personal prayers may be offered here.

Christ of the Cross,
See our need of Your grace,
Hear our prayer for Your mercy, And come to us again, to help and restore, because
we cannot heal ourselves. Amen.

The Sacrament

Jesus came into the world, not to judge it, but to save it.
We are so grateful for God's infinite love,
and we celebrate with all of creation, the saving work,
of our Suffering Saviour.

On the night before he was nailed to the merciless cross,
Jesus shared His last meal with His friends.
He took the bread, He broke it, and He gave thanks,
and then He passed it among them saying,
This is my body which is broken for you. Eat it and remember Me.

He took the wine, and He gave thanks,
and then He passed it among them saying,
This is my blood which is shed for you. Drink it and remember Me.
And so, we take, we eat and drink, and we remember:
There is no greater love,
than this sacrifice which You, Jesus, made for us;
When we come to this meal, O Lord,
we are reminded that it is the death and darkness in us,
that drove You to the cross;

And so we come with no pride, no sense of entitlement;
we come humbly and with deep gratitude;
For it is You alone that has made a place for us
at Your table.

Amen.

As you awaken us to your presence by your Spirit,
may we know this bread and wine,
to be your body and blood;
As you embrace us now, by your Spirit,
may we be changed, so that together we become
the embodiment of your love, of your life to the world.

Amen.

The sacrament is shared

Hymn Suggestion

Take up your cross and follow me!
Dare risk upsetting powers-that-be –
the forces shaping life and thought;
expose the webs in which we're caught.

Take up your cross at one with those

whose role as scapegoats grows and grows;
so love 'the least', who give, give, give –
those asked to die before they live.

Take up your cross – the Empire's tool –
though it may make you seem a fool;
but not to bless the fear it spreads,
instead to drain its poisoned threads:

Denounce the lie that 'might is right';
that says the poor deserve their plight.
Take up your cross and follow me:
the kingdom's truth shall set you free!
Amen.

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Suggested tune: Gonfalon royal