

his mother..” We do not know if this was Rufus, son of Simon. Rufus was a not uncommon name. We do know that at Pentecost the apostles addressed people in many tongues, among whom were residents “*from...the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene.*” (Acts 2:10). Cyrenian followers of Jesus are also mentioned as fleeing to Antioch after the martyrdom of St Stephen (Acts 11:20). Tradition states that Simon of Cyrene shared the Gospel in Egypt. The apocrypha say that Simon was martyred in 100 A.D. by being cut in half with a saw. The Roman Catholic Church does not venerate Simon, but the Eastern Orthodox do, on the basis that Simon is to be respected and celebrated as an example of how to follow Jesus in His words; “*Let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23).

NEXT WEEK: *Joseph of Arimathea...*

Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 125: Response: What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad.

Second Reading: Philippians 3: 8-14

Gospel Acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Seek good and not evil so that you may live, and that the Lord God of hosts may really be with you. Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Gospel: John 8: 1-11

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.



Pietro della Vecchia

Fifth Sunday of Lent Sunday Cycle C, 2022 Weekly Reflection: Minor Players in the Passion (5): Simon of Cyrene

All the Gospels save St John’s identify Simon of Cyrene as assisting Jesus to carry His cross on the way to His crucifixion. The scene is captured in the fifth Station of the Cross. Cyrene was in modern day Libya and had a large Jewish community. St Mark and St Luke tell us that Simon “*was coming in from the country*”. At the Passover Jerusalem would be overflowing with visitors and so many who came to celebrate the feast would have to stay outside the city and come in from the country on a daily basis. These pieces of information suggest that Simon may have been Jewish, visiting from Cyrene to celebrate Passover.

The Gospels make it clear that the Roman soldiers compelled Simon to help Jesus. There is no intimation that he was at the time a follower of Jesus. Roman crucifixion, a key part of which was to require the victim to carry his cross (or at least the *patibulum*, or crossbeam), was public entertainment. The soldiers were expected to ensure that death did not occur on the way to crucifixion. It is likely that Simon was press-ganged to carry the cross since the soldiers thought that Jesus might die before He was actually crucified.

There is evidence that his involuntary involvement in this horrific scene led to Simon subsequently becoming a disciple of Jesus. Would three evangelists have specifically named him if the part he played was limited to his brief assistance in cross-carrying? Or was he named because he meant something to the early disciples? Further, St Mark informs us that Simon was “*the father of Alexander and Rufus*”. This casual mention, without more information, has been interpreted by some as implying that Simon’s sons were also well known to those for whom St Mark wrote his Gospel. The sons may therefore have been active in the early church in Jerusalem. Finally, St Paul asks the Romans (Romans 16:13) to: “*Greet Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also*