

PARISHES OF  
**ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH**  
**AND**  
**SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW**  
**WEEKLY REFLECTION**

**Sunday 8th March 2026 Third Sunday of Lent**  
**The Way of the Cross**  
**Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the Cross**

*"A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross." Mark 15: 21*

*"Without beauty, without majesty, we saw him, no looks to attract our eyes." Isaiah 52:14*

He was worn out already. His friends had been no help, falling asleep - they couldn't even watch one hour. Pleading with his father, in his humanity, to take the cup away. Scourged, thorns twisted into a crown pushed onto his head, spat upon, mocked. This once vibrant man, this perfect man, looked appalling - his face was so disfigured, he seemed hardly human. But the soldiers didn't care about that. They couldn't have him dying too soon. That wouldn't do at all - a public spectacle of crucifixion on Golgotha was required.

Simon was only there for the Passover. He didn't volunteer to get involved in any of this. The soldiers forced him. They forced him to carry the cross and to head to Golgotha. They forced him to give Jesus comfort and relief. They forced him to play a role in Jesus's mission of salvation for mankind. Do we have to be forced to share the weight of His Cross?

The only way to heaven is the Way of the Cross (Matthew 16:24). The only way to see God face to face is the Way of the Cross (Rev 12:11). The only way to union with Christ is the Way of the Cross (Rev 7:14-17) We know this as truth and we can believe this intellectually, but in our hearts it is very hard to accept.

We don't like sacrifice; we don't like suffering. We certainly don't like being told what to do. We like easy. We like to stay in our Hobbit holes - its comfortable there; it's safe. But that isn't the way of Christ; it isn't the way of the Cross. We know death in this life is inevitable. We cannot escape the Cross; Golgotha is for everyone.

The paradox of Christianity - why so few people can accept it, particularly in contemporary culture - is that suffering, sacrifice and love are totally intertwined; they are inseparable. In His sacrifice for our sins, in His suffering and His total self giving for us, Jesus shows a love that goes to the end. A great audacious, reckless love that goes beyond any other love we can ever experience. And the only response to that is to love Him back, to open our heart to His heart.

When we agree to follow Him we die to the world. We are in it for the long term. And to the world it looks like madness, because this is His command:

*"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." Matthew 16: 24*

The hills of Jerusalem were scattered with crosses and our lives are too. We have our own cross, our friends and family have their crosses. War torn nations and suffering peoples have huge crosses. And often they seem too heavy for us to carry or to help others to carry. But every time we show mercy, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, patience, forbearance, humility, gentleness we help to carry those crosses because we show something of Jesus's love.

We bear our own suffering and the sufferings of others out of love for Him. By ourselves this would be impossible. But He gives us the grace to do this and to be able to bear all for His name. He calls us to be fearless, not timid. If we ask, he will fill us with His Holy Spirit as he filled the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and when we become docile to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives we begin to become like Christ.

Can we bear one another's burdens? (Gal 6:2)

**Lord by your cross and resurrection  
you have set us free.  
You are the Saviour of the world.**

Rachel Grayson