

Laudato Si Week

The Rosary of Creation: Sorrowful Mysteries

1. Agony in the garden:

Knowing that the time when His horrifying death was to be fulfilled, Jesus left his followers to pray in the garden at Gethsemane. He left his companions, whom He loved very much, to find solitude and consolation in nature, and there was able to receive the comforting presence of angels.

- a. Do we, like Christ before us, look for God and look for God's comforting solace in nature? Are we able to find solace from God's presence in the small things in life, those moments of respite among flowers, trees and vegetation?
- b. Reflect on Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Human beings began in the garden to be in union with God; do we return there, in either the physical or spiritual sense?

2. Scourging at the pillar:

Jesus is taken and tied to a stone pillar, where he is cruelly whipped and scourged. His agonizing death begins, and those who have had a chance to stop the horrible events or stand with Christ have neglected to do so.

- a. Have we neglected standing with God in solidarity of protecting the integrity of God's creation?
- b. Again call to mind our responsibility to stand with the lowly, the persecuted and the downcast. If we were present at the scourging, what party would we be? Those who openly persecuted and whipped Jesus, those who ran away or would we try to protect His dignity? What response would that look like today as God's creation, as well as the disadvantaged, are "scourged" by a world that is often hostile to anything that stands in the way of interests of the most powerful? As the USCCB said in a statement in February 2010: "People living in poverty-both at home and abroad-contribute least to climate change but they are likely to suffer its worst consequences with few resources to adapt and respond." Like Christ, they are innocent of any wrongdoing and yet are punished for seemingly no reason.

3. Crowning of thorns:

In order to humiliate Jesus, a crown of thorns was woven and placed on His head. This perhaps epitomizes that we are able to betray the inherent goodness in both our fellow human beings and the world that God has created by twisting them to our own narcissistic purposes.

- a. Do we have a tendency to view the world around us as something to be used for our own purposes? Do we twist creation to the point of abuse?

b. Though the thorns were meant to cause Jesus pain and humiliation, He was eventually crowned in a glory that continues through our faith and witness. All creation, however, is supposed to give witness to God's glory. As Pope Francis points out, "The earth, our home is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth" (Laudato Si, 21). How can we help our planet to again reflect the glory of God?

4. Carrying of the Cross:

I don't think there are very many reflections as deep or as rich as that of the 4th Sorrowful Mystery. We are able to see Jesus in all of His human frailty; we see Him stumble, struggle and fall. We see the cruelty of the temporal rulers continue to make its way to the brutal climax. But we also are witnesses to small acts of hope through the actions of Simon and Veronica as well as Jesus' strength in continuing to get up after falling. And these things are what we are called to do in our spiritual journey as well as helping one another in theirs.

a. This mystery calls to mind how we can alleviate Christ's suffering, even today, through simple acts of kindness. Every time we perform an action-regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant-we are like Simon or Veronica helping carry Christ's cross or wiping Christ's bloody face. Acts such as picking up garbage strewn on the ground, planting a tree or garden, recognizing the humanity of a homeless person with a smile or a kind word or turning off a light switch all help to more fully bring Jesus' glory to fuller recognition in the world.

5. Crucifixion:

Christ our Lord dies on the cross. A profoundly heartbreaking event, commemorated whenever we gaze upon a crucifix, celebrate Mass or meditate on this mystery, it's a terrible but, necessary component of our salvation history.

a. What is the first mental image that comes to mind when you think about the death of Jesus? What do His surroundings look like? For many, we probably think about dark, stormy clouds while His followers are mourning His death and others are cheering it. The light of Jesus, at least temporarily, has been extinguished.

b. When we "crucify" Christ by doing things detrimental to harkening His Kingdom, we summon those same storm clouds. We're called to love and care for all of God's creation in its infinite goodness.

c. Remember also the Earth rumbled and shook, terrifying the people who were witnesses to the crucifixion. As Christ groans in agony, so does the Earth and as Earth groans in agony so does Christ.

Taken from the Franciscan Action Network who offers this guided rosary with an emphasis on Caring for Creation as a response to the call to prayer in Pope Francis' "Laudato Si"