

Welcome to Walk to the Cross

The cross means different things to different people these days. For some, it is a piece of jewelry. For others it is a sign and symbol of their commitment to Christ or their call to ordained ministry. For many Christians around the world, the cross is an experience—it takes the form of daily and life-threatening persecution. For every Christian, the beauty and brutality of the cross is the inescapable reality that confronts us during Holy Week, challenging us to consider what it means for us to follow Jesus in taking up our own cross—whatever form that may take.

Jesus challenges us: If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Mark 8:34

Those who first heard these words and decided to follow Jesus had already made a risky choice. It was a perilous time in Roman occupied Palestine—violence and uprisings were common and threats to the state were ruthlessly put down. Jesus' followers knew he was the Messiah, and they thought that meant Jesus would soon be overthrowing the pagans, restoring the temple, and establishing a new kingdom built on justice. That was their dream. But instead of defeating the Romans, Jesus ended up crucified. And all his followers, we included, are left with a command to exchange our dreams for a cross.

This, at its simplest, is what Jesus was all about. Through his crucifixion, the Messiah makes it clear that following him is not without cost. In fact, it is a dangerous choice that inevitably leads to death of one kind or another. Or did we suppose that taking up a cross would require only a few minor adjustments to our ordinary lives?

The persecuted Christians over the years, and today, help us understand more about what it looks like to take up one's cross. Their living faith has grown from a risky choice to align themselves with the cross of Christ. Their cross is a daily struggle to follow Jesus in the midst of betrayal, suffering, threats, and persecution. And this commitment is the source of their extraordinary perseverance and power. They embody the truth that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

So let us walk together, in silence and contemplation around the town of Drake. If you want – offer prayers for the people in the houses we pass near. But also give thanks for the many people who have carried their crosses despite hardships of all kinds. We will stop in various places as we walk the edge of the town for scripture readings. Please keep a comfortable distance from each other wear your mask if you can, and volunteer to read as when we stop. We will end up back here for the final reading. May this be a time of worship, prayer, thankfulness, and reflection about that first Palm Sunday. Thank you for coming. May we bless each other and our Lord Jesus Christ.

NSMC Walk to the Cross Directions – for Drake

1. Church steps Welcome to the Walk to the Cross Reading / Opening Prayer
2. School - Saskatchewan Ave The Suffering and Glory of the Servant Isaiah 52:13- 53:12
3. Hawkins Road & Saskatchewan Ave The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus Luke 22:47-53
4. Hawkins Rd. & Cadiz Ave. Peter denies Jesus Luke 22:54-62
5. Hawkins Rd. & Railroad Ave The mocking and beating of Jesus Luke 22: 63-71
Jesus before the Council
6. Railroad Ave. & Francis St. Jesus before Pilate Luke 23:1-12
Jesus before Herod
7. Railroad Ave. & Norreys St Jesus sentenced to death Luke 23:13-25
8. Norreys St. & Cadiz St The crucifixion of Jesus Luke 23:26-38
9. Norreys St. & Saskatchewan Ave The two criminals Luke 23:39-49
The death of Jesus
10. School - Saskatchewan Ave The burial of Jesus Luke 23:50-53
11. Church steps Imitating Christ's humility Philippians 2:5-11

1. Welcome to the Walk to the Cross Reading / Opening Prayer

2. Reading Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 The Suffering and Glory of the Servant

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals—so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;

and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;

yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away.

Who could have imagined his future?

For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain.

When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;

because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

3. Reading Luke 22:47-53 The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?”

When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit?”

When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

4. Reading Luke 22:54-62 Peter Denies Jesus

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.”

But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.”

A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.”

But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.”

But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

5. Reading Luke 22:63-71 The Mocking and Beating of Jesus

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” They kept heaping many other insults on him.

Jesus before the Council

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.”

He replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

All of them asked, “Are you, then, the Son of God?”

He said to them, “You say that I am.”

Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!”

6. Reading Luke 23:1-12 Jesus before Pilate

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.”

Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

He answered, “You say so.”

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.”

But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.”

Jesus before Herod

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer.

The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

7. Reading

Luke 23:13-25

Jesus Sentenced to Death

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.”

Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”

A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.”

But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed.

So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

8. Reading

Luke 23:26-38

The Crucifixion of Jesus

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.

But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”
The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”

There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

9. Reading Luke 23:39-49 The Two Criminals

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

The Death of Jesus

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun’s light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.”

And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts.

But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

10. Reading Luke 23:50-55 The Burial of Jesus

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.

The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

11. Reading Philippians 2:5-11 Imitating Christ's Humility

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Leave in Silence