

Awaken me to your presence  
Alert me to your love,  
Affirm me in your peace.

Open to me your way  
Reveal to me your joy,  
Enfold me in your warmth.

For my heart is ready,  
Holy One, my heart is ready.

*... silence ...*

**From Psalm 107**

Some sat in darkness and in gloom, prisoners in misery and in irons,  
<sup>11</sup>for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.

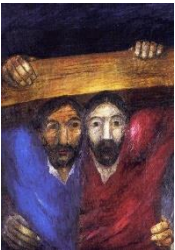
<sup>12</sup>Their hearts were bowed down with hard labour; they fell down, with no one to help.

<sup>13</sup>Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;

<sup>14</sup>he brought them out of darkness and gloom, and broke their bonds asunder.

<sup>15</sup>Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

<sup>16</sup>For he shatters the doors of bronze, and cuts in two the bars of iron.



**a GLOBAL issue**

-

**a PERSONAL issue**

how do we use our power?

coercive control, abuse, manipulation?

.India withholds fuel from Nepal

.Assad withholds food from civilians in north Syria

.the Anglican communion places sanctions on its North American community

.the West places embargoes on Iran to stop nuclear developments

.a country's debt is talked up to justify privatization sell-offs to international companies.

I go silent hoping my spouse notices I am sad.

They put a child in a cupboard as punishment for disobedience.

The aid worker decides 'first come, first served' is easiest way to give out food.

He threatens to have an affair unless she complies.

A government funds social housing but turns a blind eye when investors purchase.

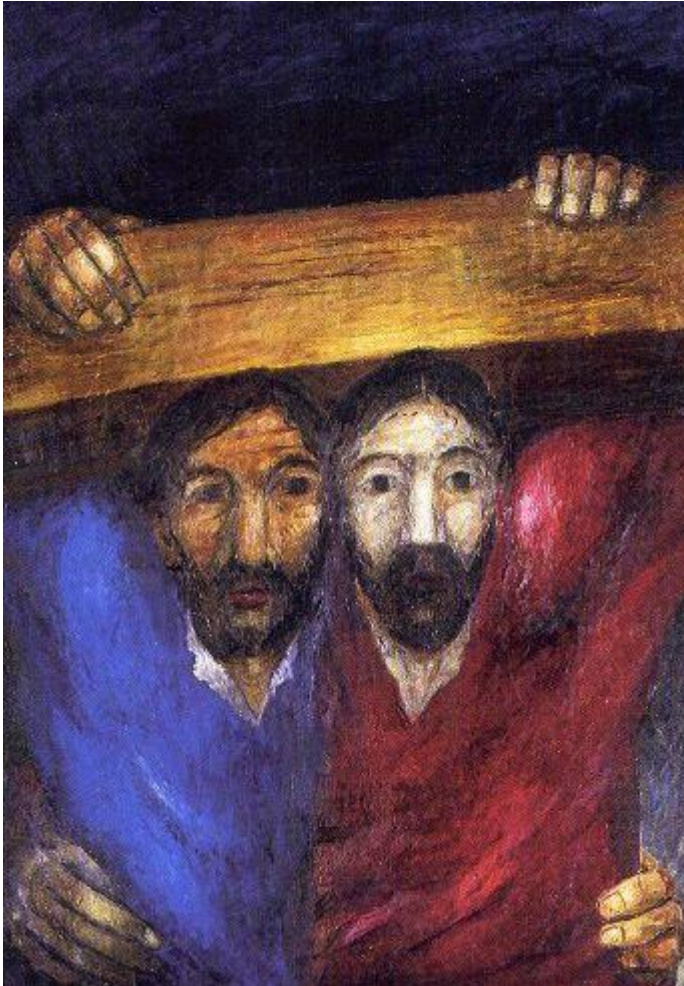
can I imagine a wholesome alternative to each of these?

### ***The sacred gaze***

Allow yourself to be drawn into this experience with a trusting heart. Allow yourself to settle.

Imagine your whole self arriving as you focus on the painting in front of you. Let it engage you – notice the movement, the stillness, the opposites, the contrasts.

mid-morning :: Luke 23.26



What do you see? Let your eyes travel over the whole of the scene – and then rest where your attention draws you most.

Where do you feel invited to stop? Where do you feel least invited to dwell?

Do you like the painting? The colours? The subject matter? Why?

Give the painting a name which is a feeling word (anger, joy, peace, hurt...)

Stay with what most 'affects' you or invites you. Let it deeply enter your awareness.

Does it reflect your life in any way?

As you stay with the painting, which word of scripture, or of a poem, suggests itself to you? What music do you hear?

Now let go of the immediate engagement with the painting. Consciously notice your breath flow through you – and relax.

### ***Reflection***

Where – perhaps – in this image has God visited me? How – perhaps – has the image helped me to hold before God some aspect of my life, my vocation? What has begun to be known? What do I need to revisit?

What is stirring in me as I pray? Am I consoled, troubled, left cold? I imagine Jesus himself at my side, and share my feelings with him.

## **Response**

You may wish to commit the image to memory, learn it 'off by heart' – as it were. Whenever your attention strays, quietly return to the image. Invite the memorised image to a place deep within.

*In the face of coercion and abuse, Jesus said -*

What is the significance of this silence?

Feel invited to speak to the Holy One about how the painting affects you.

You may wish to pray these words ... or write your own ... or sit in silence for some time.

Lord, teach us to ~

Work non-violently for the active pursuit of peace  
when others opt for waging the aggression of war.

Draw forth humility from our heart when our ego seeks to triumph over  
and trounce the victims of our self-righteous superiority

Voice open non-defensive dialogue when the loud anger  
and unfair accusations of others attempt to topple us with their ferocity.

Place merciful peace on our lips when words of prejudice, gossip,  
shame, and blame are eager to be there.

Holy One, help us ~

Set to rest what screams for revenge. Bid farewell to what drains away kindness.

Ease out old grudges, remnants of resentment, and any remainders of jealousy.

Sift through rubble of former battles with anyone. Sort out and discard the decomposed rot.

Find what is salvageable, Save what benefits a growthful love.

Resist attempts to mend what is beyond repair.

Let go of what was but can be no more. Move on without reluctance or self-doubt.

Loving God, teach us to ~

Free what trembles with fear. Embrace what longs for acceptance.

Forgo anxiety and worry, which steal peace from the soul and add to inner turbulence.

Resist the desire to grasp. Have only what is essential.

*(Joyce Rupp)*

## **Rest**

Sit quietly with God, at rest in the presence of the One who loves you. Do not worry that you may appear to be doing 'nothing'. Trust that the Holy Spirit is at work in the depths of your spirit, deepening your faith.

Let the image and its message move from your head to your heart to dwell there in peace-full silence.

...

## **And some time later ...**

Was Simon one of those 'men from Cyprus and Cyrene' who shared the good news (see Acts 11.20-39)? Was he transformed from this encounter with Jesus? Solidarity in the face of suffering and abuse ... a life-changer, or just a job he was forced into?

May the gentleness and strength of the Holy One

The delight and vulnerability of thy Way of Christ

And the graceful mystery of the life-giving Spirit

Be with you now and always.

AMEN