

The Garden of Gethsemane

Grace: Ask for the grace of “sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me”

Introduction:

You have celebrated the Last Supper with Jesus. Perhaps there is some excitement with the Passover celebrations but by now you realize that being in Jerusalem is dangerous. Jesus wants to go to a private place and pray. You are invited to go with Him.

Jesus’ Passion begins in the Garden of Gethsemane. Saint Ignatius reminds us that “In the Passion it is proper to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.”



As you sit in the dark quiet of the Garden, you may find it challenging to stay awake with Jesus. How are you adjusting from the sudden switch of celebrating the Passover meal with Jesus to watching Jesus in agony as He prays in the garden? How do you feel going with Jesus to the Garden in the dark of night? How do you feel when you look at Jesus and see the intensity in His eyes? What do you say to Jesus and how does He respond to you and your concerns? How do you respond when Jesus comes back and catches you and the other disciples sleeping?

How do you respond to seeing Judas when you realize that he is the one who brought the guards? What experiences of betrayal do you have? How do you respond to the guards as they make their move to arrest Jesus?

It is difficult work to stay with the feelings of sadness, uncertainty, anxiety, anguish, fear, pain and betrayal. And yet, that is precisely what you are called to do. Pray for the grace to be there insofar as you are able. Talk with Mary about the challenge of staying with Jesus and any fears that you might have. Speak with God about how to find the courage to overcome those fears and to stay with Jesus.

Addenda:

1. *The frame of prayer remains the same. However, keep in mind the three special considerations for the Third Week: What Jesus suffered in His Humanness, and desired to suffer; How Jesus hid His divinity; How Jesus suffered for me.*
2. *What you ask for during this time will challenge you. You are Jesus’ friend now, and you want to act the part of a friend while He goes through His suffering and death. That part gives you pain and anguish. You really want to beg God the Lord to let you enter into the part of a friend.*
3. *It is a common experience for your prayer to go deeply quiet during these days. You may find that words cannot capture your experience. Trust Jesus and the Spirit are with you, and ask that you may remain with them.*

Mark 14:32-52 Gethsemane - They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Teach me how to be
compassionate to the suffering,
to the poor,
the blind,
the lame,
and the lepers;

show me how you revealed
Your deepest emotions,
as when you shed tears,
or when you felt sorrow and anguish
to the point of sweating blood
and needed an angel
to console you.

Above all,
I want to learn how you supported
the extreme pain of the cross,
including the abandonment
of your Father.

--Pedro Arrupe, SJ



In these or similar words ... I see Jesus suffering and in a cold sweat as he tries to find an answer from the Father in heaven for advice and relief of suffering. As I am one of Jesus' close friends it saddens me deeply and I am in a difficult situation on what to do with Jesus. Is this part of God's plan? Am I supposed to let this happen to Jesus? Or should I take action? Then I see Judas with the enemies of Jesus and I wonder what is happening here? Then I remember when Jesus said that one would betray him and I am infuriated and want revenge on Judas. Then thinking back on that night I remembered when Jesus said that I would deny him three times. Hearing those words uttered at the time I thought they were a test from Jesus so now I must stand up for Him. I feel up to the daunting challenge because I know there is opposition to Jesus. The rage inside me builds so I fight back and forcefully protect Jesus. I have never been this angry before. How could Judas do this? He was my friend and now a betrayer. I am fighting with all my will and trying to protect Jesus from them. I am ultimately restrained and I still want to fight but then Jesus turns to me and says "Do not fight or you will be killed" and I comply even though it kills me to do so.



Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand Jesus as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, consider going for a solitary walk in a garden or taking a hike on a nature trail. The idea is to spend some time outside in prayer. Imagine Jesus walking with you. Pay attention to the sounds, smells, and views. If it is a safe area, consider spending some time in the evening after sunset. Reflect on how the experience changes after dark.

