

An Invitation to Prayer during Holy Week

Ruth Haley Barton

Then Jesus came to his disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray..."

Matthew 26:40, 41

It is a custom of the Christian church to keep vigil with Christ at different times and in different ways throughout Holy Week. One of the places from which we draw this custom is Jesus' request to the disciples to be near him and keep watch while he prayed and agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane. Of course, they were unable to fulfill Jesus' request because they kept falling asleep; however, even though they struggled to stay awake to the pain of Jesus' agony, the invitation was there for them, as it is for us today. We also know that there were those few--including Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother Mary, and John--who stayed near the cross and kept watch as Jesus suffered and died.

As a part of our Holy Week observance **we are inviting you to keep vigil—to watch and pray with us—on Good Friday sometime between the hours of 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m.**, the time when Christ suffered on the cross and gave up his life for us. If you would like to join us in this prayer vigil, we are asking you to **e-mail us back and let us know which half hour or one hour block of time during these hours you will set aside for prayer and reflection on Christ's death.**

If you email us back indicating the time slot in which you will be praying, then on Maundy Thursday you will receive an *eReflections* with a link that will provide guidance for your prayer and meditation based on the Stations of the Cross. You will also receive a roster of those who are praying. (If you wish to pray with us, but not have your name included on the roster, please let us know.)

You may want to plan to go to a church, a chapel or a garden that is open for the purpose of meditating on Christ's last hours. Since the meditation we e-mail you will be based on the Stations of the Cross, it might be helpful to find a place that has depictions of Jesus' journey to the cross so that you can walk the stations as you pray. You could also choose to fast through lunch as a way of joining with Christ in his suffering. **Those of us from the Transforming Center who are able will gather in the chapel at the Loretto Center at 12:00 noon to pray the Stations of the Cross together. If you are able to join us, you would be most welcome.** Everything you need will be provided so just bring yourself!

Let us enter prayerfully into this Holy Week together, watching and waiting with Christ so that together we can celebrate the joy of the Resurrection. We cannot keep the feast until we have kept the vigil.

Lord Jesus Christ, prepare our hearts to walk with you the rest of the way this Holy Week.

Help us to find ourselves in this part of your story and not run from the pain and the unanswerable questions contained within it.

Draw us to sit with you at the Last Supper where you shared your heart so tenderly with your friends and also faced your betrayer honestly and without malice.

Help us to stay awake in the Garden of that Dark Night, wrestling with the death and dying that must take place in order for your will to come forth.

Give us the wisdom to know, as you did, when it is time to lay down our life so that some day we can take it up again.

Give us the grace to endure the pain of witnessing your humiliation and rejection so that we can more gracefully endure our own.

Help us to be as gut-wrenchingly honest as you were when you cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Grant us the courage to let go when it is time.

Grant us the patience to wait with you in the silence of death until you call forth the resurrection.

Amen.

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