

Let's crawl inside the mind of Simon of Cyrene for a moment.

They can't do this to me. I don't even know this guy. I was just minding my own business. I live out in the country. I just had to come into the city for a meeting--I saw the crowd and came over here. Well, who wouldn't? Everyone likes to watch a crucifixion. It's fun to see someone else get what they deserve. Why did they pick on me anyway? There were lots of people in the crowd. But those soldiers ~~actually~~ physically grabbed me and forced me into the middle of the street. Now the people aren't just looking at the criminal, they're looking at me. I wonder what they think of me? He's the criminal, not me! He's so weak he can't even carry his own cross; he actually needs help to die.

Jesus, they call him. Must be that religious fanatic. God, what if they think I'm one of his followers. Where are his followers, anyway? If they really believed in him they should be out here, not me. I'm not the kind of guy who goes public with religion. Sure, I believe in God, but that's between him and me. I didn't ask to be a ~~believer~~ ^{believer}, I was just born one. I don't go to meetings, I don't waste my time with committees, I go to the temple when everyone else is there, but that's strictly between me and God. And what the others do is between them and God. God, this cross is heavy. What does he need me for anyway? He should be strong enough to carry the cross on his own.

Well, let's crawl back outside Simon's mind. We don't know what happened to Simon once he got to Calvary. Did he stay, was he moved by the sight, did he hear the news of the resurrection, did he boast that it was he who carried the cross? We don't know. What we do know is that Simon was forced to take part in Holy Week. It wasn't his own choice. But how we follow Christ is our choice. Through Lent, we have followed him with prayer, fasting, and charity. This week your parish offers you the chance to follow him with a retreat, the sacrament of penance, and the services of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Simon is the image of the disciple who picked up a cross and followed Christ. To follow Christ this week or any week, we cannot leave the cross behind.

Regis
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