

**The Stations of the Cross and the Beatitudes, Week 3 2021<sup>i</sup>**  
**Monday Mar 1<sup>st</sup> - Sunday Mar 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Beatitude Three:** “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” NRSV

Matthew’s “Blessed are the meek” is too similar to Psalm 37:11 for the connection to be overlooked. In the NRSV, Psalm 37:11 is rendered as, *“But the meek shall inherit the land...”* The Common English Bible phrases it a little differently: *“But the weak will inherit the land...”* Notice the slight shift from “meek” to “weak.” The Hebrew word being translated in the psalm is *anawim*. It comes from a Hebrew root meaning stooped, bowed, bent over, and perhaps most interesting of all, outcast. In other words, this is not about, or not just about, those who are quiet and unassuming, who politely don’t make waves and never push to the front of the line. *Anawim* refers to those who are not allowed into the line in the first place. *Anawim* is a word that could far more readily be used to describe women without the vote or the untouchables in India. It refers to the lowest of the low, and Psalm 37 tells us they will one day inherit the land. If you were a landless peasant or one who had lost land to the ruling elite with no hope in the world, this would be amazing news, and it is undoubtedly what Jesus has in mind in the beatitude, since he would have been familiar with the psalm and the context of the blessing it contains. Here are the opening verses quoted from the Common English Bible: *1. Don’t get upset over evildoers; don’t be jealous of those who do wrong. 2. because they will fade fast, like grass; they will wither like green vegetables (Psalm 37:1–2).<sup>ii</sup>*



**Station Five:** Simon of Cyrene is ordered to carry the cross for Jesus.

*Simon wears Tunisian clothing - long shirt, trousers and cap. He walks out of step with the Jesus who carries the front of the cross. The way Simon is holding his end of the cross it appears to press down on Jesus' back. In the background is a devastated townscape, people picking over a pile of rubble. A woman sits and weeps with her head in her hands.*

Simon of Cyrene was visiting Jerusalem from Africa — he was there to celebrate Passover. The Romans built their empire on slave labour. They had a law that allowed their soldiers to press anyone into temporary service, to carry a load for a soldier or to do day labour for imperial purposes. Simon was drafted on the spot to carry the cross for Jesus, who, after being beaten severely, was too weak to carry it himself.



**Station 6:** Veronica wipes Jesus’ face with a cloth as he passes by.

*Jesus carries the cross towards the viewer, almost filling the frame. A young woman in Muslim dress stands half turned towards Jesus. She has unwrapped the veil from her head and reaches up with it to wipe Jesus face. In the background are smoking, skeletal ruins of buildings.*

This legendary story says that a woman named Veronica, whose name in Latin means “true image”, wiped Jesus’ face with a cloth as an act of compassion, and in so doing an image of his sweaty and bloody face was left on the cloth, which became a legendary religious relic in the Middle Ages. (There is no mention of Veronica in the biblical Passion narratives.) This Station invites us to seek the true image of the Christ in ourselves and the people around us.

**Questions:**

- i) What does it mean to be “meek”? What kind of humility is real and appropriate, and what kind demeans the soul?
- ii) Have you seen incidents where humility and consideration have had powerful, positive effects?
- iii) Who does our dirty work in Aotearoa?
  - a. Where do the people who do our dirty work come from — what do we owe them?
- iv) And who else carries our cross?
  - a. What do we owe the people who work under terrible conditions in third world countries to produce the goods that stock our stores?
- v) When have you encountered the Christ in another person?
  - a. What was that encounter like?
- vi) The “true image” in the Veronica legend was that of a blood-stained, suffering human face. To what degree does suffering expose our “true image”?

**Meditation on your Lenten Action:**

Where do you find resonance, meaning, and inspiration in these Stations, and in this Beatitude, in the course of your work of service or advocacy so far?

**Artistic expression:**

Take a mirror and draw a cartoon image of Jesus on it, with an erasable marking pen. Then hold up the mirror so that you, and others, can see the image of the Christ in their own faces.

**Peace to you and yours****Colin**


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<sup>i</sup> Recommended books to accompany this Lent study: adapted from [James Burklo](#)

Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary (Paperback)

by Marcus J. Borg (Harper One, 2008)

Campaign Boot Camp: Basic Training for Future Leaders (Paperback)

by Christine Pelosi (Polipoint Press, 2007)

The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus’s Final Week in Jerusalem (Hardcover)

by Marcus J. Borg, John Dominic Crossan (Harper One, 2006)

Jesus: A New Vision by Marcus Borg (Harper One, 1991)

The Five Gospels: The search for the authentic words of Jesus, by the Jesus Seminar (Polebridge Press, 1993)

<sup>ii</sup> Schmidt, Donald. *The Beatitudes for Progressive Christians: A Ten Session Study Guide* (p. 41). Wood Lake Publishing.