

Simon of Cyrene. Third Fall of Jesus

The procession had reached an arch formed in an old wall belonging to the town, opposite to a square, in which three streets terminated, when Jesus stumbled against a large stone which was placed in the middle of the archway, the cross slipped from his shoulder, he fell upon the stone, and was totally unable to rise. Many respectable-looking persons who were on their way to the Temple stopped, and exclaimed compassionately: 'Look at that poor man, he is certainly dying!' but his enemies showed no compassion. This fall caused a fresh delay, as our Lord could not stand up again, and the Pharisees said to the soldiers:

'We shall never get him to the place of execution alive, if you do not find someone to carry his cross.' At this moment Simon of Cyrene, a pagan, happened to pass by, accompanied by his three children. He was a gardener, just returning home after working in a garden near the eastern wall of the city, and carrying a bundle of lopped branches. The soldiers perceiving by his dress that he was a pagan, seized him, and ordered him to assist Jesus in carrying his cross. He refused at first, but was soon compelled to obey, although his children, being frightened, cried and made a great noise, upon which some women quieted and took charge of them. Simon was much annoyed, and expressed the greatest vexation at being obliged to walk with a man in so deplorable a condition of dirt and misery; but Jesus wept, and cast such a mild and heavenly look upon him that he was touched, and instead of continuing to show reluctance, helped him to rise, while the executioners fastened one arm of the cross on his shoulders, and he walked behind our Lord, thus relieving him in a great measure from its weight; and when all was arranged, the procession moved forward. Simon was a stout-looking man, apparently about forty years of age. His children were dressed in tunics made of a variegated material; the two eldest, named Rufus and Alexander, afterwards joined the disciples; the third was much younger, but a few years later went to live with St. Stephen. Simon had not carried the cross after Jesus any length of time before he felt his heart deeply touched by grace.



