

SIMON THE CYRENE:

You . . . Pick Up
That Cross!

Petra Pierre-Robertson

**Mark 15:21 . . . Simon a Cyrenian . . . passed by,
coming out of the country . . .**

IT WAS the morning of the Passover. Instead of staying in one of the inns within the walls of Jerusalem, he chose to camp outside the city. The pristine setting nurtured an air of meditation and surrender, as he walked towards the high, thick, grey

stone wall that encircled Jerusalem. The air was fresh with the smell of dissipating dew; passing his nostrils before being sucked up by the sun, coyly giving a glimpse of its warmer personality before blazing in a burst of terrifying glory; even as the Son, would have His face marred and His body scarred before being sentenced to the earth by the very persons who



"Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross," detail from a painting by Jan Van Eyck (1809-1853)
Van Eyck painted 14 pieces dedicated to the passion of Christ.

needed His warmth and presence. Unknown to Simon, such a choice would make him a major player in an event that would change the course of humanity down through the ages forever; a role that would change his direction for good; because the Son of God was already in the situation that awaited him when he diverted from that peaceful, familiar trek.



Because you are a child of God, a cross awaits you. We do not have to go looking for it. It comes in our daily walks and experiences.

A large crowd of people was following Jesus that morning for various reasons, comprising various categories of persons and witnesses. Some were there merely to jeer and gloat, others had heard and out of curiosity wanted to see, there were those who just wanted to be there that fateful morning in history. Then, at the back there were the quiet supporters—the grieving and the faithful followers.


Simon was just exiting the country when suddenly and unexpectedly he came face to face with a violent shouting mob made up of soldiers, civilians, victims and criminals. He was soon to be not just a witness but a major player in high profile case of not merely wrongful arrest and imprisonment but wrongful execution with the authorities at the helm. It extended beyond historical, physical, geographical, and spiritual boundaries, and his was a name that would be called whenever the case came up or the story was told.

Matthew 27:32 . . . And as they came out, they . . . compelled (Simon) to bear His cross.

“Why me?” This is usually the cry when there seem to be others in the crowd more deserving of the punishment our cross seem to represent. The disciples, His close friends, were there. Why didn’t one of them approach and volunteer their assistance? “Why me?” I just had a good week, a good experience, a good devotion, a good encounter . . . “Why me?” Should I have stayed on my knees a little longer? Should Simon have continued a little further up the country road and entered another one of the massive gateways providing access to Jerusalem, thus avoiding the mob in the process? Had he taken a premature exit? He happened to be in what appeared the wrong place at the wrong time but was in fact in the right place at the right time. He found himself in the presence of Jesus.

Luke 26:23 . . . and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

Because you are a child of God, a cross awaits you. We do not have to go looking for it. It comes in our daily walks and experiences, thrust upon us unexpectedly—in our homes, at our workplaces, at the church, on the streets. If we are to be joint heirs with Jesus we must suffer as He suffered. Simon served as a forerunner to several other Christians who would later have crosses thrust upon them for simply following the example of Christ. We, like Simon, will have to bear witness of Jesus



for in the bearing of His cross we become witnesses for Him.

After the cross was placed on Simon, Jesus turned not to him but to the women following him and weeping and addressed them. Sometimes when we bear our various crosses, Jesus appears neither to address us, see us, nor be with us, while around us others appear to be basking in His blessings, grace, and love. Rest assured, He is with you. While the sun/Son may be blotted out from your vision, shadows and dark clouds are just evidences of a fixed Sun/Son that is standing firm; clouds float away, the earth rotates but the Son is ever present, ever faithful, ever shining His glory, goodness, and blessings on all who carry His cross and bear testimony of Him! ☺

Petra Pierre-Robertson is the library director at the University of the Southern Caribbean and has served the youth in various capacities at her church and the South Caribbean Conference. Write your opinion about this article to prioridades@iada.org.

