

# A Walk Through Jerusalem

by Basilea Schlink

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**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36, Isaiah 53:5, Luke 23:34, 1 Peter 2:24, John 3:16, Philippians 2:8, Revelation 5:12

**Topics:** "Journey of Suffering", "Love and Redemption"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, Darmstadt, West Germany presents A Walk Through Jerusalem at Jesus' Side. Many have been drawn to the Holy Land in their desire to understand better what our Lord did for us. Today, Mother Vasileia Schlink invites us to visit the places where Jesus suffered, died, and rose again.

What a privilege to retrace His footsteps and to bring Him love and thanksgiving. In Jerusalem, everything speaks of Jesus. When, for instance, we seek out Gethsemane, the place where Jesus offered up prayers with tears and sweat of blood, the sufferings of our Savior come alive for us.

And what is true of Gethsemane is true of the whole of His Passion Way. But among the jostling crowds, imposing buildings and maze of narrow streets, where the clamoring voices of children mingle with the shrill cries of bargaining shopkeepers, we may ask, where we can find Jesus? A guiding hand is offered to us in Mother Vasileia's book, *The Holy Land Today*. And in plaques at historical sites, awaiting tourists in their hotels is her booklet, *The Holy Places Today*.

It was Mother Vasileia's prayer that all these things would help many to become pilgrims in the truest sense of the word. For in the Holy Land, Jesus is waiting to have an encounter with us. Jesus, Jesus my beloved, name of God now glorified, once you chose the cause of suffering, willingly for us you died.

Let me, Lord, with love now follow on your path of pain and death. Let me feel the grief and sorrow which you felt at every step. Let us now accompany Jesus along His path of sorrows from Gethsemane to Calvary.

Before the altar of the basilica at Gethsemane, part of the rock of the agony is exposed. At this site we shall find Jesus when we contemplate what took place here long ago. On this rock the Son of God knelt in the agony of death.

Weak as a gentle lamb attacked by a raveling beast, He nevertheless fought like a lion against hell, and thus against Satan, death and sin, even sweating blood. It was a life and death struggle, the fate of mankind, His children whom He dearly loves was at stake. He wanted to deliver them from Satan at all costs.

The words uttered by Jesus during this battle revealed to us His heart. Not words of mistrust and rebellion against God, but deeply moving words of trust came from Jesus' lips in response to all the suffering that God let Him undergo. You, O Jesus, in Gethsemane, in deepest night and agony, spoke these words of surrender and trust to God the Father.

In gratitude and love I want to say with you in my hours of fear and trouble, My Father, I do not understand you, but I trust you. In childlike trust Jesus surrendered His will to God the Father. With this weapon He defeated the Prince of Death and emerged from the battle as victor.

Today we live in a dark world where we can sense the attacks of Satan. In our trials and temptations, in our fears and struggles, we shall experience Jesus as a living Lord and victor if we use the same weapon, childlike trust and dedication to the will of God. As stones throw away, we find the site where Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested.

It is also known as the place where the disciples of Jesus slept while He wrestled with death. How can we find Jesus here? We can sense the very heartbeat of Jesus in His lament to His disciples. Could you not watch with me one hour? These words reveal how deeply disappointed Jesus was in His disciples, whom He dearly loved.

Are we not created to live in a close relationship of love with Jesus and to share the things that grieve His heart? Let us therefore pray here. Lord Jesus, we have so often disappointed and grieved Your love, and today, as never before, You are wounded by those who bear Your name. Instead of disappointing You, may I now live to bring You joy and comfort by my love.

Turning southwest, we cross the street, and before us lies the Valley of Kidron, the Valley of Tears. Once King David, with a large following of his people, passed through this valley, weeping as he went, for his own son had cast him out of Jerusalem. About one thousand years later, Jesus passed through this valley, but unaccompanied by any followers.

His disciples had deserted Him, nor did He go as a free man like David, but was led in chains. Through the Kidron Valley He was driven like a lamb to the slaughter, under the cruel hands of His tormentors, who led Him to the judges. Here, in the Valley of Kidron, we are given another glimpse of Jesus' heart of never-ending love.

Jesus, the ruler of heaven and earth, endowed with divine power and majesty, was like a lamb. He submitted to the bonds of wicked men to release us from our chains of self-will and lust for power. He set

us free from our fallen ego, which holds us captive and makes us unhappy.

Free for God and of your own free will, binding yourself to the loving heart of God and to His will, you will find the deepest fulfillment to your life. Now, Jesus, bound in chains, is entreating you. Come, follow me.

Of your own free will, bind yourself to me. Love me and my will, and accept suffering willingly. With our commitment to follow Jesus wherever He may lead us, even if it be into imprisonment and death, we shall gain everything for time and eternity.

We shall gain Jesus, joy in abundance and everlasting glory. I give to you, my dearest Lord, my will in loving gratitude. My will shall now be bound to yours.

Your will alone shall be my choice. In love I now would follow. Following a steep path from the valley of Kidron up the eastern slope of Mount Zion, we come to the excavated steps called Scala Santa.

Jesus must almost certainly have trodden them when He was led to the house of the high priest Caiaphas. Nearby stands the church of St. Peter in Gallicantu. It is considered to be built on the site of the house of Caiaphas and commemorates Peter's tears of repentance after his denial of Jesus.

The name Gallicantu, meaning cock's crow, recalls the incident in Luke 22. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. Jesus, once filled with sorrow because of Peter's sin, is now gazing at us. He longs that we too might shed tears of repentance over our sins.

The more we weep in contrition for having grieved Jesus, the more fervent our love for Him will be. Jesus, my dearest Lord, look now on me. That I, like Peter too, may weep so bitterly.

Then bring you love and never grieve your heart again. Lord, look on me. Starting at the Lion's Gate, we now retrace the steps of our suffering Lord within the city wall.

About 200 meters away is a narrow overgrown arch. Here begins the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows, the street in Jerusalem that we especially long to tread. The Via Dolorosa first crosses the side of the fortress of Antonia, which in Jesus' day was located at the northwestern corner of the temple area.

The various buildings erected over the place are not suggestive of the ancient fortress, but in them we find the sites commemorating the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the condemnation. Let us now enter the Chapel of the Flagellation. How can we find Jesus here? In spirit we see Him before us, scourged, half beaten to death, His body covered with wounds.

How was Jesus able to endure the torment so willingly? He was not suffering as a sinner like us who deserve to suffer. Love alone constrained Him to undergo such agony, an act surpassing all human understanding. Jesus knows what suffering the sins of the flesh, such as impurity, lust, and unchastity bring to mankind.

Ruined personalities, disease, misery, and death. But more than that, carnal sins will incur the torments of hell in eternity. In order to redeem us from the sins of the flesh, Jesus offered up His pure body, which was the temple of God, and endured the agonizing pain of the scourging.

Who is willing to accept His redemption? Who is determined to make a clean break with these sins? With His stripes we are healed. The Savior, scourged for our sakes and covered with wounds, assures us. In my wounds there is power to heal all who are enslaved by the desires of the flesh.

If you call upon my name, I will set you free. The next building on the right-hand side of the street is marked by the Exe Homo Arch, which derives its name from Pilate's words, Behold the man. At the entrance to the vaulted crypt of the basilica, we ponder on the words of Scripture, Love endures all things.

Jesus, the Son of God, reduced to the image of scorn and shame, looks at us entreatingly and asks us, Who will stand here beside me and choose my path? Who will respond with forgiving love when He is hurt and ill-treated? He will be blessed as my true disciple. The eternal, almighty Son of God, by whom the entire universe and all mankind were created, stands before us here, the image of deepest humility. Degraded, derided, blasphemed, Jesus is made to appear ridiculous, as a king who is not a king, who has neither might nor subject.

Here Jesus is reduced to the level of a fool. Indeed, He is made the butt of all human wickedness. Rough carvings of geometrical patterns on the flagstones, all part of the game of the king played in Roman garrisons, are reminiscent of the scene in which Jesus was mocked and ill-treated by Roman soldiers.

Yes, Jesus, in His degradation, is radiant with majesty and splendor, with the glory of supreme love, which is humble love. He proves that He is greater than His scoffers, as a true king, today as long ago. We shall find Him as King and Lord when we set foot on His pathway.

He will reveal Himself to us when we have the courage to walk a path of humiliation, to suffer insults and injustice, and yet continue to love. In doing so, we shall take our place at Jesus' side and experience His presence. Tradition has it that in the fortress of Antonia, Jesus was condemned to death and laden with the heavy cross.

We continue on our way through the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher by following the narrow lanes of the Via Dolorosa, with their noise and milling crowds. Here the typical Oriental way of life holds sway. In spirit, we can see Jesus before us on His way to Calvary.

Silently, patiently like a lamb, He bears the cross, staggering beneath its heavy weight as He passes through the noisy, crowded, narrow streets of Jerusalem. Who would not discover Jesus' heart along this way of sorrows where He bore His cross? Not a single cry or complaint, no sigh or word of rebellion against God fell from His lips. No rebuke to those who had abandoned Him or to those who incited Him.

Also He had shown them nothing but goodness. Jesus, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha. He who belongs to Jesus can go no other way in his life than the way which Jesus went.

Love must go the way of the cross with Jesus. On His way of sorrows, Jesus is longing to find disciples of the cross, those who consecrate themselves to the way of the cross and thus to Him. Here He is waiting not for spectators but for sincere followers who will patiently bear their cross with a yes, Father, on their lips, their eyes fixed lovingly upon their cross-bearing Savior, they press on towards the gold of glory.

Yes, for those who bear the cross, the crown is laid up in the heavenly glory for all eternity. Turn your eyes upon Jesus and you will have the strength to suffer. Passing through a small doorway in the wall at the end of the Via Dolorosa, we find ourselves in the paved courtyard before the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

From there we enter the church itself, which is built upon the site of the crucifixion and the tomb where Jesus was laid. A narrow flight of stairs leads up to the chapel of Calvary. On the left-hand side of the chapel is the traditional site where the cross was erected.

Through an opening, it is possible to touch the actual rock of Calvary. Pilgrims frequently kneel down in reverence at the spot where the cross was rammed into the rock. What a deeply moving moment it is to be here.

Calvary, a cross towers high into the sky. It proclaims the triumph of love, which amid hatred and scorn, torment and agony, did nothing else but love. Love prevailed, thus defeating hell and death.

With that, the cursed tree became the tree of life where sinners find healing, where they experience redemption and become new beings, made whole by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus, love eternal, slain by man's hatred, prayed with his dying breath for his enemies. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

This forgiving love won the victory. Now it wants to triumph in you and me, that we may show forth the nature of Jesus. So come and bring all your sin and guilt to the cross, especially every sin against love.

There and nowhere else will you receive forgiveness, peace, joy and redemption. You will become a new person reflecting the love of Jesus. The depth of loving mercy sweet, for us, you bore this pain so deep.

For us, for us, poor sinners. Beneath the cross we humbly fall. The door, the Lamb who saved us all, our griever sins bewailing.

Descending the stairs from the Calvary Chapel, we turn left to reach the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, which has the appearance of a church within a church. Above the tomb of suffering and the pangs of death, the sun rose gloriously on that first Easter morn. Jesus, our risen Lord, now stands before us, radiant like the sun.

All power has been given to him in heaven and on earth. He has the keys of death and Hades. From now on, may our hearts belong to Jesus, the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world, your sin and mine.

Exalted be the Lamb, adored forevermore by ten thousand times, ten thousand, uplifted for all to worship, his wounds shining forth in splendor. Jesus, the Lamb of God. Glory to the Lamb, all glory, who in dying for our sakes hath found the cross.

He has raised again its splendor. Every land now praises splendor. Love in suffering has overcome.

Alleluia. If this program has spoken to your heart, write for a free copy of *The Holy Places Today* by Mother Vasilia Schlink. We would be glad to hear from you.

A videocassette of this program is also available upon request. Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, P.O. Box 30022, Phoenix, Arizona, 85046. Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, P.O. Box 30022, Phoenix, Arizona, 85046.

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