

Simon: The Wrong Place at the Wrong Time

Several weeks ago I was reading an article in the AJC on Mel's movie, "The Passion of the Christ." I came across a short sentence right in the middle of the article that jumped out at me and as I read I was drawn back to it repeatedly. It said "And Simon came off as small hero." I had not yet seen the movie and for some reason I was intrigued by this short sentence. I went to the Gospels to see what was said about Simon, the Cyrenian. Only 3 mention him...each only in a brief sentence. Matthew and Mark say: he was pressed into service", while Luke says "they took hold of him." Doesn't sound like he went willingly. By then I was very interested in how the movie portrayed Simon...why did Simon come off as a small hero?...I wasn't disappointed. Simon was an innocent bystander who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. When the soldiers grabbed him, he was holding his child's hand and he pleaded that he knew nothing of this man. With severe threats he succumbed to carrying the Cross with a look of total fear and confusion. The next few minutes of the movie I found fascinating...Jesus didn't leave Simon, but hooked his arm over the cross and struggled along side of him. Simon clearly was carrying the cross, but Jesus was eye-to-eye looking into Simon's face. Without any dialog the two connected in their struggles. And Simon was converted from an unwilling bystander to a small hero struggling with and defending Jesus. Simon left Jesus on Calvary before the Crucifixion with a look of bewilderment...wondering why this man Jesus touched his heart.

I related to Simon. If I were there in Jerusalem that day I could see myself being curious about the commotion...wondering what was going on? But there is no way I would have wanted to be involved, let alone in carrying that cross.

A Friend: The Right Place at the Right Time

Several years ago Mother Teresa visited Atlanta and a friend of mine, Mike Balfour, had the privilege of being an escort for her. They were coming into the stadium climbing up some stairs and Mother Teresa's sandal slipped off. Mike was walking right behind her so he bent down to pick it up and offered to slip it on her foot. He said her foot was so bent with arthritis and gnarled it was painful to look at. He slipped the sandal onto her foot and she bent down touched his head and blessed him. Mike was in the right place at the right time to be blessed by a Saint!

The Rest of Us: Some Place In-between