

THE STATIONS OF THE STORM

An Immersive Passionist Journey



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Stations of the Storm:
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Written and created by:

Johnson Emmanuel, CP

Faith Offman

Emily Shaffer

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Introduction

"Do not be surprised by the fiery ordeal that comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice, in so far as you share Christ's sufferings..."

— 1 Peter 4:12-13

My dear friends, welcome into the boat - storm, calm, silence.

In our Passionist tradition, we are called to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus—not merely as an event that happened once in history, but as a living mystery unfolding in the aching hearts and turbulent lives of people today. St. Paul of the Cross, our founder, taught us that "the Passion of Jesus is the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love."

The great spiritual writer Henri Nouwen once reflected: *"The Passion of Jesus is not a conclusion but an opening, not an end but a beginning, not a solution but an invitation to see all of life through the lens of God's suffering love."* Tonight, we accept that invitation in a uniquely Passionist way.

We gather this evening not to walk the traditional Stations of the Cross, but to enter something deeply Catholic yet refreshingly different—the **Stations of the Storm**. This distinctly Passionist approach revisits seven moments from the final hours of Jesus' life, each reframed as a storm He braved— storms that mirror the storms we face in our own lives: dread, betrayal, abandonment, injustice, burdens, powerlessness, and surrender.

In our Passionist spirituality, Jesus is not a distant hero we admire from afar. He is a wounded companion who walks with us through every storm we navigate. He doesn't explain away pain—He enters it. Jesus does not offer quick answers—He offers Himself.

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In our Passionist spirituality, Jesus is not a distant hero we admire from afar. He is a wounded companion who walks with us through every storm we navigate. He doesn't explain away pain—He enters it. Jesus does not offer quick answers—He offers Himself.

So, bring your own storms—your hidden griefs, your silent sorrows, your aching questions. Let them meet the trembling, faithful love of the Crucified Christ, who sanctified every storm by walking through them first.

This is not a performance. This is not a box to check. This is a boat we enter together.

Let us walk with Jesus through the tempests of life, knowing that the One who once said to the waves, "Peace, be still," continues to speak that word over our storms.

Let us begin.

Let us enter this sacred space together...



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Station I: The Storm of Dread — Gethsemane

Scripture: *Luke 22:41–44*

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Ritual: *Anoint your hands with olive oil, rub slowly, notice the balm of the oil and smell of olives in the air*

Have you ever been afraid of tomorrow?

Some storms don't arrive with thunderclaps. Some begin in silence—in the pit of your stomach at 3 a.m., when the future feels like fog and your prayers return like unanswered echoes. This is the storm before the storm, the dread that stalks you when you see suffering approaching and feel powerless to stop it.

In that garden under olive trees heavy with shadow, Jesus wasn't floating serenely above human emotion. He was drowning in it. His sweat became like drops of blood, his soul crushed by the weight of what lay ahead. He was trembling. He was pleading. He knew what was coming—and He stayed.

You know this storm intimately. The sleepless nights before the diagnosis. The racing heart before the conversation you wish you never had to have. The dread as you watch someone you love slip away, powerless to stop it. The future that looks like stepping off a cliff, and prayers that seem to echo back unanswered.

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Jesus felt it all—the trembling, the pleading, the desperate wish that the cup might pass. Yet he didn't run from the storm of dread; he let it crash over him fully. Deeply feeling it and sharing it fully with God. In that surrender, he sanctified, making holy every anxious moment that has stolen your peace, every sleepless night you have ever endured.

Gethsemane teaches us that courage isn't the absence of fear—it's the willingness to feel it fully and still whisper, "God, I trust that you are in this." The storm of dread is not weakness or sin, it is the raw ache of a heart that loves deeply and sees clearly.

Jesus felt it completely, and in feeling it, he made it holy. Your anxiety about tomorrow, your fear of what you cannot control—these are not signs of faithlessness but of your deep humanity, which Christ has embraced and blessed.

If you've ever whispered "Please—not this," then you already know this garden. And Christ is kneeling there beside you still.

This is where courage begins: not in the absence of fear, but in the willingness to feel it fully and still whisper, "I trust your presence Lord."

In your Gethsemane moments, you are not alone. Christ has already knelt there—and tonight, He kneels beside you still.



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Questions to Ponder:

- Is there a storm you have come through where you can now notice the presence of God even in the midst of it?
- What storm are you quietly anticipating right now—the one you're afraid to name aloud?
- When have you felt dread so heavy that even prayer felt like a whisper into silence?
- How do you usually respond to fear—do you fight, flee, freeze... or try to numb it away?
- What storm are you begging to avoid? Can you let Jesus sit with you in it tonight—just as you are, no masks, no pretense, only honesty and trembling trust?

Take some quiet time to reflect on these questions...

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Station II: The Storm of Betrayal — The Kiss of Judas

Scripture: *Luke 22:47–48*

"Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Ritual: *hold a piece of broken dry bread or cracker in your hands, crumble it, notice the pieces, the crumbs, broken trust*

There are wounds only love can leave.

Betrayal never comes from strangers. It comes from those we gave a piece of our heart to—wearing a familiar face, speaking in a voice you once trusted. In the garden shadows, Judas approached with lips that had shared bread at the same table, hands warmed by the same fire. A kiss—the ancient greeting of love and respect—became a weapon of destruction.

Jesus wasn't ambushed by enemies. He was kissed into captivity.

This storm cuts deeper than any physical wound because it strikes at the very heart of trust. Jesus experienced it in its most intimate form: betrayal wrapped in affection, destruction delivered through a gesture of love. The one who had walked beside him for three years, who had witnessed miracles and heard private teachings, who had been called "friend"—this was the one who sold him for thirty pieces of silver.

You know this storm. Perhaps it was the friend who shared your deepest secrets with others. The spouse who broke sacred vows behind closed doors. The family member who chose sides against you when you needed them most. The colleague who smiled to your face while sabotaging your work. The church leader who failed to protect when protection was needed most. The betrayal that came wrapped in familiar words: "Trust me."

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The crumbs in your hands represent the fragments of broken promises, the scattered pieces of relationships once whole. They are the remnants of the bread Jesus shared with Judas at the Last Supper—bread given in love, received with hidden treachery.

Yet notice: even in this storm, Jesus does not retaliate. He doesn't curse Judas or strike him down. Instead, he looks into the eyes of his betrayer with profound sorrow—the grief of love wounded but not destroyed. Even as he's being led away, he calls Judas "friend."

This is the mystery of divine love: it remains open even when wounded, hopeful even when betrayed. Jesus shows us that love does not require us to be naive, but it does call us to resist the hardening of our hearts. The storm of betrayal need not turn us into people who can no longer trust or love—it can, instead, teach us to love more wisely, more deeply, more like Christ.

In your betrayal, you are not alone.

And healing does not come through revenge. It comes through the wounded Christ, who understands—and still calls us "friend." A love that can still say "friend"—even when kissed into captivity.



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Heart Reflections:

- When have you felt most deeply betrayed by someone you trusted?
- What broken promises or shattered relationships are you still carrying in your heart?
- How has betrayal changed the way you trust others?
- Who in your life might you need to forgive for wounds they have caused?
- What would it mean for you to call someone who hurt you "friend" as Jesus did with Judas?

Take some quiet time to reflect on these questions...

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Station III: The Storm of Abandonment — The Disciples Flee

Scripture: *Matthew 26:56*

"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Ritual: *hold a smooth stone tightly in your hand, notice the weight, the weight of being alone*

Have you ever suffered alone?

There is a particular cruelty to this storm. It's not just suffering—it's suffering alone. It's not just pain—it's pain witnessed by no one. The disciples who had sworn they would die with Jesus couldn't even stay awake for an hour. When the soldiers came, when he needed them most, they ran.

"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." Six words that capture one of humanity's deepest fears: being abandoned when we are most vulnerable.

Those who had eaten with Him, traveled with Him, laughed and wept with Him, now vanished into the night, leaving Him to face the cross alone.

Feel the weight of that stone in your palm. It represents the heaviness of solitude, the burden of carrying what feels too much for one person to bear. Jesus held this weight too—the stone-cold reality that even love sometimes runs away when courage is required.



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You know this storm intimately. It's the hospital room where the chair beside your bed remains empty. The funeral where fewer people came than you expected. The crisis when your phone stayed silent and the friends who promised to be there simply weren't. It's the weight of depression that no one around you seems to understand, the grief you carry while others have moved on, the struggle you face while loved ones sleep peacefully, unaware of your darkness.

This is the storm of the empty chair, the unanswered text, the door that never opens again. It's sitting at your kitchen table, surrounded by the debris of broken relationships, wondering why you are always the one left holding the pieces.

But notice what Jesus doesn't do in this storm: He doesn't call down angels to force his friends to stay. He doesn't diminish their freedom to choose. He doesn't curse them for their weakness or demand their loyalty. Even in his deepest human loneliness, he lets them go.

And in that letting go, something profound happens. In his greatest hour of human abandonment, Jesus discovers he is not ultimately alone. The Father remains—silent perhaps, hidden in darkness, but present. Even when everyone else flees, God stays.

God doesn't promise that people won't leave you, but promises that you will never be forsaken—even when the silence feels overwhelming and the emptiness echoes with your pain. The One who was abandoned understands the particular ache of your loneliness.

Sometimes the deepest strength comes not from who stands with us, but from knowing that even if all others flee, God does not.

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Questions for Solitude:

- When have you felt most deeply abandoned by those you counted on?
- What burdens are you carrying that feel too heavy to bear alone?
- Where do you sense God's presence when human companions fail you?
- Who in your life might be experiencing their own storm of abandonment right now?
- What would it mean to believe that even in your deepest solitude, you are not forsaken?

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Station IV: The Storm of Injustice — Pilate's Verdict

Scripture: *John 18:33–38*

"I find no basis for an accusation against him."

Ritual: *Dip your fingers in a bowl of muddy water, notice how it stains, feel the stain of injustice*

Have you ever tasted the bitter storm of unfairness?

Pilate knew. He knew Jesus was innocent. He declared it publicly: "I find no basis for an accusation against him." Yet within the hour, he handed Jesus over to be crucified. This is the storm of injustice—when truth is clear but power chooses convenience, when the innocent suffer while the guilty prosper, when systems meant to protect become instruments of oppression.

Feel that muddy water on your fingers. It stains, doesn't it? That stain represents the mark injustice leaves on all of us—sometimes as victims, sometimes as silent witnesses, sometimes as reluctant participants in systems we feel powerless to change.

You know this storm intimately. It's the workplace where hard work goes unrewarded while politics and favoritism prevail. It's the family dynamic where peace-making always falls on the same shoulders while others escape accountability. It's the courtroom where wealth buys better outcomes than truth. It's the school system where some children get opportunities while others are written off before they begin.

This storm tastes like iron in your mouth—bitter and metallic. It's the single mother not believed when she reports abuse. It's the worker cheated of fair wages. It's the patient denied care because of their zip code. It's every time someone washes their

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Jesus stands before Pilate, embodying truth itself, yet he remains largely silent. This silence is not weakness or defeat—it is the profound response of one who understands that some storms cannot be argued away. Some injustices run so deep in the systems of power that only love willing to absorb the blow can ultimately transform them.

Jesus chose not to return violence with violence, bitterness with blame, or injustice with injustice. He absorbed the full weight of a corrupt system and refused to let it poison his heart or corrupt his mission. In doing so, he revealed that the ultimate power is not in the hands of those who inflict suffering, but in the heart of those who refuse to be broken by it.

But notice: Jesus's silence before power does not mean we should be silent before injustice. His absorption of corrupt systems does not mean we should accept them. Rather, his response shows us how to fight injustice without becoming unjust ourselves—with truth, with love, with persistent hope that God's justice will ultimately prevail.

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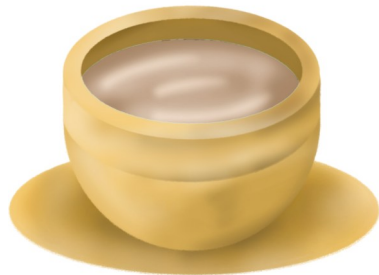
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Questions for Courage:

- When have you experienced injustice personally—been falsely accused, unfairly treated, or denied what you deserved?
- Where do you see systemic injustice in your community, workplace, or world that breaks your heart?
- When have you "washed your hands" like Pilate—knowing what was right but choosing the easier path?
- How can you be an instrument of justice without becoming bitter or vengeful?
- What would it mean to trust that God's justice will ultimately prevail, even when earthly systems fail?

Take some quiet time to reflect on these questions...



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Station V: The Storm of Burdens — The Cross is Laid Upon Him

Scripture: *Matthew 27:31–32*

"They led Him away to crucify Him. As they were going out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they forced to carry His cross."

Ritual: *Hold the rough rope in your hand, feel the roughness, the weight and texture of suffering.*

What burden are you carrying that no one else sees?

Some burdens we choose. Others are flung upon us without warning. Jesus, already bloodied and bruised, had the cross laid upon his shoulders—not because he deserved it, but because the world's pain had to rest somewhere, and love volunteered to carry it.

Feel that rope in your hands—rough, unyielding, cutting into your palms. This is what burden feels like: the weight that won't lift, the responsibility that won't leave, the pain that won't heal.

You know these burdens intimately. The aging parent who no longer remembers your name. The child drifting far from the values you gave your life to. The chronic illness that rewrites every plan you make. The depression that follows you like a shadow, no matter how many prayers you pray. The addiction that grips someone you love, making you feel helpless and exhausted. The financial pressure that keeps you awake, calculating what you cannot afford to lose.



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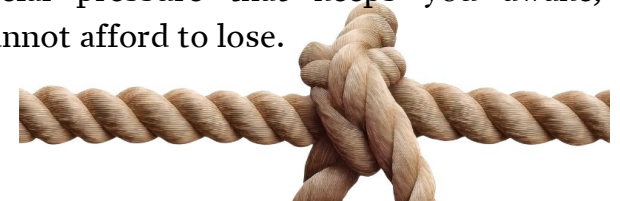
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Some burdens come with no logic—they don't play fair, and no matter what you do, they don't go away. Others are secret weights: the shame you've never spoken aloud, the private grief, the fear that haunts your silence. Some were inflicted by others' choices, others' cruelty. And some are lifelong companions you never asked for but cannot abandon.

And you wonder: How much longer can I carry this?

Here's what the Gospel shows us: Jesus stumbled under the weight. The Son of God, carrying the sins and sorrows of the world, fell beneath the load. He needed help. Simon of Cyrene was pulled from the crowd—not because he volunteered, but because someone had to help, and God provides help even when we don't see it coming.

This moment matters because it reminds us: Even Jesus did not carry His cross alone. You weren't meant to either.

Simon didn't choose this burden, but he carried it anyway. Sometimes we are Simon—unexpectedly called to help shoulder someone else's cross. Sometimes we need our own Simon—someone willing to step in when our strength fails.

Strength isn't measured by how long you carry something alone. Sometimes strength looks like letting someone in. That rope in your hands represents not just the weight you bear, but the lifeline connecting you to all who have carried heavy loads, and to the One who promises: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened."

The burden is real. But so is the presence of the One who shoulders it with you—not as a distant Savior, but as a weary Companion who knows the weight you bear.

Some burdens come with no logic—they don't play fair, and no matter what you do, they don't go away. Others are secret weights: the shame you've never spoken aloud, the private grief, the fear that haunts your silence. Some were inflicted by others' choices, others' cruelty. And some are lifelong companions you never asked for but cannot abandon.

And you wonder: How much longer can I carry this?

Here's what the Gospel shows us: Jesus stumbled under the weight. The Son of God, carrying the sins and sorrows of the world, fell beneath the load. He needed help. Simon of Cyrene was pulled from the crowd—not because he volunteered, but because someone had to help, and God provides help even when we don't see it coming.

This moment matters because it reminds us: Even Jesus did not carry His cross alone. You weren't meant to either.

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Questions to Carry:

- What burden in your life feels heaviest right now, threatening to crush your spirit?
- Which of your burdens did you choose, and which were imposed upon you?
- Who or what helps you carry them?
- Have you let anyone step in—or have you told yourself you have to manage it alone?
- What burdens are you carrying in secret that you're afraid to share with others?
- Where do you sense God's presence in your heaviest moments, even when relief doesn't come?

Take some quiet time to reflect on these questions...

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Station VI: The Storm of Powerlessness — Jesus is Stripped and Mocked

Scripture: *Matthew 27:35-36, 42*

"When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots... 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself!'"

Ritual: *Hold a small torn piece of cloth in your hand, just a fragment, sense the vulnerability*

Have you ever reached the end of yourself?

This is perhaps the cruelest storm of all—not just suffering, but being mocked for your inability to stop it. They stripped Jesus of his clothes, his dignity, his last shreds of human comfort. The One who had healed the sick and calmed storms now hung naked and helpless while soldiers gambled for his garments.

"He saved others," they sneered, "but he can't save himself!"

There is a particular agony in this mockery because it contains a terrible truth: sometimes the very gifts that define us become instruments of our torment. You know this storm intimately. The healer who cannot heal his own disease. The therapist whose marriage falls apart despite years of helping other families. The parent who guides other children but watches helplessly as their own spirals into addiction. The counselor who comforts others but cannot touch his own depression. The financial advisor facing bankruptcy. The surgeon whose spouse dies of cancer, despite all his medical knowledge.

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This is the moment when all your competence, all your strength, all your usual resources become utterly useless. It's breaking down weeping in your car because you've held it together too long. It's the shame of being seen in your weakness—emotionally unraveling, financially ruined, mentally burned out. It's realizing that no amount of effort can save the one you love.

This storm strips you bare—not just of clothing, but of identity, of the persona you've carefully constructed. It exposes the gap between who you're supposed to be and who you actually are, and that chasm swallows your self-respect.

Jesus, who had commanded storms to be still, could not command this storm of suffering to pass. The Word who spoke worlds into existence was reduced to gasps and cries. Yet notice something profound: He does not rage against his limitations or curse his inability to save himself. Instead, he uses his remaining breath to forgive his executioners and comfort a dying thief.

This is the mystery of powerlessness transformed: when we can no longer do, we can still be. When we can no longer fix, we can still show up in love. Sometimes our greatest power lies not in what we can accomplish, but in how gracefully we surrender what we cannot control.

The storm of powerlessness is not a sign that God has abandoned you. It may be the very place where God is most near—where the illusion of control dies and grace begins to pour into the cracked places, into the dust, into the rawness of apparent defeat.

Feel the weight of that fall tonight. Know that Christ has been there, and He doesn't look away from your weakness—He meets you in it.

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Questions for Vulnerability:

- When have you felt most powerless despite having skills or abilities that usually help you?
- How do you respond when others see you in your most vulnerable, unguarded state?
- When have you been mocked or criticized for being unable to help yourself despite helping others?
- Where do you find meaning and purpose when you can no longer do what once defined you?
- Can you trust that God is with you—not despite your weakness, but right in the center of it?

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Station VII: The Storm of Surrender — Jesus Breathes His Last

Scripture: *Luke 23:44–46*

"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon... Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last."

Ritual: *Hold a rough stone in your hand and release it into a bowl of water, notice the new ripples outward*

What are you being asked to let go of that feels like death to release?

This is the storm that ends all storms—the moment when fighting ceases, when striving stops, when the only choice left is to let go. In the gathering darkness, Jesus speaks his final words: not a cry of defeat, but an act of ultimate trust. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And then... silence.

There is something both terrible and sacred about this moment. The One who had commanded demons to flee, who had raised the dead, who had promised never to leave his followers—this One now releases his grip on life itself. It is the ultimate surrender, not in despair but in trust that goes beyond understanding.

Notice the profound difference between surrender and giving up. Jesus doesn't say "I quit" or "I can't take anymore." This is not defeat—it is the deepest act of trust possible. It's trust that goes beyond understanding, raw and honest and holy.

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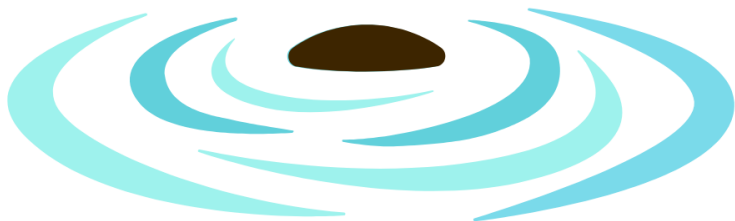
This storm feels like death because it is death—the death of control, of certainty, of the illusion that you can hold onto anything forever. Some things must die: the perfect parent you thought you'd be, the health you took for granted, the faith that once felt simple. These deaths are real, and they hurt with grief that can take your breath away.

In this surrender, there is a strange stillness. The storm doesn't end with triumph or explanation—it ends with darkness and holy silence. A pause between what was and what will be. You have stood in this silence: in hospital rooms where machines stop beeping, in empty houses after children move away, in the quiet after saying goodbye to who you used to be.

This is where every storm leads—to the moment when you can no longer fight, fix, or flee. When the only choice left is to open your hands and whisper, “Into your hands I commit...” your marriage, your child, your health, your future, your very self.

The mystery of this final station is that endings can be beginnings we cannot yet see. Some things must die so new life can emerge. In the silence after surrender, God does hidden work—planting seeds in what looks like grave dirt, writing resurrection stories in what feels like final chapters.

Jesus' last breath was not the end of the story. Neither is yours.



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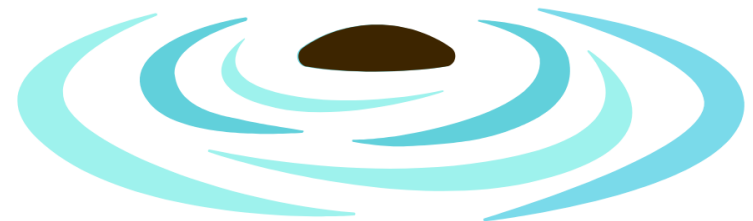
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Questions for Surrender:

- What in your life feels like it's dying or needs to die for new growth to happen?
- What are you still trying to control that you're being invited to place "into God's hands"?
- What deaths in your life—of dreams, relationships, identities—still cause you grief?
- Where do you sense God's hidden work happening in the silence after loss?
- What would it mean for you to breathe your own prayer of surrender: "Into your hands I commit..."?

Take some quiet time to reflect on these questions...

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Conclusion

My dear friends, we have walked together through seven storms this evening—storms that Jesus faced, storms that we face, storms that are woven into the very fabric of human life. We have touched dread and betrayal, abandonment and injustice, burdens and powerlessness, surrender and trust.

And in every one of them, we found not just the shadow of suffering—but the trace of God.

Not a God who hovers above the storm, but a God who enters it. Who weeps, bleeds, breaks... and breathes peace.

These storms are not just ancient moments in Jesus' Passion. They are the weather of our own hearts. And Christ meets us not after the storm, but within it.

If you are still waiting for the winds to die down, still holding your breath in the silence, still wondering what resurrection could look like— you are not alone.

The journey is not over. But you are accompanied.

Let the memory of Christ in the storm become the presence of Christ in your storm. Let what you experienced here be not just something you remember, but something that remembers you— brings back the lost pieces of your soul, so you can walk again in hope.

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Closing Prayer

God of the storm and of the stillness,

We thank You for meeting us in wind and silence, in sorrow and surrender.

You have shown us that Your love does not skip over suffering, but walks through it with us.

As we leave this space, help us carry the memory of Your Passion— not just as a past event, but as a living comfort in our daily crucifixions.

Give us the courage to surrender what we cannot fix, the grace to carry what is ours, and the faith to wait for resurrection—even in the dark.

Let us be Simons to one another. Let us walk through storms not with fear, but with mercy. And let our lives whisper what You once said to the sea: "Peace. Be still."

In the name of Jesus, who walks with us in every storm. Amen.

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