

**Reflection on the Gospel-Passion Sunday Year C
(Luke 22:14-23:56)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Jesus of Nazareth is executed in Jerusalem when the city is filled with pilgrims who are there to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover. A year after his execution, when his friends and family gather once more for Passover, they find new meaning in the celebration of the feast. Every Passover from now on will mark the anniversary of the death of Jesus and will be celebrated through the lens of their experience of his life and death. They share their memories of the one they loved so deeply and reflect on the meaning of his life and death in the light of their wisdom traditions. Every element of the Passover story, the ancient story of God's deliverance of God's people from slavery, will echo with resonances of the life and death of Jesus who is now present to them in a new way. It is not surprising, then, that these final events of Jesus' life were probably the first part of the Jesus' story to be committed to writing. Neither is it surprising that each of the canonical gospels includes an account of Jesus' suffering and death and that each approaches the events from its own particular perspective.

There are several unique features in Luke's account. The most remarkable to my mind is Jesus' readiness to forgive his executioners even while they continue to mock him. Another is his capacity to reach out to others: to "turn towards" the women of Jerusalem, to receive their compassionate mourning, and to express his own concern for them. In line with his overall intention to demonstrate that Christianity is no threat to the Roman Empire, Luke repeatedly points to the innocence of Jesus. In Luke's gospel, Jesus is the rejected prophet who trusts utterly in God and into whose hands he entrusts his spirit. He dies with the same sort of dignity that has characterised his life.

It is easy to let our own hurt find expression in criticism or mistreatment of others whom we fail to understand. It is also easy to retaliate in the face of unjust accusation and insult. It takes more courage than most of us can muster to name unjust treatment for what it is, to truly forgive, to retain our peace of mind in such circumstances, and to trust in the power of God to break through the ignorance that engenders violence. Palestinian activist Lucy Nusseibeh, founder and director of Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND) and the members of the Israeli Coalition of Women for a Just Peace have learned that lesson and are showing others the way of non-violence. As we enter into the mysteries of Holy Week, we might pray for the grace to act, like these Palestinian and Israeli women, with the dignity of the Lukan Jesus and thus circumvent the cycles of violence in our own contexts.