

Stations In a Time of Terror

[composed by Stephe Vincent Kobasa and the Hartford Catholic Worker, 2012]

This is the time of terror, the time of fear. A road walked, then and now, with violence thickening the air. Jesus knew what we know; his humanity in his being afraid.

I. Jesus is Condemned to Death. The Terror of Anonymity Shackled, drugged, hooded with bags and tape, sealed indictments, docket numbers, preventive detention. Those crucified with Jesus died without their names.

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine.

- Isaiah 43:1

II. Jesus Takes Up His Cross. The Terror of Futility The lost orchards of Palestine, the gardens of Colombia, all the labors of generations, the land where families recognized themselves, wiped to a desert, as if they had never been.

**Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things!
Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are
green again; the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full
yield.**

- Joel 2:21-22

III. Jesus Falls the First Time. The Terror of Helplessness In Afghanistan, the hospital ward, a child dies before one's eyes, over and over again. Nothing possible but the watching.

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the
mountains shake in the heart of the sea...**

- Psalm 46:1-2

IV. Jesus Meets His Mother. The Terror of Love Somali parents in the refugee camps of Kenya, wrapped in rags, imagining the grief to come as they outlive their children.

**Though an army pitched camp against me, my heart shall not fear; though
war arise against me, yet I will be confident.**

- Psalm 27:3

V. Simon Aids Jesus. The Terror of Complicity Federal taxes purchase us for state-sponsored murder; the sweatshops line our closets and shelves.

...it has become known that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brothers have taken courage from these chains of mine, and are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear.

- Philippians 1:13-14

VI. Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face. The Terror of Memory The boy, hands raised, emerging from the Warsaw Ghetto on that piece of film. Picture postcards of lynchings sent in the mail; all those galleries of horror passed on to the future.

Have no fear, do not be afraid; have I not told you and revealed it long ago?
You are my witnesses! Is there any other God besides me?

- Isaiah 44:8

VII. Jesus Falls the Second Time. The Terror of Silence The woman screaming for help in the alley as we tremble behind chained doors, unable even to reach for the phone. All the witnesses are missing.

You came near that day when I called to you; you said, 'Do not be afraid. You have taken up my cause, you have redeemed my life.

- Lamentations 3:57-58

VIII. Jesus Speaks to the Women. The Terror of the Future Inside every dream of widowhood and orphans, a government telegram which begins with the words, "We regret to inform you that..."

You will be founded on integrity; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.

- Isaiah 54:14

IX. Jesus Falls the Third Time. The Terror of Failure What does scripture say? We know the answer, yet do nothing, And not just once.

Proclaim with me the greatness of God, and let us exalt God's name together!
I seek the Lord, and the Lord answers me, and frees me from all my fears.

- Psalm 34:3-4

X. Jesus Is Stripped Naked. The Terror of Humiliation In a world where pornography is currency, we are still unable to show the body naked on the cross. Our executioners wrap the condemned man in a diaper before the needles come,

**When I am most afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise,
in God I put my trust, fearing nothing. What can men do to me?**

- Psalm 56:3-4

XI. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross. The Terror of Technology The innovation of the nail, twisted into the service of pain. All those laboratories of invention whose machines mean death.

**You will not fear the terrors of the night, the arrow that flies by day, the
plague that stalks in darkness, the destruction that lays waste at noon.**

- Psalm 91:5-6

XII. Jesus Dies. The Terror of Death That we will go to nothing, alone, with all the stories that we have told of our faith turned to cold laughter.

The passersby jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'So you would destroy the Temple and in three days rebuild it! Then save yourself if you are God's son and come down from the cross!' The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way, with the words, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He has put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, "I am God's son." ' Even the bandits who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way. From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling on Elijah,' and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he filled with vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. But the rest of them said, 'Wait! And see if Elijah will come to save him.'

But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

- Matthew 27:39-50

**There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do
with punishment, and we who fear are not perfected in love. We are to love
then, because he first loved us.**

- 1 John 4:18-19

XIII. Jesus' Body is Taken Down. The Terror of Sorrow Anguish our only occupation; the only measure of time in counting what has been lost.

What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul...

- Matthew 10:27-28

XIV. Jesus Is Buried. The Terror of Vanishing The disappeared, the unmarked grave, bodies dropped from helicopters into the sea; no place of ground to mark the grief.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, every hair off your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- Luke 12:6-7

XV. Jesus Is Risen. The End of Terror And every time that terror traps us, Jesus says, over and over, "Do not be afraid." Love is stronger than fear.

...his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid, I am the first and the last, I am the living one; I died, and now I am to live for ever and ever..."

- Revelation 1:16-18