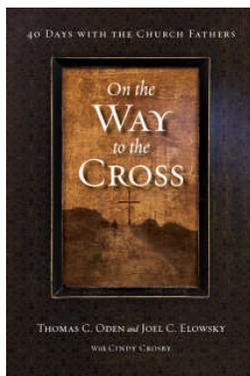


Shaped by the Cross: Meditations on the Sufferings of Jesus
Available
January 2012
 \$15, 160 pages,
 paperback,
 978-0-8308-3808-0



On the Way to the Cross: 40 Days with the Church Fathers
Available
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 \$10, 112 pages,
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 978-0-8308-3567-6

A Journey Through Lent

On the Way to the Cross and *Shaped by the Cross* both guide our walk through the season of Lent, one with the church fathers and one through meditation on the suffering of Jesus as seen in Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

In *Shaped by the Cross*, Ken Gire uses artwork as a vehicle for focusing our prayer during the Lenten season. Using a series of images related to the suffering and resurrection of Christ, Gire details how and what Michelangelo did to create “the most beautiful work in marble found in Rome today and which no master could surpass” (p. 14).

On the Way to the Cross, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Joel C. Elowsky, provides forty days of devotionals based on the literature Oden researched in editing the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. The structure of each devotional is similar to that found in the Book of Common Prayer.

We're not sure what it means to be like Christ. We're not sure what it means to see with his eyes, to hear with his ears, to feel with his heart. I wonder myself sometimes. I wonder what it is like to will only one thing, not to have a distracted mind or a divided heart. To want only what the Father wants. To love only what the Father loves. To do only what I see the Father doing. To speak only what the Father has taught me. I wonder what it is like to empty myself the way Jesus did. To give myself the way he did. To sacrifice myself the way he did.

As I gaze at the Pietà, all the larger-than-life images that once captured my imagination look so small by comparison, and so trivial. Someone once said that we don't judge great art; great art judges us. With the Pietà it is different. Here, we are not so much judged as we are saved. Saved from the tyranny of images that have filled the pantheon of our imagination.

Until Christ returns to establish his kingdom on the earth, God is restoring his rule in this rebel world, a person at a time, a family at a time, a church at a time. For now, the rule of God rests on those who bear his image, those whose lives reflect his love, his wisdom, his understanding, his compassion, his forgiveness, his humility, his gentleness.

—from chapter three, “The Image of Christ,” in *Shaped by the Cross*

One of the ancient sages of the desert named Abba Agatho said that Satan and the spiritual forces of this world are constantly seeking ways to interrupt a person's prayer

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life. They know that prayer is one of the only things that hinders them. Other areas of life allow for a measure of rest, but not prayer. This is why St. Paul called on Christians to “pray without ceasing.” To pray without ceasing means to develop a heart, mind and attitude that is continually focused on God. We need, in the words of Abba Agatho, to pray “till we breathe out our dying breath. That is the great struggle.” Our Lord was engaged in this struggle throughout his ministry as he made his way to the cross that awaited him at Calvary. He knew the importance of a disciplined prayer life.

Each Christian is on the way to the cross in imitation of our Lord, who called for nothing less from each one of us than that we bear our cross and follow him. Each of us must deal with the daily crosses that come our way, as we take up whatever cross has been laid down in front of us. In taking up that cross with the hands of prayer that God has given us, the ancients knew that there was a certain rhythm to prayer that would allow for a deeper engagement with God and his purpose for our lives. This is much deeper than simply allowing our prayer life to be governed by the tyranny of the urgent, or being ruled by whatever is on our minds at the moment. They knew that prayer is not first and foremost about us; it’s about the One to whom we pray and his will for our lives.

—from the introduction to *On the Way to the Cross*

Ken Gire (Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary) is the author of more than twenty books, including *The Divine Embrace*, *Windows of the Soul*, *The Work of His Hands*, the Moments with the Savior series and the Reflective Life series. Two of his books received an ECPA Gold Medallion award.

Thomas C. Oden (Ph.D., Yale University) is the director of the Center for Early African Christianity at Eastern University, St. Davids, Pennsylvania. He is the general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture and the Ancient Christian Doctrine series as well as the author of *Classic Christianity*, a revision of his three-volume systematic theology.

The Reverend Joel C. Elowsky (Ph.D., Drew University) is associate professor of theology at Concordia University in Wisconsin. He is the editor of *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (ACT), *John 1–10* and *John 11–21* (both ACCS), and *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (ACD).

Cindy Crosby is a speaker and the author of five books, including *By Willoway Brook: Exploring the Landscape of Prayer*. She also coedited with Oden the *Ancient Christian Devotional* series. She is a contributor to the book *Creation Care*, and her writing has appeared in numerous publications, including *Books & Culture* and *Publishers Weekly*.