

# VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

I chose this, the sixth station of the cross to reflect on because it speaks to me through Veronica's actions. She produces a cloth and wipes away the blood and sweat from the face of Jesus to give him some relief at a time of suffering. This was a brief human touch in the midst of inhuman treatment. And, for this kindness she is rewarded with the imprint of the face of Christ on her cloth.

Is this not how we too are called to treat others? As a small and seemingly insignificant gesture, Veronica was rewarded with an image of Christ on her cloth. In the same way through helping others and seeing relief, gratitude and perhaps a smile on the faces of people we encounter on a daily basis, we too are rewarded by the face of Jesus because it is the gratitude of Christ. In the words of Mathew chapter 25:verse 40 "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me".

Veronica reminds me that even the smallest of kind gestures brings me closer to Jesus. Knowing that I can't fix everything and knowing that I can't often change the end result, the small insignificant acts of kindness can still have a huge impact on people's lives and can bring small comforts. In easing the sufferings of others by being there for them when they need me, I believe I am symbolically wiping the face of Jesus in his sufferings just as Veronica did.

Sometimes, acts of love and kindness can seem very small and insignificant. At other times a similar gesture can feel much bigger because at that particular time one might be struggling or suffering, and gain comfort from someone just being there, by their side, not necessarily talking or giving advice, just to know that someone cares at a difficult time can be so powerful. These acts of kindness are rooted in compassion and can make someone feel truly loved.

I believe in a God who unconditionally loves all of humanity. God works through people to demonstrate this love for each of us. So, remembering how much God loves me and recognising his demonstration of that love through the people in my life, I believe he calls me to also act with love and compassion towards others.

In my work as a nursery nurse in the specialist perinatal mental health team, I strive to deliver a compassion focused service to all the families I work with. Acting lovingly and kindly towards them does not happen through dramatic actions which will radically transform their current situations, but focusing on the seemingly little things that I can do to ease the pain can make such a difference. Just allowing someone to offload their stresses and anxieties or just to sit with someone who is in distress is showing love and kindness, and is in my mind symbolising wiping the face of Jesus as he suffered pain. My hope for the families I work with is that they will feel the warmth of God's love for them because of some act of kindness I showed them. In the same way, as an ALM in pastoral care, my hope is that I can touch the hearts of the people I come across in this work and show them Gods love through kindness and compassion so that they also see the true face of Jesus.

Veronica's action in this station of the cross is a classic small gesture of love. She could not change Jesus' circumstances, just as I cannot change the circumstance of my clients or indeed how others cannot change my circumstances when I am in need. However, I see it as meeting people where they are, loving them as they are and making small acts of kindness towards them just as Veronica did. A small act of love is what God asks of us to ease the sufferings of others and we will be rewarded with relief, gratitude and perhaps a smile on the face of those we help. That is the image that should be forever marked in our memory because it is the gratitude of Christ.