

Hill of Crosses

1 O Dear - est Lord: Where is the hill of cross - es
 2 O Suff - ring Lord: See here the depth of sor - row!
 3 O Dy - ing Lord: Your love in - spires en - dur - ance
 4 O Sav - ing Lord: Speak words of life un - end - ing
 5 O Liv - ing Lord: Breathe peace and hope a - mong us!

on which, with two thieves, you were hung to die?
 And the im - men - si - ty of hu - man pain!
 from all who weep with you, the Cru - ci - fied.
 from ev' - ry wind - swept, ho - ly, cross - strewn hill.
 Move us with cour - age lest your goal be lost:

Here in this place of un - told, an - guished loss - es,
 Will such de - spair tor - ment us still to - mor - row?
 Gent - ly em - brace the griev - ing with as - sur - ance
 Stretch forth your wound - ed hands in con - stant bless - ing
 That we may love each child formed in your im - age

your cup of suff - ring has been mul - ti - plied.
 Did you not break death's bonds and end its reign?
 that heal - ing free - ly flows from your pierced side.
 for all who bear your cross and love you still.
 with grace de - scend - ing from your bless - ed cross.

In May of 2007 I led the Lenoir-Rhyne University A Cappella Choir on a tour of the Baltics. Toward the end of our tour we visited the pilgrimage site of the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania. This monument to the faith and resistance of the Lithuanian people was pillaged and plowed under several times during the Soviet Union occupation, but each time sprang up again. As one walks the hillside through the thousands of crosses, large and small, the pain and suffering of humanity is palpable. Pope John Paul II visited this hill, but instead of erecting a cross, he gifted a life-size statue of Jesus extending his arms in blessing.

Though my hymn is inspired by this pilgrimage site, it melds the feelings I experienced there with the hill on which Jesus died and our own experiences of the cross on whatever hill we find ourselves. This hymn became the inspiration for and centerpiece of a series of Lenten devotions in which worshipers made or brought crosses meaningful to them, and over the course of the Lenten season, constructed a "wall of crosses" on netting. The simple hymn was sung in an additive fashion week after week until during Holy Week my expanded arrangement of this hymn was performed.