

Simon of Cyrene

Read Mark 15:21-22

And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull).

After his beating and abuse Jesus was too weak to carry the cross all the way from the army headquarters to the place of execution. At some point in the journey through the streets of Jerusalem the soldiers forced a man from the crowd to carry the cross for Jesus. His name was Simon. He was from Cyrene, a city on the north coast of Africa. Simon was in the city that day by chance, although we might also say “moved by the Holy Spirit.” Whether Simon still lived in Cyrene or was living outside of Jerusalem [coming in from the country] we do not know. He was there that fateful day and carried the cross for part of the journey.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke also mention this story. John does not.

It is mentioned that Simon has two sons, Alexander and Rufus [both common names]. Whether they were with Simon that day we do not know. That their names are mentioned seems to indicate that the first disciples may have known them in the Church.

Paul mentions a “Rufus” at the end of his letter to the Christians in Rome.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Paul mentions a “Alexander” in his letter to Timothy, however not in a positive light.

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

But we have no way of knowing if these were the same people.

In the 1965 movie *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, Sidney Poitier played Simon of Cyrene.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Poitier