

Living as Missionary Disciples of the 21st Century

4th Week of Lenten Retreat Theme: Suffering

In preparing ourselves for our Lenten Retreat, we invite you to take time to read and then reflect on what resonates most with you.

Br. Mark Brown SSJE writes: Is it not often suffering that breaks open our hearts to receive love? Is it not often the suffering of others that draws us into compassion? To receive love, to express love, to be broken as the bread is broken, to be poured out as the wine is poured out: this is to become the flesh and blood of Christ: this is to participate in the Divine Nature. – *Mark Brown*

Question for Prayerful Reflection: When has the experience of suffering broke open your heart? Did your heart shut down or did it expand in love to hold even more suffering, yours or the suffering of others? How might this be an invitation to see your suffering in solidarity with the sufferings of Jesus?

Author Patricia Datchuck Sánchez writes: Through their suffering for being his disciples, Jesus' followers become who they truly are— living and breathing reflections of him in the world. Disciples do not choose suffering for suffering's sake; rather, they accept suffering because of the unity with Jesus...suffering remains an adversary, yet at the same time it can prove to be the disciple's advocate, uprooting selfishness and enabling one to become completely centered on Christ, on God...Our suffering, when united to his, identifies us as his own. – *Patricia Datchuck Sánchez*

Question for prayerful Reflection. In coming to terms with the experience of suffering when did you experience the grace of “acceptance”? In what way(s) did acceptance open you to selflessness shifting the center from you to God? What difference has this made in your life and in your relationship with God? Are you willing to share in another’s suffering by walking with them and easing their burdens? Are you willing to join God’s prayer in fasting and penance for others?

Fr. Richard Rohr OFM, a Franciscan friar writes: Jesus on the cross and Mary standing by the cross are images of transformative religion. They are never transmitting the pain to others. All the hostility that had been directed toward them—the hatred, the accusations, the malice— none of it is returned. They hold the suffering until it becomes resurrection! That’s the core mystery. It takes our whole life to comprehend this, and then to become God’s “new creation” (Galatians 6:15). – *Richard Rohr*

Question for Prayerful Reflection. The practice of an eye for and eye was grounded in retaliation, retribution, and revenge, i.e., transmitting pain to others. Have you engaged in this in practice or entertaining it in your heart? Jesus showed as a better, though more difficult way—to bear, carry and hold suffering until it transforms, frees and restores us to life. When did you choose this more difficult way? How did it change you?

"I make myself all things to all so as to win over as many as possible...I have become all things to all, so save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it." (1Cor. 9:19, 22-23)

What Being a Missionary Disciple of Christ Means to Me

*So for me to be a missionary disciple, I need to be humble,
to be alert to the Holy Spirit's promptings,
to listen to and hear what the other person is saying
and then share the love of Jesus with them as best I can,
calling on my own experiences of how Jesus
has helped me through the many trials and joys of my life.
And sometimes, I only need to be there for that person and just listen and pray.
I believe we all have been given different gifts and talents and that
we need to honor God by using them to share His Good News
with others in the way He has asked us to do.
For some that may mean serving food,
to others it may mean singing,
for others it may be making a meal for someone or sending a card,
for others it may mean a simple task like mowing someone's lawn when they can't.
Offering ourselves in service to those others in need, speaks volumes to them and hopefully will
even spark them to ask why we believe as we do.*

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