

# Good Friday



## Facing pain, suffering and death

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Good Friday is a time when we are invited to be with Christ in His suffering and death, to be prayerfully present, and to accompany Him as he takes this transformative journey.

On this day in His Passion, He experiences the depth of human suffering. Contained within this journey to and on the cross, we encounter familiar human experiences such as fatigue, physical pain, humiliation, betrayal, vulnerability and a sense of abandonment. We know from experience how anxiety, anger and fear can accompany such events. These human experiences are, in turn, suffered by so many people in our world today. People who are fleeing from war and

hunger, refugees taking long dangerous journeys, women held captive as sex slaves, homeless families striving to survive the elements, close family members who die unexpectedly, relentless financial struggles, the list goes on. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by such stories of pain and suffering, but Good Friday can help us to find meaning and transformation in such places.

Sometimes as we listen to the Passion narratives, our natural instinct is to pull away, and in doing so, to push our own pain deep inside us. As a result, we can fail to feel God's presence when we are most in need. The point here is not to glorify suffering for its own sake. Rather, the



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invitation is for each of us to draw closer to Jesus whose crucifixion was a great act of love and the result of the outpouring of His ministry to the poor, the sick, those considered sinners and those deemed 'unclean'. Having shown us how to live, through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, God shows us how to accept suffering and death in our own lives. We come to understand that by trying to avoid suffering, we can distance ourselves from life in all its fullness.

On Good Friday we are invited into discipleship and the hope of resurrection life. Through His death and resurrection, we are called to live justly, to build community, to work to overcome social evil, to be open to the conversion of heart and mind, and to care for the earth and its creatures. The experience of Jesus with all its horror, gives some dignity to pain, suffering and death, as He shows us that fear of suffering can simply increase the

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suffering, and pain consciously held can reveal the hidden grace of God who dwells at the heart centre of each human being.

There is no simple explanation when it comes to the mystery of pain and suffering in all its forms. I recall that when I was studying theology my lecturer asked the class a question that has stayed with me. He asked, "Would it have made a difference if Jesus had died peacefully in bed of old age?"

I invite you to reflect on this question... and if you have the opportunity, to discuss your reflection.