

God the Father in Suffering

Fifth Week of Lent

4

Retreat for Journeying through lent Everyone

Retreat for God the Father in Suffering Everydaaay



contents

introduction and programme...	4
meditation...	5
story...	8
sunday liturgy...	9
thought for the week...	13
common prayers...	14

Introduction and Programme



Introduction

The retreat is now in its fourth week. Again look at how you are doing. Look at how the retreat went last week, make the necessary adjustments to the programme for you. Perhaps you will need to adjust the time to suit you, maybe choose a different place, maybe decide the television should be switched off.

Things that help

Choose one place to pray.
Choose a time and keep to it.
Invite others to share in your prayer.

Tip for the Week

Perhaps in this week you can visit someone who is ill.

For further details please read the introduction in Book 1

Meditation

God in Suffering

Some of the recent pictures we have seen in the media remind us of suffering in the world: the displaced and abused in Kosovo, the tortured and murdered under a Political Dictator, the starving in Ethiopia, those who have lost everything through floods in India and Southern Africa. Sometimes the suffering seems so unnecessary: a young ten year old who lost his life on the Dentist's chair, a family bereaved by the carelessness of a drunken-driver or a young man who became a quadriplegic after coming off his motor-bike at high speed. We hear terrible stories of "Children lost in Care", of battered wives or those who simply cannot cope. Some of us know of those who are old or housebound. We may know of the poverty in our own cities. We also know of the heartache of families that break-up, of parents who decide to divorce, of children who do not see the light of day - for whatever reason - and are denied the right to life.

Suffering is an unwelcome but very real part of our life. There is no easy answer, why there is suffering in the world. Still less is there a ready answer to the question: "why me?" or " why has this happened to my child?" It is only when we encounter suffering, either personally or in someone we care for, that we notice that suffering knocks you out of orbit. Serious, chronic suffering or bereavement mean that we are not going to find our way back into that orbit. Our life changes and we need time to adjust. It is said that a women having her first child needs help. A mother giving birth to her second child can help herself. A mother of three can help others cope with their first. Some people have come to terms with their suffering that they now help others in theirs. We know the theory of crisis management: the first reaction is not to want to believe what has happened. This is called denial. Then a person might want to avoid the reality in a fit of depression or a fit of anger - trying to find someone to blame for what has gone

wrong or just feeling helpless and not coping. It is only when we reach the stage of acceptance that we start to be able to deal with what has gone wrong. If we are to overcome this difficulty then it begins with acceptance and culminates in finding some kind of sense in what has happened.

Victor Frankl was imprisoned as a Jew during the Nazi regime in the second world war. At one point he thought he was to be transported to an extermination camp. Fearing the worst, that he was about to die, he forced one of his friends to learn off-by-heart a message for his wife from whom he was separated only after a short period of marriage. His message: "Please tell my wife: there has never been anyone in my life that I have loved more than you. Each day I have thought of you and spoken to you in my heart. Despite all that I have experienced and suffered, it is all worth it because I have known you". Victor Frankl was to survive the horrors of concentration camp. However his wife his parents and his brother and sister were all to die in the cities of death. One famous professor was to put the question: "Who can be our God after Auschwitz?"

The more we look into this mystery the more we realise that our human wisdom comes quickly to an end. Victor Frankl was to start a new school of Psychology based on his experiences and observations in the most extreme circumstances imaginable. What he learned is put very simply: You do not have to make sense of tragedy but you have to search for a deeper meaning. Only then in human terms is it possible to come to terms with adversity. There is a chance that we can overcome the difficulties.

Our eyes of faith tell another story: the only way we can make sense of suffering is to join Christ on Calvary. St. John tells us that Mary, the Mother of Jesus stood under his cross. The Child she had received from the Father she now entrusted to the Father in the faith that his mission would be completed. That the Father would keep his promise. Through His Son's death on the

cross all of creation is redeemed and humanity enters into a new relationship with God - a relationship which is more than that of Paradise, for now we are no longer slaves or servants, but friends, sons and daughters through the Spirit, because Jesus lives in our hearts.

This means on the one hand that suffering takes on a different meaning. What was meant to destroy Christ, brought about the fulfillment of his mission. By dying he destroyed our death, by rising he restored our life and now we await that he should come in glory.

On another level we can say that God is also in our suffering, because he himself suffered. We could even say, that we see our own suffering as part of Christ's suffering. As St. Paul says, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. Therefore we can be comforted that when we are called to suffer then the Christ within us does not leave us on our own. He is the God who walks with us. One group in the Church call themselves "Helpers under the Cross". Most of them are chronically ill or handicapped or both. They see their suffering in the light of the cross and feel that they belong under the cross beside Jesus

Story



God in Suffering

The Story of carrying the Right Cross

A legend from the Middle Ages tells how God showed his mercy to a woman, who felt that the cross she had been given in life was too big for her to carry. The Lord lead her into a room, where there were crosses of every shape and size. "Choose," the Lord said, "you choose the cross that you can carry!" The woman wandered from cross to cross and considered which one she wanted. She saw a thin cross, but it was much longer than the others. She saw a very small cross, but when she picked it up it was as heavy as lead. She saw another cross that she liked, but as soon as it was placed on her shoulders the splinters from the wood dug into her back. Every cross had something unpleasant about it. The woman looked at every cross in the room and finally decided to choose one. It wasn't too big, or too heavy, it wasn't too light or awkward. It seemed just right for her. She took it to the Lord and said, "I choose this cross - this is the cross that I will carry in the future. Then the Lord looked at her and smiled: "This is the cross that you have been carrying up till now!"



Sunday Liturgy

God in Suffering

Greeting

Let us begin our prayer together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Opening Prayer

Let us pray

God with us.

Jesus indicated the kind of death He was going to suffer. We can't always understand Your plan, but You always understand us. Help us to support one another in times of suffering and need.

Let us show through our actions that Your love is always with us.

Amen

During this prayer a candle can be lit.

Gospel Reading

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus'. Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

'Now the hour has come
for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I tell you, most solemnly,
unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies,
it remains only a single grain;
but if it dies,

it yields a rich harvest.

Anyone who loves his life loses it;
anyone who hates his life in this world
will keep it for the eternal life.

If a man serves me, he must follow me,
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.

If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.

Now my soul is troubled.

What shall I say:

Father, save me from this hour?

But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name!

A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'.

People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder;
others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him'. Jesus answered,
'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.

'Now sentence is being passed on this world;
now the prince of this world is to be overthrown.

And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all men to myself'.

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

Gospel Meditation

*Take some time to think about the Gospel you have just heard.
Perhaps the following questions might help you - but don't let
them distract*

** How do you react to suffering?*

** Must we accept suffering as a part of life with God?*

** Do you receive support from others when suffering, and
do you believe that that support originates from God?*

Time for Quiet

Personal Bidding Prayers

Jesus said where two or three are gathered in my name - I am with them. Gather all your prayers together either aloud or in the quiet of your own heart.

*Join your prayers with the prayers of Mary as you say-
Hail Mary, full of grace...*

Moment of Prayer

Choose one of the prayers form the collection on Page 14

Blessing Prayer

Father,

as we journey toward 2014

help us to remember that You are always close to us.

May we welcome You into our lives and homes this Lent.

Let us create a unique place where we can speak to You each day and gain the strength and confidence to live life with You.

Give us Your continued love, and help us to never lose faith.

In this Year of Grace may your Church grow through our prayer.

With Mary we journey in faith in our home where you are Lord, living and reigning for ever and ever.

Amen.



Thoughts for the Week

God in Suffering

Greeting

Let us begin our prayer together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Opening Prayer

Let us pray

God with us.

Jesus indicated the kind of death He was going to suffer. We can't always understand Your plan, but You always understand us. Help us to support one another in times of suffering and need.

Let us show through our actions that Your love is always with us.

Amen

Thought for the Week

Read the passage from scripture for the day. Spend some time in quiet. Gather all your prayers and offer them to God.

Blessing Prayer

Father,

as we journey toward 2014

help us to remember that You are always close to us.

May we welcome You into our lives and homes this Lent.

Let us create a unique place where we can speak to You each day and gain the strength and confidence to live life with You.

Give us Your continued love, and help us to never lose faith.

In this Year of Grace may your Church grow through our prayer.

With Mary we journey in faith in our home where you are Lord, living and reigning for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday - As they persisted with their question, he looked up and

said, "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." *(From: John 8)*

Tuesday - "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself: what the Father has taught me is what I preach; he who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him." *(From: John 8)*

Wednesday - To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said: "If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free." *(From: John 8)*

Thursday - God said to Abraham, "You on your part shall maintain my Covenant, yourself and your descendants after you, generation after generation." *(From: Genesis 17)*

Friday - "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has delivered the soul of the needy from the hands of evil men." *(From: Jeremiah 20)*

Saturday - "I shall settle my sanctuary among them for ever. I shall make my home above them; I will be their God, they shall be my people. And the nations will learn that I am the Lord the sanctifier of Israel, when my sanctuary is with them for ever." *(From: Ezekiel 37)*

Common Prayers

God in Suffering

A Lifelong Sharing

Love cannot remain by itself- it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service. How do we put the love for God in action? By being faithful to our family, to the duties that God has entrusted to us. Whatever form we are, able or disabled, rich or poor, it is not how much we do but how much love we put in the doing, a lifelong sharing of love with others. Mother Teresa

They have their Dignity

Today our poor of the world are looking up at you. Do you look back at them with compassion? Do you have compassion for the people who are hungry? They are hungry not only for bread and for rice, they are hungry to be recognised as human beings. They are hungry for you to know that they have their dignity, that they want to be treated as you are treated. They are hungry for love.

Mother Teresa

The Angelus

Leader: The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:

All: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit

Hail Mary, etc.

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord:

All: Be it done to me according to your word.

Hail Mary, etc.

Leader: And the Word was made Flesh:

All: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

Leader: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

All: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may be brought by his passion and cross to the glory of his resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Leader: May the divine assistance remain always with us + and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

All: Amen.

Divine Praises

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St Joseph, her spouse most chaste.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints



Pilgrimage Prayer 2014

Dear Mother and Mother of our Lord!
With great joy we start out on our pilgrimage to your shrine.

Father Kentenich's faith inspired you
to set up your home in Schoenstatt.
In the shadow of this shrine
a family was born,
a new spiritual way within the Church,
a charisma in the midst of our time.

Today we want to fill the jars with our gifts,
with our gratitude and repentance,
with our surrender and longing.
With every step we take on our pilgrim way we ask you:
Enkindle in us anew the fire of love for you,
for our father and for our family.
Mother, give us the strength to spread a covenant culture in our world
today
and educate us to be your true missionaries for this century.

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