

Don't think Jesus' suffering purchased forgiveness. The language of purchase, ransom and redemption is not about paying off our sins. And it is most certainly not about trying to persuade the Father to forgive us. ...The Father sent him to forgive. **God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

Yet we afflicted him and we afflict him *still*. **"What you do to the least of my brethren you do to me!"**

... *Suffering buys nothing*. ... It is the *love that bears our suffering* that forgives, it is the love poured *into* our brokenness that heals, it his life that poured into our death that makes us alive. The Father's glory is the Son's *self-sacrificing love for us; he bears all we lay upon him ... yes, even death on a cross.*

And the same letter to the Hebrews explains that **Jesus ...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.** (RSV, Hebrews 12:2)

He loves each one of us as if we were the only one in the world. ... His gentleness doesn't force, but constantly invites. ... *The glory of God is self-sacrificing love that carries us of his shoulders.*

God did not promise you *or me* an easy life; he promised us a *meaningful* life, a *divine* life when we consciously live in him.

Don't be like James and John who wanted a promotion at others' expense. Don't be like the apostles who refused to see that suffering must be given meaning. *Be like Jesus who made suffering into an act of love!*

We heard the Gospel: **"the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."** ... Jesus enters into our slavery to free us! He enters you still in bread and wine transformed, that he might become *your flesh and blood!* ... **Take, eat this is my body ... Take drink this is my blood.** ... It is not enough for Jesus to give us life for us, *he pours his life into us!* In you, Jesus experiences everything you experience. In Jesus, you will share in the divine nature. But it is only your openness that lets him in.

Sadly, when we are in trouble we become very tunnel-visioned; we don't look for Jesus and the grace that is there. *Look for his grace to get you through!* ... *Look for the love to transform suffering into a gift. Choose him!*

Sadly, when others in trouble, we easily become tunnel vision forgetting our task is to become like Jesus, to become Jesus. *Look for his grace to guide you. Choose to be him!*

The two brothers wanted the best! ... *Don't we all?* ... "[Lord], **grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.**"

That started a firestorm! ... The others were livid! Angry at themselves for not think of it first! ... *They wanted glory seats too!*

Did Jesus smile at their foolishness and think, "You don't know what you're asking"? ... They imagined the Messiah was all about power, pomp and parade!

Jesus' glory is the cross, and the two places were reserved for two thieves. ... To share Jesus' glory is to share his Cross! ... *Do you really want a share?*

Or maybe Jesus shook his head because they were so *dense!* ... He'd repeatedly told them he was going to be killed. ... *They listen!* ... James' and John's request and their infighting proved they didn't understand Jesus. ... *Do we?*

When hardship or tragedy happens, we say — and *I've heard it a thousand times* — *What did I do to deserve this? ... Why me?... I've said it myself!*

Why do we think the good shouldn't suffer, when the very best did?

Be real! We live in a world of change! ... The forces that made the Sierras, levels cities! *Earthquakes!* ... The processes that create new species give us new diseases. ... The very freedom that says "*I love you,*" is the same freedom that rages revenge and war, that chooses addiction and self-loathing.

Be honest, we want a pain-free life, where courage is unnecessary, and forgiveness never needed. ... *We are broken, and our pain is real!* ... The trouble is we ratify the brokenness and pain by our acts small and large. *We sin too. We place ourselves at the center!*

I've dried too many tears. I've buried too many youths, consoled too many abandoned or abused people. ... *What can I offer? What do I say?*

I want answers, but God doesn't answer! ... *That awaits a distant shore!* ... *Instead he chose an unexpected path. He becomes one with us in our mess!* He tells us, "*I will join you in the pain; you will not carry it alone.*" ... "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**"

Jesus more than walks with us, **he joins us in us!** He feels what we feel; he knows us from the inside; he knows our weaknesses. Our second reading said: "**we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has [likewise] been [tempted] in every way.**" *But Jesus does more than sympathize!* He makes our suffering his own.