

St. Therese Catholic Church

Grief, Suffering and Hope

February 11, 2021

Family Picture





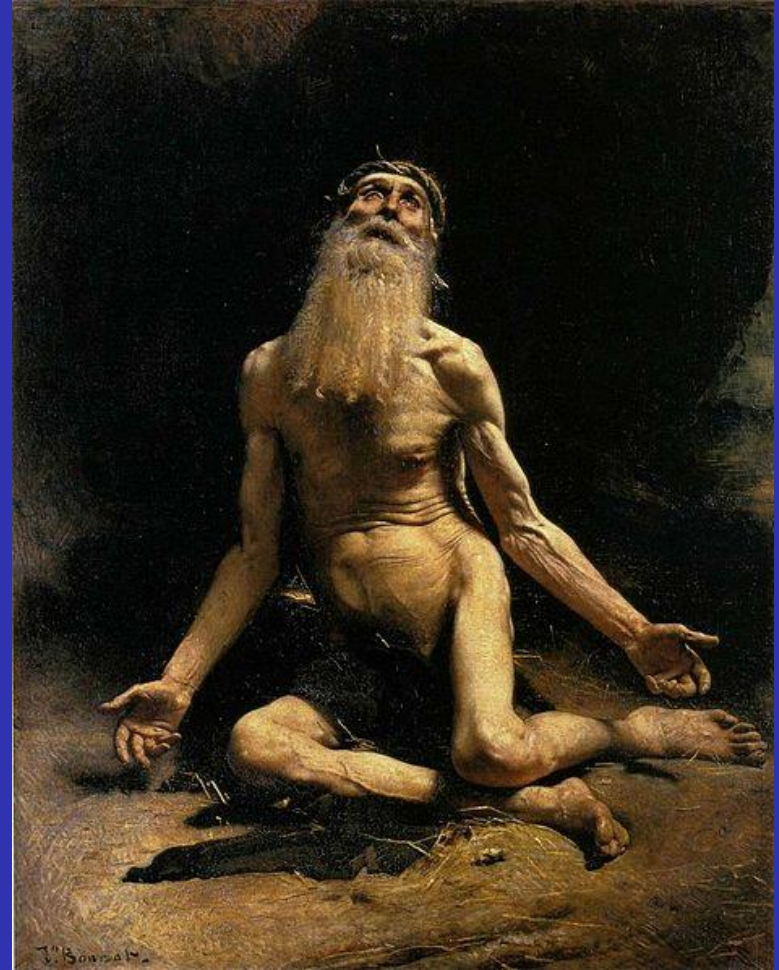
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- **2006:** My father called me to inform me that he was diagnosed with ALS. I asked what that was and after explaining it, he said he had a year and half to live.
 - Over the next year and half, each time I saw my father he was progressively worse. At first it was his right arm and then his legs. Eventually, he couldn't even lift his head.
- **Mitch Albom:** ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax...you cannot support yourself standing...you cannot sit up straight. By the end, if you are still alive...your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk...like something from a science fiction movie, the man frozen inside his own flesh. ~Tuesdays with Morrie



Book of Job

- Presented as innocent and upright
- Suffers greatly: physical suffering, loses family, house, livestock, etc.
- Asks God, “Why?”



Job (Leon Bonnat)



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- Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus (Jn 11:5)
- **Martha:** “Lord, if you have been here, my brother would not have died (Jn 11:21)
- And Jesus wept. And the Jews said, “See how he loved him” (Jn 11:35-36)



<https://ldsblogs.com/17590/jesus-wept>



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- Jesus Himself embodies the pain, suffering, and cries of prayer we see in these verses.
 - **Stripped:** He is stripped of His garments (Mt. 27:28) as Jerusalem was stripped of its land.
 - **Scourged:** He was scourged at the pillar and humiliated (Jn 19:1) as was Jerusalem.
 - **Offers Cry:** On the cross, Jesus offers up His heart, His cry to the Father (Mt. 27:46).
- **Key:** Jesus embodies not only the cry of Jerusalem, but our cry as well. In grief and pain, He prays. We see hope.



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- Different forms of suffering
 - **Suffering from self**: Suffering from sin (Broken relationships, addictions, self-absorption, etc) causes pain for others
 - **Suffering for self**: Redemptive suffering that purifies us, builds virtue, etc. Conforms us to Jesus!
 - **Suffering for others**: Offered up in union with Christ that graces from Christ are given to others.

Source: <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/we-all-suffer-but-not-all-suffering-is-the-same>



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- Grief: What you experience when you suffer loss.
 - Death of a loved one
 - Breakup of a relationship
 - Loss of a job
 - Shattering of a dream
 - Loss of health
 - **Key:** Loss of something valuable



- Common characteristics of grief
 - Takes time
 - People cope differently
 - Emotional roller coaster
 - Can cause stress (impact health)
 - Return at key moments



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- **Salvifici Doloris**: Apostolic Letter written in 1984 on the Christian meaning of human suffering.
- Eight chapters
 - All suffer in some way
 - **Physical**: Body is hurting
 - **Moral**: Pain of the soul (psychological, spiritual)
- **Key**: Suffering is evil – contrary to physical health, peace of mind and soul, etc.

We are rational creatures and seek answers.

- **General:** Why is there suffering?
- **Personal:** Why am I suffering?
 - How will I handle it?
- **Time:** How long will I suffer?
- **Purpose:** What will come out of it?
 - How will it change me?





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- While it is ok to ask “why,” we may not obtain the answers to our questions. Only love will answer our questions. Love must enter into our suffering.
- **John Paul II:** But in order to perceive the true answer to the “why” of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists (*Salvifici Doloris*, 13).
- In this life, the mystery of suffering will always remain.
- **Key:** Love is the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering (13).



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- John Paul II invites us to look Jesus, who is God’s “response” to our suffering – our grief, pain, sadness, struggles.
- **Key:** God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)
- Jesus is God’s “gift,” or God’s being with us in our suffering. In other words, we are never *alone* in our suffering. Jesus comes to suffer “with us.”





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Blessed Mother knows suffering well.

- The more pure the nature, the more intense one can suffer. The Blessed Mother is the most pure, which means that she suffers with extreme intensity.
- **Simeon:** Blessed Mary and Joseph and said to Mary, *“Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted.”* (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”
- **Key:** Mary knows suffering well. She can help you!



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In the loss of my dad, I had a choice to make.

- **Bitter and Angry:** “Lord, why did you take my father away from me at such a young age?”
- **Reclusive:** Go into a cocoon and try to pretend everything is OK – ignore the pain.
- **Run from it:** Immerse myself in school or work
- **Be honest:** Speak to God/others about my pain, sadness, and ask God for help. “Jesus, you know suffering well. Be with me. Help me to be with you.”



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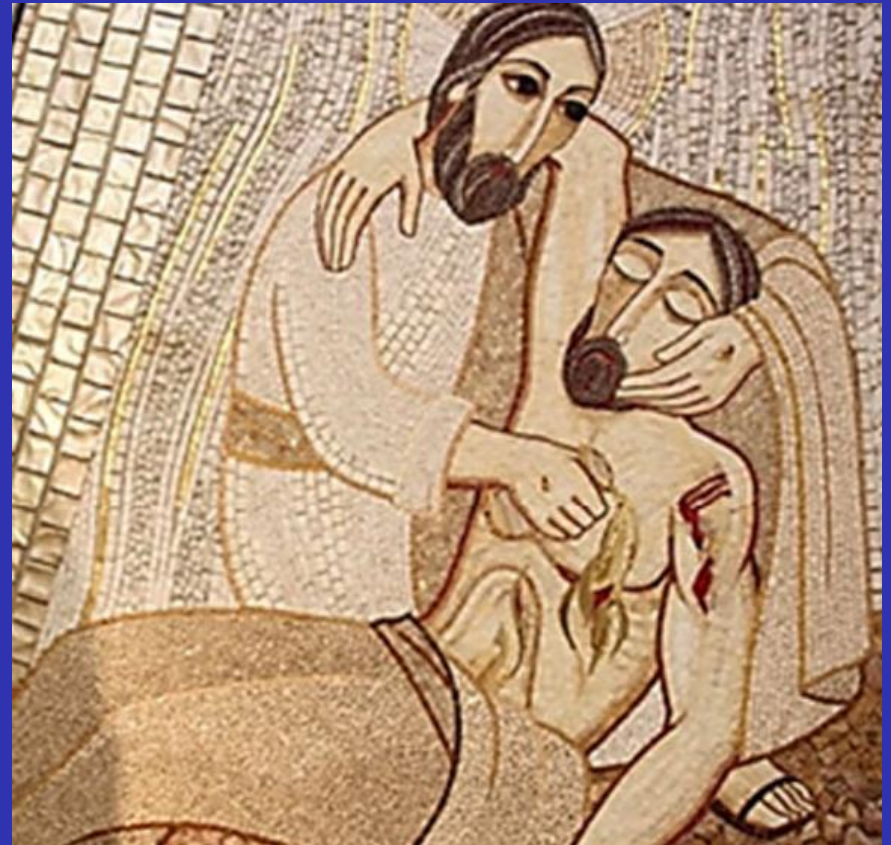
In His wisdom, God's plan is like a big book. It has:

- **A beginning**
- **Middle with a rich plot:** The story of our lives, which we write in cooperation with His grace. We have pages of celebration, joy, grief, and sorrow...
- **End:** Faith and love conquer. All tears will be wiped away. No more death. No more mourning. Christ will make all things new (Rev. 21:4-5).
- **Key:** Stay close to God as you turn each page together.



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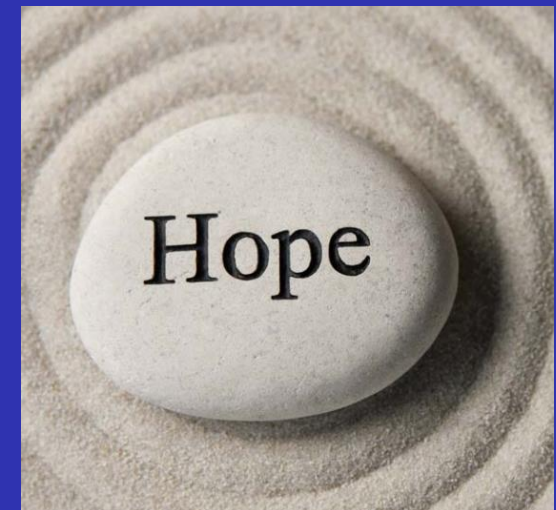
- As the good Samaritan hurting, we feel weak, beaten up, and in need of healing. Allow Jesus love us in prayer and through others.
- Be the good Samaritan, choosing to “stop” beside those who suffer. Be a gift to someone in need, and in doing so, you release the power of love.





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- **Romans 8:28:** We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
- **Key:** God always writes with love and goodness behind the scenes in suffering.





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- What (Consoled by Jesus)
 - A chance for those who have lost someone to come together in faith and support.
- What do meetings look like?
 - Prayer, share a scriptural reflection, listen, share and support.
 - Recent gatherings we have talked about navigating the holidays and the pandemic, how our faith can be challenged when we feel more alone, as well as the blessings that have come to us.
 - We hold fast to the promise: *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.” (Matt. 18:20)*



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- When
 - Usually third week of each month for a small group gathering.
 - Wednesday mornings at 10am
 - Thursday evenings at 7pm.
 - Schedule changes when large group presentation incorporated – see website.



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- How
 - Currently via Zoom – links posted on website. Hopefully in-person option added back in again soon!
 - RSVP is not needed!



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- Questions?

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