

THE CARMELITE
CENTRE MELBOURNE

**On-line Carmelite Conversation:
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www.thecarmelitecentremelbourne.org



Perennial Human Questions

– a reflection on suffering and death

“Why is there suffering?”

“What can I do about death?”

Questions to prompt reflection on your own experiences of suffering

What questions do you ask yourself?

Where is God in this?

Why would God do this to me?

Why is God letting this happen?

What did I do to deserve this?

What is God inviting me to?

Other questions?

How do you explain experiences of suffering to yourself?

It's part of God's perfect plan.

“All things work together for good for those who love God.” Romans 8:28

“An enemy has done this.” Matthew 13:28 (sowed weeds among the wheat)

Other ways to find meaning?

How do you respond?

How is your response informed by your beliefs about God?

How does suffering deepen your relationship with God?

How does suffering challenge your beliefs or relationship?

Other reflections about your response?



Gospel on the Third Sunday of Easter, 2024 Luke 24: 35-48

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost.



Then he said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Segments for Bishop Greg's homily:

The answer to the human question is a person – Jesus Christ

Jesus says “It was written that I should suffer, die and rise from the dead.”

– it was always meant to be that my place in the world was about suffering and death.

Who am I? I am about your question; I am about what you struggle with; I am about the universal human question. “What is the place of suffering?” And how does he begin to answer it? By suffering himself.

How does he answer the question about death? By dying himself. The answer to the question of death, the answer that he gives is very simple: death is not the end. Death is an opening to something else. And that in its own peculiar way, every person's suffering is what makes them beautiful.

Look at the beautiful people you know. Almost all of them will be people that have suffered. And their suffering brings God into their lives. Their suffering brings the real God into their lives, rather than some notional philosophical God. Rather than some God that we turn to and say “take away my suffering”.

Because, you remember, when we celebrated the Lord's death he said to his Father “Take this suffering from me” and the heavenly Father didn't answer him. Didn't take it from him. Because it was the suffering that made Jesus who he was to be.

In Jesus the human question is answered.

In suffering with him, we are changed, we are humanized, we are made beautiful, and as this happens we also recognize that death is not the end, it is not the last point, it's only a point that opens to something else.

The answer to the human question is a person – Jesus Christ. And the answer that we are given is living what this person shows us.



More prompts to ponder

Jesus Abandoned

“On the cross, close to physical death and in the mystical death of his forsakenness, Jesus is aware of the collapse of his humanity and at the high point of that collapse, the Father mysteriously allows him to doubt – as if in Jesus the presence of God is totally eclipsed. Because of this he cries out, My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Matt 27:46) [quote from Chiara Lubich?]

What did Jesus experience when he was suffering?

What do we experience when we are suffering?

What is the connection between suffering and love?

“Affliction is God’s tight embrace as a Lover and that this mystical knowledge balances off the experience of suffering.” [Simone Weil]

“suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” Romans 5:1-5

