

Holy Week

Community/Staff Prayer

A Love That Transforms Suffering



Artwork by Dorothy Woodward rsj

Preparation:

A large Crucifix or Cross is the focus of our prayer. We are seated in a circle (if possible) around the Cross. The Bible is placed on the Prayer focus and lies open at the Scripture reading for today. There are also several photos of people/events that show the suffering of the world today. A prayer leaflet is provided and the CD and player arranged.

WE GATHER

Gathering Song: **By His Wounds** (Monica Brown – A Heart’s Journey) or the video [By His Wounds](#)

Opening Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray ... (pause) ...

All: O God of Deepest Love,
Your Beloved Son, Jesus, surrendered himself into the hands of death
so that we could live our lives to the full.
Transformed by such love, may we give generously of ourselves
So that others might live ...
We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus your Son,
And in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WE LISTEN

Scripture Focus: Isaiah 53: 4-5

Breaking Open The Word /Reflection:

The Leader reflects as follows. If desired, the group may then take time to share ...

Australian Scripture scholar, Brendan Bryne SJ, reminds us of the line in the movie, *Elvira Madigan* that says: “When you are in love, you look out at the world through another pair of eyes”

What if we looked out at the world through the eyes of Jesus? What did he see?

He'd have seen what we see today - a world 'burdened' by all this tragedy, so many natural disasters, so much anger and violence, illness, depression, addiction ...

Jesus chose to enter into this world and to let it enter into him!

This is actually what Jesus did when he suffered and died on the cross.

He willingly and trustingly opened his arms to the suffering of the whole world.

He didn't protect himself or resist! He said "Yes" to it and allowed it to come into his body – and he held our pain and transformed it into love.

Jesus enters our pain and heals it from within!

On Good Friday, we will hear again these words from Isaiah:

And yet ours were the sufferings he bore,

Ours the sorrows he carried.

***... he was pierced through for our faults,
crushed for our sins.***

On him lies a punishment that brings us peace,

And through his wounds we are healed.

In another translation, it says: ***He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.***

Jesus is the Bearer of our burdens, our sins, and our pain.

The wonder of this is that God is offering us TRANSFORMATION in the person of Jesus.

In Jesus, our human brokenness becomes whole.

After some time for silence and/or sharing, the Leader continues:

WE RESPOND

Ritual:

Leader:

In Holy Week, we enter more deeply into the mystery of Love.

We allow ourselves to be transformed by its life-giving power.

When you feel ready, I invite you to close your eyes and gently open up your arms as if you were on the Cross with Jesus. This action helps us to open our hearts to the reality of suffering and its power to transform.

The Leader waits until people have opened their arms in silence ... S/he then continues slowly:

We surrender to the difficult process of moving through pain and suffering to new life. We allow this action of ours to include all those for whom acceptance seems impossible at this point in their lives. As the wounds of the world are healed by the loving surrender of Christ, we say (or sing):

All:

By his wounds we have been healed.

In his wounding, we are healed.

The Leader allows a few more seconds of silence before continuing.

Conclusion:

Leader:

Our God is always faithful – most especially in our wounded-ness.

Let us join our hands and pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

All:

Our Father ...

... for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

WE GO

Leader: As Christians, we believe that suffering can lead us to transformation.
This is the victory of Love!
Let us end our prayer by marking ourselves
with the powerful sign of Christ's victorious love:

All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

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