



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

GOD AND HUMAN SUFFERING

PART II

“Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to them that are in bitterness of soul? That look for death, and it cometh not, as they that dig for a treasure: And they rejoice exceedingly when they have found the grave. *To a man whose way is hidden, and God hath surrounded him with darkness?*” (Job 3.20-26)

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Yesterday we heard Job say, “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?”

Your sufferings are real. They are devastating, horrific; they consume you!

And no one understands. They do not enter the depth of your suffering. They cannot. You are alone in it. It is a suffering like unto no other, and none understands. You wait for it to pass, but it lingers. The broken heart, the shattered body, day and night they torment you and give you no rest.

Your agony has made life senseless and, like Job, you either lament the day you were born, or yearn for the day of your death.

Job had *his* tormentors who convicted him of sin; you have *yours* who convict you of weakness and self-pity. Neither understand. Perhaps they never will.

Desperately you look around, and find that there are none to deliver you: all have

fled ... and those who remain torment you.

You did not *choose* this suffering — despite all that you are told by your “consolers” and detractors. As if the pain were not great enough of itself, humiliation is heaped upon you.

You are hanging with Christ on the Cross

The world does not understand you any more than it understood Christ.

You are told that God wills it — but He does not. You are told that it will pass — but it does not. You are told every lie that will conceal the scandal of the enormity of your suffering from those who see themselves in you — *and fear it*. It could be them — and they know it.

You are an unwilling sign to the world ... and it flees you!

You cry out to God ... and even God Himself seems heedless of you; your prayers vain orisons in a starless night.

You question Him. You question the world. You question yourself. And in the end you question life. That you should long for an end to all things is not, as those who do not grieve would tell you, “pathological” – it is understandable. It is not death that you seek, but acquittal ... just as Job did:

“For then I should have lain down and been tranquil; had I slept,
I should then have been at rest with kings and counselors of the earth
who built where now there are ruins ...”

But God did not bring this upon you. You may have no inkling of what has. Things are in motion in this world over which you have no control, but in which you have a part.

Suffering as Redemptive

At the moment it seems ignominious. You have been nailed to the Cross with Christ. Willingly or not, you are participating in that redemptive suffering.

If you embrace it in Christ it becomes meaningful, even salvific.

If you do not, you must bear it no less and to no purpose.

You cannot escape it. Not now. Not yet. It is not of your choosing — but you *can* choose what to do with it. You can unite your suffering to the suffering of Christ on the Cross and make it redemptive. Or you can suffer it alone and to no end.

Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane did not want it either. He understands you, and you come to understand that, in the end and despite all appearances, you are *not* alone.

But He *chose* to take *your* suffering upon Himself — for you ...

All that remains to you right now is this: *Will you now choose Christ, as He chose you?*

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