

A book based on

*The Grace concealed in Suffering: Developing
Virtue and Beatitude*

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Section III: Answering the Call

The Outline

Section 1: Rethinking Suffering

- Suffering as a Detector of Evil
- The Four Tasks of Suffering

Section II: Suffering in God's Providential Plan

- Addressing the problem of Evil
- Divine Action
- The Theology of Suffering

Section III: Answering the Call

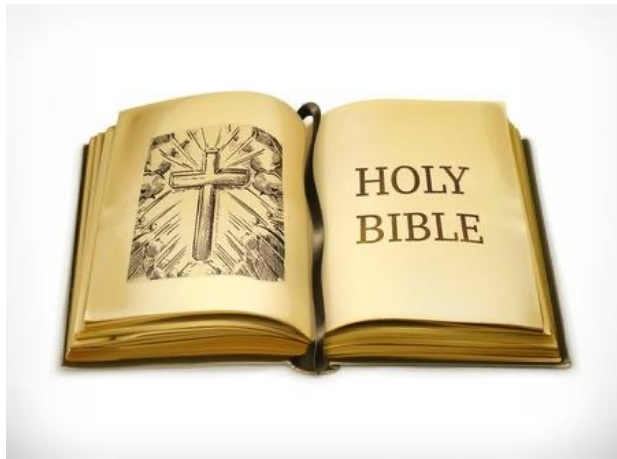
- The Role of the Church
- The Joy in Suffering
- Messengers of God
- Called to help
- Dying Well
- Finding meaning



Suffering is a Religious Calling

- It calls us to share in God's life and nature according to his design
 - Suffering is our ability to detect the absence of good in our lives and motivates us to attain what is missing this is our call to return to God's plan for our life
 - Suffering calls us to give witness of our experience to others so that they can learn and be saved
 - Suffering provides us the opportunity to serve our suffering neighbors, uniting with them to solve the world's problems out of love for God, our creator.
 - When we answer the call, we encounter joy.

SUFFERING AS A FORM OF DIVINE REVELATION



- Suffering reveals divine direction by making deviations from it painful
- There are better, less painful ways to align yourself with God:
 - By heeding the teaching of the Church which Christ commissioned to pass on the revealed truth
 - By heeding the message of others who have suffered before you
 - By heeding the rules put forth by human organizations

Suffering will identify any wrong direction discerned from others

Chapter 13: the Role of the Church

- Christ and His Church provide the necessary perspective to interpret the lessons of suffering

Christian Perspective	Correct interpretation
Genesis 1: Everything God made is good	Evil is the absence not the opponent of good so God and evil can co-exist
The Story of Jonah and the Whale : God uses a storm to redirect the reluctant prophet	God can use evil to bring about good
The Story of Job: God allows Satan to test Job to demonstrate that Job is righteous	Suffering is not always about punishment – sometimes we suffer for the benefit of others and to learn about ourselves
The Parable of the Prodigal Son: God is waiting for his wayward children with open arms, welcoming us home	A loving God is using Suffering to bring us home to him, where we have everything we need
The parable of the final Judgment	To enter the kingdom of God one must have mercy on those who suffer,
Jesus's death and resurrection	Human suffering even to death can lead to a greater good if we share in the divine nature and particularly in Christ's suffering

We Need Help to Share in the Divine Nature

- God alone can reveal and give himself
 - Sharing in the divine nature is supernatural, surpassing the power of human intellect and will
 - It is Suffering more than anything else which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls- John Paul II
 - Christ established the sacraments and his church that administers them to provide a way for humans to communicate their desire for God's grace and through which grace is bestowed
 - Salvation requires people to work together

God is No Tyrant

- He forces no one to believe in him or to join his Church
 - He does however make the wrong choices less appealing through suffering
 - If we approach the Church in a self-centered fashion (what is in it for me?) then it will not be appealing
 - If we enter it like we enter a marriage, looking to make our partner happy, then we will find happiness ourselves.
- Entering the Church is a precursor to ultimate union with God
 - If we choose to be separated from Him in life, we remain separated in death
 - .

Answering the call to re-orient ourselves to God and his Church is critical for our journey to salvation

- This is our personal repudiation of original sin
 - Choosing to unite our wills to the will of God reduce our separation from Him
- This is emulating Christ, who prayed to God at Gethsemane:
 - “Not as I will, but as you will”
- Like Christ, we need to put our love of God into action through our love of neighbor
 - As in the life of Christ, suffering will provide the opportunity and context for this to occur
 - It starts with unleashing our love of neighbor and culminates in our own redemption when we willing suffer for the benefit of others as Christ did

FINDING JOY IN OUR OWN SUFFERING



- If you feel that your suffering is a curse, you may be holding on too tightly to earth-bound goals (fame, fortune, power, pleasure, comfort)
- Suffering is meant to drive you to higher goals (union with God / eternal joy)
- When you come to understand this, your suffering will take on meaning and can turn to joy



Suffering, more than anything else, clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls
- John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 27

A Message of joy to the chronically ill

In the Book of Job:

- Job has a chronic case of the boils
- Had to endure the speculation that he suffered because of sin that threatened his self-identity as a righteous man
- He was exposed to the possibility of social isolation

Job speaks for the chronically ill:

- Job laments his weakened state but holds firm in declaring his innocence
- He recognizes that he could still have joy despite the pain if he could regain his identity as a righteous man
- He is concerned that God may have indeed counted him among the wicked, to which he protests

Job's restoration does not involve the healing of his disease:

- God restores his position as a righteous man, insisting to Eliphaz, "Let my servant Job pray for you, for his prayer I will accept"
- Only after Job prays for them and his position as a righteous man is restored, do his family and friends dine with him and his fortune is restored.
- His boils are not healed but he has joy in knowing he can overcome it and remain a righteous man

Like Job, You Can Overcome Chronic Illness and have Joy in being righteous

Illness as a catalyst for conversion

In **illness**
man experiences
his powerlessness,
his limitations and
his Finitude.

Every illness can make us
glimpse death

Illness can lead to
anguish,
self-absorption,
sometimes even
despair and
revolt against God

Illness can also make
a person
more mature,
helping him discern
in his life what is not
essential so that
he can turn to
that which is

Very often **illness**
provokes a search for
God and a return to Him

- CCC 1500-1501

In Suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace

- John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 26

While all illnesses and injuries can remind us of our mortality, a diagnosis of a terminal illness creates a much greater sense of urgency

- No one wants to get this prognosis
 - It is shocking and scary for everyone
- However. It also gives one time to prepare
 - Reconcile with God
 - Take care of those left behind
 - This can be a great blessing

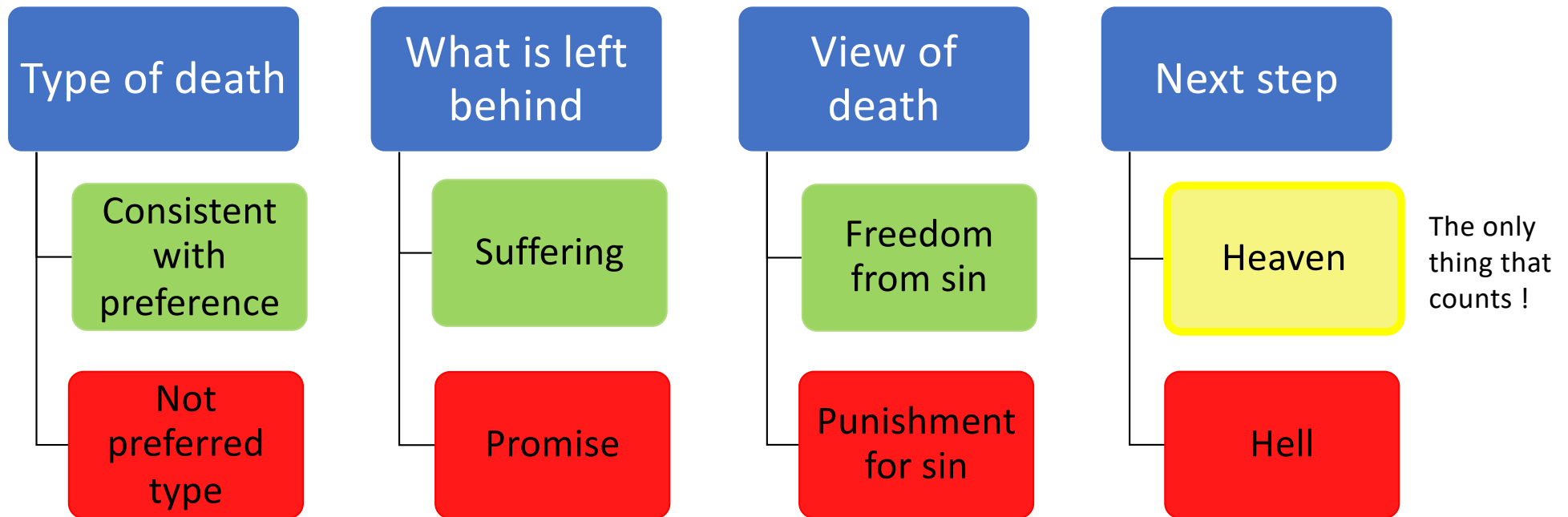


There is wide variability in the nature of terminal diseases

- Some take a long time to kill you
 - Parkinsons
- Others are very lethal and quick
 - Pancreatic cancer
- Some are completely debilitating
 - Others less so
- Some are potentially curable
 - Others are not

- All patients with terminal diseases are confronted with the need to balance 3 tasks:
 - Fighting the disease to extend life
 - Continuing to live their lives
 - Preparing for death

Dying well results in the soul getting to heaven



- Death is good because it allows new growth and is the gateway to “graduate” to eternal life
- Death is not evil (the absence of good)
 - It is not the absence of life with life after death
 - It is not the absence of body-soul coupling because our souls reunite with resurrected bodies at the 2nd coming

The three tasks for terminal patients

Priority for those who will die well



- Extending one's life
- If it takes away from the other tasks, it must be for a good purpose
- People who expend all their resources here will die poorly

- Living One's Life
- One should attempt to contribute to society as long as one can

- Planning for Death
- Reconciling with God should be highest priority
- Followed closely by reconciling human relationships and transferring material goods and information to those who survive us.

A message OF Joy for the terminally ill

Suffering Can be a blessing not a curse for those that seek God

Suffering helps you and your loved ones let go of this life and prepare for the next one

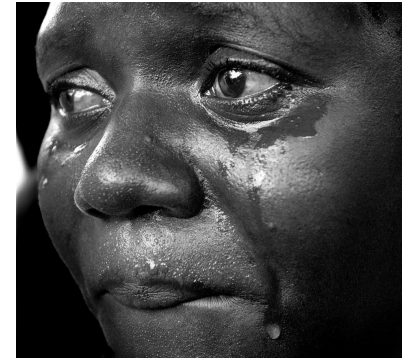
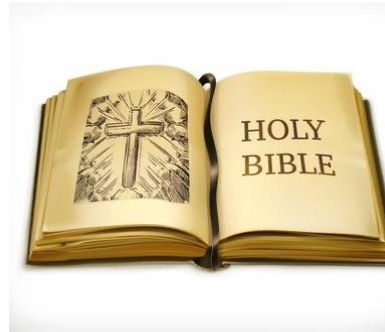
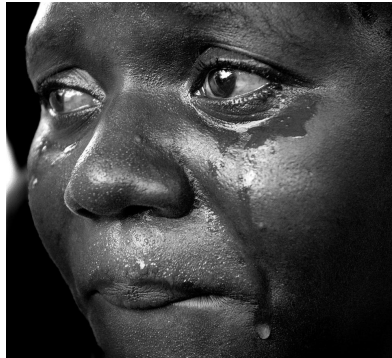
- It drives you toward good and eventually to the highest good (God)
- It provides opportunities to love and be loved
- It provides opportunity to reconcile with God sacramentally

If we willfully accept our sufferings because we understand that it can help others materially and spiritually, then we are truly sharing in the sufferings of Christ and will share in his glory.

- Embracing this will provide meaning to your suffering and turn it to joy



Sufferers As Messengers of Divine Revelation



The Sufferer
bears the
message of what
caused the
suffering and
must deliver it

Bystanders must
listen:
The message
highlights risks &
opportunities
for others

Interpretation
based on God's
will is required.
It must be
aligned to
understand the
message

People must
heed the
message of
suffering for
themselves and
others

Failure to heed
the message of
suffering will
result in less
good and more
suffering

The third task: Finding Joy in Helping Others



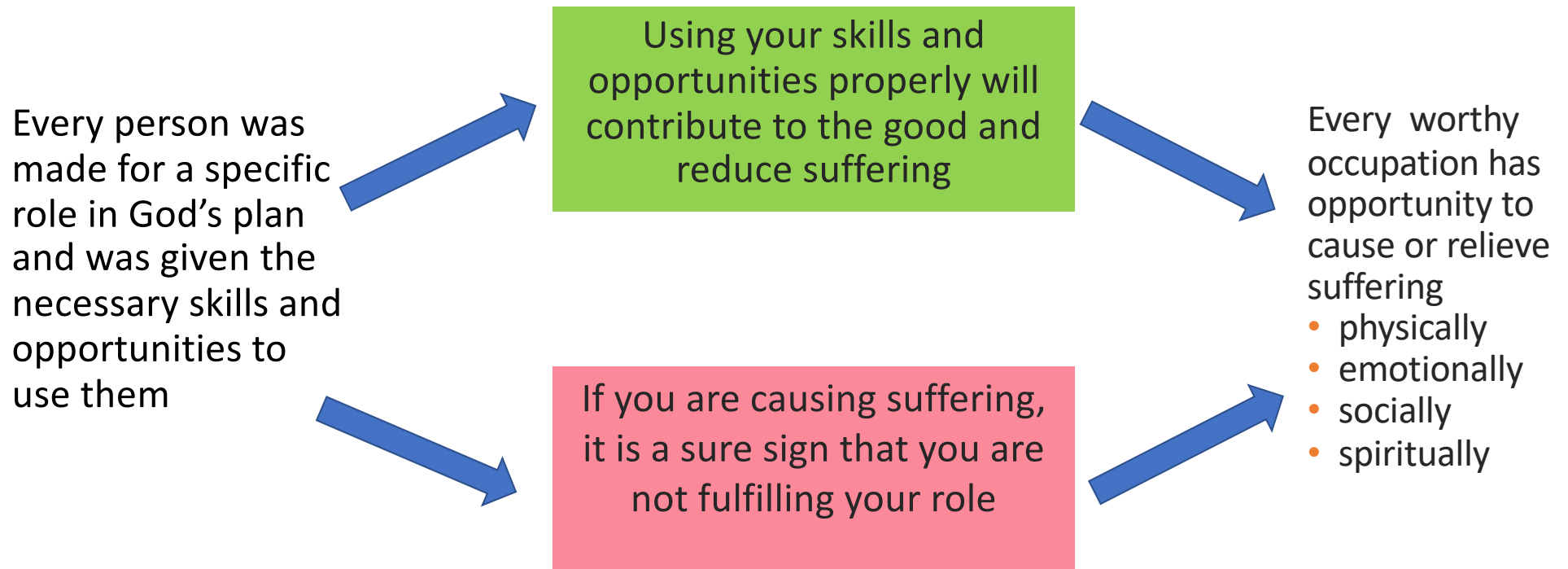
Suffering directs us on the path to joy

Heeding the message of the suffering of others

Remember, others may be suffering for our benefit

- Carefully listen to see if your actions cause suffering: if so, repent.
- You are being offered the chance for spiritual benefit by helping others
- People need to have a purpose and solidarity: provide what you can
- Provide for the physical comfort of others if possible, but focus on spiritual support

Suffering and Occupational Service to others



Suffering and Care Givers

Element of Suffering	Relieving Suffering	Causing Suffering
Physical	Make person you are caring for as comfortable as possible, responding to their verbal and non-verbal requests	Is unresponsive to the discomfort of the person you are caring for
Psychological	Help the person you are caring for find and see ways to contribute and find meaning in his life / Address uncertainty of existence	Devalues or does not acknowledge ability to contribute. Makes person feel he is a burden. Keeps person in the dark about their condition
Social	Treats person you are caring for with dignity and facilitates social interaction with others	Denies personal dignity while causing social isolation
Spiritual	Facilitates access to catechesis and sacramental support	Inhibits spiritual and religious activity

Caregivers must be attentive to all four elements of suffering: physical, psychological, social and spiritual and help the people under their care to get attention for all of them while not causing suffering themselves

Suffering and Spiritual Care Givers

Element of Suffering	Relieving Suffering	Causing Suffering
Physical	Makes necessary accommodations for person you are caring for to worship with the community	Is unresponsive to the physical requirements of the person you are caring for
Psychological	Help the person understand the meaning of suffering and how it can be redemptive	Devalues or does not acknowledge ability to contribute. Makes person feel he is a burden. Keeps person in the dark about their condition
Social	Treats person you are caring for with dignity and facilitates social interaction with others	Denies personal dignity while causing social isolation
Spiritual	Facilitates access to catechesis and sacramental support	Inhibits spiritual and religious activity

Clergy / Chaplains / Catechists must be attentive to all four elements of suffering: physical, psychological, social and spiritual and help the people under their care to get attention for all of them while not causing suffering themselves

Obligations of a Christian Physician

- A Christian physician has the same vocation as all Christian persons
 - to fulfill oneself in giving oneself to others: to family, friends, neighbors, strangers.
 - In addition, as a physician, the Christian person is called to a special way of love, of giving oneself in one's daily works of healing, helping, curing and caring.
- Physicians and patients are persons interacting in a specific existential situation in which one is vulnerable and suffering and seeks healing for another who offers to help and heal.
 - By its nature, the healing relationship is unequal. The patient's personhood is exposed to and by the physician – bodily, spiritually and emotionally.
 - The patient's need for affirmation as a person in the face of this exposure is intense and a source of moral obligation for the physician
 - Pellegrino, Edmund D. and David C. Thomasma. *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practice*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996. 144.

Suffering and Medical Professionals

Element of Suffering	Relieving Suffering	Causing Suffering
Physical	Provides treatment to address illness or injury, allowing patient to function in society	Uses knowledge to harm (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, mutilation, terminal sedation) or exploits patients for own purposes
Psychological	Provides patient with ability to maintain identity and understand their prognosis	Insensitive to patient insecurity about what will happen to them- keeps patient in the dark.
Social	Facilitates steps to ensure patient dignity and social support	Treats patients in undignified manner and/or inhibits social support
Spiritual	Recognizes need to treat body and soul; takes steps to insure spiritual support is offered and available	Inhibits spiritual development and ability for the sick to reach out to God

Medical Professionals must be attentive to all four elements of suffering: physical, psychological, social and spiritual and help their patients get attention for all of them while not adding to their suffering themselves. Failure to meet expectations can cause medical professionals to suffer

Physician Burnout – A Modern Crisis

- A more accurate term is that physicians suffer from “Moral injury”
- Occurs when doctors feel they are impeded from doing what is best for their patients. Impediments can take a variety of forms
 - an insurer’s unwillingness to pay for a medication or procedure
 - limits on appointment times set by the doctor’s employer, or
 - the need to score highly on patient satisfaction surveys.”
- Suffering is identifying problems in the expectations on health care professionals

Heeding the Suffering of Medical Care Professionals

- There are many theories about how to solve Physician Burnout
 - Most do not acknowledge that the reasons for suffering is a lack of spiritual goods and that the physical aspects are symptoms
 - The reason many health care professionals cannot find joy in their work:
 - Joy is the result of spiritual attainment, which they are not currently pursuing
 - Healing the body alone is insufficient to stop suffering

Re-envisioning the Role of Medicine

- The person is a composite being of body and soul and healing must incorporate both: Medicine must work with the Church to meet spiritual needs
- Medical practitioners should see themselves as instruments of God's mercy
 - who can mitigate symptoms and delay death to allow people the opportunity to meet their familial, ecclesial and societal obligations.
 - Who never obstruct patients' ability to reconcile with God
 - Don't give false hope that decouples illness from the sense of finitude
 - Don't facilitate euthanasia, terminal sedation or PAS

Re-envisioning the Role of Medicine: CHCS

- The health care professional has the knowledge and experience to pursue the goals of healing, the maintenance of health, and the compassionate care of the dying, taking into account the patient's convictions and spiritual needs, and the moral responsibilities of all concerned.
- The person in need of health care depends on the skill of the health care provider to assist in preserving life and promoting health of body, mind, and spirit.
- The patient, in turn, has a responsibility to use these physical and mental resources in the service of moral and spiritual goals to the best of his or her ability.
 - USCCB, The Ethical and Religious Directives, 13

Suffering and Civic leaders

Element of Suffering	Relieving Suffering	Causing Suffering
Physical	Policies provide for the greater good without exploiting individuals	Policies favor some citizens at the expense of others
Psychological	Provides a safe environment that facilitates and rewards the contributions of all residents	Devalues resident contributions in a hostile environment
Social	Promotes equal dignity and social support for all residents	Denies personal dignity while causing social isolation
Spiritual	Programs support religious freedom	Inhibits spiritual and religious activity

Civic leaders must attentive to all four elements of suffering: physical, psychological, social and spiritual and help their residents/citizens get attention for all of them while not causing suffering themselves

Understanding how to Resolve Suffering (From late 20th Century insights)

Dr. Eric Cassell (Medicine)

The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine, 1991

When a person can find meaning in their suffering, they can ignore the pain and may even feel exhilaration.

Simone Weil (Philosophy)

The Love of God and Affliction, 1940s

“Only through contemplating Jesus on the Cross in affliction and recognizing our solidarity with him in denying ourselves can affliction be relieved.”

Suffering turns to joy when its meaning is understood

Pope John Paul II (Magisterial)

Salifici doloris, 1984

As the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed. It is then that man finds in his suffering interior peace and even spiritual joy

Dorothee Soelle (Theology)

Suffering, 1975

Suffering is transformed, as is the person, when its meaning is understood
Suffering in Christ summons self-confidence, boldness, and strength when the sufferer “knows” that he or she was “sent” to actualize justice.

The Joy in Finding meaning in suffering

Now I rejoice in my
sufferings for your
sake...

- St. Paul, *1Colossians 24*

Only through contemplating Jesus on the
Cross in affliction and recognizing our
solidarity with him in denying ourselves can
affliction be relieved.

- Simone Weil, *The Love of God and Affliction*

It is when the salvific meaning of
suffering descends to man's level and
becomes the individual's personal
response that man finds in his suffering
interior peace and even spiritual joy.

- John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 26

Transcendence brings relief to the
pain and deprivation - to the
suffering itself - by giving it a
meaning larger than the person.

- Eric Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering
and the Goals of Medicine*, 44