

## END OF LIFE WORKSHOP – SUFFERING TABLE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### SUFFERING IS:

- Means something new in our lives; it is more space for growth
- Result of previous experience
- Not getting what we want and getting what we don't want
- Exhausting and requires courage and tenderness
- Helplessness; stuck in empathy
- In a place of hopelessness
- Subjective
- Fluid (it ebbs and flows, waxes and wanes), as is resilience
- Denial
- Guilt
- Having no spiritual purpose in life
- Easier to handle if I share some of the details of it with others who I consider special – who, to me, are important
- Not supposed to be there
- Unloved / unwanted
- Wanting to be other than they are
- Made more bearable when voiced, shared, understood and accepted
- A lack of happiness.
- Enduring physical pain and lack of relief for it, or diversion, which would bring about a living hope of wellness.
- Discomfort in our being.
- Torment or anguish that evokes questions like 'why me?' 'What did I do to deserve this?'
- Isolated grief
- Continuing to live with darkness in the light of life's ongoing normality
- Losing connection to others
- Loss of inner peace
- Being alone when all you want or need is to NOT be alone.
- Inner Chaos
- Painful, horrible, overwhelming, unexplainable, individual to us
- Pain in many colors and can become a rainbow
- Unfathomable
- A weariness
- No respect of persons – it comes to everyone!
- Physical / emotional
- The absence of peace in the midst of pain
- Varies in degrees
- Real and inescapable in life

- Part of life/ universal X 2
- Part of life and we need to stop and deal with it
- Part of being human
- Mostly involuntary
- Something that comes without any notice
- Motivate / discourage
- Sometimes avoided to be available to others – to be of service to others. But it becomes a delayed acceptance of suffering.
- Feeling alone on the journey
- Exploration of the unknown – journey to an unknown territory – map unclear
- A journey, not chosen as destination or travelling
- Unbearable in isolation
- Fear of vulnerability
- Call to my life long is a pain
- A window to the promise of greater things to come: hope
- Unavoidable – occasion to invite God’s presence – God’s suffers with us
- Feeling disconnected with God
- Becoming aware of my limits and asking God to help me live through this
- Birthing into a new life of eternal peace and everlasting joy
- Not the end of joy
- Your perspective
- Opens and relives the fullness of life as sacred
- Sustainable when I have those whom I love with me
- Often deepened by the fear of the unknown, but some relief is often brought about by hope.
- A blessing with unpleasant gift wrapping paper x 10,000
- Can be God’s mercy in disguise
- The unwelcomed guest
  - New stories
  - Someone else’s experience illuminating your own
  - Rearranging schedules, time lines, plans
  - Causing extra work
  - Straining patience
- Naming / finding the Real, especially what is often not said, accepted or considered correct. Naming what it is.
- What makes suffering be more of a physical pain or of emotional pain. Is one more significant than the other?
- What you have at the moment and being thankful
- A state that varies in magnitude for everyone

## **SUFFERING MAY BE RELIEVED BY:**

- Love – other’s love/care, God’s love
- The presence of one who cares enough to not see the suffering one as a burden or be afraid of being in the presence of suffering
- The loving presence of another human being who cares
- Finding a meaning for it. Meaning is suffering may come from faith in the afterlife.
- Refocusing the
- Why me? Why not me?
- energy, medication, acknowledge
- Mindfulness
- Contemplating we are more alike than different
- Accepting the truth and not clinging to life as permanent
- Letting yourself be in it. Therefore we ‘go there’ and practice (Mindfulness)
- Companionship X 5
- Visits
- Sharing with someone X 5
- Sharing in others suffering, rituals, and reclaiming the power of faith
- Shared with close friends or loving family members
- Sharing it with those who support me through touch, words, music, and empathy
- Sharing, being present, acknowledging time
- Loving, connected presence X 2
- Loving touch – holding, hugging, being with
- Someone else being present
- Empathic support
- Sharing in rituals that have held meaning in the past X 5
- When I do a service at a nursing home for example, and end with everyone saying the Lord’s prayer, even the people who don’t seem to be aware come to live and say the prayer out Loud.
- Use of traditions
- Stories of others who have made the journey,
- Giving oneself permission to express the pain / loss / fear, etc.
- Knowing someone is there to support you
- Knowing that you are not alone
- Making the choice to see the joy that exists beside it
  - Amidst his recollection of his conversation with Eli, he so vividly recalled the sight of the nature around him, the senses of living.
  - Be here now fully.
- Those who join you on the journey
- WE will be okay

- Accepting our own situation in comparison to that of others
- Act on pain to help relieve it so you can go on
- Tasting another's tears. We then come in!
- I unite my suffering to Christ who suffered for me. I offer this suffering for those who are suffering more than I.
- Give it meaning
- Have to act on it
- Allowing the person to talk / share
- Awareness, recognition / meditation
- Helping others and loving others to love and obey
- Something, or maybe nothing at all
- Cure
- Death
- The meaning you attach to it.
- Acceptance and prayers X 2
- The sacrament of the sick
- Medical interventions
- Hope for relief in time
- Support from family, friends, caregivers
- Spiritual guidance from a pastor
- Thankfulness
- Surrendering
- Looking for a little piece of happy joys that you can look forward to
- Taking the holy communion daily and anointing
- Retreating into one's self and into God
  - And that's where Meaning comes from
- Trusting that:
  - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble, even though the earth should give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God
- Knowing that the deepest reflection and meaning comes in the time of pain and suffering, also accepting that life is a gift
- Getting distracted with a group as listening / viewing a hockey game (example)
- Maintaining day-to-day normalcy. Keep everyday routines such as family meals and personal care and maintenance.

## MEANING IN SUFFERING MAY COME FROM:

- Love
- Putting suffering in context
- Perspective
- Unexpected places / people
- Those accompanying you on the journey
- Fellowship and companionship X 2
  - Conversation and reflection
  - Remembering our shared human experience
- Contemplating from why me and asking why not me?
- Wandering of the mind / random thoughts - mindfulness
- The opportunity to experience raw emotion, quality time, and the ability to share profound feelings with those we love and care about
- Something seemingly meaningless – as grape juice and a bun, and the one that suffered in our stead
- Discovering again and again what you already have with different views from a lower position (humble)
- Distracting ourselves / minds with mundane things... ‘I don’t have any raisins’
- Inner wisdom
- Connection and listening by ‘we’ X 3
  - Past life, present life, future life
- Transformation of the soul / growth
- A belief in someone / something / some idea
- People not being afraid
- Loved ones being able to be present and accompany the person on their work
- Spiritual and human love and compassion
- Listening with compassion to others from the heart
- Facing our fears
- Generational healing
- Taking the time to live suffering, and to recognize how suffering has changed me.
- Reminds me of my vulnerability, fragility, I’m not in charge
- Something you once had and now have lost.
- Our belief that the Good Shepherd cares... we’ll be okay
- Suffering and inviting God to enter my pain and journey on a pilgrimage with him.
- The presence of the Lord.
- Christ – walking and journeying with the sufferer
- Uniting in Christ suffering. Offering for a good cause.
- Jesus on the cross
- How one experiences God journeying with us
- Raphael (Num.24)

- Walking into new life of eternal peace and lasting joy
- Observing all experiences as moments in time that are not permanent and will change
- Surprising unanticipated circumstances and or relationships
- Searching along the way for places of rest, hearing the stories of others
- Gratitude
- Solidarity with other sufferers
- Unanticipated insights
- Sharing it, accepting it, resisting it
- Storying it – capturing it in a story
- The sacred and the ordinary – recreation and community
- Humour – not taking myself so seriously
- Joining with the sufferings of the world – common humanity
- Rituals – childhood prayer, music
- Recognizing the deeper meaning and levels of familiar rituals
- When we realize that our suffering is part of a greater story
- Reflecting and being grateful for what you have at the moment in comparison to others

*Suffering is a human emotion that all humans will experience; for many it may be present all their lives.*

*Life is an adventure full of mystery lived in the mystical body of Christ's passion and resurrection*

*Grace finds beauty in ugly things.*

*Communion of Saints in the story – real/true meaning when I was at my friend's death sitting at her bedside, suffering with her. I live the 'Communion of Saints'.*