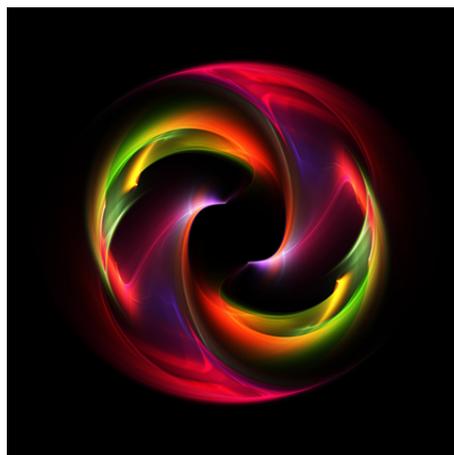


## PRAYER FOCUS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2015

### *Our Suffering World*

*Just as we know that ultimately death will come to each of us, so too must we accept that suffering is part of the human condition, and we will all experience it at some time in our lives along with the joys we encounter. It comes in many forms – physical, mental, emotional, moral, and in varying degrees. Some people seem to experience a greater share of suffering than others, but we can never stand in the shoes of another and judge their suffering.*



#### REFLECTION ONE

- ❖ Suffering is not something we welcome, and at times it can seem unbearable. Jesus did not welcome suffering – his own or that of others – and during his time on earth he did what he could to alleviate the suffering of many of those he encountered. God did not *will* Jesus to suffer and die on the Cross, but neither would he – or could he - intervene because he knew his Son, in coming on earth took on our humanity and would live this to the end including his death. It was by going through the brutal suffering of Calvary, that Jesus showed his great love for us, a love that has no limits, and will never desert us. In the end Love triumphed over Death and gave us the promise of life beyond the grave.
- ❖ Suffering can't be 'explained' or reasoned away. There is no explanation for the suffering of thousands of children born into a world of brutality and deprivation and who will die through no fault of their own. No answer could be acceptable and there is no way of getting rid of suffering, rather it is "the open wound of life in this world".
- ❖ We know that God is in all suffering creation. This is not an answer but an invitation to love and suffer life as God does; an invitation to promote the good in love in spite of on-going evil, an invitation to risk as God risks for the sake of all creation. The Cross is the key to convincing us to love in the midst of hate; it is the key to our hope because it reveals to us the ground of all hope – the truth and the justice of the Creator God.

*In praying for the wider suffering world, you are invited to pray this month for many of our Sisters and others you may know who are dealing with suffering and often severe and constant pain. It may be dealing with cancer and all that entails, or the fragility, diminishment and incurable ailments that come with older age or the sadness of loss of loved ones. "Suffering accepted becomes a mighty cry in the ears of God;" and the prayers of our Sisters who are suffering can be among the most effective. When we simply cannot pray then suffering itself becomes our prayer. Let us place all our suffering people in the arms of our compassionate God who, we know, walks with us in our suffering.*

Miriam Elder ocd, taken from 'People's Companion to the Breviary'

### **PRAYER FOR REFLECTION**

*When the signs of age begin to mark my body  
(and still more when they touch my mind);  
When the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off  
strikes from without or is born within me;  
when the powerful moment comes in which I  
suddenly awaken to the fact that I am ill or growing old;  
and above all at that last moment  
when I feel I am losing hold of myself and  
am absolutely passive within the hands  
of the great unknown forces that have formed me;  
in all those dark moments, O God,  
grant that I may understand that it is you  
who are painfully parting the fibres of my being  
in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my  
substance and bear me away within myself.*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ

### **REFLECTION TWO**

While we continue our prayers for our own Sisters and others close to us, you are invited to also extend that to the wider suffering world and the suffering Earth. It would seem that the conflict zones and the evil that is perpetrated in them have escalated in a way not seen before. While the reporting is focused mainly on the Middle Eastern countries like Syria and Iraq, and more recently Nigeria, we know warfare is going on in other places that don't make the headlines.



We are confronted daily on our TV screens and newspapers with the scenes of terrible atrocities with the casualties running into the thousands. Islamic State or those supporting them are among the perpetrators. They show a total disregard for the value of human life regardless of whether the victims are small children, young teens, or adults. Christians especially are being targeted for no other reason than they are Christians, and young people gathered in schools and universities are easy prey.

❖ *These things are happening in places far removed from our country and our reality. SO WHAT CAN BE OUR RESPONSE?*

Brendan Lovett in a book published in 1990, **"It's Not Over Yet"**, offers us these deep insights into the only meaningful way we can be *involved* in the Passion of Jesus.

**"The Passion of Jesus is to be placed within the ongoing story of the passion of humankind, in solidarity with the suffering people of all times and places." In that sense, the Passion of Jesus will never be over. "It is only if we understand it in continuity with all the suffering of the world that we can be properly involved in the passion of Jesus. "The Gospel never invites us to pity, but it does invite us to active response through openness to deeper involvement in the suffering and sub-human suffering of our world.**

**The passion story of Jesus has the power to illumine the truth of the suffering that is omnipresent in creation and history and the truth of God in relation to suffering. That is not to offer any easy answers, but to come to see the cross of Jesus as the deepest meaning of everything that is going on in our world."**

***You are invited to pray for:***

**PEACE WHICH THE WORLD CANNOT GIVE**

O God, you love justice and you establish peace on earth.  
We bring before you the disunity of today's world:  
the absurd violence, and the many wars,  
which are breaking the courage of the peoples of the world;  
human greed and injustice,  
which breed hatred and strife.

Send your spirit and renew the face of the earth;  
teach us to be compassionate towards the whole human family;  
strengthen the will of all those  
who fight for justice and for peace,  
and give us that peace which the world cannot give.

Amen.

*World Council of Churches*

*Acknowledgements:*

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