

DNA – The Lenten Path of Dispossession, or,
How come the Good News sometimes sounds like Bad News?

Opening Reading: Luke 9:22-25

Jesus said to his disciples: "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?"

Reflection: How come the Good News sometimes sounds like Bad News?

Taking up our cross each and every day is a frightening prospect. To be entirely dispossessed of everything that is not Christ, leaning more and more on him, entering every more deeply into the suffering of others: the sick, the refugee, the stranger caught in a war-torn country, the outcast, the prisoner, and all those in whom Christ hides and longs to be seen. And like Christ, we may even be broken open and poured out, enduring great suffering and rejection.

This can even be confusing for us. How can Jesus' ministry, which was filled with Good News for the poor and healing for those suffering, end so brutally? With a horrid torture and execution? How can the Good News seem so grim?

But it all leads us, eventually, to greater intimacy with God in Christ. As the path of dispossession becomes the path of greater union, the body broken by suffering becomes the bread of the new covenant, and the blood so bitterly shed becomes the wine of intoxicating intimacy. We begin to taste and see what saints and mystics have promised: a hidden wholeness, a font of living water, an intimate indwelling in the very life of God.

One day we may gaze with gratitude at the cross through which Christ pulled us out of ourselves and into the infinite abundance of the divine life. Until then, we pick it up, daily, and we follow.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is there any suffering on your heart today?
2. How does your faith and prayer life interact with all of the suffering in the world today? Do you experience doubt, or the call to mission and healing, or both?
3. Have you experienced God's presence in suffering? If not, have you brought your suffering to prayer? How has that transformed the suffering?
4. What cross are you carrying? How can this group help you with it?