

Sharing in Christ's sufferings

A CMS Presence reflection for Lent 2024

We live in a time of increasing divisions and polarities, fear and anger.

So this Lent comes to us with a particularly weighty task: how to allow the examination of self that is encouraged by the season to re-shape us - that we might, in God's grace and in small ways, participate in God's healing of our world.

One of the markers of the Christian faith story has always been the call to share in suffering. We might wish it were otherwise, but it is at the centre of the practice of the faith. To hunger and thirst for righteousness in ourselves and in our world, is a call to suffer. And to allow the sufferings of our world, in God's grace, to find in us some small measure of transformation.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death...

Philippians 3:10 NRSV

How might we approach this calling?

Any attempt to share in Christ's sufferings can only begin through a commitment each day to prayerful presence. We need to be prayerfully present to God, the source of our life. We need to be prayerfully present to those around us and to our wider contexts, in their joys and yes - in their sufferings.

Whenever I speak in person of this weighty call I naturally find myself beginning to open out my arms ever wider, and breathing deep. You might like to try this position in your prayers for the world this Lent.

In this stance we may discern the crucified Jesus, who allowed all the sin and pain of the world to come towards him, and to hold it there, refusing to pass it on to others, enabling it to be transformed within him.

As we seek, in God's grace to share in that ongoing transformation now, may we have the courage to open ourselves up to the joys and sufferings of our world; and the wisdom to root ourselves ever more deeply in the loving presence of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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