

HEART PEACE

Embracing Life's
Adversities

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Preface

PERHAPS YOU ARE FEELING MUCH ANGUISH and despair right now. You may be experiencing a very difficult time at work, or you may be involved in an unhappy relationship. You may be facing a crippling or terminal illness; you may be dreading the consequences of mistakes you have made; or you may be in physical or psychic pain. You may be feeling the excruciating pain of loneliness, the fear of abandonment, or the insecurity of the unknown. You want to live, but life hurts too much to go on. You want peace so badly, but all you seem to experience is misery. The whole world appears dark and menacing. Your internal wound is great and the bleeding doesn't seem to stop. The tears you shed are as constant as the pain from which they come. All of these are important feelings that you are experiencing and at times they must seem overwhelming to you. There seems to be no way out of this, but please believe me, there is.

There has been no darker time for me than when my son was killed. The years that have passed since that dreadful time have been full of an agony too great

to bear, and yet, I have borne it. They have included days in which I did not want to live, and yet, I have lived through it. At the time I truly believed that such a loss was a wound too deep to heal, and yet, I have been healing. The journey through desolation is long and arduous, but we do not make it alone.

I believe that God cries with us, mourns our losses, and suffers our pain. God is with us always, even when it does not appear so. And God is unconditionally forgiving. Because God loves you so much, God would have you live life fully. You can work through these difficult times with the help of God. When life is out of control and completely without meaning, then you are ready to receive God's help. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. With God working through you, life becomes manageable again, little by little.

It is here, at the point of annihilation that you can save your soul. Out of our hopelessness, the hope of God prevails. From behind the wall of your shame-filled self, your secrets are set free. As your false self dies off, your true self is born anew. As you face your fear, you are given courage; as you acknowledge your brokenness, you are healed. The long, dark night now breaks into the promise of tomorrow.

Life is a tornado. It is a whirlwind that tosses and turns you, lifts you to the heavens and crashes you into the rocks, and, at the same time, at the center of it all, there is a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a stillness that calls the deep within you to the

deep that is God. This is the nature of life. When you least expect it, you are torn from that quiet place and thrown into the strife. And, when you least expect it, you discover the eye of the storm in the midst of the tornado.

As a child of God you are called to love: love of God, love of self, and love of others. It is a love that sustains you through the darkest of nights. As a child of God you can see time through the eyes of eternity. As a child of God you are invited to rest from time to time. As a child of God you are encouraged to live in such a way that you honor your physical self. As a child of God you abandon your quest for perfection, and embrace your imperfection humbly and gratefully. As a child of God you are beckoned to be one with God in prayer and meditation, there to discover that, even in the worst of times, God is with you.

Regardless of the conditions or the circumstances of your life, if you believe God is with you, hope springs eternal. Your hope, then, transcends what is before you, not by thinking about tomorrow, but by daring to stay in the present and finding God's love in the eternal now.

Why the Suffering?



SOMETIMES LIFE IS MORE than we can bear. We are bent down under the weight of our troubles and broken by the impact of our suffering. We try to understand the mystery of suffering but to no avail. With arms extended toward the heavens we ask, "Why?" half-way expecting an answer, but we know there will be no answer, no reason given for what is happening to us. We want to understand our suffering so we can control it, yet we never completely understand, and our frustration only compounds our suffering. Ultimately, we come to realize that suffering is a part of life, and that if it is to make any sense or logic, we will have to be the ones to give our suffering a sense of meaning and purpose by the way we embrace life's adversities.

The Cause of Suffering

Sometimes we can see a direct correlation between our actions and our suffering, but a direct cause and effect connection is not always clear. Often our suffering is brought on by the actions of others, by heredity, destructive acts of nature, or accidents. Bad things happen to us in life whether we deserve them or not. They just happen.

We are sorely disappointed when we suffer even after we have obeyed the “rules” that were supposed to keep us safe and sound. We discover, eventually, that there are no guarantees against suffering, regardless of how we have lived our life. It seems so unfair to us to see that some people who have not obeyed the “rules” are apparently free of suffering, while others who have observed the rules are not spared from suffering. Just like the rain that falls on the just and the unjust, suffering respects no person and recognizes no boundary.

In our attempt to make some sense of our suffering we sometimes look for a culprit, a cause, a source of our suffering. Sometimes we blame God. God must be punishing us for our wrongdoing, we reason, because otherwise an all-benevolent God would not allow suffering. But even in God’s goodness God cannot stop the suffering that comes with living, neither can God direct the suffering toward the bad and away from the good. God does not will suffering for us; God wills that we live and love and embrace life and all that