

The Agony in the Garden as a Model of Human Suffering

Faith & Evangelization Congress
Archdiocese of Hartford, Nov. 15, 2014

Outline of Presentation

1. Being a disciple of Christ means conforming ourselves to him, even in our suffering.

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Lk. 9:23).

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10).

2. The Garden of Gethsemane is a unique place of mental and emotional suffering – for Jesus and for us.
3. Close reading of the parallel accounts of the Agony in the Garden as found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.
4. Reflection on the nature of Jesus’ suffering and how we suffer the same “agonies” (see back).
5. Meaning of the Greek term “agonia” and how it captures the experience of human suffering and (ultimately) surrender.
6. Brief meditation on suffering with Jesus in the Garden.

Agonia Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, in the pages of Scripture, I read the story of your suffering. It is a story that begins with the rebellion of humankind and plays out over the pages and over the centuries, from the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane, from the long road out of Eden to the burdened path to Golgotha. In the world around me, and in my own life, I see your suffering continue. Though I find strength within myself and comfort in the support of others, there are times when my self-reliance becomes hollow; there are times when I am alone. In those times of true agony, I enter the Garden. I throw myself to the ground before you. There is nothing left to hide. There is nothing left to cling to. I only see the cup before me and the *agonia* within me. In my struggle, bring me to a place of peace and surrender: *not my will but yours be done*. Strengthen me to rise from this earth. Remain with me in this Garden of struggle and surrender, and I will drink this cup: *Into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit!* Amen.

Suffering of Christ <i>(possibilities)</i>	Our Suffering
Dread of pain	
Dread of death	
Empathy for others who must watch him suffer and die (Mary, disciples, etc.)	
Disappointment of being misunderstood (by disciples, others who heard him)	
Frustration over the hardness of the human heart	
Disappointment in the religious leaders of his time	
Distressed about leaving his disciples behind	
Loneliness of suffering without his friends awake and near	
Hurt by their impending desertion	
Heartbroken over the betrayal by one of his own (Judas)	
Natural feeling of abandonment in a time of suffering	
Tension within his own will – <i>instinct to survive vs. desire to do the will of the Father</i>	