

Lenten Retreat Reflections
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Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink? Mt. 20:22

Uniting my sufferings with Jesus' suffering is drinking from His cup. It is taking up my cross daily. I realize that God gives me graces with the crosses if I am willing to carry the cross with love. Carrying the cross daily develops virtue and a clearer vision of what is eternal.

Jesus paid the ransom for our forgiveness through unimaginable suffering. He has forgiven those who have offended me. I need to also forgive and actively work and pray to be relieved of the weight of the memory of these offenses. I want to truly imitate Christ and reap His blessings and peace. I can't just embrace the "good stuff"—the pleasant, the uplifting, the joy and peace, but accept crosses with gratitude, not just grit my teeth and endure it when suffering comes.

The cup Jesus drank was intense suffering to ransom us from Satan. He did it because He loves us beyond our imagining. He ransomed those who are currently offending us, who bring us misery and suffering. I can't put myself and my perceptions of justice above God's standards of forgiveness. Mt. 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Accepting the inevitable suffering and injustice we experience and uniting it to Jesus', is sharing His cup of suffering.

In the book of Jonah, Jonah didn't want the Ninevites to repent and be spared annihilation. When Jonah saw that God withheld destroying Nineveh when the people repented he was exceedingly displeased and angry. (Jonah 4:1) In answering God's question Jonah said "I do well to be angry, angry enough to die" (Jonah 4:9b). Drinking the cup of suffering and forgiving offenses is forsaking being angry and desiring vengeance for wrongs that are done to us. Jonah's idea of justice was to destroy the Ninevites, whom he hated and thought they deserved to be annihilated. Sometimes my idea of justice is not God's way of mercy. I must remember Jesus' words (Lk. 22:42b, Mk. 14:36, Mt. 26:39b) ...not my will, but yours be done. I recognize the truth in Is. 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

Lenten pillars are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. I am trying to fast from anger and pray for those who hurt me.