Why did Jesus Suffer and Die? Four Minute Retreat for March, 2025

Doug Leonhardt, S.J.

Introduction

I believe in a God who loves us so much that he sent his Son in human form so we could get a glimpse of the face of God and hear God's voice. Jesus, as Son of God and fully human, lived among us so that we might have life and life in abundance. Then, why did He have to die? As a human person Jesus experienced the fullness of being human as we do. He was susceptible to the germ pool that was among the people of Israel at that time. He experienced the challenges of childhood, learning to walk, to talk, to read, to pray, to make friends. As a young adult, He discovered His strengths and life's limitations. As an adult, He had to discover how to accept praise and to grow in intimacy. But most importantly, He had to appropriate his deepest identity as the Beloved Son of God with a mission from His Father. He fulfilled his mission by proclaiming the closeness of the Kingdom of God, preaching the good news to the poor, and healing those broken in body and spirit. As He fulfilled his mission, He opposed those who chose the Law over the God of the Law. And by professing His divinity by forgiving sins, He threatened organized religion. So, He was accused of blasphemy. As a consequence, the authorities judged it better to get rid of Him by killing Him. Then He would be out of mind and out of sight, but He was raised from the dead and lives. He died so we could know that death is not as an end but a passage to a new life.

Scripture: Romans 5. 5-10

"Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, He died at the appointed time by the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But what proves His love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us… Indeed, if, while we were sinners, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more once reconciled, we will be saved by his life."

Reflection Questions:

1) How do you react to the fact that Christ allowed himself to be put to death for our sake before we even knew about it?
2) Does Christ's death relieve you from any fear that death will be the end?

Action:

Since Jesus as the risen Lord carries with himself the fullness of His human experience, the next time you pray do so with the awareness God understands whatever you are experiencing; and you can just talk with Him about it.