

**“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

**Once upon a time**, there was a science fiction story called **“The Traveler.”** It was about a man, named Paul Rossbach, who was a part of a government, research team. They had developed an energy screen to permit people to travel back in time.

As the story unfolds, the first trip is scheduled to take place, in Spring, a few days before Easter. Paul has been picked to make the trip. He decides to go back to the day of the Crucifixion.

Please note that Paul is a non-believer and anticipates finding the Crucifixion quite different from the way the Bible describes it.

When the historic moment comes, Paul steps into the screen. The countdown begins as planned and the launch is made on schedule. This is what took place:

**Paul finds himself soaring back into time—100 years, 500 years, 1,000 years, --2,000 years!**

The energy screen touches down on target. Calvary is swarming with people. Everybody’s attention is focused on the 3 men nailed to the crosses, about 100 feet away from Paul.

Immediately, Paul asks the Command Center permission to move closer to the crosses. It is granted, **BUT...** they tell him to stay inside the energy screen.

Paul moves closer. As he does, his eyes come to rest on Jesus. Suddenly, something remarkable begins to happen. Paul feels drawn to Jesus, as a tiny piece of metal is drawn to a magnet. He’s deeply moved by the... love radiating from Jesus. It’s something he has never experienced before.

Then, contrary to all his expectations, events on Calvary begin to unfold exactly as the Gospel describes them. Paul is visibly shaken; his blood pressure is soaring, his heart pounding. The Command Center realizes this and fears he is becoming too emotionally involved. They order him to prepare for immediate return to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Paul protests, but to no avail.

**The return-trip goes smoothly. When Paul steps from the energy screen, it’s clear that he is a changed man.**

The author ends the story with this comment:

**“It was Good Friday and... a wonderful time to find... one’s... faith!”**

I think it is interesting to note that, what impressed Paul so deeply, was not the suffering of Jesus (which had to have been breath-takingly-grotesque), **BUT**... the love of Jesus. Love radiates from Jesus, as light radiates from the sun.

I think, further, that the story of Paul Rossbach makes a very important point.

**“What, exactly, IS the very important point the story of Paul Rossbach makes?” you ask.**

**Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

It is this: maybe we shouldn’t focus so much on the suffering of Jesus in the Holy Week ahead. Maybe we should focus on the deep love of Jesus that speaks to us through his suffering in Holy Week. Every time I see Gibson’s film, **The Passion of the Christ**, although I am appalled at the graphic suffering, yet, because of that explicitly depicted suffering, I am utterly amazed at the depth of Our Lord’s love, which generated his endurance & acceptance of such unimaginable pain.

\*\*\*\*\*

**The suffering of Jesus speaks to us of his love in 3 ways:**

**I<sup>st</sup>** it’s a sign of love. It tells us, in the most powerful way possible, what Jesus told us in his lifetime:

**“The greatest love a person can have for his friends ...is to lay down his life for them.”** Jn. 15:13

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, the suffering of Jesus is an invitation **to** love. It says, in the most powerful way possible, what Jesus told us in his lifetime:

**“Love one another, as I have loved you.”** Jn 15:12

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, the suffering of Jesus is a revelation **about** love.

It tells us, in a most powerful way, that **love entails suffering**.

**“If anyone wants to come after me, he must pick up his cross and follow me.”** Mk 8:34

I cannot stress this profound teaching of Jesus enough, today. We need to meditate on it more & more. I am afraid that we have apparently forgotten it, as a society, as a culture--godless as it is!

You see, in our era of painkillers, reality-escape-tools (incl. the internet, Smart phones, & I-pads), and instant gratification, we expect everything to be **pain free** and ...we expect it **now**!

**BUT**, and there's that proverbial **BUT** in life, this is impossible.

**For example:** It's painful to rekindle a relationship grown cool, peppered with paranoia.

**For example:** It's painful to try to keep the lines of communication open with someone who doesn't care to listen to what we have to say.

**For example:** It's painful to deal with someone who's irrationally demanding.

**For example:** It's painful to try to face each day with courage in a world that is passing us by.

\*\*\*\*\*

Let's face it, we can't get into an energy screen and go back to Golgotha Hill this Holy Week. We can't just get on a plane and go on a guided Holy Land tour.

**BUT**, we **can** meditate on the Holy Week, Gospel readings.

We **can** retrace, spiritually, the Holy-Week-steps of Jesus.

We **can** learn the lesson of **love** contained in the **suffering** of Jesus.

**For example:**

We **can** learn that ...the suffering of Jesus is a **sign of** his incredible love for us.

We **can** learn that ...the suffering of Jesus is a **revelation about** his incredible love for us.

We **can** learn that ...the suffering of Jesus is **an invitation for us to** love our brothers/sisters...  
as he has loved us!

(Remember, love of God is inseparable from love of **neighbor**...those 'others' that he suffered & died for.)

This is the message contained in today's Passion Sunday readings.

It's the lesson of love that Jesus wants to share with us, especially in the Triduum Liturgy...  
Holy Thursday, Good Friday, & Easter Vigil/Sunday.

I close with this familiar prayer:

**“Lord, teach us to love.**

**Teach us to love as you loved us:**

**To give ...and not count the cost.**

**To fight ...and not heed the wounds.**

**To toil ...and not seek for rest.**

**To labor ...and not ask for reward,**

**Except to know that we are ... doing... your ... will.**

May God, the Essence of love, our Abba, bless you—  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.