

Carrying the cross

A traditional notion of Roman Catholicism inevitably involve suffering. Indeed the likes of St Teresa of Lisieux, took on suffering as a means of further spiritual development.

Those of you who have read Graham Greene will perhaps have been confused by his almost perverse recognition and acceptance of suffering.

Roman Catholic homes have more often than not have a crucifix somewhere in the house.

This is in direct contradiction of the bombardment of modern popular media.

Suffering in the popular notion is not something to be confronted, but only something to be avoided.

Suffering is seen as a consequence of failure, and not the inevitable result of courage.

In the Gospel St Peter seeks to avoid the inevitable crucifixion

His apparent statement of compassion, is seen by Christ as the voice of evil.

Could I say as a Roman Catholic priest, that I hope that there is suffering in your life.

Is that perverse

Or a hope for real human dignity.

I do not wish suffering be given you

No it is more complicated

I hope that you yourself reach a place or stage in life,

where suffering is inevitable

where you have the faith

To take up arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing

To end them

The easiest illustration of this is the image of the athlete.

I once watched a documentary where Steve Redgrave the Olympic rower was shown going through his paces in a gymnasium to improve his fitness.

In an attempt to increase his strength and endurance he was working on a rowing machine.

He moved beyond the stage that his powerful body was comfortable with.

Through astonishing mental will, he pushed, and strained and struggled

Until his whole frame was in pain, and screaming to stop this self-imposed torture.

Then he fell off the contraption and vomited.

We have all watched the Olympic Gold being presented to the glorious victor
How many are prepared to recognise the suffering that that medal represents.

No pain, No Gain.

Or closer to home

On a level of mere mortals.

You are not perfect

This may come as a surprise but it is true.

The people you love are not perfect.

They are not spiritually perfect

They are not emotionally perfect

They are not physically perfect.

They will make you hurt.

You will make you hurt

I have witnessed intense beauty at the bedside of a dying patient who drifts off into eternity holding
the hand of a suffering lover

I have seen the tears of the betrayed as the consequent practical realities are dealt with.

I have even been amused at the frustration, as affection moved beyond infatuation, and was
confronted by pig ignorance.

It hurts

It hurts

But love is worth the price

You will make you hurt

When you fail. In order to begin again you must recognise the fault. That hurts.

When the gift of humility is given as a result disaster. That hurts

When in order to celebrate more is asked. That hurts.

When you take the risk, with its inevitable anxiety. That hurts

But life is worth the price.

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