

## Main Ideas to Percolate Over for Next Week on Suffering in Our Ancient, Unfolding, Sacred Cosmos...

*Paschein* -- Greek term “To suffer” “To endure, to undergo”

*Map* (Divine Suffering):

God is a God characterized by Relationship -- God With us. Thus, God is in solidarity -- covenantal solidarity -- with creation. God companions with us in an unfinished, broken world -- and with beautiful and broken people. Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we too are called to accompany others on this pilgrimage. But how can divine suffering be a map for us -- a map for our pilgrimage with other co-sufferers that come in many forms in our world?

- Creative suffering of our Triune God
- Wounded Face of the Spirit
- Incarnation as Emergence
- Cosmic Cross

*Window* (Ecosystemic Suffering):

When we cut ourselves off from the natural world and began to deny that we are part of this planet, that we are stardust, then our understanding of suffering diminished and we became numb to the suffering of our human brethren and Earth's many subjects

- Other-than-Human Subjectivity
- Sacrifice (Kenotic-Kinetic): give and take -- cruciformity and creativity.
- Hope -- looking out the window on the cosmos also reminds sufferers that the sacred universe story narrates a tale of active resistance to that which thwarts well being

Brene Brown (Atlas of the Heart): Hope is a function of struggle -- we develop hope not during the easy or comfortable times, but through adversity and discomfort. Hope is forged when our goals, pathways, and agency are tested and when change is actually possible.

We experience hope when...

- a) We have the ability to set realistic goals (I know where I want to go)
- b) We are able to figure out how to achieve those goals (still flexible too & resilient)
- c) We have agency - we believe in ourselves

*Mirror* (Personal Suffering):

How are we embracing our own participation in the sacred cadence of the give and take, the kenotic kinetic and the undeserved infliction of pain and suffering by others? Looking deeply into the abyss of the shadows of creation -- what can you learn? Perhaps God is awaiting you there, to offer solace when the idea of punishment captures your imagination. Perhaps if we ask the beasts they will tell us this. Perhaps if we see the sacred sacrificial receptivity offered by the tomb on Holy Saturday, we can find peace in the surety of transformation despite diminishment, suffering, rejection, pain and death.

- Live, Love, Labor, and Death of poet, feminist, LGBTQ activist Audre Lorde
- Teilhard de Chardin

### **Nine Aspects of Promise Offered by Our Vigil and the Tomb**

- 1) Appreciation of the cosmos as a communion of compassionate subjects instead of an alienated, voiceless collection of radically autonomous objects
- 2) Resistance to suffering as both an individual and communal practise rather than a purely human-centered model of combat-- human technicians of medicine laying siege to the foreign, rebellious material body in a medical war which is ultimately “lost” when a person dies or is disabled
- 3) Divine action in the world as empowerment and accompaniment rather than as “power over”
- 4) Broadening and deepening of how humanity envisions subjectivity, intrinsic worth, purpose, consciousness and sentience to reconnect human sufferers to Earth as a meaningful, sacred source of healing and transformative power
- 5) Opening of our eyes to the sacrificial dynamic of mutuality- the kenotic kinetic of receptivity - that grounds all created life and love
- 6) Testifies to intrinsic worth and transformative hope (and not fatalism) laying in the irreversible, ongoing, and unpredictably creative processes in creation. This addresses the fears of many sufferers that their life is/was meaningless and they are worthless
- 7) Illustrates how the creative suffering of the triune God can be interpreted and experienced by all of creation in a diversity of ways: transcendent sympathy (suffering with the cosmos), Incarnate empathy (suffering in the cosmos) and Immanent protopathy (suffering under the creative processes of creativity)
- 8) Narrates the story of the incarnation as the magnetic force that both lures creation from above and up ahead, towards fullness of life in the heart of God
- 9) Appreciate how the cross can be understood as the cosmic cross and the crucifixion is not merely a one time event but represents the presence of divine compassionate love spanning from the first sacrificial moment of life, to the extinction spasm of the Cretaceous Period, to the suffering experienced by people today

**From Brene Brown *Atlas of the Heart***

**Anguish** is an almost unbearable and traumatic swirl of shock, incredulity, grief, and powerlessness

**Sadness** - in our saddest moments we want to be held or feel connected to someone what/who has known that same ache, even if what caused it is completely different. We don't want our sadness overlooked or diminished by someone who can't tolerate what we are feeling because they are unwilling or unable to own their own sadness. Positives: builds empathy, sensitivity, less prone to judgment, time to evaluate own life -- reminds us of our connection to each other -- sad movies move us

**Hopelessness** arises out of a combination of negative life events and negative thought patterns, particularly self-blame and the perceived inability to change our circumstances.

**Despair** is a sense of hopelessness about a person's entire life and future. When extreme hopelessness seeps into all the corners of our lives and combines with extreme sadness, we feel despair. e.g., tomorrow will be just life today

- We often PERSONALIZE (think that we are the problem not the situation, systems, or context)
- We often think what is now will always be - PERMANENCE (we need to ask ourselves will this issue be a big deal in five minutes, five hours, five days, five months, five years?)
- We often think that what we are up against PERVADES every part of our lives - nothing good is left.

**Grief** - involves many emotions in an attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. What all grief has in common -- they share a need for their grief to be witnessed (someone fully present to the magnitude of their loss - not to pathologize it or get over it...). Three foundational elements:

- loss (normalcy, what could be, person, something we thought we knew)
- longing (not conscious yearning - meaning, purpose, wholeness...)
- feeling lost (reorientation of every part of our physical, social and emotional worlds)

**Acute Grief:** initial period after loss (yearning, sadness, longing, anxiety, bitterness, anger, remorse, guilt and /or shame)

- **Integrated Grief** -- adaptation to loss; integration of grief into life to allow them to remember and honor the person who died. Grief has a place in their life.
- **Complicated Grief** - when something interferes with adaptation and causes long periods of intense emotional pain and cannot see a way forward.
- **Disenfranchised Grief** - not openly acknowledged or publically supported via ritual nor valued as an experience of loss. Often invisible to others. Includes loss of a partner or parent due to divorce, loss of an unborn child, survivor of abuse or sexual assault, loss of a loved one to suicide. Loss of worldview, trust, self-esteem, self-identity, freedom, independence, safety, security, or sexual interest.

**Depression:** sadness is a common feature of depression but is not an essential feature -- and there are more of a cluster of symptoms that persist over a period of time.

**Pain:** mental, social, physical suffering or discomfort