



STANDING VIGIL AT  
THE TOMB: LOOKING  
INTO THE ABYSS AND  
FINDING GOD

# In the Darkness Grows the Green

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The Promise of Holy Saturday



Winter is a lesson about the fine art of loss and growth.

Its lesson is clear;  
There is only one way out of struggle,  
and that is by going into its darkness,  
waiting for the light, and  
being open to new growth

in The Circle of Life:  
The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons



A misty, snow-covered forest with tall evergreen trees. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft blue and white color palette. Snow is piled up at the base of the trees, and the branches are heavily laden with it. The background is hazy, creating a sense of depth and mystery.

## Opening Reflection

Winter is the season of waiting - a time nature is holding its breath, staying still, awaiting the movement and vitality trembling in its depths.

Waiting requires great trust and a willingness to believe that this angst will not last forever.

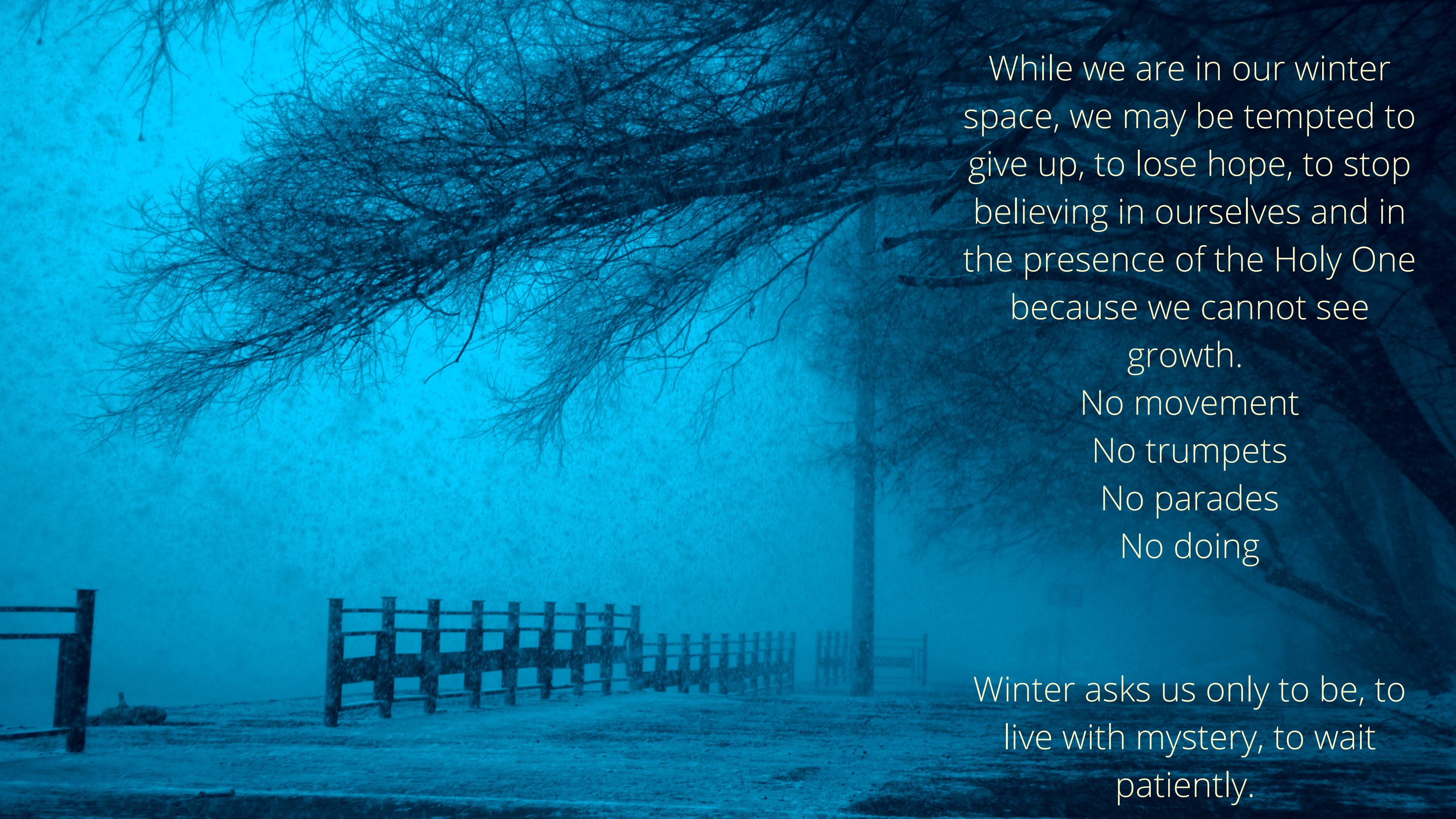
Even though all appears dead and void of movement, there is quiet growth taking place.

During the darkness, gestation occurs.

Silently. Gracefully.

So too at the tomb Holy Saturday





While we are in our winter  
space, we may be tempted to  
give up, to lose hope, to stop  
believing in ourselves and in  
the presence of the Holy One  
because we cannot see  
growth.

No movement  
No trumpets  
No parades  
No doing

Winter asks us only to be, to  
live with mystery, to wait  
patiently.




We are required to keep a delicate  
balance between yielding to  
winter's silence and keeping our  
eyes on a future springtime.

The held breath vigil between  
Good Friday and Easter Sunday





A photograph of a large, flat, circular stone slab leaning against a rough, textured rock wall. To the right of the slab is a dark, rectangular opening in the rock face. The scene is outdoors, with some greenery visible in the background.

Each day challenges us  
to carry hope in our  
hearts no matter how  
sparse our awareness of  
inner stirrings might be.

Adapted from Joyce Rupp and Macrina  
Wiederkehr, *The Circle of Life*, 2005, pp.230



Gift of Holy Saturday

Silence.

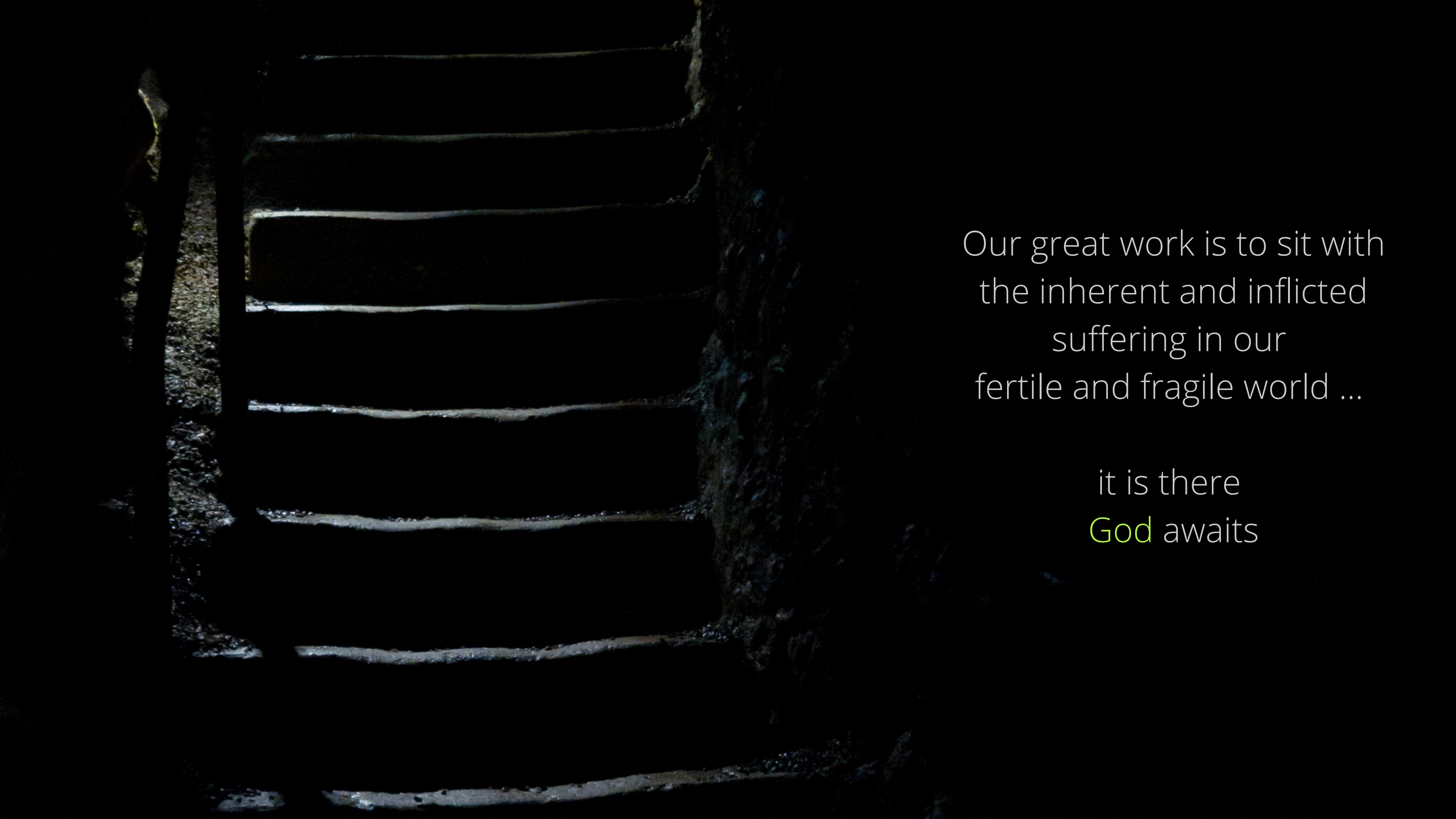
Being Still.

Standing Vigil.

Sitting with Suffering (and Joy)





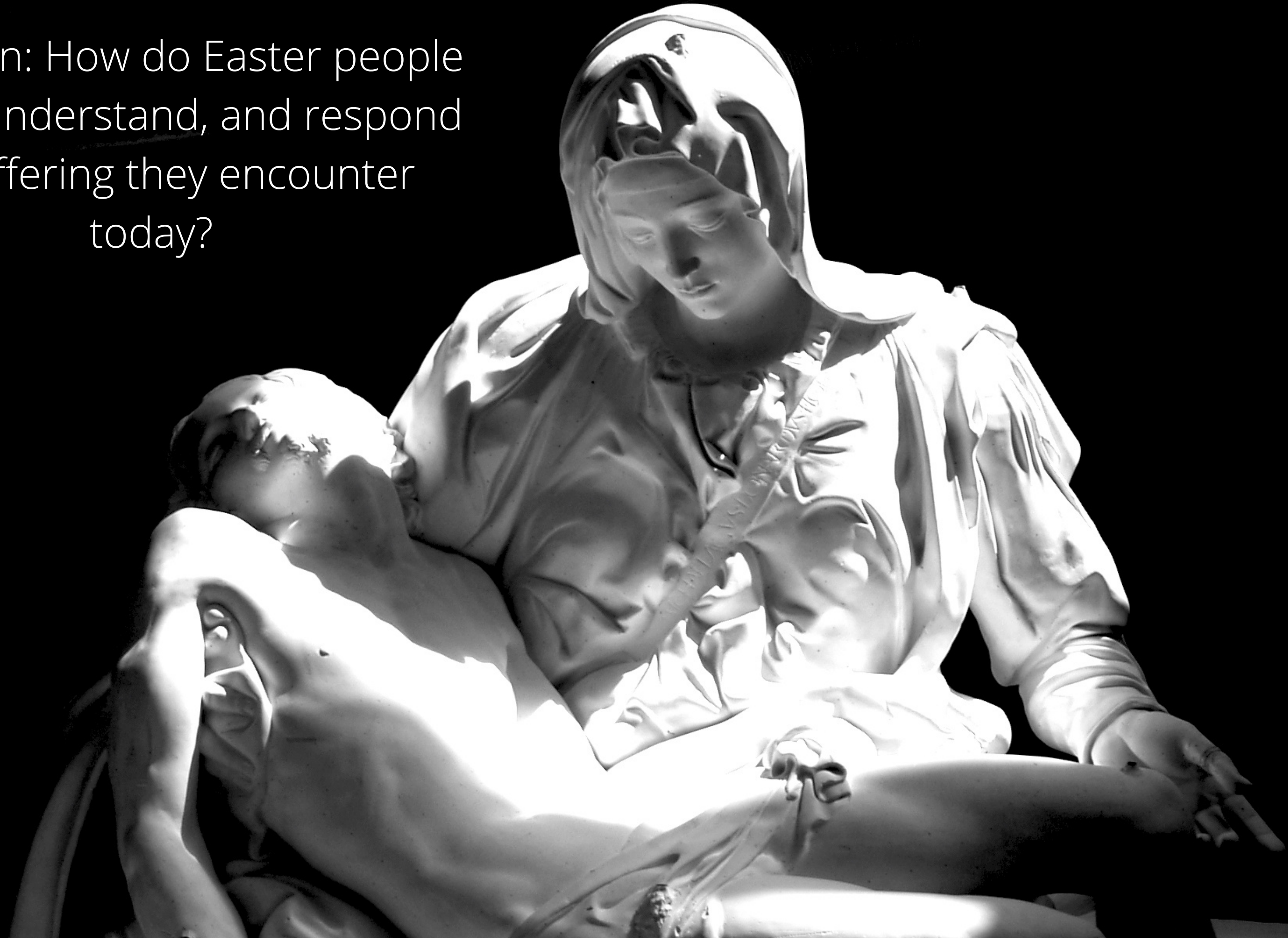


Our great work is to sit with  
the inherent and inflicted  
suffering in our  
fertile and fragile world ...

it is there  
**God** awaits



Question: How do Easter people  
name, understand, and respond  
to suffering they encounter  
today?





An underwater photograph of a cave interior. Sunlight streams through a large opening at the top, creating a dramatic lens flare and illuminating the dark, rocky walls and floor. The water is clear, and some marine life is visible in the distance.

## **Scripture Writers**

Suffering as Punishment

Messianic Suffering

Divine Discipline (Apostolic Suffering)

Call to Greater Intimacy

Witnessing as Test of Faith and Purification

Lament

Mystery

Cosmic Travail





## **Early Church Fathers & Mothers:**

Punishment (Divine Wrath)

Testing and Purifying

Schooling in the Ways of Divine Wisdom

Medicinal Suffering

Aesthetic Theme of Harmony

Steadfast Witness

Mystery





Voices from the Margins:  
The Suffering of those  
deemed 'other' in society

Breakdown of Relationship  
Resistance to Unnecessary  
Violence Against  
Well-Being

"Crucified Woman" by Almuth Lutkenhaus-Lackey (Photo by Susie Guenther Loewen)



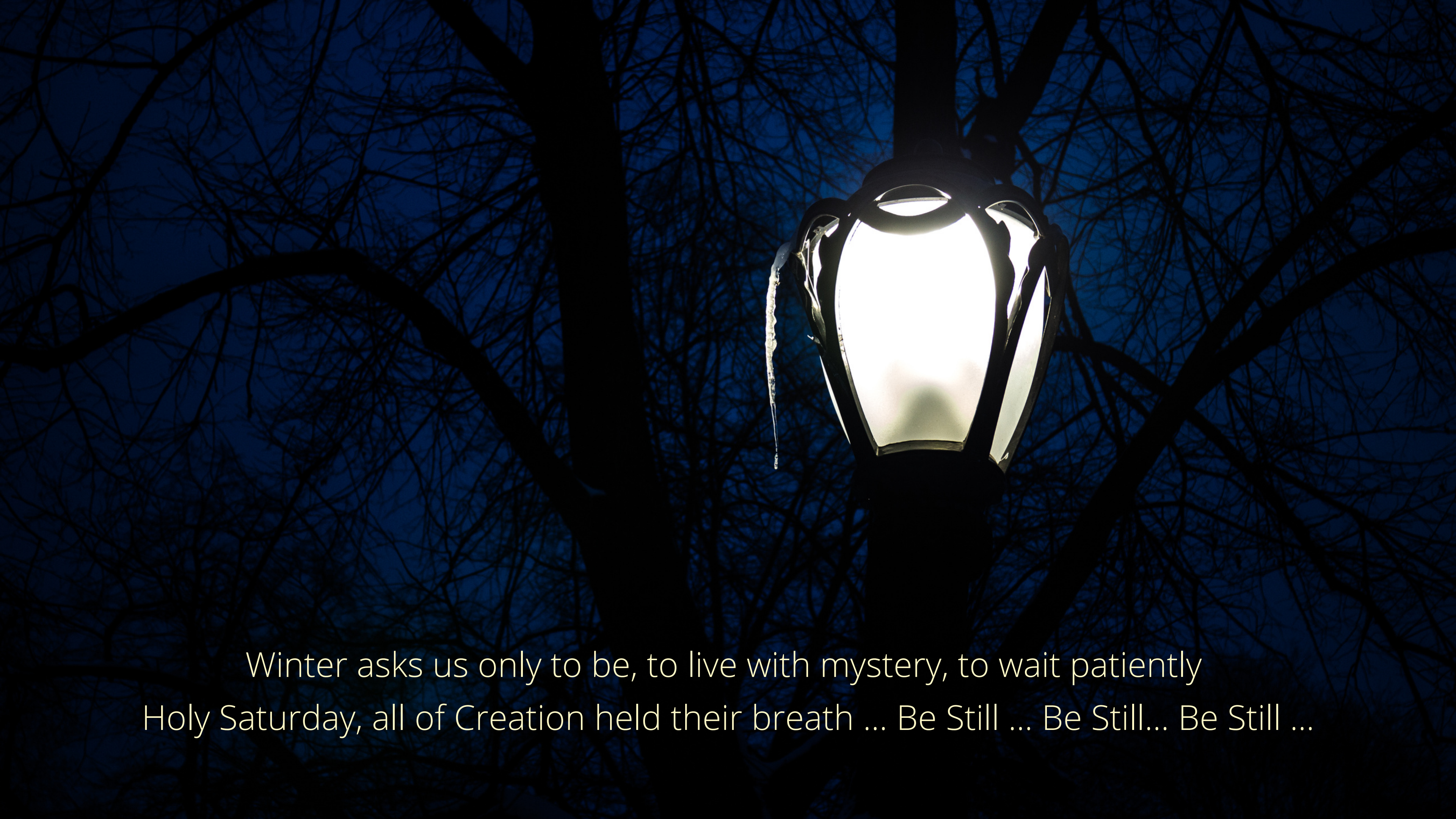
# Voices from the Holocaust: Radical Suffering



Bebeto Matthews/AP

“Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night...,” wrote Nobel Peace Prize-winning Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel in his memoir, “Night.”



A glowing street lamp at night, casting a warm light. The lamp is ornate with a glass globe and a metal frame. In the background, the dark silhouettes of bare tree branches are visible against a deep blue night sky. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Winter asks us only to be, to live with mystery, to wait patiently  
Holy Saturday, all of Creation held their breath ... Be Still ... Be Still... Be Still ...





## Reflection

**In the Darkness Grows the Green**


**By: Magdelana Gomez**

A soul cornered by Death's unwelcome visit  
to the mind cowers in the darkness;  
Illusions gathered as gold purchase denial.  
A friend sold on the auction block;  
faithful Wisdom goes with her.

Death sings to the rising sun  
reminder to live, dance, dream, hope, extend  
a hand beyond a casual, passing reach  
through the edge of one more day.

Despised gypsy rattles bones in fleshy cages where  
we do not welcome ourselves as who we are, but  
as what we do and do, and do and do  
forgetting to live, becoming the stranger.





An intruder is defined by a  
locked door;  
welcome,  
embrace,  
devour what comes,  
what will come;  
within a dark womb  
the first howl awaits.

Be still  
Be Still  
Be still

Seek the eyes of Death as  
Lover,  
bestowing compassion; as  
Prophet,  
foretelling the uselessness of  
anything less than love.

Magdelana Gomez



# What is Suffering?

*Paschein*: Greek term for "to suffer, endure, undergo"





Complex  
Personal yet Universal  
Transformative yet Destructive

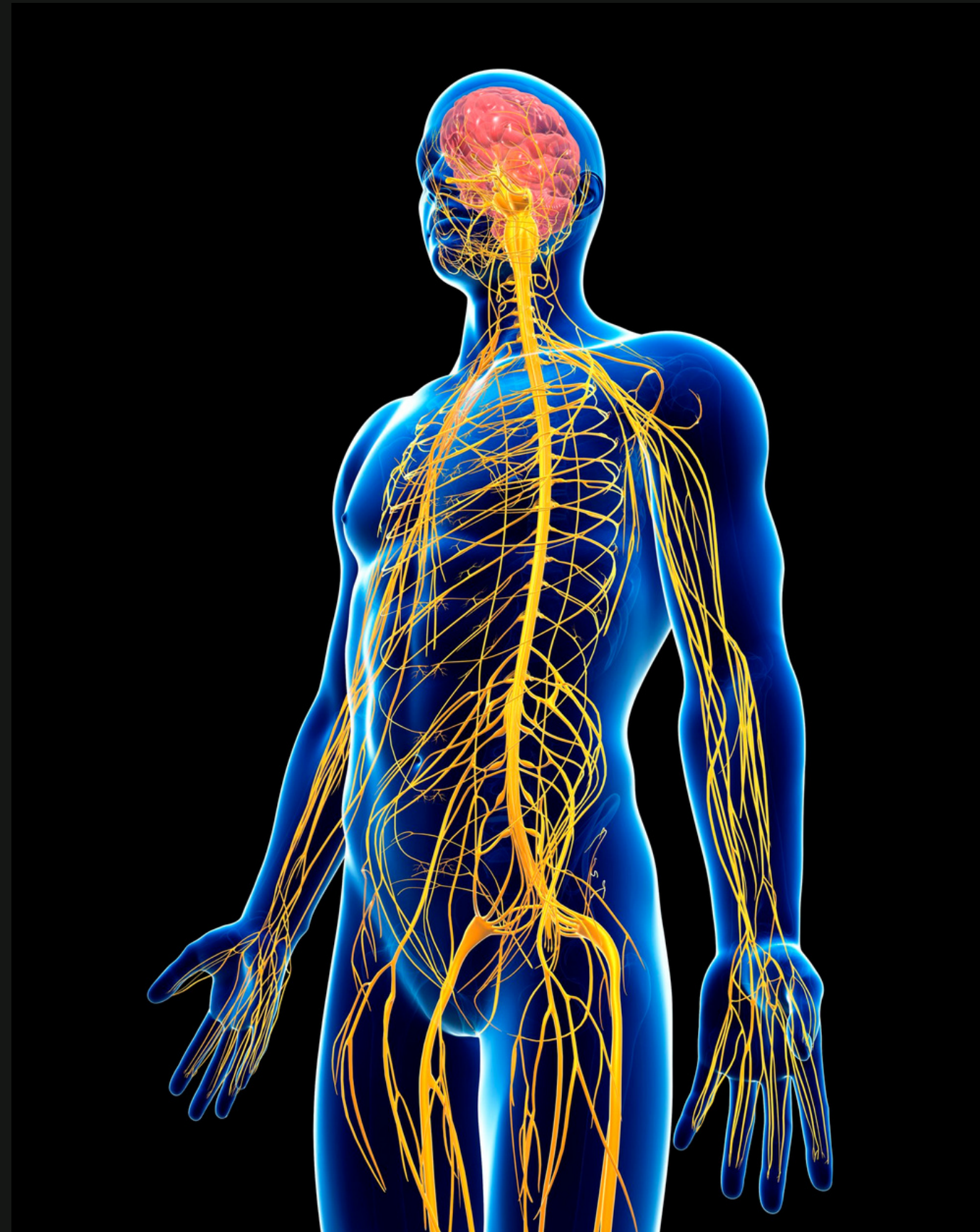
Worldview



When Multicellular organisms evolved, **death** came into the world

When the Central Nervous System developed, **pain** entered the world

When self-reflective consciousness arose, **anxiety, grief and depression** came into the world



Death, pain, and suffering is the price for living in a developing world with highly complex and intense forms of sentient life



# Sadness

What is your  
favorite sad movie?  
Why?

"To be human is to know sadness. Owning  
our sadness is courageous and a necessary  
step in finding our way back to ourselves  
and each other" Brene Brown







'Melancholy'  
Albert Gyorgy (sculptor)

Grief  
Anxiety  
Loss  
Disconnection  
Hopelessness  
Despair



# Anguish

August Friedrich Albrecht Schenck



"Anguish not only takes away our ability to breathe, feel, think - it comes for our bones. Anguish often causes us to physically crumple in on ourselves...The element of powerlessness is what makes anguish traumatic. We are unable to change, reverse, or negotiate what has happened ..."

Brene Brown





## **Dark Elegy - by Suse Lowenstein**

**Spawned out of her personal tragedy - death of her son Alexander on Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie Scotland in a terrorist attack (1988). "Dark Elegy is made up of 75 larger than life pieces portraying a mother or wife at the moment they learned the news of the death of their loved one. "Dark Elegy is a universal appeal for peace and dignity for all victims of senseless hate and vengeance"**

**<https://www.suselowenstein.com>**





## Today's Pilgrimage Questions:

How can we talk about suffering today?

- Map (divine suffering)
- Window (ecosystemic disintegration/suffering)
- Mirror (personal)

What are New ways of Describing Suffering?

- The Cruciformity of Creation
- Sacrificial Reciprocity as the Labor of Creation
- The Kenotic Kinetic of the Cosmos





Can God Suffer?

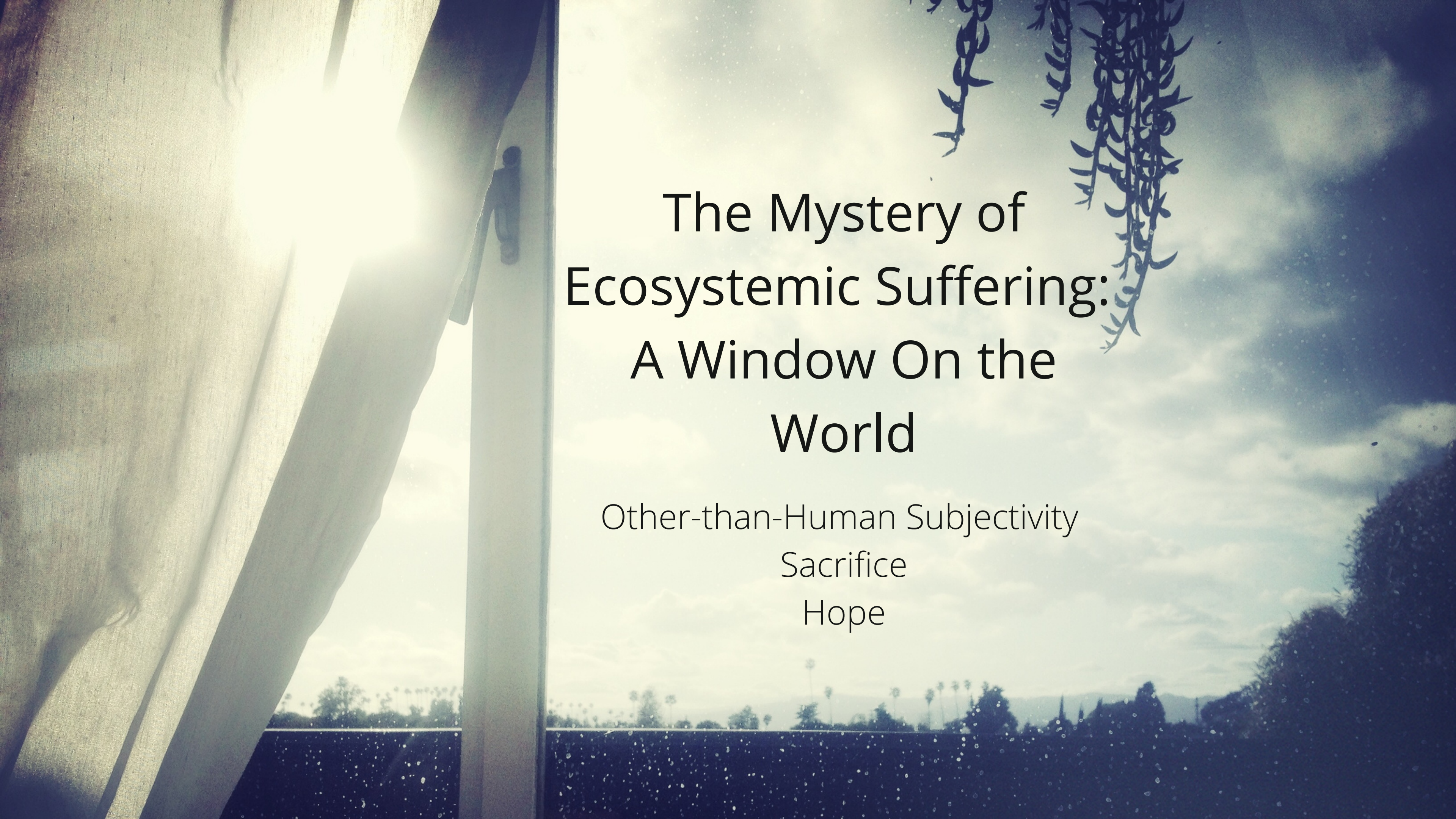


A large, dark wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the image, extending from the bottom left towards the center. The background is a deep blue, starry sky with wispy, glowing clouds in shades of teal and blue. The stars are small, bright white dots scattered across the dark blue expanse.

# The Mystery of Divine Suffering: A Map for Us

Creative Suffering of our Triune God  
Wounded Face of the Spirit  
The Incarnate & Risen Christ as Emergent Compassion  
Cosmic Cross



The background of the slide is a photograph of a window. On the left, a light-colored wooden frame or shutter is partially visible. To the right, the window looks out onto a landscape. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted trees and bushes. In the middle ground, a line of palm trees is visible against a bright, cloudy sky. A plant with dark, trailing leaves hangs from the top right corner of the window frame. The overall lighting is soft and natural, suggesting daytime.

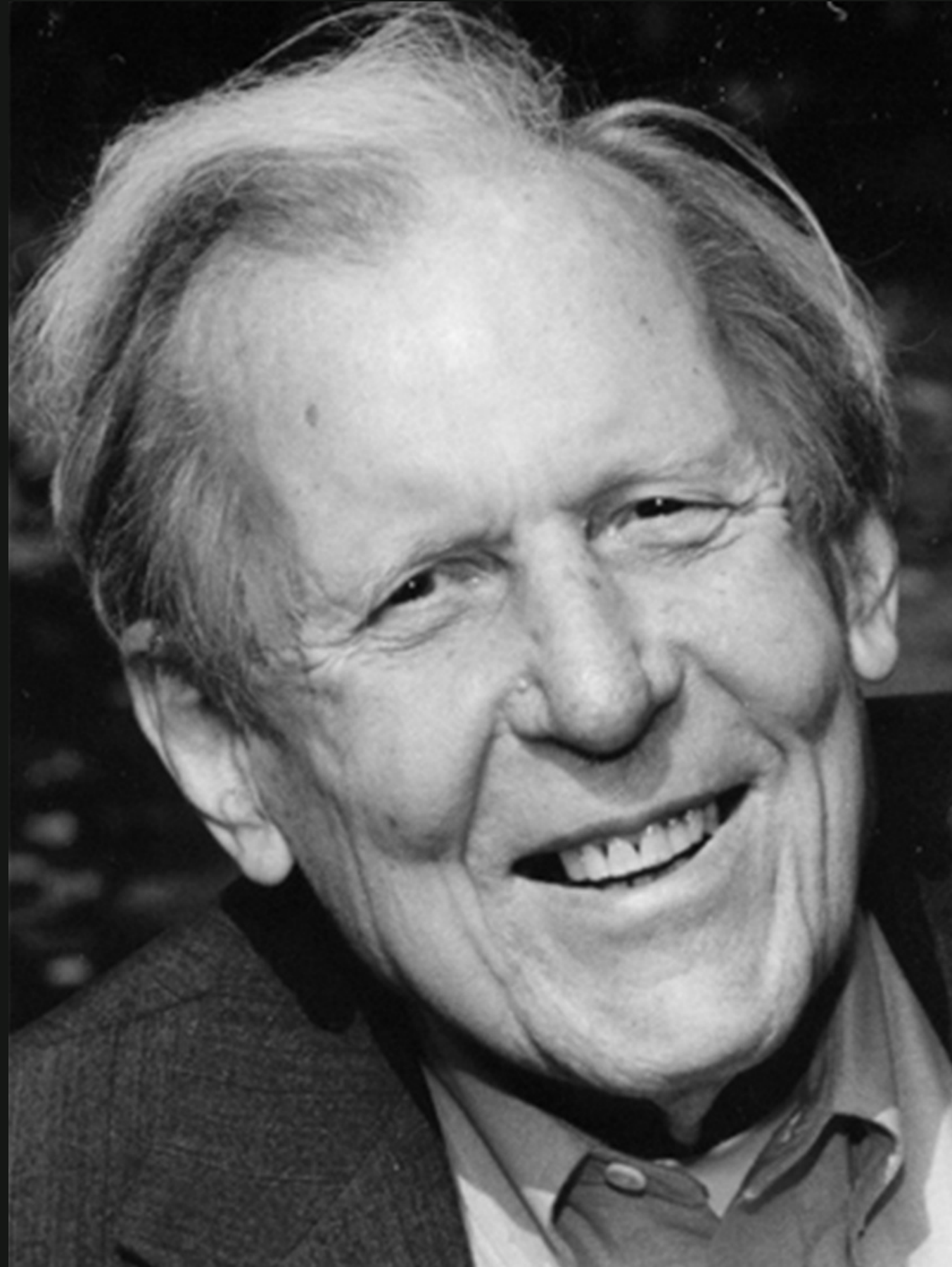
# The Mystery of Ecosystemic Suffering: A Window On the World

Other-than-Human Subjectivity

Sacrifice

Hope





The universe has a violent as well as a  
harmonious aspect; but it is consistently  
creative in the larger arc of its development

from "Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe"  
(Cross Currents, 1987)

LightDarkness





# Why Look Through this Window?

Ask the beasts and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;  
ask the plants of the earth and they will teach you;  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.  
Who among these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?  
In his hand is the life of every living thing,  
and the breath of every human being  
(Job 12.7-10)



A close-up photograph of a silver chess king piece standing on a dark, reflective surface. In the background, a pair of glasses with thin frames and a yellowish-brown temple is lying on its side. The lighting is dramatic, creating strong highlights and shadows.

# The Mystery of Personal Suffering: A Mirror





# Nine Aspects of Promise