

For Reflection:

Suffering has a way of whittling us down to realize that only a few things in this life really matter. Love is the means that pulls us into unity with God and oneness with one another. Franciscan priest Richard Rohr says “suffering and love are closely related. If we love anything greatly, we will eventually suffer for it” (meditations@cac.org, 3.20.20).

The goal of the spiritual life is to become aware of and wholeheartedly accept that there is higher and more benevolent, more creative and intelligent, more sovereign and potent power at the center of all existence. We have the life story of Peter to show us how trust in this truth is our salvation. Peter wanted to be safe and important in this life. Jesus kept trying to tell Peter he already had these things AND there is more, something even better to come—even if it wasn't all that obvious in the current circumstances.

Peter did figure it out and this is a spoiler alert. Peter, through great suffering and great love was able to put Jesus in his rightful place at the center of Peter's heart and mind. He denied Jesus three times (total rejection; Mk 14:66-71). With Jesus' help Peter confessed three times his love for Jesus (complete devotion; Jn 21:15-17). The uneducated, Galilean peasant went on to become a great preacher, writer and The Rock (which is what the name Peter means) on which The Church was founded.

Today's Scripture:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold.... (1 Ptr 1:3-7, NIV)

Questions to Ponder:

Keeping in mind the things on which we have read and reflected this past week, read the Book of 1 Peter. It is five short chapters. Have you or anyone you know had a similar transformation of heart and mind?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to love you with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, with all my strength. I want to love my neighbor too. Help me. Show me the way to transformation. I will try to pay attention to the ways you are speaking. Amen (Mk 12:29-31, NIV adapted)

Practice:

The Prayer of Recollection - to rest in God and allow God to calm and heal your fragmented and distracted self.

Intentionally come into the presence of God. Thank Jesus for being present with you. Ask Jesus to gather up the distracting thoughts so you can focus on his love, and rest in his presence. If there are things you feel you need to confess or ask of him, do so, and then go back to quiet rest.

(Adapted from *The Spiritual Discipline Handbook*, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun/The Prayer of Recollection)