



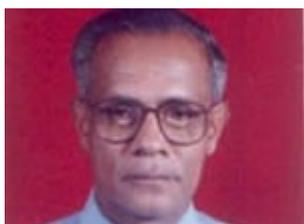
# The World Community for Christian Meditation

Published on *The World Community for Christian Meditation* (<http://www.wccm.org>)

[Home](#) > [Community Blog](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

---

## Meditators' Blog 8/4/2012



**The Transformation of Suffering** by *Christopher Mendonca*

It would seem that suffering is part of the natural order of the universe. At all levels in nature we see the struggle for survival, growth and decay, the emergence of new life and a return to the earth of what is biodegradable. Lacking the machinations of a mind, the order of creation just below humans does not cry out in anguish at its loss and destruction.

Its passing away or transformation when it often occurs, takes place often unnoticed but always without complaint. Death and destruction is never ?avenged?.

The emergence of human intelligence brought with it a sense of control of nature and the ability to control to some extent one?s own course of life. But with it also came the ability to look upon the whole of one?s life as a personal asset to be preserved, to see deprivation as a personal loss, to avenge a perceived wrong. With the human mind came the concept of ?victim? hitherto unknown in creation. Suffering came to be seen as punishment, sickness was often considered to be a consequence of sin. But more importantly not only did humans experience ?victimhood?, they also learned to victimise others. Stephen Karpman, a psychotherapist in the Transactional Analysis tradition, famously described this as a drama triangle as consisting of a persecutor, victim and rescuer. It has invaded all forms of human relationships.

It is in this context that the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus assume importance. Christians all over the world celebrate this Sacred Triduum as the central event of their spiritual calendar. The celebration culminates with Easter as its high point. Tragically, it is often the case that we stop at the Suffering Christ, sympathise with his pain and anguish and think that we are called to imitate him in the silent endurance of injustice, exploitation, ethnic violence, child abuse, degradation of women and a host of other issues that are the malaise of our society. What is missed is the fact that Jesus in this whole episode has not done away with suffering, but transformed it.

The newness of the Christian Message consists in this, that suffering is not synonymous with victimhood. Victimhood is a product of the ego. Freed from the influence of one?s ego it is therefore perfectly possible to suffer and yet not be a victim. This is the death to self Jesus

invites us to. It is the memorial, we are called to make present in our day. We are called to return to the original meaning of the word 'suffer'. Coming from the Latin 'patior', it is a verb that strangely connotes an active meaning but with a grammatically passive voice. The virtue of 'Patience' consists in 'allowing things to touch you' without victimising you. When our ego is no longer the victim, we opt out of the Drama Triangle and thus break the cycle of reprisals, vendetta and vengeance that so often colour our fight against injustice. It has been aptly said that suffering not transformed, is suffering transmitted.

Jesus' first of his seven last words as he hung on the cross is 'Father, forgive them..?' Forgiveness is not the denial of hurt, wrongdoing, injustice and exploitation. Rather by accepting our own inner pain we choose not to let it influence our response to the present situation. By not being victims ourselves, we also pre-empt the possibility of making others victims in return. The imbalance is restored by equals among equals. We now have the freedom to accept and accommodate others within the context of our inevitable human limitations. The energy locked in our victimhood is released for our own good and that of others. In spite of the inevitable 'suffering' the world is still a better place as a result.

The Resurrection of Jesus is not so much a physical phenomenon, but a Spiritual Reality that we are all called to experience. In that sense it is not constrained by the limits of space and time. May we behold beyond our own sufferings and those of others, not the crucified Christ, but the Cross the symbol of our often conflicting desires. May we experience beyond the contradictions and suffering of this passing world the Reality of our own Transformation in Him that endures forever.

*Christopher Mendonca is a India-based oblate of WCCM.*

Community Blog

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.wccm.org/content/meditators-blog-842012>