



RECOMMENDED READ:

ON HOPE | POPE FRANCIS

Recommendation by Tim McCormick

Last month I recommended a new autobiography from Pope Francis. This month, I wanted to highly recommend another book by Pope Francis called "On Hope." From December 2016 to March 2017, Pope Francis delivered a series of talks focused on the theological virtue of Hope. These talks were collected and edited into a rather brief volume, but one that is filled with deep reflections from the Holy Father. Each reflection in this small book is deeply rooted in the biblical narrative and the teachings of the Church. They are meant to provide hope in our difficult times...and they do! So much so that six of us staff members at Foley have been meeting weekly during Lent to discuss two chapters a week. Our conversations have been rich and deep. "On Hope" can be a great book for both Lent and Easter. Highly recommended!

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE, EXTENDED READ

Recommendation by Ken Pullis

The Stations of the Cross is a Catholic prayer that goes back centuries. They are often called the Via Dolorosa, which means the "Way of Suffering" as we retrace the steps of Jesus on His road to Calvary. Every year, pilgrims from around the world travel to Jerusalem to physically walk in the footsteps of Jesus. It has always been a dream of mine to do this one day! While most of us will not make this journey to the Holy Land, we all can make this spiritual pilgrimage at a local church by walking with Jesus as He suffers for our sins. Each of us is at a different stage in our walk with the Lord, and the Stations of the Cross can be a powerful reminder of all that Jesus has done for us. Jesus walks with us through life in the good times and even when we suffer. We can walk with Him this Lent as He suffers for our salvation. *We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.*

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Pray for Those Who Left the Faith as You Walk the Stations of the Cross

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER

www.ncregister.com/commentaries/stations-of-the-cross-pray-for-those-who-left-faith



RECOMMENDED LENTEN PRACTICES

Recommendation by Steve Petty

As we make our way through these last few days of Lent, we will soon be reading about the Lord's passion and crucifixion when we celebrate Palm Sunday and Good Friday. The story of Jesus' passion and death is challenging for Christians for two main reasons. On the one hand, it is hard for us to hear about the excruciating suffering Christ endured for our sake by such a torture. On the other hand, it is also difficult because we know that Jesus' call to discipleship means carrying the cross:

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Matthew 16:24

For some in the world, this call to carry the cross may very well end up in literal martyrdom. We know that Christians to this day are being killed around the globe for no other crime than being a Christian. Most Christians, however, are not called to such a dramatic sacrifice. Most Christians are called to carry the crosses that are presented to them in the fabric of everyday life. The question on the table is: *Does the suffering we endure through these daily crosses have any value?*

The modern world runs away from suffering. This is natural enough, I suppose, but Christ wants us to look at suffering through the eyes of God. *Suffering for the sake of suffering is pointless. Suffering for someone else, however, gives it meaning.* This is what the Son of God did for us and is trying to teach us. Jesus suffered and died for us on the cross. It wasn't for his benefit — he was innocent; it was for our benefit — the guilty. When this happened, Jesus forever changed the meaning of suffering. He showed us the meaning of love (agape) by suffering and dying on the cross. Those who are his disciples are called to imitate their Master. So how do we do this on a practical level? We do this by simply offering up the sufferings we endure in everyday living to Jesus.

When I was growing up, the phrase "offer it up" was a common one in our household. If you suffered any sort of setback or inconvenience and you complained about it, my mother would simply retort with, "offer it up." I don't mind telling you that when I was young, that little phrase could really get under my skin. Over the years, however, as I started to mature in my spiritual life, I came to realize what Jesus meant when he said, *"Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will find it."* When we offer up our crosses to God, we are simply doing what Jesus did for us. Even though we'll never truly know their worth, we do believe that those offerings to Jesus have redemptive value in the Kingdom of God.