

GOSPEL



... All the disciples deserted him and ran away. The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

... On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him. Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

PALM SUNDAY

... From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling on Elijah' and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. The rest of them said: 'Wait! See if Elijah will come to save him.' But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, 'In truth this was a son of God.' And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea, called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate thereupon ordered it to be handed over. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away. Now Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre. *Matthew 26:57 - 27:61*



FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

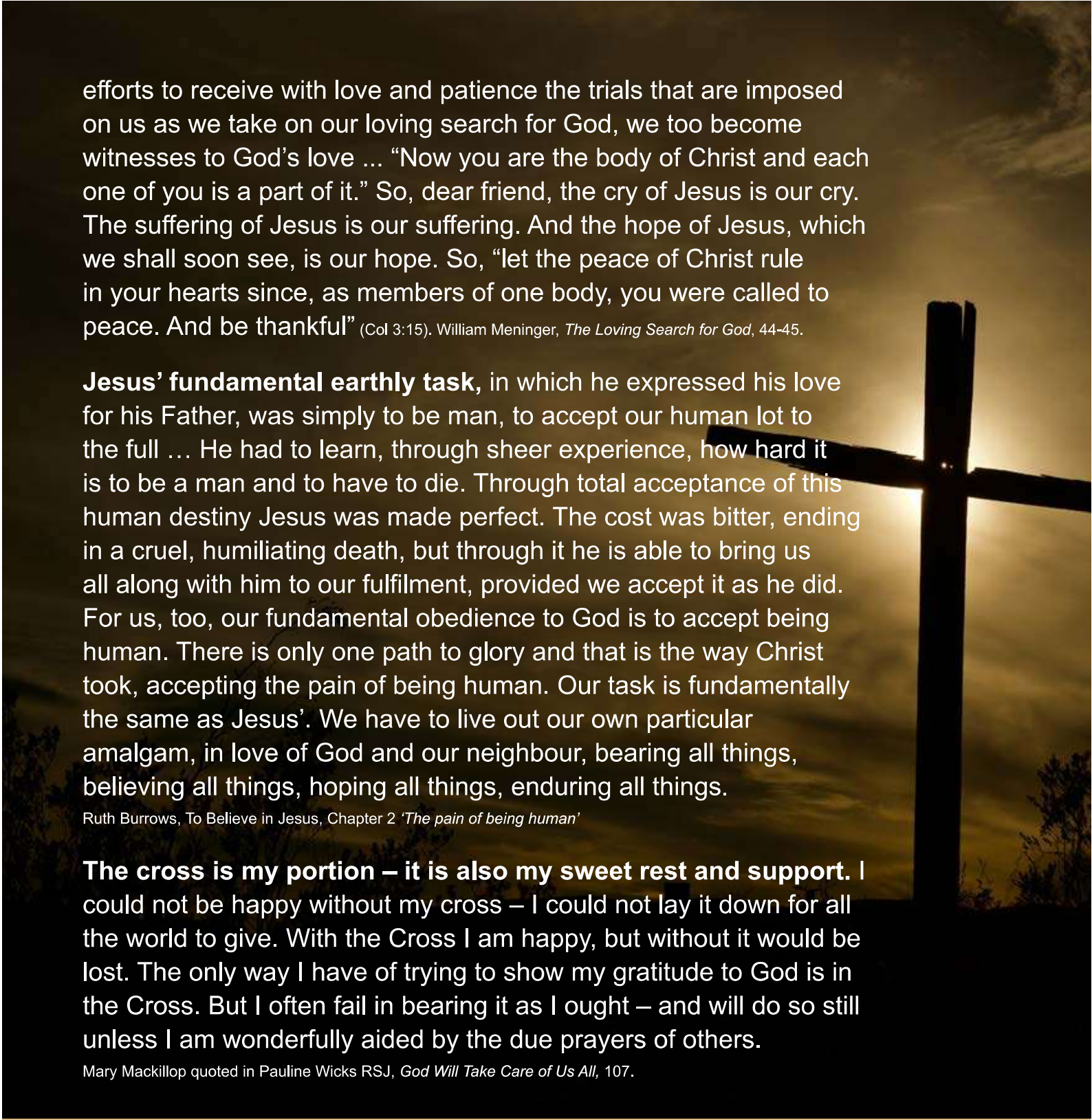
... **The experience ... of Jesus himself**, when the world collapsed about him, the powers of darkness closed in and he was swallowed up. His only certainty and security lay in the love of his Father, the Father who no longer showed his face. This is what faith is about. And this is what it means to seek to know the Lord. It is, as Jesus says, when the sun is darkened, and the moon eclipsed, when the very stars are falling from heaven and our world rocking on its base – our secure, safe world – that the sign of the Son of Man is ...

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'Who is he, Lord?'

... **It was to those who could stand by Jesus** when humanly speaking all was lost, when God had disappeared and godlessness prevailed, that Jesus bowed his head in death and gave up the Spirit.

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'The Narrow Gate'

Yes, dear friend, we are all called to suffer in our own ways, in our own time and places, and according to our own capacities. The loving search does indeed include the way of the cross. We are called to be one with Christ in all things – in his joy – in his labours – in his friendship – in his teachings – in his love and in his sufferings. By seeing these things through the eyes of Jesus, we can unite them to his suffering. By our



efforts to receive with love and patience the trials that are imposed on us as we take on our loving search for God, we too become witnesses to God's love ... "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it." So, dear friend, the cry of Jesus is our cry. The suffering of Jesus is our suffering. And the hope of Jesus, which we shall soon see, is our hope. So, "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since, as members of one body, you were called to peace. And be thankful" (Col 3:15). William Meninger, *The Loving Search for God*, 44-45.

Jesus' fundamental earthly task, in which he expressed his love for his Father, was simply to be man, to accept our human lot to the full ... He had to learn, through sheer experience, how hard it is to be a man and to have to die. Through total acceptance of this human destiny Jesus was made perfect. The cost was bitter, ending in a cruel, humiliating death, but through it he is able to bring us all along with him to our fulfilment, provided we accept it as he did. For us, too, our fundamental obedience to God is to accept being human. There is only one path to glory and that is the way Christ took, accepting the pain of being human. Our task is fundamentally the same as Jesus'. We have to live out our own particular amalgam, in love of God and our neighbour, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'The pain of being human'

The cross is my portion – it is also my sweet rest and support. I could not be happy without my cross – I could not lay it down for all the world to give. With the Cross I am happy, but without it would be lost. The only way I have of trying to show my gratitude to God is in the Cross. But I often fail in bearing it as I ought – and will do so still unless I am wonderfully aided by the due prayers of others.

Mary Mackillop quoted in Pauline Wicks RSJ, *God Will Take Care of Us All*, 107.

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful?
For what are you least grateful?
Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What is calling to you from this Gospel passage and these reflections?
- Early in his ministry Jesus found himself in a desert, tempted to find quick easy ways out of the pain and loneliness of it. His Father's all-encompassing love was a spring that flowed beneath all that he experienced. His own uncompromising love led inevitably to the cross. For we human beings who want to be his disciples, the cross, in whatever form it comes to us, is our way too. Take some moments to consider the deserts and the crosses of your life. How do you draw upon the spring that Jesus promised will become a never-ending source of living water for you?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

O Lord, remember

not only the men and women of good will,
but also those of ill will.

But do not remember the suffering
they have inflicted on us.

Instead, remember the fruits we
have brought because of this suffering
– our comradeship, our loyalty to one another,
our humility, our courage, our generosity,
the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this.

And when they come to the judgement,
let all the fruits that we have borne
be their forgiveness. Amen.

Prayer found on the body of a dead child at Ravensbrook concentration camp Germany,
in Patrick O'Sullivan, *I Call You Friends*, 17.