



GO AND...

JESUS, COMPANION IN MY SUFFERING - JOYCE RUPP

Review by Diane Harpster

This month's Go and.... focus is "Have THE Conversation". One of the questions the synod's resources pose around this theme is "What is THE conversation that you need to GO and have and with whom?"

Honestly, my first reaction is that I'm not a big fan of hard conversations. If it were up to me, difficult conversations wouldn't be necessary. If I was in charge, we could move through life without major bumps in the road, and we would all just get along. But that's not life, is it? This world does not allow for that kind of fantasy. Being human, being in relationship with other humans, we encounter our brokenness on a regular basis. We hurt and we suffer and life is messy. And as people of faith in Immanuel/God With Us – we are called to model the compassion and care of Jesus who walks with us through all that life brings.

Ash Wednesday, February 14, ushers in the season of Lent. I love how the liturgical calendar invites us to walk through the life of Jesus each year from Advent through Pentecost. Each new season can be an opportunity to pay attention, learn from Jesus, and grow deeper in our own walk.

Maybe the conversation I need to have this Lent is with Jesus. There is a lot that feels hard right now, both around the world and closer to home for me. In Lent, I'm reminded that Jesus knows suffering. He knows my hurts. He's been here as one of us, and he gets it. So this year, I plan to walk through the season with the aid of a new book by Sister Joyce Rupp called *Jesus, Companion in My Suffering; Reflections for the Lenten Journey*. I have several of her books in my library, and I always appreciate her wisdom, and candor as she shares her own experiences of faith.

As she says in the introduction, everyone knows what it is to hurt, to suffer. "In Jesus, we find insight and inspiration to encounter our struggles along with the assurance of being able to move through and beyond those heartaches". Facing and acknowledging what's real rather than running from or covering up what hurts, is the way through. Always.



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This little book offers a word or phrase with a two to three-paragraph reflection for each day in Lent, accompanied by a brief prayer and a sentence of intention for that day. I especially appreciate the varied ways she addresses Jesus each day, acknowledging aspects of this One who loves us and accompanies us. Clear-seeing Friend, Companion in My Suffering, Channel of Healing, Unwavering Supporter, Encourager of Honesty, Rest for My Burdens; these are a few of the ways we are invited to see Jesus with us.

The names alone prompt me to feel seen and understood and loved, and to begin to imagine the compassionate presence of Christ who knows me and is not surprised by my struggles and hard things. When I know myself as beloved, I can begin to approach conversations with others seeing them as beloved. I don't need to be afraid to encounter what's difficult and I can do it from a place of wisdom and compassion.

The book is published by Ave Maria Press and is available in all the usual places where books are sold. It even includes a list of questions for weekly personal reflection or group sharing. I look forward to walking through the upcoming Lenten season with Sister Joyce's beautiful and thoughtful reflections and pray that we all experience, more and more, the deep and abiding compassion of Jesus throughout our life's journeys. As we do, we will become more and more able to be honest with one another, not running away from what is hard, but accompanying one another, listening deeply, and bringing light through our own compassionate presence.