

Unit 4 Reading Guide Answer Key

The Paschal Mystery and Real Life

Chapter 9: Personal Suffering and the Paschal Mystery

Article 36: Making Sense of Suffering

1. Jesus Christ's Passion and death led to his Resurrection and Ascension, so we know that God can bring good out of suffering. Still, the Paschal Mystery is exactly what it says it is: a mystery, a truth we can never fully understand.
2. In much of the Old Testament, there is a simple explanation for suffering: when someone does something wrong or bad, God punishes that person. [This] concept of divine retributive justice might appeal to our sense of fairness and justice, but it is not correct.
3. God is unbound by space and time and knows all things past, present, and future. Grasping why good people suffer is not within our capability, so it remains a mystery to us.
4. Ultimately, the best evidence we have that suffering is not a punishment for sin is that Jesus suffered.
5. We can't avoid physical and emotional suffering; it is part of human life. But we can control how we deal with it. If we choose to find the good in our suffering, it can be a path toward growth and maturity.
6. The ultimate example of good coming from suffering is in Jesus' Paschal Mystery. His suffering and self-sacrifice lead us on a path toward redemption and salvation.
7. Uniting our personal sufferings and sacrifices with Christ's is part of being a disciple. We do this not only because of our hope and faith in our eternal reward in Heaven but also to make reparation for the hurt and harm caused by our own personal sins.
8. Sacrifice does not have to be a grand, life-threatening endeavor. Consider the following practical, everyday examples of small sacrifices you can make:
 - spending time with a sick classmate or family member instead of going out to have fun with friends
 - sacrificing your popularity by not giving into pressure to participate in immoral activities
 - donating your time and money to those in need instead of spending it on yourself
9. Christians all over the world make sacrifices daily. Not only have they discovered that the Holy Spirit provides the strength they need, but they've also discovered that they have received much more than they have ever lost.

Article 37: Is Accepting Suffering a Sign of Weakness?

1. Accepting suffering is not a sign of weakness. The Paschal Mystery of Jesus clearly shows that the willingness to accept suffering takes a great deal of courage and strength.
2. Jesus' suffering was not limited to his Passion and death. He endured pain and insult throughout his ministry.
3. Similarly, knowing that sacrifice and suffering have an important role in God's plan of salvation doesn't automatically make it easy for us to accept and endure suffering in our own lives.



4. Jesus himself made it clear that following him was not always going to be easy. The good news is that we don't have to do it alone. Such sacrifice is possible only through our loving and compassionate God who desires to help us on this journey.

Article 38: Finding Strength in Times of Weakness

1. We all have personal strengths as well as limitations and weaknesses. The good news is that knowing our personal strengths and weaknesses raises our self-awareness and can help us make good life decisions.
2. We were made to be in communion with [God] and with others. This becomes all the more apparent when we face our weaknesses and sufferings. There is a vast difference between the experience of facing these things alone and facing them with someone.
3. The following are some ideas for reaching out to God and to others, which can help us to find strength in times of weakness:
 - Reach out to family and friends to talk about your struggles.
 - Read the accounts of Jesus' Passion. Here we are reminded that we are not alone, that God is not aloof, and that he has suffered as a human being too.
 - Pray the Psalms.
 - Set aside some time for daily prayer.
4. Taking our weaknesses to God and others can help us envision our situation differently. Rather than seeing it as a burden we must endure, we might be able to start looking at it as a time to grow, a time to strengthen ourselves and our relationships with God and with loved ones.
5. Almost all of the suffering we experience in this lifetime will be temporary. We can be confident that better days are ahead.
6. Ultimately, our story does not end in this lifetime. We can find hope in looking forward to the joy and peace we will share with God in our heavenly home.

Article 39: How Do I Cope with Suffering?

1. When someone we know experiences a great loss, like a death, or is dealing with immense physical or mental suffering, there is often a desire to help them make sense of what has happened or is happening. However, we should avoid trying to come up with easy explanations.
2. One of the most important things you can do for anyone who is suffering is to just be there and listen to them. Let them talk about their pain without trying to fix their problems.
3. Another important thing to remember is to avoid saying something that may make the person feel worse, no matter how well intended it might be.
4. Suffering is often accompanied with an investigation into the meaning of life. It is natural to question why bad things happen. People need time to struggle with these difficult issues.
5. A question to ask that can be helpful [when you experience suffering] is "Where is God leading me?" This question is rooted in the trust that God can bring good out of any situation.
6. The grappling with questions such as, "Why did God allow this to happen?" must be given special care. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, there are no easy answers to questions that seek to understand the spiritual significance of suffering. However, the struggle to understand can lead us to a closer relationship with God and with one another. Instead of weakening our faith, it can strengthen it.



7. Offering our burdens up to God can act as a sort of training in selflessness and a reminder of Christ's work of salvation. This practice does not yield quick results, though. After a while, we do become more comfortable with the mysterious nature of Christ's and our own suffering.

Chapter 10: Communal Suffering

Article 40: Sinful Violence

1. The [Israelites] understood that God's just nature required justice for the terrible sins people committed. Yet throughout their history, God also revealed to them his merciful and loving nature.
2. In the New Testament, Jesus fully and truly reveals God because he *is* God. If we look to Jesus' words and actions, it's clear that God's nature is not primarily rooted in divine retributive justice.
3. From the cross, [Jesus] asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying him (see Luke 23:34). The Roman soldiers knew they were putting someone to death. However, it is unlikely that they knew they were crucifying an innocent man, and they certainly didn't know they were killing the Son of God.
4. In some cases [of mass violence], there is a psychological illness that prevents them [the perpetrators] from completely understanding the consequences of their actions. In the case of terrorism by religious extremists, they are often under the influence of misguided leaders. Racist violence is often the result of ignorance and unchallenged prejudice.
5. How could God ever welcome the brutal murderer of small children into his heavenly home? Yet, in the events of the Paschal Mystery, we find God's loving forgiveness for even those who killed the most innocent of all.
6. The love that God has for his people calls us not only to forgive but also to prevent these violent acts from occurring.
7. Violence does not happen without a reason. It is most often rooted in one form of sin or another: jealousy, greed, fear, falsehood, or injustices like poverty or oppression. To end violence, we must address its root causes in our own hearts.

Article 41: Human Failings

1. Communal sin is "the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins"¹ (CCC, number 408).
2. Communal sins are often the results of ignorance, neglect, or a lack of compassion. Even though there is no single person to blame, a communal sin is no less sinful. A community's failure to acknowledge problems like a broken penal system, drug abuse, poverty, and poor health care can be devastating.
3. Quite often, we are unaware of the unjust situations and systems that deny people the freedom and justice to live fully. Although it is impossible to be aware of every situation, Christians are called to inform themselves about the world around them and to act when necessary.
4. Unfortunately, there are people in governments, businesses, and even churches who use their power from authority for their own gain and to the detriment of others. They've become corrupt. Corruption is the dishonest conduct by those in power by which they take advantage of those they lead or serve.
5. As citizens and Christians, we are called to make sure that our representatives and business leaders are held accountable. We also must work to free them from influences that keep them from serving their community.



6. It is our love of money that can lead us toward sin, not the money itself. With wealth comes responsibility to use it wisely and justly. But the temptation to use it only for one's selfish desires can be very strong and therein lies the problem.
7. Greed can lead to a lack of concern for the suffering of other human beings. Sometimes people make money at the expense of their workers or consumers. While some are so focused on buying the extra luxuries of life, there are others who cannot afford the necessities (food, shelter, health care, and so on).
8. Technological advancements are allowing us to do things that were not even imagined a hundred, fifty, fifteen, or even five years ago. But just because we have the technical ability to do something, does that mean we should do it? Opening the door to certain possibilities can potentially lead to disaster.
9. Unlike God, we humans are limited in our ability to see the unintended consequences of our actions. We must be extremely careful that we do not create the conditions for sin. Humans should not be messing with the natural order that God set in place.

Article 42: God's Creation Suffers

1. When God created humans, he told us to have dominion over the Earth and all creation (see Genesis 1:28). *Dominion* is a word that was used in relation to kings having authority over the people. It was not unlimited power to use as they saw fit.
2. Kings were expected to care for their people. This is God's commandment to protect and nurture creation, and it is a mandate that needs more of our attention.
3. Much of our environmental crisis can be blamed on waste. Today, milk is often purchased in plastic bottles that take about four hundred years to decompose naturally.
4. Most of our plastic trash ends up in landfills or the ocean. The Pacific Ocean now holds what has been dubbed as "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch." It is more than twice the size of Texas and mostly consists of plastic items that even the salt water of the ocean cannot break down.
5. Ecological disaster and poverty make a situation ripe for social turmoil, government instability, and war. Countries that are suffering from economic and environmental crises become vulnerable to terrorist organizations as well.
6. The Earth is neither lifeless nor is it an endless supply source. Instead, it is an interconnected dynamic entity that requires our care and attention. It is a gift from God that continues to provide for us, but only as long as we ensure its safety.
7. We are called to be stewards of God's creation. Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of someone or something that has been entrusted to a person's care. This includes responsibly using and caring for God's gift of creation.
8. The Earth has been passed on by faithful stewards for hundreds of thousands of years. Most have taken good care of it, though there have been difficult burdens from which the Earth has had to rebound. These moments have brought a variety of sufferings upon us.
9. In the past fifty to one hundred years, humanity has painfully pushed Earth to its limitations. Its future, and the future of humanity, is at stake now.

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Endnote Cited in Quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition

1. Cf. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et poenitentia* 16.

