

Good Friday 2010  
Luke Passion Reading  
Good Shepherd, Wareham  
The Rev. M. Lise Hildebrandt

Rachel Remen (“Bearing Witness” in My Grandfather’s Blessings, Riverhead Books, New York, 2000) recounts this story: A psychologist named Lois went to a professional workshop on the films of Marie-Louise von Franz, a renowned Jungian dream analyst. The films were shown to the participants; in between, an expert panel which include Carl Jung’s grandson, fielded questions that were written down and handed in by the audience members.

One of these cards told the story of a horrific recurring dream, in which the dreamer was stripped of all human dignity and worth through Nazi atrocities. A member of the panel read the dream out loud. As she listened, (Lois) began to formulate a dream interpretation in her head, in anticipation of the panel’s response. It was really a “no-brainer,” she thought, as her mind busily offered her symbolic explanations for the torture and atrocities described in the dream. But this was not how the panel responded at all. When the reading of the dream was complete, Jung’s grandson looked over the large audience. “Would you all please rise?” he asked. “We will stand together in a moment of silence in response to this dream.” The audience stood for a minute, (Lois) impatiently waiting for the discussion she was certain would follow. But when they sat again, the panel went on to the next question.

(Lois) did not understand this at all, and a few days later she asked one of her teachers . . . about it. “Ah, Lois,” he had said, “there is in life a suffering so unspeakable, a vulnerability so extreme that it goes far beyond words, beyond explanations and even beyond healing. In the face of such suffering all we can do is bear witness so no one need suffer alone.” (pp. 104-105)

Jesus, nailed to the cross and bleeding, is standing in solidarity with all who suffer unspeakable pain.

Jesus bears witness to, indeed embodies, the suffering of the poor, the broken, the dying, the hopeless.

But he also stands with the suffering of Peter, shattered and shamed by his own denial.

With the suffering of his mother, who has seen her beloved son jailed, beaten, punished.

He stands with the suffering of Judas, who has realized with horror what he has done, whose anguish is so great that he will commit suicide.

His heart goes out to the Roman soldiers who are just doing their job, putting him to death, so afraid of the power over them that they cannot or will not question what they are doing.

He bears witness to the religious leaders who are so intent on maintaining order and keeping their own jobs that they can’t see God when he is staring them in the face.

He stands with the common people who were incited to turn against him, who have had hope taken away from them once again.

There is no suffering that he does not bear witness to and have compassion on and embrace.

Jesus stands with the suffering of those who have lost houses and possessions in the floods.

With those who have lost whole families in the earthquake in Haiti.

With the world's children who are starving or are forced in prostitution or slavery out of poverty.

He bears witness to the dying reefs and melting polar regions, the wild weather and endangered species due to global warming.

He stands with our suffering. A number of you have shared with me just some of what you are going through. I am awed at your strength in the face of overwhelming suffering. Families members with mental or physical illness, disabilities, addictions, economic challenges, unemployment, housing problems, deaths of loved ones, rejection, betrayal, giving all to help another. You can fill in the blanks.

Jesus stands with you. He knows your suffering. He takes it into himself and reaches out his arms to you. "Give it to me," he says. "You are never alone in this. Give it to me. I accept it. You will walk through this, but I will walk with you, and I will transform it. Give it to me."

Amen.