What do I do with this?
A Spirituality of Suffering

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Introductory Remarks

* Acknowledgements
* Thank you
* Assumptions
Approach to the Session

Each of us faces the sufferings of life.

* What do I make of it?
* Where do I go with it?
* Who’s with me in this?
* How do I live with it?

Spirituality

Explore the mystery of suffering
What does the research indicate?
Suffering

Clinical Descriptions of Suffering
Framing the Reflection

* Three personal stories
* Gnarled fingers
* Go away giving
* Sylvia
Spirituality – *It means what?*

**Spirituality**

* 40 years
* Prior Christian Literature
* Eastern Religions
Framing the Reflection

Spirituality
* Spirit
* Vision
* Lifestyle
* Experience
Christian Spirituality is the cultivation of a lifestyle consistent with the presence of the Spirit of the Risen Christ within us and with our status as members of the body of Christ.

(Richard O'Brien)
Spirituality

“Spirituality is a way human beings create meaning, something they are prone to do at times of existential reflection or of threatening crisis. They respond with the resources they have on hand, making sense if they can of events that seem arbitrary, hurtful, and meaningless.”

(James W. Green)
Spirituality

The aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals:

* Seek and express meaning and purpose and

The way they experience their connectedness to: The moment
* Self
* Others
* Nature
* The significant or sacred
Prism of Meaning: Human Person

Karl Rahner

*Dependent
This
*Free
Is
*Subjective
My
*Transcendent
Life
Prism for Meaning: Nature/Person

Karl Rahner

* Nature
* Person
* Passion
Touch Points of Suffering Human Experience

Our Body

* Why this undertow?
* Why this human condition?
Touch Points of Human Suffering: Human Experience

Our Psyche

* Why these moods and meanderings?
Touch Points of Suffering: Human Experience

Our Mind
* Meaningful?
Touch Points of Suffering

Human Experience

Our Social Experience

* Whom may I love absolutely?
* Who loves me?
*Is there an ultimate story within which my story fits?
Spiritual Distress Issues

- Lack of meaning/purpose
- Hopelessness
- Despair
- Not being remembered
- Guilt/shame
- Lack of love, loneliness
- Anger at God/Others
- Abandonment by God/Others
- Feeling out of control
- Spiritual suffering
- Trust
- Reconciliation
- Grief/Loss
- Gratitude (Puchalski 2002)
Reflection

* Moment of quiet

* Reflect on an experience of suffering?

* How did it affect your vision/perspective on life/God?

* What resources did you turn to?
Suffering Classical Approaches

* Punishment
* Plaintive
* Pointless
* Purposeful
* Purification
* Personal
* Power Struggle
* Participation
Suffering Classical Approaches

Punishment

What have I done?
Whom did I offend?
The plaintive cries of the people of Israel gave rise to the rich biblical tradition of the lament. Of all the categories of psalms within the Bible, the largest by far is the lament. (Ryan, 27)
Suffering Classical Approaches

Pointless

Beyond meaning

Alienation
Suffering Classical Approaches

Purposeful

Atonement
Ascribe reason

Suffering Servant

Isaiah 53
Suffering Classical Approaches

Purification
Test of faithfulness
Job
Islam
Suffering Classical Approaches

Personal
Karmic consequences
* Hinduism
* Sikhism

Aware of sources
* Buddhism
Suffering Classical Approaches

Power Struggle
Cosmic battle
Apocalyptic traditions
Suffering Classical Approaches

Participation
God passionately present
Paschal Mystery - Redemptive Suffering
Elie Wiesel, *Night*
God present/participating
Suffering Faith Perspectives: Catholic/Christian
Reflection

* Which reflects past experience?

* How do you find yourself responding to these?

* Which is missing?
Examining our being with others

* Core Identity
* Dependency/vulnerability
* Freedom
* Focus
* Simplicity
Examining our being with others

* Generosity/Hospitality
* Resourcefulness
* Count on Word
* Contemplation
* Hope
Final Reflections

What gift to you has come through being with those in suffering?